

A man with dark hair and sunglasses stands on a wooden deck. He is wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, and a dark tie. His hands are clasped in front of him. In the background, there is a large, white, abstract sculpture made of metal beams, resembling a stylized 'C' or a spiral. The sky is blue, and a building is visible in the distance.

Fear No Evil

This season's scariest show—exorcisms, anyone?—might make you want to close your eyes more than once. But with superlative stars like **Katja Herbers, Mike Colter, and Aasif Mandvi**, you won't be able to look away.

By Fred Schruers

*Photography by Williams + Hirakawa
Styled by Molly Dickson and Michael Nash*



EVIL

*premieres Thursday,
Sept. 26, at 10 p.m. ET/
PT on CBS and streams
on CBS All Access.*

On Mandvi: Suit, shirt, and tie by Hugo Boss. Sneakers by Vince. Sunglasses by Salvatore Ferragamo. Watch by Omega. Ring, Mandvi's own. On Colter: Tuxedo, shirt, bow tie, and sunglasses by Tom Ford. Shoes by Barneys New York. Socks by Calvin Klein. On Herbers: Dress by Markarian. Shoes by Ruthie Davis. Sunglasses by Garrett Leight. Jewelry by Melinda Maria.

Asif Mandvi is an actor many viewers know best from his arch persona on *The Daily Show*, where he delighted with sardonic segments such as “Pag-ing Dr. Mandvi” (who diagnosed the “malady” of liberalism, among other imagined and real ailments). But on this summer afternoon in a sprawling penthouse suite at Hollywood’s historic Roosevelt Hotel, Mandvi is sincere and heartfelt as he describes the easy rapport he found with co-stars Mike Colter and Katja Herbers as they shot the pilot for the new CBS entry *Evil*, a psychological drama full of dark thrills that somehow also makes room for both sly jokes and deep dives into the characters’ psyches.

“There’s a cohesion that’s happened because we’re working together,” Mandvi is saying as Herbers is greeted at the doorway a few steps away. “But I feel like we’re also the kind of people that all get along organically—” He pauses a beat as his gaze shifts 45 degrees

away from his interviewer to Herbers, who is grinning zestfully at him with her right middle finger jabbed skyward.

“See how we all get along?” he asks, not neglecting to return the gesture. Herbers, who was already an established star in her native Holland before banking a series of well-regarded character portrayals in the building-the-A-bomb saga *Manhattan*, the dystopian drama *The Leftovers*, and more recently the shape-shifting HBO centerpiece *Westworld*, explains, “Just because he was saying that we all get along so great, I thought it was appropriate to give him the finger.”

The third component of this almost astonishingly comradely trio, Mike Colter (best known for a rise to cult fandom in *Marvel’s Luke Cage*), is just around the corner, and he has his own upbeat take on the team’s rapport: “We get each other, we get along, there’s a chemistry there. And I feel like the characters can go any way we want them to go.”

Unsurprisingly, given that the show is the creation of the CBS stalwarts Robert and Michelle King (*The Good Wife* and its offshoot, *The Good Fight*), the characters Colter cites bring a degree of intelligence not every procedural can claim. Indeed, the robust reception the show’s unveiling got at the network Upfronts gives the Kings and the acting trio (plus Michael Emerson, perhaps the most celebrated of TV utility players after runs on shows like *Person of Interest*, *Lost*, and *The Practice*) plenty of elbow room to push boundaries and trust their instincts over the coming season.

Herbers plays Kristen Bouchard, a forensic psychologist laboring away as consultant to the prosecutors in the Queens, New York, district attorney’s office. In the pilot we meet her four daughters, an endearing bunch but also a daunting handful, given her husband’s absence of several months on a Nepalese climbing expedition. In the course of assisting in the interrogation of a dangerously guileful killer (Darren Pettie’s Leroux), she realizes at once that he’s a different breed of psychopath. Along with that realization comes the arrival of Colter’s David Acosta, a Catholic priest in training tasked by the church to investigate problems of the supernatural sort, and his

