



SWEET ESCAPE

Whether she's charming her way into hearts while on screen, making children smile with her philanthropy or simply throwing down in the kitchen, Lacey Chabert holds the recipe for sweet success

Words by Vanessa Pascale • Photo credit: Tyler Shields

It's a warm, sun-shiny day on Sunset Boulevard, where I find Lacey Chabert patiently sitting at a table (ten minutes ahead of our set meeting time) sipping an iced coffee on the outdoor patio of The Coffee Bean. Prior to my arriving, Lacey sends me a text message to let me know that she's wearing a pink scarf and green purse—so I can find her. She is—stylishly adorned over dark jeans and a tunic, complemented by large, mirrored sunglasses.

As I pull up a chair, Lacey jokes about our meeting this way feeling like a blind date. We laugh. I skip picking up my favorite drink (mochachino) as the line inside is too long and the drink boasts as many calories as a dessert. I comment that cupcakes are much more satisfying, which instantaneously sparks a conversation about our obsession with **Sprinkles Cupcakes**.

"I love it! Their strawberry cupcakes are the best dessert ever, and I'm a baker!" Lacey gushes. "Do yourself a favor and have strawberry next time. I would only eat the red velvet and black and white, and I just happened to get a strawberry one day and was hooked," she exuberantly shares. (I've recently had the pleasure of trying the strawberry and can attest that Lacey is right. The frosting is perfectly sweetened. It is delicious.)

With visions of cupcakes still dancing in our heads, Lacey gets into her recent undertakings. "I just finished an independent film called, **Telling of the Shoes**, which was a drama we shot in six days. I've never been a part of such an ambitious project before," Lacey explains about the film, whose dramatic plot unfolds at a Manhattan dinner party of six guests. Early last year, Lacey starred in the romantic comedy **Slightly Single in L.A.** (still awaiting release), while the web series, **Off Season**, she filmed with **Eliza Dushku** and **Rick Fox** will debut this fall via internet. "I play a sports reporter, so I was doing what you're doing," she says referring to my job, "which was really fun. My character is basically a woman in a man's world."

Her distinct, confectionary-sweet voice has been used in several animations: **The Wild Thornberrys Movie** and series, **Anastasia**, **The Lion King II...** and as the original voice of **Family Guy's** Meg Griffin (before Mila Kunis took over). This season Lacey lends her vocals to **Jonah Hill's** new primetime series with FOX, **Allen Gregory**. "Jonah Hill is producing and starring in it. It's really, really fun to work on. He's so funny. **Will Forte** is hilarious, he's in it and a bunch of people from **Saturday Night Live**—to be in a room like that, when we do the read-throughs, they just start pitching ideas and jokes. Most of the time, they're completely brilliant and if it doesn't work, they just move onto another idea. It's such a fearless way they attack creating these episodes. It's really, really inspiring to be around," she raves.

Lacey has another project in the works, but was unable to comment on it—much. "I'm literally not even allowed to say the title—it's a comic book thing," she laughs. "Got myself there," she stops herself. Quiet on that subject, she does share her desire to work a bit behind-the-scenes. "I really want to start being more involved in producing material from the ground up. I've optioned a few scripts and I'm always looking to option novels. I haven't had anything come to fruition, where it's made it to the screen yet, but I'm trying my hand in that as well," she says.

Always up for a challenge, Lacey has been pushing herself to surpass boundaries in this industry since she was just 7-years-old.

The natural performer and songstress grew up singing in church, school plays, even took lessons, which landed her on **Star Search**. Even though she lost, the minor setback didn't impede Lacey's drive. Her family moved her to New York, where she continued to sparkle in the limelight as Bianca on the soap opera **All My Children** and on Broadway's **Les Misérables** as Cosette for three years. Lacey's passion helped her tackle the toughest of feats, including the "meaty" role of Gavroche, which she understudied, but hadn't finished learning the choreography for before being asked to take the stage as the male character on her 10th birthday.

"I just remember that feeling, where I couldn't have articulated this as a kid because I didn't understand it; I knew I was just so excited to perform. I realized this is such an exciting opportunity and I went and did it." With full support from the cast, and her tenacious personality, Lacey shined. "When it came curtain call, I ripped off my hat and my hair came out and they're like, 'It's a girl!'" she remembers. "As a kid you're so fearless. I was a little nervous, but you don't have that self-judgment... I find myself trying to get back, even in my work now as an adult, taking the judgment out of it and doing it for the love of it."

