

EXCLUSIVE

Alyssa Milano is the central figure, standing against a vibrant red background with a deep tufted or quilted pattern. She is wearing a black, short-sleeved, V-neck dress that falls to her knees, paired with black high-heeled pumps. Her long, wavy brown hair is styled over her shoulders, and she has a soft, confident expression, looking directly at the camera. Her right hand is placed on her hip, and a ring is visible on her finger. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of her dress and the background.

In a League of Her Own

Alyssa Milano always brings her A-game --to her acting career,
her philanthropic endeavors, family life, & business

Words by Vanessa Pascale | Photo Credit ABC / Bob D'Amico

She is tiny.

My first thought as I greet Alyssa Milano when she walks into Jinky's Café in Studio City, California.

My second? *Wow, she looks so young.*

If I didn't know she is 41, I'd easily think she were in her late 20s, or early 30s. Her skin is aglow and flawless --I am in serious awe of it, and her classic girl-next-door beauty. [Disney animators used pictures of her to illustrate Ariel of *The Little Mermaid*.] We've watched her transform into a beguiling woman that men have been crushing on since her *Who's the Boss* years, a regular WCW pick (Woman Crush Wednesday) and a screen siren women have fantasized about being [my thoughts since *Fear* (1996) -- even Mark Wahlberg's character couldn't resist her].

What makes her even more attractive is that when I call her a "sex symbol" --she seems to not entirely believe that she holds such a title, viewing herself as the "eternal girlfriend, eternal bestie or eternal cousin" and as an accessible celebrity that people can talk to since they grew up with her. In those first few moments of conversing with her, as we settle into a corner booth and her Perrier is brought out by our waiter, I am charmed by her warm nature which makes me feel as though we could be besties.

Last summer, ABC premiered the salacious television show *Mistresses*, which follows four female friends' intricate and racy relationships. Alyssa plays Savannah "Savi" Davis, who in the first season has an extramarital affair, with her co-worker Dom, that she becomes pregnant from. The season finale ends with Savi, who was just in a car accident, flatlining. What can viewers expect from season two? "It's a good season for Savi because she's getting passed the repercussions of her actions from last season. She's finding some stability and happiness, and sort of a passion again for life. Last year, we didn't know if she was going to survive or not. We find her overcoming those physical struggles, but also having a new lease on life. She does settle into a relationship with one of the guys, can't tell you which one," she says reticently. "There's a lot of twists and turns and drama with the other girls, and a lot of eye candy, everything you could expect from *Mistresses*."

Alyssa signed on to *Mistresses* seven months after her son Milo's birth in 2011. "I was considering going back to work; I had taken the seven months off. The script came along and it just had a lot of elements I was looking for at this point in my life. Most importantly, it was an ensemble, which meant I was going to have time to spend with my boy," says Alyssa as she sips her Perrier. When on set, she always has her two-and-a-half-year-old with her, where he is fondly referred to as their little mascot. "He does the slate, does hair and makeup. I have a whole collection of pictures of him doing different jobs on the set. It's fun for him, and I feel so blessed as a mom to be able to do that, 'cause there aren't many jobs that allow that." With mom and dad (Alyssa's husband is Creative Artists Agency agent David Bugliari) working in showbiz, is Milo destined to join the family business?

"I'm trying to make behind-the-camera seem as attractive as humanly possible, hence the working the slate, makeup brushes and whatever else I can think of to make it look more fun." She laughs, then says seriously, "Whatever he decides to do, I will be supportive --I think that's probably the most important lesson I learned about being a mom, to encourage who your children innately are. You're not going to change them. If you try, they're just going to rebel against ya anyway. I feel like my job is to give him as many tools as possible to be successful in whatever he chooses to do." Her sage perspective likely born from her own confidence in knowing what she wanted to do in life at such a young age.

Alyssa has been in entertainment since she was 7-years-old and understands the importance of having the unyielding support of family early on. "My parents went into it knowing that it was a gamble. Their relationship is so strong and they always had their own sorta thing --that enabled me to grow up in this industry as normally as you possibly can." Alyssa managed to avoid the downfall that child stars like Lindsay Lohan and Justin Bieber have come to know too well. "I don't think 'celebrity' has anything to do with it. Coming from broken homes, hard childhoods... We hear about it more 'cause they're in the public eye, but I think that they would've taken the wrong path or different path, no matter what they did in life... Lindsay Lohan would've gone out partying every single night if she was in college, and never in the entertainment industry," Alyssa rationalizes.

Wild escapades have been reserved for Alyssa to play out onscreen, attributing the surplus of sexy roles, *Poison Ivy II*, *Fear*, *Melrose*... and

Comic (Book) Relief

Three years ago, Alyssa became “really obsessed” with the role social media was playing in all of the political uprisings throughout the world, and the hacking organization, Anonymous. “I thought, what if Anonymous was really just one guy, but using the front of a great organization to keep his cover? Who would that guy need to be? What would he do for a living? The only person I could think of that would have any sort of qualifications in that world is Jack Dorsey [inventor of Twitter and Milo’s Godfather]. Very philanthropic, he’s a coder, I thought, what if he started Twitter to actually affect this change throughout the world and sort of be the puppet master of the democracy? That would be pretty cool --hence the idea for this comic book, *Hacktivist*... It’s definitely a time stamp, I think, on where we are right now. Super, super fun. Creating a comic book is great because they are no budget constraints. It’s not like you’re doing a movie where they’re like, ‘No, that would be too expensive to do that helicopter chase.’”