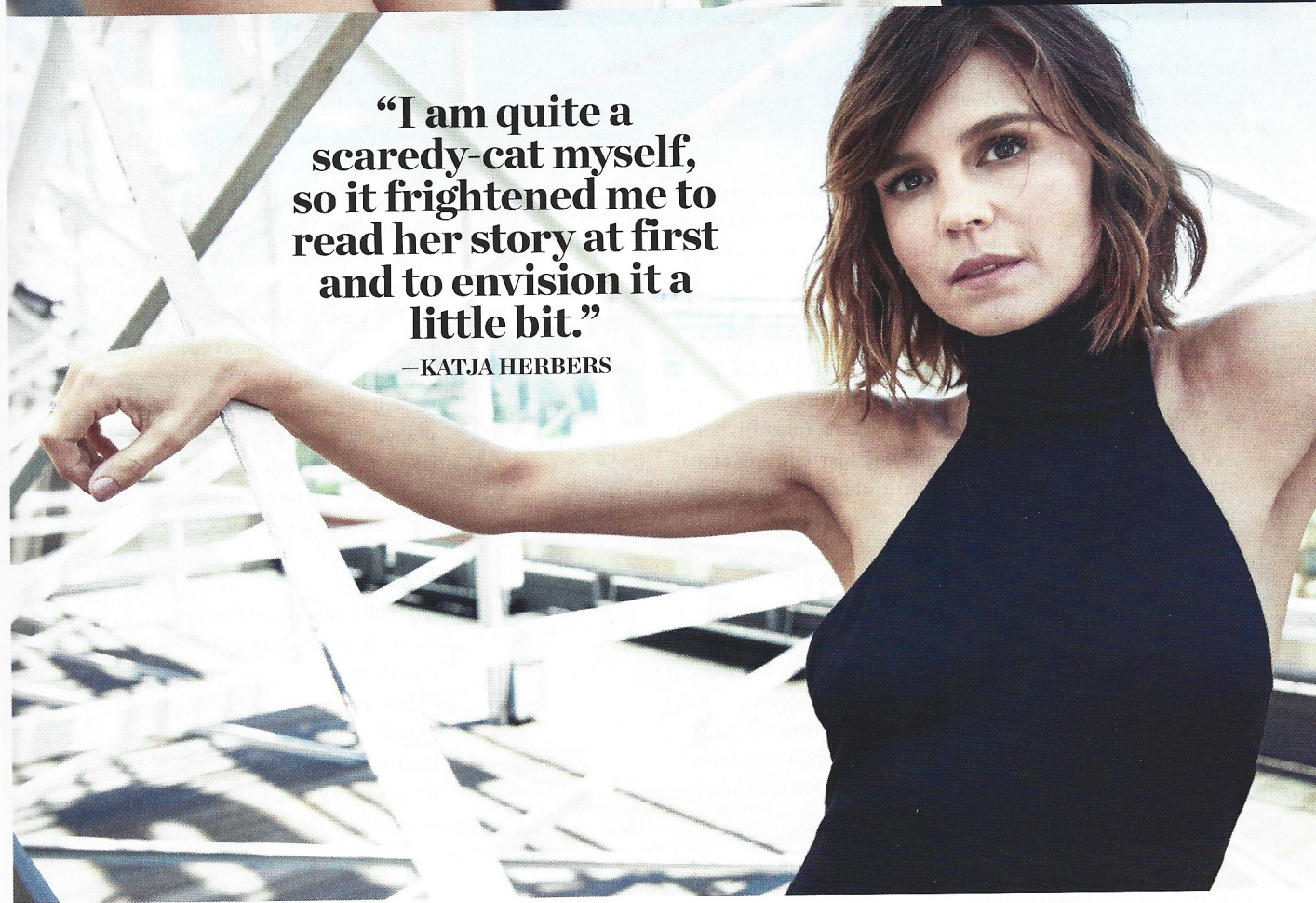
This page: Dress by Dolce & Gabbana.
Opposite: Dress by Ralph Lauren. Jewelry by Melinda Maria.

