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Danielle Bowman.

Photographed by Megan Dougherty

Credits.

Talent. **Danielle Bowman**
Interview. **Vanesa Miraglia**
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On the cover



Danielle Bowman.

Danielle's passion for storytelling radiates throughout our interview as we explore her multifaceted role in "Children of the Pines" - which will be released on all major streaming platforms, like Amazon and Apple, beginning October 18, 2024. The conversation unfolds with an air of reflection and authenticity, revealing her deep connection to the emotionally complex character of Kathy. Drawing parallels between the character's journey and her own, Danielle sheds light on the universal themes of resilience and isolation that the film so poignantly captures. She explores the intricate family dynamics that resonate with many, unearthing layers of vulnerability and strength both on and off screen. As she articulates her evolution from simply portraying characters to truly embodying them, Danielle underscores her dedication to evoking genuine emotional responses from her audience. Her commitment to the craft is driven not by traditional recognition but by the impact of authentic storytelling, leaving us with a profound sense of her as an artist committed to capturing the raw essence of human experience.



V: It's clear you've carved quite a path for yourself in this industry - both in front of the camera and behind it. But what truly piqued my curiosity was "Children of the Pines." There's a quiet intensity to the title, a hint of something both mysterious and deeply personal. Can you tell me, what initially drew you to this project?

D: What really drew me to *Children of the Pines* was the emotional complexity of Kathy's character and the intense, yet subtle, family dynamics at the heart of the story. There's a real sense of survival, both emotional and physical, which hooked me right away. Kathy is navigating this deeply fraught space between protecting her daughter and being trapped in a relationship that is unraveling. The scenes, especially in the flashbacks, reveal so much about Kathy's struggles to hold her family together, all while she's quietly enduring this storm of fear and conflict. The title itself hints at something ancient and rooted, and that's exactly what drew me to Kathy's story—a woman fiercely trying to keep her family safe in a world that feels like it's constantly closing in on her.

V: The portrayal of family in the film seems beautifully complex. Was there a conscious decision to move away from the traditional, picture-perfect family dynamic? And how did you, as producer, navigate that portrayal with the actors involved?

D: One of the scenes that resonated with me the most was the therapy session with Kathy. It was raw and intimate, and it struck me how, in that moment, she is grappling with the weight of her family's pain—especially her daughter Riley's. There's this deep sense of wanting to fix everything, but also the recognition that some damage is too deep to repair. I think what makes this scene so powerful, and what resonated with me personally, is the idea that no one gets through life unscathed. Kathy's journey, her mistakes, and her attempts at healing are things we can all relate to. We all have scars, unresolved issues, and moments in our lives when we feel helpless in the face of them.

The themes of the film—the complexity of family dynamics, how past trauma continues to echo through the present—remind us that we all carry something. Like Kathy, we often want to 'fix' things or believe that there's a way to undo the damage, but life doesn't work that way. This family, with all its flaws and struggles, shows us that despite the darkness, there's a shared experience of pain and healing. And I think that's what draws us to sto-

ries like this one: they remind us that, in some way, we're all part of this human experience, and we share more in common with these characters than we might initially realize.

V: "Children of the Pines" seems to delve into the human spirit's resilience in the face of isolation. Did you find yourself personally challenged by this theme during filming? Did it perhaps unearth any personal discoveries about your own capacity for strength?

D: Absolutely, *Children of the Pines* challenged me on many levels, particularly when exploring the theme of resilience in the face of isolation. The isolation Kathy feels—both emotional and physical—resonated deeply with me. Throughout filming, I found myself reflecting on how isolation can take many forms, not just the physical loneliness of being apart from others, but also the emotional isolation that comes from being misunderstood, or feeling like you're carrying the weight of the world alone.

There's a particular scene, the therapy session, that really brought this home for me. Kathy is so desperate for connection, for healing, but the more she reaches for it, the more elusive it becomes. That reminded me of how we sometimes try to fix things in our own lives—relationships, past mistakes—thinking we can push through on sheer willpower, only to find that some wounds can't be patched up so easily.

During filming, I did find myself personally challenged by this theme of isolation and resilience. It made me confront some of my own tendencies to withdraw during tough times, to try to shoulder everything myself. In some ways, it reminded me that true resilience doesn't always mean pushing through alone—it can also mean finding the strength to seek support, or admitting when something is too much to carry by yourself. Filming those moments of Kathy's vulnerability helped me realize that resilience comes in many forms, and sometimes the greatest strength is in recognizing when you need others.