Photo Credit: ABC/ Ron Tom



now *Mistresses*, to casting directors wanting to show her in a different light after the end of *Who's the Boss*. "I am very, very, very aware of the fact that I'm 41. I'm going to have to graduate from that, and I'm actually kinda looking forward to it. I'd like to be able to play the mom role at some point. I just feel like its evolution... It will be interesting to see what happens in the next ten years for me in my career. I always joke, you know those fuzzy filters? They cut to the fuzzy filtered lady. 'Cause she's older, they have to put a filter in. As soon as that fuzzy filter comes out, I am gone from this business! I am gone." She laughs.

When choosing acting roles, Alyssa looks for ones that allow her more time, not only to spend with her family, but for her many passions. "I've realized the importance of fulfillment in every area of my life. There's so much more to me as a human being that's important to me, like my work with UNICEF, my clothing line -- to not have time to dedicate to that stuff, I feel like I wouldn't really be fulfilling that aspect of who I am as a person. I think it's a much healthier, to me anyway, perspective in the industry, because if you focus too much on getting acting roles and that part of the industry, you're just always

going to be disappointed. If you have other things to focus on, you still feel like a productive human," Alyssa explains.

There is a specific event that catalyzed a significant change in the course of Alyssa's life. In 2000, Alyssa was on location in South Africa for three months to film a European mini-series. Working only two days a week, she had an abundance of free time that enabled her to really experience the area, and the chance to volunteer in a children's hospital. "When I came back, I had a very hard time assimilating the person that I was there with the person I was here, at the time I lived in Beverly Hills, drove fancy cars, and all of that. Basically I took inventory of my life and said, 'Ok, who do I want to be, and what's important to me at this point?' Sold the house, moved outside of the city on five-acres (her present residence), bought some horses, and just started volunteering places... It was an amazing trip. It was life changing," she recollects thoughtfully. "It was nice to feel like I found my place within, within myself really." Soon after, Alyssa contacted UNICEF to see if she could help in anyway. She was made a Goodwill Ambassador in 2003 and has traveled to Angola [two years after the

And she hits it outta the park!

A chilly day at Dodger Stadium and a lack of women's clothing options in the gift shop yielded the idea for Alyssa, a huge sports enthusiast, to create a women's sports apparel line. "Everything for women was pink and I was like, God, this is horrible, so I didn't buy anything. I'd rather freeze," she laughs. She pitched the idea to CAA [8 years ago], who arranged a meeting for her in New York. "There were maybe ten male executives, over the age of 40, whom I was trying to sell on this idea of a fashion-forward fan apparel line. My whole pitch was: You see guys on the street wearing their hats, t-shirts. You never see a girl, unless she's at a game, flying the colors, and it's because the stuff is crap. I don't know if they got the idea of the clothing line as much as they could hear how passionate I was about, not only that, but the sport in general." Today, her line Touch is carried by all of the leagues. "First moment I felt like a true business person, to actually have an idea that started out as you're eating nachos in the stand at Dodger Stadium." She laughs. "I get to go to all the games and I have a little boy, so he's been on the field at Citi Field, All-Star Game, and all that stuff. It's that childhood you kinda fantasize about giving your kid, and you're actually getting to do it. It's pretty cool. He loves it too."



Peace Treaty was signed], India [six months after the tsunami] and most recently, Kosovo.

Today, Alyssa lives about 45 minutes northwest of Los Angeles in a gated community with her family, four chickens, four horses, and her vegetable garden. "It's such a great escape. It's one of those places that you feel your blood pressure lower when you drive into the gate," she breathes wistfully. A smile spreads across her face as she touches

on her vegetable garden and how tending to it is a favorite pastime. "There's something just really cool about growing your own food, especially in this day and age where we don't know anything about our food supply, at all." You're a vegetarian? I ask. "Not anymore, not with this pregnancy. She likes meat. Can't help it." Alyssa accidentally uses 'she.' At the time of our interview, she was not revealing whether they were expecting a boy or girl. Six days later, on May 15th, Alyssa announced in a video posted on her website that they are expecting

"a little sweet baby girl." (If she hadn't revealed this, I would've kept her secret --that is what besties do.)

