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**C**ourteney Cox arrives at our rendezvous, a little Italian restaurant, wearing jeans, a tight black sweater and rimless eyeglasses; as a consequence, I almost don't recognise the star of *Friends*, *Scream* and its sequel, *Scream 2*. This kind of makes sense since, despite her popularity, I also feel I don't know very much about her. For the past few years, stories about her have seemed to focus solely on her break-up with ex-Batman Michael Keaton and her indefinable relationship with Counting Crows singer Adam Duritz. And then there are the constant allegations in the media of eating disorders (the mere mention of which makes Cox roll her eyes theatrically in their sockets).

But there's much more to Cox than a series of famous men and anorexia rumours. She was the 17-year-old with the pixie

Instead, we stick to the things that might encourage Cox, who is really open when asked things *indirectly*, to give it up. While we wait for our salads, we start scripting her life story, the TV version. "Our story starts in Birmingham, Alabama," she says. "Ohhh . . . do we need to get into the whole divorced parents stuff? No? Good. So we have a young girl from Alabama who never really felt like she fit in. Everyone else around her talks so slowly and she wants them to catch up to her speed, so she starts talking more quickly.

"She hates high school – not the work so much; it's just the cliques. She feels very out of place. See, the girl had been in this clique since eighth grade. It's the 'in' group, but it's not a nice group. One of them starts dating her boyfriend, so she's ousted.

"So she joins this work-study program at school called

# COURTENEY COX

**JIVING WITH "THE BOSS" IN THE DARK MAY HAVE LAUNCHED HER CAREER BUT, THESE DAYS, EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE CONTROL-FREAK IS DANCING TO NO-ONE'S TUNE BUT HER OWN. BY SUZAN COLON**

haircut who grooved with Bruce Springsteen in his "Dancing In The Dark" video. A string of straight-to-video movies and a Judith Krantz mini-series were followed by star turns as Michael J Fox's girlfriend in the hit '80s show, *Family Ties*, and Jim Carrey's love interest in *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*. All of which paved the way to an apartment full of famous . . . friends.

## **cox's life as a TV miniseries, part one**

After 15 years in the business, the 33-year-old actress has become adept at being genially evasive whenever personal questions crop up in an interview. "Very seldom does an actor interest me to the point where I want to read about every detail of their life," she says. "I want to hear about the last thing they worked on and how they feel about what they do. You know?"

Distributive Education, and she goes to school from eight to 12. She gets all her major subjects in, and gets to skip lunch and gym. And she doesn't have to go to the smoking area – back when they had one.

"Then," Cox smiles, "she graduates from high school and moves to New York."

Dropping the miniseries schtick after I suggest that Claire Danes play the young Courteney ("Claire Danes? You think Claire Danes should play *me*? What a compliment . . . to me, not to Claire"), Cox continues with her story.

## **part two**

"I went to New York for two weeks before I graduated and met with the Ford Modelling Agency. I went with my step-cousin



**unplugged**

## upclose&personal

[Miles Copeland Jr, brother of Police drummer Stewart], who walked me in and slipped them a couple of tickets for the Police concert at Shea Stadium. He greased 'em up pretty good because let me tell you, I was only five-foot-five [1.65m] and no beauty," she laughs, no longer making eye contact with me. "Alabama's great, I'm not cutting the state down, but there's a time lapse from what's *in* down there and what's *in* up north. I went in there wearing my jeans tucked inside my cowboy boots and a poncho, so I wasn't looking too good. Modelling was never an aspiration of mine, but I wanted to get out of Birmingham. It's a great place to grow up and a great place to settle down. But I just had to leave. You see, the south is very social and I'm not."

The postscript to this story is that she landed a part in a Bruce Springsteen video and became the first person to ever utter the word "period" in a US Tampax commercial; and for whatever reasons, these two things launched her career.

### cox's perfect day: a fantasy

"On a perfect day, my call time would be at 11, so I can sleep in. I wake up at eight and the coffee's already brewing. I play with my dog and have a good 45 minutes to an hour to relax.

"Then I'm like, 'Hey, I *want* to work out – wouldn't that be fun? I sprint to the gym, get on the treadmill and jog for a half-hour, loving every minute of it. I do another cardio; I do the

don't call back, because we won't be home.'

"Later, the guy who sent me flowers picks me up and we go to this really nice restaurant where I order – and finish – the biggest bowl of pasta in the world. With cream sauce. And, for some reason, my stomach is not sticking out at all.

"We go back to my house; we make out, fool around. Then he says, 'I know you have to wake up early and I understand. I'm going home, and everything's just fine.' I get into bed. And guess what? My teeth are already brushed."



**"That's my biggest problem: I have a fear of commitment."**

weights. I look at my watch and it's only 9.15 – I have another hour and a half till I have to be at work!