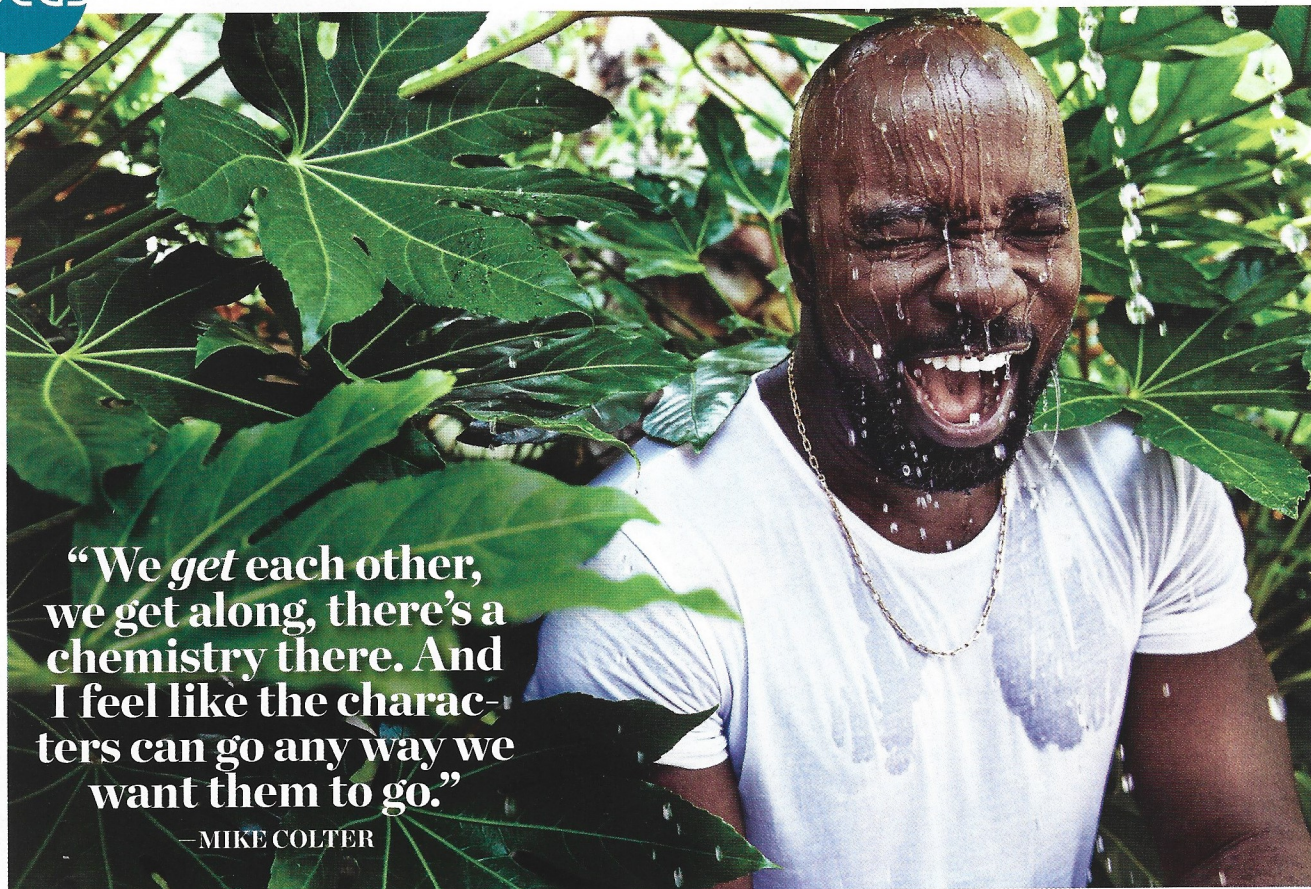




**“I am quite a
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—KATJA HERBERS





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—MIKE COLTER

accompanying jack-of-all-trades Ben Shroff. He’s played by Mandvi, who refers to Ben as “a MacGyver kind of character who can figure things out, doesn’t believe in [demonic forces], and gets a kick out of debunking such things a bit.”

Though David finds Ben working in a humble post as a carpenter around a church rectory, Mandvi says his character “has a certain level of scientific knowledge, more than the average person. I think that’s where Kristen and Ben connect, which is that they both have a skepticism. I think Katja’s character is interestingly caught in the middle, because she’s naturally a skeptic, but she also leans toward, Could it be true? Could *some* things be true? So I think she has a connection in different ways to both of us.”

Something the pilot accomplishes with convincing aplomb is bringing in a story thread in which Kristen’s “night terrors” (an actual disorder therapists study) drive her toward lending some credence to hauntings and the like—in her case very spooky but also personal, risibly deranged, and transgressively erotic visitations. Add in her absent husband and David’s quite evident attractiveness and the show bears more of a libidinous charge than most network television would dare.

With the Kings even at this moment in the writers’ room preparing multiple episodes with plotlines still mysterious to the actors, one wonders if fledgling priest David and lonely mom Kristen will, in the fashion of the network’s now-departing hit *Elementary*, keep it to a kind of male-female “bromance” or succumb to each other’s allure. (A possibility other characters have already foreseen in snip-pets of dialogue.)

