

Ex-math geek Dawson finally comfortable with chosen profession

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Sun Media

LOS ANGELES — After resisting it for half her life, Rosario Dawson concedes she'll probably stick with acting after all.

That might seem an odd admission from someone who's worked steadily since her debut in 1995's *Kids*.

But Dawson, who turns 30 this year, says acting was a career she never pursued or even really desired.

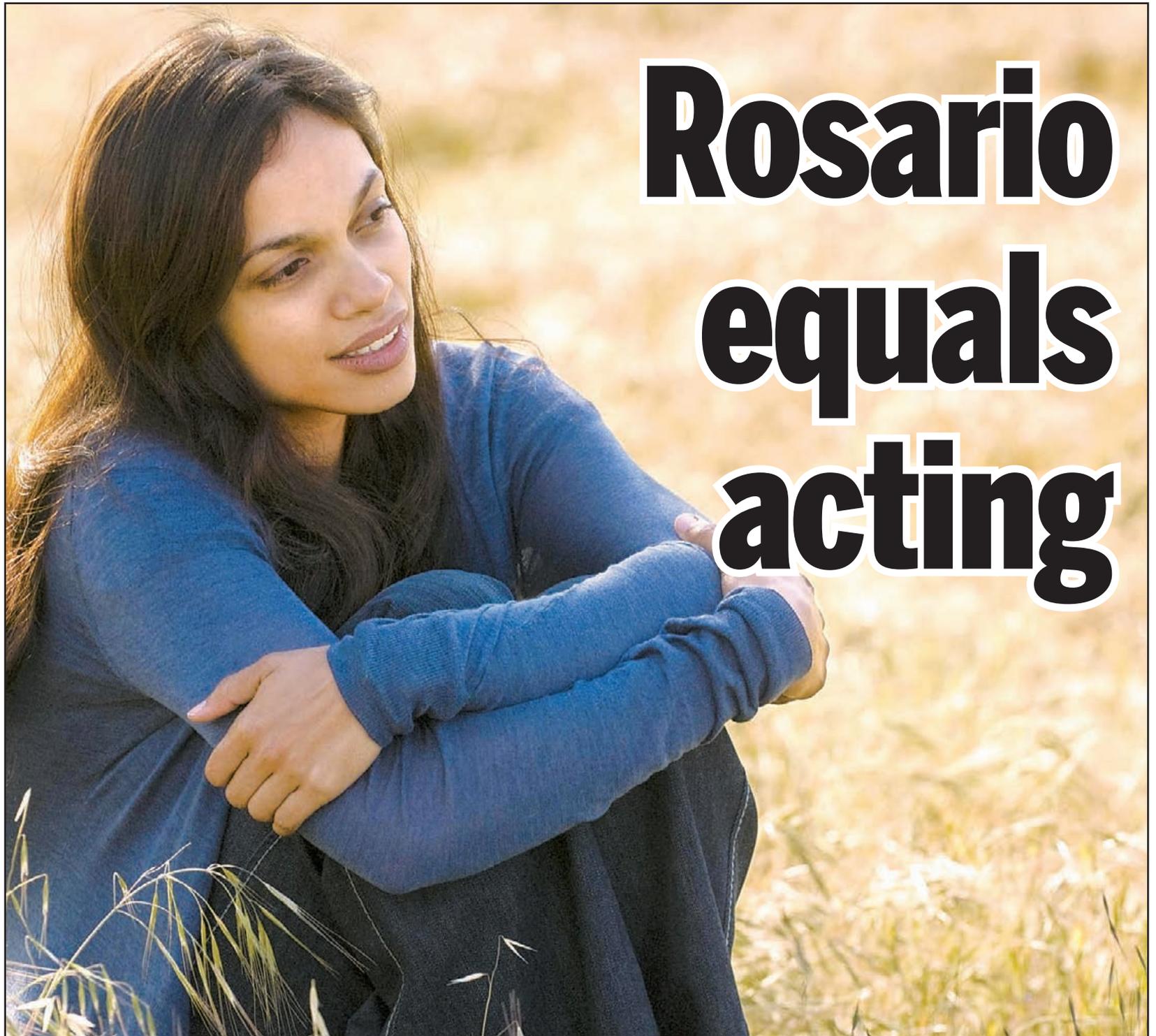
"In high school, I really got into biology and math. I wanted to be a marine biologist. I never studied acting. I took one summer class for theatre, which I hated. There were all these kids there who wanted to be actors; they all had their headshots and resumes. It seemed like a world I did not want to be part of. I was so much more into calculus."

