

= Abby Cunningham =

Abby Fairgate ( formerly Cunningham , Ewing and Sumner ) is a fictional character from the CBS soap opera Knots Landing , a long @-@ running serial about middle class life on the fictional cul @-@ de @-@ sac known as Seaview Circle in Los Angeles , California . She was played by actress Donna Mills between 1980 and 1989 . Abby was created by producer David Jacobs as one of Knots Landing 's earliest characters . She debuted in the first episode of the second season . Mills remained a principal actor in the series until she left in its tenth season . She returned for the two @-@ part series finale to provide closure for the fans . The character made her last television appearance in 1997 , when she appeared in the Knots Landing reunion series Knots Landing : Back to the Cul @-@ de @-@ Sac , and was reunited with former cast members .

Prior to being cast on Knots Landing , Mills was predominantly known for playing " damsel in distress " roles , which is why the producers didn 't initially consider her . Abby 's storylines focused on business dealings , affairs and family troubles . Introduced as the sister of Sid Fairgate , she was initially portrayed as a friendly , warm @-@ hearted woman with great love for her children . In due time , she evolved into the series ' main antagonist , constantly causing mayhem in others ' lives . According to series creator David Jacobs , the producers always intended Abby to be a J.R. Ewing @-@ esque character . Jacobs said , " When we were casting the role of Abby , we were looking for a homey type , someone whom the other women characters would trust . It was our intention to have this nice person gain the trust of the other women and then cause trouble for them . We didn 't want the other characters and the audience to know that there was a scheming person under this nice facade . We wanted her to come on as a good person and then evolve into a vixen . "

The character became known for her manipulative behavior and was often labeled a " soap vixen " . She was praised by television critics , with Carolyn McGuire of The Chicago Tribune saying : " Whoever shows up as the next villain , chances are his or her work won 't be easy . That 's because at least one resident ? Abby Ewing ? knows how to dish nasty with the best of them . " When asked which character he wished he had created , Mike Kelly , the creator of ABC 's popular primetime @-@ soap opera Revenge , said : " Abby Ewing . Donna Mills , you rocked my world . " John Mapes of The Biography Channel said , " Any great soap opera needs a great villain . While viewers may identify more with the protagonist , the villains in a serial drama always spice things up , cause trouble , and make it more fun to watch . "

= = Development = =

= = = Casting and creation = = =

Mills portrayed Abby from 1980 ? 1989 . Prior to being cast in Knots Landing , Mills was primarily known for playing the " damsel in distress " archetype in both film and television media . The actress became somewhat famous for playing these roles , often leading to unwanted typecasting . In an interview with Jerry Buck for the Toledo Blade , Mills said : " I got tired of playing the victim . It 's a more active role . Abby keeps things stirred up , and I like that . " According to Jacobs , Abby was not planned when the show began . He knew that he wanted a female J.R. Ewing @-@ esque character . However , he had a different sense of the character and who would wind up in the role . With Mills ' reputation of playing the victim , he initially didn 't choose her for the part .

In the early planning stages of season two , CBS executive Tony Barch suggested Mills for the role of Abby Cunningham . The character was initially conceived as the sister of Sid Fairgate ( Don Murray ) , one of the central characters on the show , who was killed off in the next season . Casting agent Barbara Miller @-@ Gidaly introduced Mills and Jacobs . After meeting with Miller @-@ Gidaly , Jacobs decided to have Mills test for the role , which was unusual for an established actress . She auditioned shortly after and convinced the producers that she was the right person for the part . Jacobs said , " She came back that afternoon and she read and she was great , and it meant reshaping the role a little bit , but , um , not that much . You know , she still came in , she drove up

in the Volvo station wagon . She had the kids in the back . It was very middle class . "

In 1989 , Mills announced her intention to leave the long @-@ running nighttime soap after nine years as Abby . According to Mills , she wanted to take a break from acting for a while , and from Abby as well . In an interview with The Cedarhurst Standard , Mills explained : " I 'm tired of the show . It 's been too long . I 'm not particularly happy with the way they 've been writing Abby lately . She 's too soft . I 'd like Abby to get back to her old self . " Mills returned for the series finale and the subsequent reunion specials ( Knots Landing : Back to the Cul @-@ de @-@ Sac and Knots Landing Reunion : Together Again ) . Virginia Heffernan of The New York Times praised her scenes with fellow actor William Devane , saying : " The Jean Naté @-@ scented banter between the actors Donna Mills and William Devane is both the daffiest and the most enlightening part of the reunion special . "

#### = = = Characterization = = =

The producers always intended Abby to be the " pot stirrer " . Devane , who played Greg Sumner , said that the show was looking for a woman " in high heels with the throat of the guy ? that 's what they wanted " . He added , " It was your character that influenced all these unhappy women today who have jobs and are out there working hard , trying to raise kids by themselves , going crazy . " Mark Harris of Entertainment Weekly said , " Michelle Phillips is the last of prime @-@ time 's great schemers , an essential element of the show since the departure of Donna Mills , whose Abby Cunningham was Knots ' resident harpy for years . "