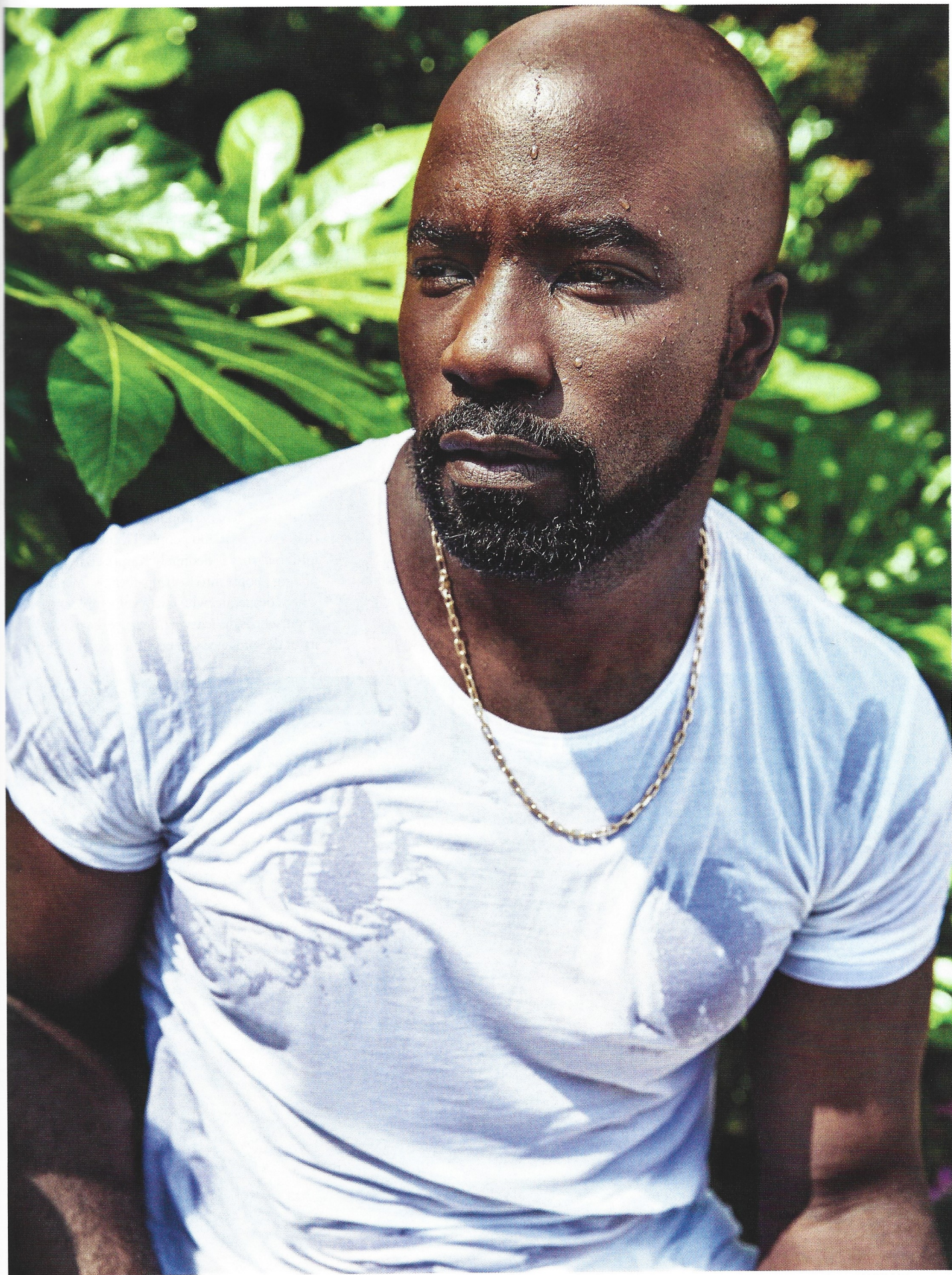
T-shirt by
Calvin Klein.
Necklace by
Cartier.

“David hired her,” says Colter. “Why? I’m sure she’s qualified, but maybe there’s something else? An attraction? But again, my character is on the journey of a priest. He’s supposed to be—chaste and sort of changing.”

Given the nerve-jangling wait the actors underwent to be certain the pilot was picked up for a multi-episode debut season—and given the warm reception their work has gotten—their friskiness and shared zeal makes sense. In between posing for a frolicsome series of shots, each actor took some individual time out to talk about *Evil*, their work as actors, and again, that rare and wonderfully evident comradery they’ve found working together.