V: There's an undeniable magnetism to your performances, Danielle. It makes it easy to forget that behind the character, there's a person going through their own evolution. When did you personally feel the shift from simply acting to truly embodying a character? Was it a gradual realization, or a pivotal moment that marked a turning point in your career?



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D: Kathy is such a layered and complex character, and building her inner world was an emotional journey for me. She's constantly torn between the desire to protect her daughter, Riley, and her own internal struggles that have been building over the years. One of the most touching scenes for me was when Kathy tries to have a heart-to-heart with Riley in her old room after she comes back home. Kathy is desperately trying to reconnect, but there's this unspoken distance between them, and that really encapsulates her internal conflict—the longing for closeness, but the fear of facing her own emotional wounds.

That scene really helped me ground Kathy's character. She's walking this fine line between being strong for her daughter and being vulnerable enough to acknowledge her own shortcomings. It was a powerful moment for me because, as Kathy, I had to find that balance of wanting to bridge the gap with Riley while also coming to terms with how much her past decisions have impacted their relationship.

To prepare for scenes like that, I had to dig deep into her emotional history—her strained marriage with John, her role as a mother, and the guilt and regret she carries. I realized that Kathy isn't just a woman reacting to her circumstances; she's someone who has slowly built walls around herself. The flashbacks were crucial in helping me understand the roots of that isolation, especially how the tension between her and John started to affect her relationship with Riley.

Exploring that dynamic pushed me into uncharted emotional territory. I found myself reflecting on how we, as people, often try to keep things together for our loved ones while neglecting our own emotional needs. Kathy's quiet resilience and her deep, albeit flawed, love for her daughter really resonated with me. That particular scene in Riley's room became a focal point for me in understanding Kathy's depth—she's trying so hard to fix things, but it's almost like she's grappling with the fact that some fractures may never fully heal.

V: Stepping into a character's world requires a certain vulnerability, doesn't it? It's like inviting the audience into a deeply personal space. How has courage shaped your approach to acting? Have there been particular roles or moments where you felt you had to be especially brave?

D: Stepping into a character's world absolutely requires vulnerability. Acting is like peeling away layers of yourself to expose something raw and real, not just for yourself but for the audience. You're inviting them into a deeply personal space where you explore emotions and experiences that can be uncomfortable, even painful. For me, courage has shaped my approach to acting in a very fundamental way. It's about being fearless enough to confront aspects of myself and the character that might be difficult to ac-

cess, and then having the strength to live in that space while performing. Courage means trusting that no matter how flawed or damaged a character might be, there's something true and human that people will connect to, even if they don't like what they see.

There have definitely been roles where I've had to be especially brave. I'm often drawn to flawed, damaged characters—people who aren't always likable, but who have rich inner lives and complex motivations. I've always been fascinated by what makes people tick, by the layers of humanity beneath the surface. I think there's something beautiful in telling the stories of people who are deeply flawed, because they often reflect parts of ourselves we try to hide or deny. One of the challenges of portraying such characters is that, as an actor, you have to commit fully, even knowing the audience might hate the person you're embodying.

There's a kind of bravery in embracing that, in saying, 'I'm going to tell this person's story as truthfully as possible, even if they're hard to sympathize with.' Some of my most rewarding experiences have been playing characters that others would find unlikeable, because it allows me to explore humanity in a deeper way. It takes courage to stand in that uncomfortable space and offer the audience a chance to see the world through the eyes of someone they might not want to understand. But I believe it's necessary—many beautiful stories require us to be brave enough to step into roles that challenge not only the audience's perceptions but our own.

V: As our conversation winds down, I'm curious about what truly matters to you when it comes to gaining respect in this industry. Is it a specific kind of recognition, or is there something deeper that resonates with you as an artist?

D: Ah, respect in the industry—it's an interesting thing. For me, it's really not about seeking recognition in the traditional sense. I do it for the love of the craft. If I can evoke an emotional response from the audience, if they find themselves completely immersed in the story and the characters—that's what matters to me. When someone says, 'I couldn't stop thinking about that character,' or 'That story really stayed with me,' that's the kind of recognition I aim for. It means the work has made an impact, and that's the most rewarding feeling.

But beyond that, I'm incredibly fortunate to work with such creative, passionate people. I love all the creatives I'm blessed to collaborate with, and honestly, I felt like I found my tribe once I started in this industry. Being surrounded by people who live and breathe storytelling, who share that same passion—it's what drives me. So, for me, respect comes from being part of that creative community and contributing something meaningful to the work we all love so much.



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