



PROFILE: Dayna Grant

STUNT PERFORMER

Dayna Grant isn't your typical mom. For her, a day might involve

getting dragged under a monster truck, thrown off a balcony, or attacked by a gang of angry swordsmen.

She wouldn't have it any other way.

Dayna is an award-winning stuntwoman. She's thrilled audiences for two decades with her work in numerous movies and television shows, including *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch*

“A DAY MIGHT INVOLVE GETTING DRAGGED UNDER A MONSTER TRUCK...”

and the Wardrobe; Power Rangers; King Kong; and Xena: Warrior Princess.

Not that you'd recognize her.

Dayna steps in when it's too dangerous for an actress to do part of her role—and we're not supposed to notice when that happens. Dayna wears an identical costume as the actress, and the director makes sure not to show her face for too long.

“I'm there ideally to make my actress look as good as possible,” she says.

Sometimes that means teaching the actress to fake a punch. But most of the time, it means Dayna takes over the risky parts.

Leaping from a building while on fire? Her all-time favorite stunt. (She wears a fireproof suit.) Flying through the air on a wire? She loves it. She'll gallop through a dark forest on horseback or do back flips during a kung fu fight. Nothing gets to her.

She has the knowledge, skills, and experience to do the stunt work—and to do it safely. It comes from years of training and a deep understanding of how human bodies are built and what they can do.

Sometimes she'll need to learn a new skill, like archery or driving a chariot. But that's part of what makes the work exciting.

“The reason I love stunts is that every day is different,”

she says. “You never know what you're going to get.”

A NATURAL

Dayna grew up on horseback. Before she could walk, she rode. Her dad made her a special saddle that held her securely on the horse's back. Even if she fell asleep, she couldn't fall off!

He didn't only teach her to ride. He also taught her that if you fall off a horse, you get right back on. That lesson—be tough and never give up—helped her become one of the top stunt performers in the world.

Like all stunt performers 20 years ago, Dayna learned

on the job. Unlike now, stunts were rarely rehearsed before filming back then. She got hurt sometimes, but she learned how to get it right.

“Before doing any stunt, I'll visualize it,” she says. “A lot of the times we only get one, maybe two shots at it. So we don't want to muck it up.”

When she was 18 years old, she auditioned for the TV show *Xena: Warrior Princess*, which was filmed in New Zealand, her home country. She hardly knew anything about stunt work, but she got the job. One success followed another, and she landed bigger roles on television and movies.

The work can be grueling. She may be away from home for six to nine months on a film. But she's managed to bring her family with her—to Hungary, Namibia, and England—so she could spend her days off with her kids.

Dayna remembers one day when her son came home from school and told her, “‘I've just realized you're not a normal mum. You jump off buildings and set yourself on fire.’ He had thought that was normal.”

Normal or not, Dayna wouldn't trade her job for any other. It's tough to break into stunt work, but the reward is worth all the hard knocks on the path to success, she says. “You just get back on the horse again and just keep going.”