MANDVI

[As natural knockout Herbers is summoned away for some hardly essential services] Oh, off to hair and makeup? Yeah, she needs a lot of hair and makeup, that woman. [Laughs, sarcastically.] We have a very 21st-century kind of thing, a little text chain since we shot the pilot, we would be just texting each other constantly going, “Have you heard anything?”



Are we picked up?" Constantly going back and forth for a few months in that period of uncertainty, leaning on each other, a little support group. I think that helped us bond, in a way.

I'm a child of the theater. At the end of the day we wanted to *play*, and that's what's great. Even when you're in school, it's like you wanted to do a play, *and* you wanted to *play*. Let's have fun. Let's collaborate, and make it fun, and try to make it the best it can be. Those are the best people to work with.

It's one of the realities you realize as you get older in this business is that it's all up and down. Today we're doing a photo shoot, and tomorrow I'm going to be in my apartment waiting for the phone to ring. That's how this business goes, so you can't take yourself too seriously at any moment.

Ben feels like he's the smartest guy in the room, and he's got to prove to these people, "OK, look. That [supposed demonic noise] is your washing machine. It's not the 'thing,' all right?" But I think also just the challenge of discovering just what it *is* is what drives him.

I was raised in an Indian Muslim family, and it was very common for my grandparents to talk about ghosts, and demons, spirits, things like that. It was just the tapestry of how they grew up and what they believed. Now, Ben would be like, "Oh, it's all explainable, and it's bunk, and it's just ..." Which may be true in some cases, but it definitely was part of the water that I grew up in. And Robert King was really interested in sort of hearing about some of those things, which feels very collaborative.