Lacey has starred in a number of films, including, **Ghosts of Girlfriends Past**, **Black Christmas**, **Not Another Teen Movie...** over her twenty years in show business. Her most notable characters

"Sometimes I'm a part of things that are really thought-provoking and interesting. And sometimes it's more for the entertainment factor, but I think that's just as important because people go to the movies and sometimes they just want to escape and be made to laugh. I think that's important, especially with everything our country is going through. It's a great way to take people's minds off of more serious subjects."

are Claudia Salinger on FOX's hit drama **Party of Five** and Gretchen Wieners from the 2004 cult classic, **Mean Girls**, which won the 2005 MTV Movie Award "Best On-Screen Team", shared with co-stars: **Lindsay Lohan**, **Rachel McAdams** and **Amanda Seyfried**. Lacey was the first and *only* choice to play the fictitious heir to the Toaster Strudel fortune. "I didn't really know that till after the fact. On paper the description of that character really didn't fit me *at all*, like physically what I thought they were looking for. It was kind of one of those things where I thought, *I don't really think I have a shot at this, but I think it's so funny. I just want to go in and give it a try*. Then I got the job. It just goes to show, you never know."

The popular movie continues to garner attention for Lacey. "I probably get stopped almost once a day, someone talking about that movie or being like, 'Oh, you're so fetch,'" she laughs about her character-associated tagline. "Last year I was really sick, had the flu... and I went to the pharmacy. I go up to the counter and the guy is like, 'Aww—you don't look very fetch.' (She laughs.) I was like, 'I don't feel it.' It's really fun to play a character and to be a part of a project that influences so many people and is memorable. Anyone can relate to that high school experience, whether you're in high school, college, whether you're just beyond all that in the real world, it's still a way that women relate to each other," says Lacey.

Grateful for a thriving career, Lacey makes it a point to give back however she can. She recently developed the charity **Project Giving Tree** (projectgivingtree.org) along with Tara Mercurio, whom she met and befriended while working on **Daddy Day Care**. "We wanted to do charitable things in our area and wanted to take more initiative." The challenge they met was figuring out where to direct their efforts when there are so many foundations that need help. "We were thinking, if there was one place where people could come and donate their time and money, I feel that people would do more than they're doing because they don't know where to go or start."

While they were forming PGT, their paths crossed with **The Angel 34 Foundation** (Angel34.org) founded by Doug Sheriff, who lost his

PEOPLE



Mean Girls

15-year-old daughter Nicole to cancer. Angel 34's mission is to fulfill Nicole's Wish List, which she requested be carried out after she passed away. Wanting to assist, PGT took on Angel 34 as their first assignment. On the list was to stock every children's cancer facility in the country (160 total) with ICEE machines. "During chemo therapy the actual ICEE is the only thing that is really soothing and they are able to keep down. It's

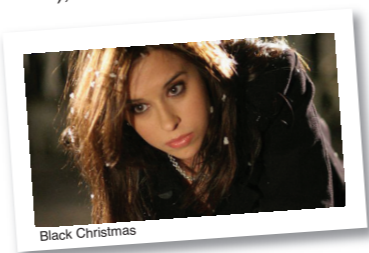
\$10,000 for a machine. We've installed four machines now and were able to get enough donations to do that." When a machine is installed, a "Style Your Sole" party is thrown for the children, who receive and decorate TOMS shoes.

"We were so inspired by TOMS and what they do, since every time you buy a pair of their shoes, they give another new pair to a child in need. We've been working with them as well. It's a big undertaking. We're still trying to stay focused and establish our own goals... We just want to help people." Lacey is also continuing her support with a few other foundations that help people in El Salvador. Since attending The City of Hope Hospital event, Lacey has actively sought out how she can make a significant difference. "I went to the event excited that *hopefully, we can help some kids today* and I left realizing that my life had been impacted just as much or more..." Children are very dear to Lacey's heart, to the point that if she wasn't an actress she may have become a teacher because of her fondness for working with them.