Dawson was raised on Manhattan's Lower East Side, where her parents — her father a construction worker, her mother a plumber and performer — squatted, installing water and electricity in the abandoned apartment Dawson grew up in. She now says that bohemian lifestyle was one of the reasons she didn't want to become an actor.

Frustrated

"I thought I was dooming myself to being poor for the rest of my life, and frustrated. My family, they're all incredible artists, but they're all frustrated. I didn't want to be unhappy. For a long time, I thought I made the wrong decision not going to college."

But after a decade in which she's appeared in such films as *Alexander*, *Men in Black II*, *Eagle Eye*, *Rent*, *The 25th Hour*, *Clerks II* and *Death Proof*, she now says, "For the first time, I feel comfortable calling myself an actor. For the past 10 years, I've thought this is just something I'm doing until I do something else more respectable and make an honest living. I've just been



Rosario equals acting

enjoying travelling and meeting people and telling great stories and trying to be empathetic in other people's shoes. I've always had this desire to go back to school, to go to college and find out who I am because it's been ingrained in me that that's how you find out who you are, in college.

"But along the way, I've kind of recognized that I've gone through a different kind of college and my teachers have been Spike Lee and Oliver Stone ... and really great actors, from Colin Farrell to Will Smith twice. So it's not too shabby of a school I've been going to."

"I finally feel like the Apollo hook isn't going to pull me out of the room and I'm going to be okay. I'm always anxious about being in this industry but I feel a lot more comfortable about where I am in my life."

Dawson's currently starring in the drama *Seven Pounds*, in which she plays a woman in dire need of a heart transplant who falls for a mysterious IRS

agent played by Will Smith.

How was it to shoot a love scene with the usually gregarious Smith?

"Will is shockingly shy about intimacy with strangers. He pushed our kissing scenes for weeks, to the point where I was getting nervous about my breath. 'It's not that bad — we don't totally have to do tongue.' It was awkward at a point ... Everyone could tell he was really, really nervous so I was very gentle."

Production

Next up for Dawson is a production of a different sort: Her 30th birthday in May.

"Thirty's the new wedding," she says, laughing. "You gotta go big on 30. I feel good about it."

Unlike most performers, she actually welcomes growing older. "Because I'm getting older I can play characters like (her *Seven Pounds* character) Emily. I'm pretty happy to be done with my insecure 20s."

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Nerdiness comes naturally to Dawson

LOS ANGELES — Because we don't know Klingon, we'll spell it out in English: Rosario Dawson is a comics-adoring, Star Trek-worshipping geek.

This may not come as a revelation if you've followed Dawson's choices in recent years — co-creating the 2006 comic series *Occult Crimes Taskforce*, signing on for Frank Miller's *Sin City* — but what may be the depth of her, well, nerdiness.

Whether she's articulating how each cinematic Batman through the decades has reflected the comics as well as the political climate of the time,



Dawson in 2005's *Sin City*.

or raving about the trailer for May's *Trek* reboot, she's the real deal.

"As a kid, I was always around comics; my uncle is a comic-book artist. He would keep them in plastic; there was this sacred ritual

of reading comics that was so important.

"I can't believe that now that's translated to a compliment about my persona. I'm like, 'Really?' It's something I bond with my brother about. There's definitely something in the blood

"My grandmother used to collect comics when she was younger, actually, and her mother threw out all her originals which is awful because she had the first *Superman*. I still cry about that sometimes. That's so messed up. That could've put me through college."

— Kevin Williamson