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{TheGIRL}

Leader of the pack

House Of Cards star
Kate Mara reveals her hand

Here's a bet. When Netflix's political thriller *House Of Cards* dominated water-cooler conversations this time last year, you repeatedly heard one piece of trivia about its dynamic star, Kate Mara: "Her younger sister is the *Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*!" But although Kate and Rooney are hardly doppelgängers, it shouldn't have been such a revelation. They share the same almond eyes, they're both exactly 5ft 3ins tall – and there's a certain Mara family drive. "Since I was nine years old I knew exactly what I wanted to do," says Kate. "I knew I wanted to be an actor and I was very, very focused." Growing up, the sisters would play *Annie* together. Fast-forward to 2010 and they were co-starring in Best Picture nominees: *127 Hours* for Kate, *The Social Network* for Rooney. "That kind of stuff doesn't get old."

So when it comes to her *House Of Cards* character, the "super-ballsy" journalist Zoe Barnes who does whatever it takes to get information from Kevin Spacey's Machiavellian politico (and returns with the show's second series next month), Mara approves of Barnes' ambition. If not her methods. "She does use her sexuality to get a story, and people sometimes don't really respect that, I notice," she says, laughing. "But she knows what she's doing, she's not an innocent bystander. Men do it all the time, so I really don't know what the big deal is."

The next big deal for Mara this year is hush-hush sci-fi epic *Transcendence*, directed by Christopher Nolan's cinematographer Wally Pfister and starring Johnny Depp. Mara plays another tough cookie, an "eco-terrorist, of sorts" fighting the dominance of computers over the human consciousness. *House Of Cards* Netflix addicts know just how that feels, and Mara has a binge-viewing admission of her own. "Embarrassingly, years ago I watched the whole first season of *24* in only a few days, which is just not healthy..." she says. "I felt a little nauseous afterwards." Don't worry, we won't tell a soul. **Matt Glasby**

● *House Of Cards* series two is on Netflix in February. *Transcendence* is out on 25 April.

The real deal:
Kate Mara returns
as 'super-ballsy'
journalist Zoe Barnes
in *House Of Cards*
next month



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