In an interview with Greg Hernandez , Mills explained : " I knew that she was going to be a trouble maker but actually knowing the writers and the producers , I knew that the character would be rounded and have dimension and that was really fun for me to play . It wasn't one @-@ note all the time , it was a lot of different colors . " Television personality Julie Chen said , " The women of Knots , Michele Lee , Joan Van Ark , and Donna Mills have been compared to earth , wind , and fire , with Donna Mills bringing the heat as Abby , the conniving vixen that everybody loved to hate . " According to Mills , many people were wary of meeting her in person because they assumed she would be like Abby . She said , " They were very trepedacious about what I was going to do . " Mike Celizic of NBC said that her character was " the archetypal predatory female " , while Meredith Vieira said " even the bad girl could show a tender side every once in a while " , in reference to her daughter 's on @-@ screen drug addiction . It was this very storyline that showed Abby at her most vulnerable and human , a story which audiences recall as perhaps one of her most desperate and motherly of moments . In addition to that , Abby also helped Val get her kidnapped babies back , even though she was blamed she said she " could never do a thing like that to anyone " . When Karen and Mack began to have some problems in their marriage and Karen distanced herself from Mack , Abby confronted Karen aggressively and told her she was wrong for doing so to him .

Mills became known for wearing a lot of eye makeup in her scenes , to the point where it became a major character trait for her fictional personality . Carole Glinez of Star magazine said , " Mills was so famous for her dramatic eye makeup on the show that she produced her own beauty video called The Eyes Have It . " Eddie Shapiro of Out magazine said that " Abby 's eye makeup was legendary ! " Glinez also referred to her as Knots " Fox " , saying : " Mills was one of the queens of the nighttime soap . Abby Cunningham Ewing was the conniving , bed hopping blonde beauty on the Dallas spin @-@ off Knots Landing .

#### = = = Relationships = = =

Abby was always intended to be the show 's promiscuous seductress . In an interview with Carolyn McGuire of The Chicago Tribune , Jacobs said : " When we were casting the role of Abby , we were looking for a homey type , someone whom the other women characters would trust . It was our intention to have this nice person gain the trust of the other women and then cause trouble for them . We didn't want the other characters and the audience to know that there was a scheming person under this nice facade . We wanted her to come on as a good person and then evolve into a vixen .

" Author June L. May of Monsters and Critics said , " In season two of Knots Landing , a catalyst moves into the neighborhood in the form of Sid 's sister , the drop dead gorgeous Abby Cunningham . Whether Abby is directly involved , or simply in the neighborhood , she has a detrimental affect on the harmony of couples . " Almost immediately , Abby sank her claws into Richard Avery ( John Pleshette ) , one of the neighborhood husbands . Though the affair was brief , it set the stage for what was to come .

In season three , Abby sets her sights on the wealthy Gary Ewing , the husband of her good friend Valene Ewing . While Gary initially thwarted her attempts , he eventually gave in and had a full @-@ fledged affair with her . Actress Joan Van Ark , who played Val , said : " I went in way early , whenever Donna Mills came on the show , and told David Jacobs that it made total sense that Gary would fall for Abby . Because they were celebrating Donna Mills and she became the center I can 't believe I did that but it really provided us with some great stories . And it was the longest running story on the show . " Dan Lewis of the Sarasota Journal said , " In a recent episode , Abby lures Gary Ewing into an affair , and sets it up so that his wife will discover it . After she completed the scene , Miss Mills recalls , the crew hissing at her ? jokingly , of course . " The character was known for her numerous rivalries with other female characters , such as Paige and Karen . Carole Glinez said , " Mills ' character faced her rival Paige , played by future Desperate Housewives sexpot Nicollette Sheridan . "

= = Storylines = =

Before her first appearance , Abby meets and marries Jeff Cunningham . They move to San Luis Obispo , California , and have two children , Olivia and Brian . When she and Jeff divorce , Abby moves to San Diego . On the way she stops to visit her brother , Sid , and decides to stay in Knots Landing . She rents a house on Seaview Circle , and has an affair with Richard Avery . Abby soon sets her eyes on neighbor Gary Ewing , which becomes obvious after she starts working as a bookkeeper for Knots Landing Motors . She and Gary get the company involved with the mob , which results in her brother Sid 's death . At the same time , Jeff kidnaps her children . She eventually gets them back . Abby and Gary go into a methanol business together and start an affair . Valene finds out and kicks Gary out , so he moves in with Abby . Gary soon inherits millions from his father Jock Ewing 's death . Abby uses the money to manipulate those around her , and Gary starts drinking again . Gary sobers up and buys a ranch , similar to Southfork , the ranch his family owns . They move there and marry .