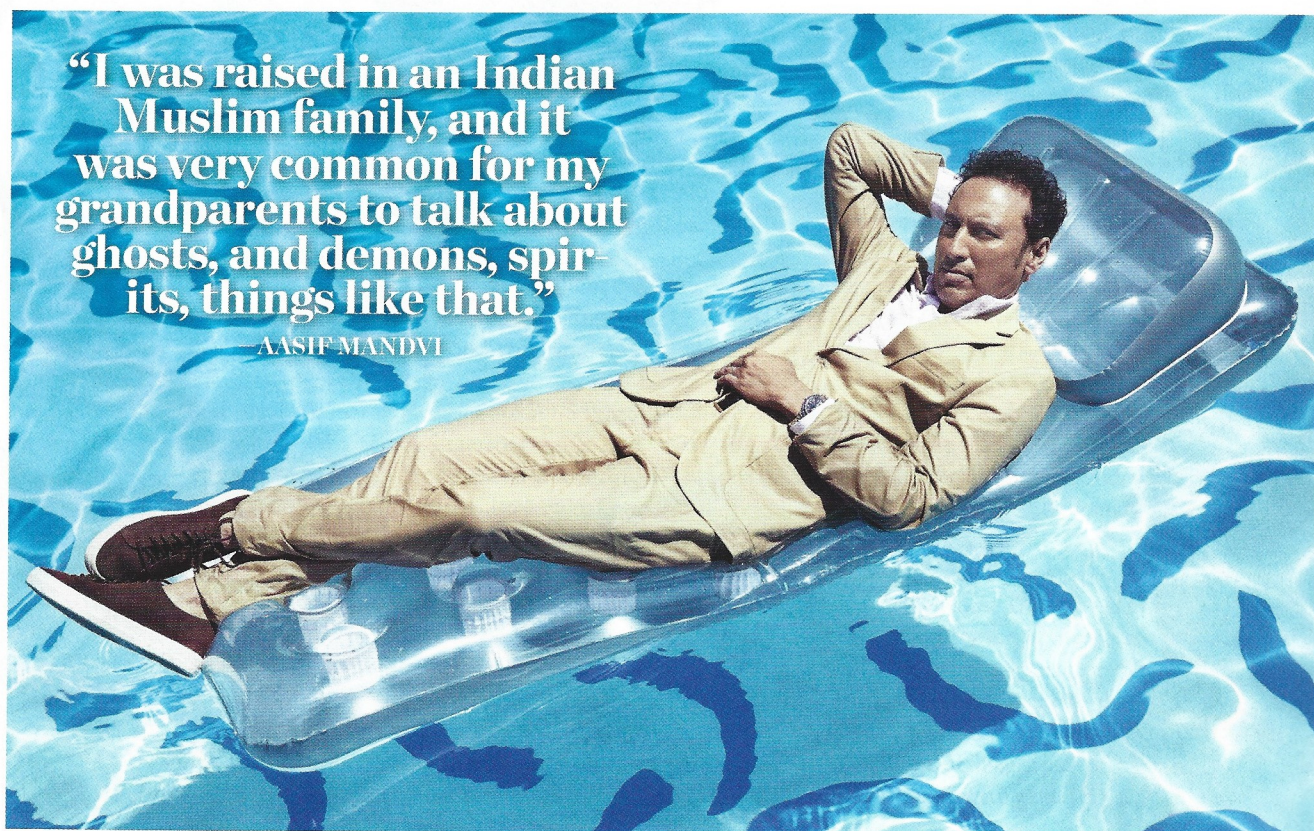
COLTER

You were asking about a moment when Kristen has David to her [somewhat disorderly] place, picks up the clothes and tosses them aside, then they cut to the look on David's face. The fundamentals of acting are there because when there's nothing being said, sometimes you get to know a person, or you get so much more from a person just based off of watching them and how they react or how they take in or how they're listening, rather than what they're saying.


David does have a lot of exposition to handle—I love good, rich dialogue—but the beautiful thing about good, rich dialogue is that you try to make it seem as if it's just conversational, and that's just how it comes out.

A sociopath, a psychopath, are such a small fraction of the population. Let's say one out of every 10,000 people. I think the way into this story is definitely Katja's character pulling people into hearing about someone who is desperate, who is in a vulnerable situation, who is disbelieving. Because the majority of the audience will be disbelievers.

Suit and shirt by Todd Snyder. Sneakers by Vince. Watch by Omega. Sunglasses by Salvatore Ferragamo. Ring, Mandvi's own.







“One of my favorite actors is Julia Louis-Dreyfus. She’s a goddess of comedy.”

KATJA HERBERS

On the second day of shooting, the conversation was basically David and Kristen going up the stairs talking about her experiences versus mine. What she believes versus what I believe. And essentially that’s the foundation of what will hopefully be a long journey of our characters and of debate. I respect what you say—but this is what I have to say, and this is what I think, and maybe you’re right, and maybe you’re wrong, but we’re going to figure it out, we’re going to find out. And will we gloat when we’re right? I don’t know, but we have these moments where it’s a healthy debate. And perhaps that’s our flirtation, perhaps that’s our relationship.

HERBERS

Chuckling those clothes away, I think I was trying to be a little bit funny for the crew. Robert King was directing, and he said,

“That’s fun, do that!” and then I kind of just made it into showing how she’s a little awkward around David. There’s some chemistry between them, she’s trying to be cool, but yet she chucks those clothes away in an awkward manner—which I thought could make her reveal something about her inner workings.

I am quite a scaredy-cat myself, so it frightened me to read her story at first and to envision it a little bit. In the pilot, it’s getting under her skin, and although she’s skeptical about it all, she does get these night terrors. What’s so cleverly done in the pilot is that all she’s told her own therapist gets thrown back into her face.

And then it gets even more scary. The more I look into these cases, I do think Kristen—she’s a mountain climber—likes danger a little, and she likes flirting with that. Where it’s free solo, I have no ropes, but I know exactly how I’m going to manage this and I’m going to win this game. And for me as an actor, that’s fun. And playing opposite somebody like Michael Emerson or Darren Pettie playing Leroux, a psychopath, because they’re such good actors, there’s a playfulness to it. And she can play with those kinds of people—if somebody’s threatening her, she could just give them something back, throw them off their game. She’s not easily intimidated. Maybe underneath, but she’s never gonna show it.

One of my favorite actors is Julia Louis-Dreyfus. She’s just a goddess of comedy. And I think the Kings were interested in my comedy work, because I actually come from comedy in Holland. They were looking for someone who can do some drama, but also has a lightness, has a bit of a twinkle sometimes, can bring some fun to this darkness. ■

This page: Top by Cami NYC. Pants by Saint Laurent. Shoes by Jimmy Choo. Jewelry by Melinda Maria. Opposite: On Colter: Blazer by Men’s Wearhouse. Shirt and jeans by AG Jeans. On Mandvi: Blazer and shirt by Zara. Jeans by Rag & Bone. Watch by Omega.

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