

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's The Split actress Nicola Walker*

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My collection of bits from every job I've had on television or stage. I steal something so I can take a piece of the character with me. I have about 40 things, from a necklace I wore in Spooks to my wellies in Last Tango In Halifax. I even kept the heart-shaped locket I wore in Four Weddings And A Funeral. I was half of the Frightful Folk Duo in Wedding One!

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Giving away my vinyl collection to charity in 1990 when my head was turned by the CD revolution.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Always being convinced I know better than Google Maps! As a result I've turned up sweating and embarrassed to auditions.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift. I read it aged 11 then studied it at Cambridge and fell in love with it.

Right: Boadicea. Above right: ski gear. Far right: a gorilla in Rwanda

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day...** I'd go to Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda to watch the mountain gorillas all day. I did it in 2004 and it was amazing, but you can only stay an hour.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** The upward inflection that turns every statement into a question.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** At the moment it's Force Majeure, a dark Swedish comedy.

**The person who has influenced you most...** Roger Parsley, my youth theatre teacher at the Harlow Playhouse from when I was 14. He encouraged us to improvise and write our own stuff. Because of him I'm drawn to new writing.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Boadicea would have some fantastic anecdotes.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Don't worry about fitting in – it's completely overrated. Most people feel like they're out of step, so just have the conviction to go your own way.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Skiing. I went for the first time last year and spent a week falling down, but I'm obsessed.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** My nan Nora's kitchen at her house in Hoxton, east London. I visited every weekend until I was 16 and I learnt about life there. Our family piled in every Saturday and I'd listen to incredible conversations. Nan died seven years ago.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** Being a good mum to Harry, 11. Most days I feel bad about getting something wrong, so I go to bed vowing to make a better job of it tomorrow.

**The poem that touches your soul...** I Carry Your Heart With Me by EE Cummings. It lets you believe someone who has died can still be part of you.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd steal The Winged Victory of Samothrace marble sculpture from The Louvre and put it in my garden in Essex. It's completely beautiful.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm not a morning person, which is a long-standing joke in my family. I'm 47 now and I actually quite love mornings. I've finally grown up.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Getting into Cambridge University to read English. It was exciting and inspiring and gave me my best friends.

**The song that means most to you...** All the songs on Tom Waits' album Closing Time. My husband Barney [actor Barnaby Kay] and I played it on a loop during my pregnancy and after Harry arrived. That album is totally connected with waiting to see our child.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd walk along The High Line greenway in New York for coffee at the Whitney Museum. Then I'd ski at Courchevel, France, with Barney and Harry. We'd have spaghetti bolognese at Le Bel Air mountain restaurant, then go to Iceland for a dip in

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the Blue Lagoon thermal spring. Later I'd have a sandwich sitting on a bench overlooking the Thames, then we'd see Hamilton. I'd relax with white wine from the honesty bar at Hazlitt's Hotel, Soho, then we'd sleep in the Jonathan Swift suite – it's a step back in time.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** As a family, throwing ourselves into the Atlantic with no wetsuits in north Cornwall three years ago. The water was freezing, the sun was shining and the waves were high.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** A woman in Rwanda telling me how she escaped the genocide in 1994 when she was little. Her story was incredibly shocking and deeply sad.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To play a part that ends up becoming a mini toy figure. It would be a laugh to have one of those of me on a shelf.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** 'Better do it than wish it done,' is a phrase ingrained in my mind. I think I picked it up in Nan's kitchen.

**The order of service at your funeral...** Lots of singing, poems, drinking and some fireworks. Then throw my ashes into the Atlantic in north Cornwall.

**The way you want to be remembered...** With love by those who loved me.

**The Plug...** The Split is on Tuesdays at 9pm on BBC1. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



## PS...

*Johnny Depp voices the diminutive detective in Sherlock Gnomes – in cinemas Friday. Arctic Monkeys' new album, Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino, is out the same day. And Claire Skinner opens in Nightfall at London's Bridge Theatre on Tuesday*



## NEXT WEEK

● The final part of our fabulous cake decorating guide with Royal Wedding baker Fiona Cairns ●  
Monty Don on the charms of cherries ●  
PLUS Britain's best TV guide