Dressed in a long black, three-quarter sleeve dress with a stylish army-green vest draped over it, and paired with black ankle booties, you can hardly tell that Alyssa is five months pregnant. "I really like being pregnant," she says thoughtfully. Pregnancy certainly suits her --she is what all women hope to look like when with child. She looks amazing, which I tell her. "Thank you. I feel very fortunate that I'm being given another shot at it 'cause 41, there's no telling whether or not I was going to get pregnant or if it was going to take a long time." She estimates that they were likely trying for six months before becoming pregnant. "I'll never forget, I was sitting in a meeting with my estate planner and he asked,

'If something happens to you and your husband is already deceased, who do you want to be in charge of your life support?' I just flashed to Milo being alone and not having someone to make those decisions with and I was like, 'Ok, we gotta get serious about this.'" Both David and Alyssa have dark eyes and hair, but their adorable little boy came out blond and blue-eyed, so she's curious to see what this little one is going to look like.

Our conversation turns to her sports apparel line, Touch (more on that later), during which she mentions that CAA (the agency David works for) helped connect her with the right people. I ask if that is when she met David. It's not. The very-much-in-love Alyssa treats me to their story. Together for seven years now, she tells me that they met in CAA's lobby while she was waiting for a meeting with her own agent. For the first year and a half they were just friends, until he came to her apartment [2006] to watch a pilot she had shot. "I opened the door. He brought me ice cream and he was in a suit," she girlishly reminisces, "and I was like, Oh shit, he's cute." We laugh.

Used to seeing David in a suit --that night was different. "But there's something about the..." We simultaneously say 'ice cream' and laugh. A man at your doorstep with ice cream, I sigh. "Very cute." Different light, I say. "Kinda true, right? Scary. I don't know what that says about me." The two got married in August of 2010. Her face lights up as she shares what she adores most about her husband. "He is one of the funniest people on the planet, all we do is giggle. And he's a great, great, great, great father, just seeing him with my son --like, the coolest thing, ever. And I'm so relieved 'cause that could've gone either way. You never know!" She laughs. "I mean you have an idea, but you just don't know. I have friends that were totally happily married until they started having kids, and then I don't know what happened. Yeah, it's scary. Phew." She breathes a sigh of relief.

The coming months have much in store for Alyssa. Last year, she hosted season three of *Project Runway: All Stars* and will return to New York at the end of June through August to shoot another season. Her graphic novel, comprised of all four issues of *Hacktivist*, plus bonus features, will be released in July. And this September, one of her greatest creations will be unveiled --her daughter. A very busy woman indeed, if she weren't in the entertainment industry, she says she'd likely be doing something totally different, like a pediatrician.

When *Who's the Boss* ended, Alyssa contemplated whether she wanted to do something else and decided that nothing was as exciting. "I remember the moment. I was doing *Fear*, it was a helicopter shot, the car chase scene where Mark is chasing me. They were trying to organize all the elements that go into that, which is a lot, as you can imagine: the helicopters gotta take off, the cameras gotta roll, the cars have gotta go. There's a walkie-talkie in the car 'cause I'm driving the car by myself and they're keeping me updated. I remember thinking as I was hearing, 'Ok, helicopter is taking off. Ok, let's go. Let's start, Alyssa!' I remember thinking, *This* is a cool job. That excitement, in those moments --which mind you, I wish there were more of those moments-- super exhilarating. Makes you feel like you're a part of something."

Gimme, Gimme More

Favorite TV show

"I love *True Detective*, *House of Cards*, *Game of Thrones*, *Sons of Anarchy*, anything you can binge watch on iTunes or Netflix. *Breaking Bad* --all of those sort of serial dramas that have beautiful performances, great stories and characters. I'm a big fan of the competition shows because I feel like it's probably the most real reality shows get 'cause when you're putting anybody in that sort of high-pressure cooker type of scenario, where there's a competition and dreams are made, the drama is real and I learned that from doing *Project Runway*. I also love *Shark Tank*."

Favorite Restaurant

"Funny, I can't even think of one right now. I love Black Market Liquor, it's delicious gourmet comfort food. I love Sugarfish for sushi. Nobu. My son's favorite restaurant is Benihana. He gets so excited about Benihana."

Best part of your job

"Which job? The acting? Honestly, that it enables me to do everything else that I love and do it comfortably, to be able to touch people and effect positive change in the world, to educate and empower by using my voice."

Fans would be surprised to find out...

"I don't think they'd be surprised by much. Uh, I like to bake. Um, my pinky toe is weird looking -- my husband says it looks like a talon," she laughs. "To this day, every time we go for an ultrasound he's looking for the talon. I wish I was taller," she laughs.

How tall would you want to be (she's 5'2")?

"5'6" would be nice, even 5'3" would be nice (laughs), who am I fooling? Um, if I wasn't in the public eye, I'd probably have a lot more piercings and tattoos."

Role that sticks out the most

"*Charmed* [Phoebe Halliwell] because at the time of my life I was 26-34, eight super formative years, and I just had a really freakin' good time. I mean, it was about witches, so there was no true way to take yourself too seriously. There's three of us, so it was like we all worked, all the time. Phoebe was a great character. She was funny and she sorta represented, to me, everything the audience was thinking at home, so she got to be as over the top as I wanted to make her." [Still close to the cast and crew, they all recently had a big reunion at Alyssa's house.] **ML**