"I take a shower and put on a pair of jeans and a T-shirt that, although simple, look perfect. Then, even though I don't really need to, I get in my car (which is full of gas) and head off to work, singing along with my favourite song, "Sex And Candy" by Marcy Playground. I'm driving as fast as I want to, I'm singing so loud and my voice sounds really good. I'm like, 'Can this be real?' And I play the song again and, yes, it's true – I sound as good as the singer!

"When I get to work, Craft Services [a catering company] has my favourite breakfast: egg whites, turkey bacon and tomatoes. There are flowers in my dressing room from a wonderful person who couldn't make me happier. The note says, 'I just wanted to tell you that I love you. There are no strings attached. I'm committed to you, you're not committed to me, and that's okay. You don't even have to call me.'

"Then I do my scene and, for some reason, everyone is laughing at every word that drops out of my mouth. I'm feeling great about myself, I'm the best actress in the world. The producers are like, 'Courtney, we don't have one note for you, you were fantastic! Go home!' I look at my watch – I've only been at work for two hours!

"I go home and look on my desk and there isn't one thing for me to do. I check my machine and everybody's left a message that goes, 'Hey, just thinking about you, but please

**"... I'm just so afraid that they're trying to control me."**

### she has this weird dream

"In the dream, I'm working on a really dark, interesting, weird movie. It's a great script and I really have to stretch. I love the director and I love the other actors. I'm having the best time of my life. When they say 'Wrap for the day', I wash off all this black eyeliner, take a shower and go home.

"And there is this wonderful man-god. And I go, 'What are you doing here? You've been here three days in a row!' Actually, I say, 'Well, hello, honey,' because, in my dream, I have no commitment problems. We cook dinner together, have great sex and go to sleep. And I wake up and I feel exactly the same way; not looking at life and where I'm going, thinking 'Oh, I'm in too deep'. That's my biggest problem: I have a fear of commitment."

Cox sighs. "I'm just so afraid that they're trying to control me," she says. "I have a problem with that, I know I do."

### a chink in the armour

You may have noticed a common theme in those last two segments: a fear of commitment. In between the salad and the main course (a dinner portion of spinach salad), over bread and a couple of sips of red wine, Cox and I share one of those very female moments where you reveal the biggest crack in

your armour – without getting specific, so you don't feel like you're a huge loser. Consequently, you speak so theoretically that it barely makes sense. Example:

Cox: "All the things that have happened repeat themselves. First you don't know why you feel a certain way. And then you go, 'Oh, I know why I do this. It's from this and this and this.' And then you say, 'I know why I feel this way, but I'm still feeling this way – why?' You never stop the feeling, and I really hate that. It's like, now we know what it is, why are we still feeling it?"

Me: "I know exactly what you mean!"

### **cox's worst day: another fantasy**

You'd think she would have put a halt to these ridiculous conversation-making tactics by now, but she's kind enough to continue to humour me.

"My idea of a day from hell: I'm supposed to be at work at nine o'clock, so my alarm goes off at 7:45, I push the 'sleep' button and don't wake up until eight. I have to be in the car by 8.15, so now I have 15 minutes to get up, take a shower and be ready to go.

"There's no time for coffee. I go to feed the dog, but there's no dog food. No, there *is* dog food, but only dry, no canned. And I can't bear to give Rags just dry food, so I'm looking through the refrigerator for something else – some bolognese that I can heat up with bouillon cubes.

"I get to work, and somebody reminds me that I have a lunch meeting. I hate lunch. I hate the food that they serve; I don't want to eat in the middle of the day – I just hate it. Plus, I'm wearing the ugliest thing I've ever worn in my life, I didn't have time to blow-dry my hair and I have no makeup on. Terrific.

"Finish work at six and it takes an hour and a half to get home. Now, while I'm sitting in traffic, is a good time to knock off all of those calls I needed to return, but no one's there, so when I get home, I have all these messages on my machine. I thought that was my time! But it's not.


"And I forgot to pick up dog food."

### **a word about monica**

Cox has often fended off accusations that she's exactly like her *Friends* character, Monica Geller; is that why she did *Scream* and *Scream 2*? Because fighting off serial killers was the most un-Monica-like thing she could do?

"That is my top priority when I read scripts," she says. "I wouldn't say that I wouldn't play someone like Monica, because she has a lot of sides to her. But it's important for me to play someone who challenges me."

Let's fast-forward to the last-ever *Friends* episode. Where would Cox like to leave Monica?

"I don't know, but I hope the last episode is something that you would never imagine. Like, Joey and Chandler finally get together, Ross and Phoebe take their kids and move out to the country . . . and Rachel and Monica fall in love, start dating and realise they've had it with men." 

*Courtney Cox has just started filming a sci-fi short film with Kenneth Branagh and Boogie Nights' Heather Graham called Alien Love Triangle. She'll be playing Branagh's wife, who turns out to be a male alien in disguise.*