

# ELYSIAN'S 22 Questions with Karen Strassman

## **Q. What is one thing you can't live without?**

*A: Real heart-to-heart human connection. Whether it's with a lifelong friend or a stranger in a grocery store.*

## **Q. Why is it important for women to support women?**

*A: The old resistance towards supporting another woman (or another human being for that matter) comes from a mindset of fear. It's that old programming that someone else's gain will be our loss. Supporting another woman or person's success is not only supporting that one person to rise and shine, but it's sending a message of trust, abundance, and celebration out to the world. I'd like to believe that the days of being catty and competitive towards each other are numbered. As we continue to celebrate the unique beauty and talents of each human being, we will all be living proof that we each have our own path, and that supporting another person's path will only enhance our own. We all rise together. Truly.*

## **Q. If you could spend the day with anyone living or dead, who would it be and why?**

*A: Helen Keller. I had the honor of playing Helen Keller as a child when I was 13 in a beautiful production of The Miracle Worker in Washington D.C. I remember I would tear through my homework to arrive at play rehearsals early and spend any extra time blindfolded with earplugs and exploring the stage and theater to absorb what it must be like to be blind and deaf. This beautiful play was the vehicle that plummeted me into a never-ending love and fascination with acting and the experience of deep empathy and*

*connection one can access through the exploration of another human soul. I have felt a strong kinship with Helen Keller ever since, and I have marveled at and her depth of wisdom, courage and connection with a deeper reality in this world. What she accomplished despite her seeming handicaps was extraordinary, and I believe she had a window into different experiences of reality that most of us don't access as readily.*

**Q. What has been the most rewarding project of your career?**

*A: I've had the pleasure to work on so many wonderful shows like Bosch, Preacher, Weeds, Creepshow, and Silicon Valley with quite a number of really fulfilling live theatrical experiences. Not to mention all the endless hours spent in recording booths all over the world working on myriads of animated projects on hundreds of big title video games over the years. My most rewarding experiences as a performer/entertainer have been the times spent curled up on the sofa with my nieces and nephew reading books and making up stories together and hearing them say, " Tell us another story Auntie Karen... and don't forget to do all the different voices!!"*

**Q. When were you happiest?**

*A: Some of my happiest moments in life are the quiet meditative morning swims in the pool or even better, a lake or the ocean. Being on a TV or film set with a group of complete strangers all working together in focused, playful, and respectful collaboration to create magic. Recently the hours spent in my current acting class with Robert Colt exploring scenes from movies, TV, and classical theatre without any pressure to be good or arriving at any result except to free-fall into the experience of simply daring to be in the truth of each moment, and to be led from one present moment to the next through the connection of my heart and the human experience between myself and another human being have been amazing.*

**Q. What is the worst job you've done?**

*A: I did an on-camera commercial for the opening of Space Mountain in Disneyland Paris in the early '90s. The shoot was from 11pm to 7am while the park was closed. It was in the dead of winter and they dressed us in summer clothes without offering anything to cover us while we waited for several hours out in the cold while they were working some problems they weren't yet able to fix. We were told the ride wasn't open to the public yet because certain safety features hadn't been installed and the ride shook more than it was supposed to. They finally brought us in at 3am to wolf down a hot meal and then pulled us away in the middle of eating because the ride was finally ready. Several people threw up their food, and we rode that roller coaster over and over that night until 7am in freezing temperatures. One could say they didn't take very good care of their actors that night. I ended up getting pneumonia from the experience. Sometimes show biz isn't quite as glamorous as it's cracked up to be.*

**Q. Where is one place in the world you would love to visit next?**

*A: I'd like to explore some of the ancient places on the planet like Egypt, places in the Amazon, and Bolivia. I've never been to southeast Asia, and I've always wanted to go to Bali. I also miss my family back in Denmark.*

**Q. How do you relax?**

*A: My favorite thing to do to relax and also recharge is swimming. It's so quiet under water and it gives me time and space away from the world to just breathe, move, meditate, work through problems and emotions, release nervous energy, and retreat for a while. I love just being near water anywhere in the world whether it's walking on the beach, sitting on a dock gently swaying above the waves with my feet in the water, or out in the middle of a lake on a boat. I find swimming in the rain particularly magical.*

**Q. What is your daily skincare routine?**

*A: Face wash, toner, serum, and moisturize with a mask once a week or so when I remember to do it.*