The Southern beauty recently returned to her hometown in Mississippi for one of her favorite kids, her 10-year-old nephew, Max, when his class presented her with an award "for being a

famous Mississippian" —from the school that Lacey attended too. "It meant a lot to me coming from my sister's child..." The great honor landed Lacey and Max on the front page of the newspaper, which Lacey thought would thrill Max, since he too aspires to join her line of work. "He calls me and goes, 'Ok, Aunt Lacey, you got me the paper, but now you gotta get me a movie.' I was like, 'Whoa, slow down,'" she laughs. "He has such an outgoing, confident personality; I could totally see him being successful in this business..."

Especially close to her family (two sisters: 35 and 32 and a brother, 27), Lacey is looking forward to spending her upcoming 29th birthday (September 30) with her sisters. "We don't get to see each as often (since her family has moved back to the south from Los Angeles, where she currently resides), so getting together for birthdays and holidays has become really important. I'm not sure what we're going to do. We went to Vegas a couple of years ago and that was really fun..., so maybe we'll do that again." Expect there to be lots of cupcakes as indicated early on in our conversation, they are her favorite.



Black Christmas

The bona fide baker and fab foodie finds herself most relaxed when she's whipping up deliciousness in the kitchen. "My dad is from Louisiana, so he always cooked Cajun food growing up, so I love to cook. I've taken a lot of cooking classes and learned a lot just from him —making gumbo, that's a specialty of mine. Now, I make peach cobbler, from scratch and to top it off, I make homemade vanilla bean ice cream..." A fan of the cooking channels and The Food Network, her favorite chefs are **Nigella Lawson** ("She just makes it look so sexy and exciting while she's cooking.") and **Bobby Flay**. "I want to be on *Throwdown! with Bobby Flay* and compete against him making my peach cobbler," she says excitedly. Sounds like Bobby has a challenge to address. Considering Lacey's track record, I know she'll rise to the occasion. **ML**

FALL TV

"My favorite show of all time was *Lost*. I'm like still sad that it's over. I love *30 Rock*. I got to work with Tina Fey on *Mean Girls* —I've been a fan of hers ever since. She's just so funny. I love that show. And I'm guilty of watching a bit of reality TV (she laughs). I'm glad the Kardashians are back. Whatever your opinion is on Kim Kardashian, you have to admire the fact that she has built an empire for herself. It's pretty impressive. And I have two sisters, so I can relate to the sister relationships."

STYLE

"I'm pretty relaxed. I like to be comfortable. If I'm wearing a simple outfit that's just jeans and a T-shirt, I always try and have a great bag or put on some jewelry —something to dress it up a little bit. But Trina Turk, I was in there the other day and I looked at their Fall book and it's the most amazing clothing. It's all very 60s-inspired. I love that stuff, lots of tweed and plaid."

MOST BIZARRE / OR INTERESTING JOB PERK

"That's such a good question, you've totally stumped me. I guess, not having to wait in line for certain things. On one hand it's really nice, but then at the same time you kind of get ugly stares from people, so I always feel like, should I just wait? I kind of feel guilty and bad so I usually end up deciding to just wait like everyone else (she laughs). I don't want people to hate me. Or getting stuff for free, who doesn't want to try beauty products or have a new pair of shoes

without having to pay for it? It's every girl's dream, I think, to receive those kinds of gift. At the same time, it feels like really just backwards and not right, but I haven't sent those shoes back, so..."

COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

"Probably my iPhone (she laughs). I hate to stay that. I'm being so cliché. I left my phone home the other day and I was like, I couldn't find a pay phone, and if there was a pay phone I couldn't find a quarter. Is it even a quarter to use the pay phone now-a-days? I think it's like 45 cents. I've become so dependent on my iPhone, because I have my appointments, the information, the addresses, Mapquest, my iPod's in there, I feel like my life is organized by my phone. It's kind of scary."

FAVE CHICK FLICK

"If I'm telling the truth, it's *P.S. I Love You*. It's a sad one. I have probably seen that movie 15 times. It's always my go-to movie. I love the soundtrack in it. I love Hillary Swank. I love Gerard Butler. It's such a moving story."

SEX SYMBOL

The *Maxim* January 2007 cover girl has made their **Hot 100 List** numerous times, how does she feel about this honor? "Um, I get embarrassed (she laughs). It's just, you know, how many women go around looking at themselves in the mirror going, 'Oh, yeah!?' I mean it's very flattering and I'm very grateful for it but, at the same time it kind of feels like a part I'm playing. I don't think of myself in that way."