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by Sylvia Karcz

Actress Jill Flint of the popular new TV series, *Royal Pains*, has this one recurring dream in which she finds herself being chased by flesh-eating zombies and aliens. "The dream starts out really scary, but then I realize I'm dreaming, and I become a ninja," she says. "And I fight zombies. It's like a video game. I start doing things I normally wouldn't be able to do."

And while this dream of hers could, in reality, symbolize many different things, there's something about Ms. Flint that makes it quite easy to jump to the conclusion that these strong, butt-kicking qualities she displays in her dream state – and very often, on the screen – are anything but imaginary.

Raised in a small, one-stoptlight town in New York State, where people never lock their doors, everybody knows everyone's car, and where a child's teacher is apt to be the same as their parent's teacher, to some, Jill may appear to serve as the prototypical image of a small-town girl venturing off to, well, the big city. But Jill is not your typical Hollywood success story. From moving to New York City by herself as a teenager, to traveling all corners of the world – climbing to the top of Mayan ruins in Mexico, hiking along cliffs in South Africa, and traversing amidst lions on an African safari, for starters – Jill is blessed with an insatiable curiosity that fuels her appetite for both adventure and challenge. Combined with a determined spirit, it's a fearless mentality of tackling the unknown – one she credits to her strong family support system – that has brought her so many opportunities.

"When I first moved to New York, I was as green as a blade of grass, which made me a very trusting person. But it [also] gave me a sense of security that I feel very blessed to have – that if anything ever happened, I know I can go home," she says of her upbringing. "It's kind of given me the courage, I guess, to take off and go to the city at 17, it gave me the courage to go off exploring the world and make some mistakes – because I always knew it was going to be alright. I don't think a lot of people have that."

Not that it all came easy, of course. "It wasn't something that I ever thought I could really do [...]" she says about her decision to explore a career as an actor in her early twenties. "It took me a long time to bite the bullet and go for it [...]" I finally just decided it's now or never. I have to take classes, I have to do this. Otherwise I'll lose out on something that could have been great."

Despite getting somewhat of a "late start," however, Jill has nonetheless already managed to add a slew of roles to her name in the past few years, both in feature films, like *Cadillac Records*, *The Women*, and *Garden State*, and TV shows, such as *The Good Wife*, *Gossip Girl*, and *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*. And even though she readily admits acting is not something that comes naturally,

and that, in many ways, "it's all a work in progress," from watching her in her current role as Jill Casey in *Royal Pains* – a role that has her playing a fierce and compassionate administrator of a local Hamptons hospital, and one that shares a similar small-town upbringing – it's very evident that the hard work is definitely paying off.

"I'm in this position in my life where I've never been before. It's my first big show, I'm doing a lot of things for the first time [...] and it's challenging at first," she says. "[But even though] it takes a few moments to realize it, I got it, I can do this [...]" It's one hell of an adventure, that's for sure."

And the fact she is able to partake in a show which hits upon some very real issues – like the balance of power, money, and well, health care – only makes the role that much more exciting." Last season, when we were dealing with the whole health care debate, and the climate of things changing, I think it's important [...]" There are so many people out there with special needs and things that need to be met that are not being met," she says.

"I think it's an interesting script, especially when it's being juxtaposed against the Hamptons," she continues about the premise of *Royal Pains*. "[We're] dealing with a very elite crowd of people with tons of money [...] while there are other people who struggle to make ends meet. And they both live in a very small area. It's a very interesting thing, and I think that it gives the show some heart, the fact that they're aware of the other side of the coin."

It's no surprise, then, that with her pragmatic understanding of modern times and her natural affinity toward people and places in various walks of life, Jill is the last person to tolerate ignorance and blatant disregard, especially when it comes to our environment. "I saw a woman take an empty bottle and throw it right into someone's front yard. It infuriated me so much, I said something to her. I have a big problem with litter," she says. "People [should be] more aware of how they consume, what their consumerism does to them and does to their environment [...]" If you give people a better environment – have them take pride in their environment – and offer them an education, I think it changes things."

And while she may not necessarily have any specific route in mind as she treks through her life journey, in a way, it doesn't matter in the least. Jill Flint's determined, "keep on, keepin' on" kind of spirit is bound to continue catapulting her to new places, surpassing both her own, and her audience's, expectations. And it can't be more evident than by, well, this one thing she always does. "When I run, I race people, I can't help myself. I see someone up ahead of me and I have to beat them. And it's kind of ridiculous, but if I feel like there's someone coming up behind me, I push it. I won't let people pass me."

photography by Michael Tarnmaro  
stylist Marc Sifuentes  
hair Brian Magallones @ exclusive artists  
makeup Kim Bower @ exclusive artists