**Q. What is your most cherished beauty product?**

*A: I love Kiehl's Vitamin C Serum (I like a lot of Kiehl's face care line) and I also love pure frankincense oil.*

**Q. Favorite accessory and why?**

*A: Wearing heels always makes me feel sexy. I have 16 years of training walking in them while living in Paris.*

**Q. What is your favorite high end brand to splurge on?**

*A: Herve Léger. I love the way his dresses fit my small frame like a glove.*

**Q. What is the biggest misconception about your profession?**

*A: That it is glamorous and we all make a lot of money. Actors deal with rejection day in and day out. We are constantly being judged, sized-up, and put in a box. The public hears about our successes, but rarely all the brutal rejection. We risk daring to be vulnerable, raw, honest, and self-revealing on a daily basis.*

**Q. Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**

*A: Now that I live in Los Angeles, I admit to having caught the west coast social disease of over-using superlatives. In this part of the world, everything everyday has become awesome, incredible and amazing. A dear friend who isn't from this country recently pointed out to me that this overuse really dilutes our language and expression. Not everything is*

*actually that amazing or incredible. Not every person we come into contact with is actually truly brilliant, and in this overuse as a culture we have really lost the ability to exercise discernment. The delineation of true brilliance and high quality gets lost in the ocean of mediocrity awarded with equal exuberant praise. I see too that in the overly enthusiastic abuse of all these adjectives, one's opinion can become less respected. Sometimes a conversation can just be an interesting conversation, or a meal can simply be a good meal.*

**Q. What trait do you most admire in others?**

*A: People who dare to be unapologetically and authentically themselves.*

**Q. Who would play you in the film of your life?**

*A: I think there are more important stories to tell about more influential people than myself.*

**Q. How would you like to be remembered?**

*A: It is my hope that people might remember feeling really understood, heard, and truly seen in our time spent together, and in that remembrance for them to be able to touch back into that feeling for themselves and be able to give it to others.*

**Q. Can you tell us about Creepshow and what was it like to work with Stephen King?**

*A: I actually didn't get to work with Stephen King. He only penned a few of the episodes in the series, and my deliciously disturbing episode was written by John Esposito. But I did get to work with director John Harrison, who was involved in the original Creepshow in the '80s and directed the original Tales from the Darkside and knows this kind of horror intimately.*

*Between working with John and Greg Nicotero, other geniuses of horror, the shoot was just incredibly gruesomely fun. We shot several nights in a row up until 4am and I remember sitting there next to David Arquette, who is so much fun, waiting for the next take, completely covered in blood, dirt and zombie goo and feeling like a kid at Disneyland just never wanting to leave.*

**Q. Who's a director or actor that you would love to work with?**

*A: There are a lot of people I'd love to work with, but let's start with this list of inspiring women directors: Lisa Cholodenko, Marielle Heller, Greta Gerwig, Chinonye Chukwu, Ava DuVernay, Josephine Mackerras, Dolly Wells, Roxann Dawson, and Mary Lou Belli.*

**Q. What is the best piece of advice that you have been given?**

*A: There are so many to choose from, but they all sort of wrap around the idea that real life happens in each moment. As a creator, the magic happens and unfolds in each present moment. At its most beautiful, life and all art come to life in an unpredictable freefall. If we dare and trust life enough to bring ourselves entirely to each moment, without knowing, strategizing, pre-planning, or contracting, life will take us on its most real, raw, and glorious ride. It offers us a deeper connection to something bigger, beautiful, intricately detailed, and incredibly alive.*

**Q. Is there a specific film or actor that inspired you to act?**

*A: I have wanted to act ever since I can remember. Making up plays in our basement as early as 4 or 5 years old (which I really don't know where that all came from). My favorite TV show when I was growing up was Little House on the Prairie. I loved those stories, and I used to dream of being a child actor like Melissa Gilbert and playing impactful young characters like*

*Laura Ingalls Wilder.*

**Q. What projects do you have coming up on the horizon?**

*A: I just shot four different TV shows this fall that I can't yet talk about, as well as some exciting video games and fun cartoons. I'm also currently working as a dialect coach on 2 different TV series. I'll be performing in a delightful, sexy new play called Slap Kiss Kill in Los Angeles this Spring, and have a lead role in Tom Six's bold new film The Onania Club, to be released sometime this year.*

**Photographer:** Birdie Thompson

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