Abby begins running Gary 's company , and uses his money to fund her own corporation , Apaloon , which she uses to develop Lotus Point . She becomes involved with politician Greg Sumner and the Wolfbridge group . When Gary finds out about her illegal dealings , he leaves her . After Abby is kidnapped , he takes her back , and makes Karen a partner in Lotus Point . Abby soon finds out that Val is pregnant with Gary 's twins . She expresses her displeasure to employee Scott Easton , who has Val 's twins kidnapped at birth . Abby works to find out where the twins are , and brings Val to them . Abby finagles her way to become a part of the " real " Empire Valley . After Gary blows it up , he leaves Abby again . She attempts to get him back , but instead they divorce . Abby soon starts an affair with Peter Hollister as a way to get information on Greg . Then Charles Scott , her first love , returns . He is married , but he divorces his wife and asks Abby to marry him .

Abby is in love again , but then finds out that Charles is the front for a group of thugs wanting to build a marina at Lotus Point for drug trafficking . Abby pretends to go along with the marriage and accepts a two million dollar wedding gift from Charles . After the ceremony she has the marriage annulled , but keeps the money . After this , Abby marries Greg Sumner . It isn 't love , but rather a political marriage . Abby forms another company , Morikame , in order to buy Lotus Point . When her former partners find out and threaten to have her arrested for fraud , she donates Lotus Point to the government as a wildlife preserve . Abby goes after a political appointment that Greg wants , and leaves Knots Landing to be a trade representative in Japan . Abby later forms another illegal company with Nigel Treadwell , and tries to take over the Sumner Group , but her plan fails . She moves back into her old house on the cul @-@ de @-@ sac .

In the 1997 reunion mini @-@ series , Abby sells her house and prepares to leave the cul @-@ de @-@ sac and move to Malibu . However , the IRS freezes her assets for non @-@ payment of back taxes , and she temporarily moves in with Karen and Mack , and gets a job from Gary at the construction company he runs with Karen . However , Abby 's motives are to obtain a legal document from their company in order to help Greg Sumner , who is being sued . Should she obtain the document , Greg will pay her the \$ 1 million she needs . Greg then informs her he no longer needs the document . Abby tries to infiltrate his other business dealings to her advantage . Instead of paying her off , Greg offers her a job overseeing one of his business operations in Thailand , which will make her rich again . Before departing , Abby learns that Brian 's girlfriend ( Kate Whittaker ) is expecting their first child , thus making her a grandmother .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

Abby was well received by television critics . Carolyn McGuire of The Chicago Tribune commented , " Whoever shows up as the next villain , chances are his or her work won 't be easy . That 's because at least one resident ? Abby Ewing ? knows how to dish nasty with the best of them . Only Alexis Carrington Colby Dexter , played by Joan Collins on Dynasty , and Angela Channing , portrayed by Jane Wyman on Falcon Crest , rival Abby Ewing , played by Donna Mills , for best prime @-@ time female villain . " When asked which character he wished he had created , Mike Kelly , the creator of ABC 's popular primetime @-@ soap Revenge , said : " Abby Ewing . Donna Mills , you rocked my world . " Jamey Giddens of Zap2it said , " While I readily admit Alexis will go down in soap history as the most famous of the 80 's primetime soap vixens , she was never truly my cup of detergent . I much preferred the more subdued , methodical villainy of characters like Abby Fairgate ( Donna Mills ) , who slept her way through Seaview Circle , and to the top of Corporate California on Knots Landing . God I miss that damn Cul @-@ de @-@ Sac ! "

Josh Mapes of The Biography Channel listed her in the category " 10 Primetime Stars We Love to Hate " . He said , " Any great soap opera needs a great villain . While viewers may identify more with the protagonist , the villains in a serial drama always spice things up , cause trouble , and make it more fun to watch . From tongue lashings to catfights , underhanded tricks to boldface lies , the characters we love to hate have each brought a fair share of great moments to primetime soaps . While Larry Hagman played the bad guy on Dallas , Donna Mills played bad girl on its spin @-@ off , Knots Landing . Unapologetically going after what she wanted , Mills ' character engaged in affairs with two of the husbands on the Knots Landing cul @-@ de @-@ sac . But , like most vixens on primetime soaps , she was only out for money , not love . " Steve Eighinger of the Quincy Newspapers listed Abby as the third @-@ most memorable TV character in an article he wrote for the Quincy Herald @-@ Whig . He said , " No one , absolutely no one , rocked eye shadow and the messy @-@ hair look like Abby Ewing , who was this marvelous combination of vixen and corporate sleuth . As her character developed , life on the cul @-@ de @-@ sac made Knots Landing destination TV every Thursday night for more than a decade . "

Marta Hoelsher of Technorati Media said : " The biggest news of season two , though , is the appearance of Donna Mills as Abby Cunningham , the blonde bombshell who wreaks havoc all through the neighborhood . With the appearance of Abby , things really started to heat up and get interesting . No marriage is off limits when Abby sets her eyes on it . Played to perfection by Donna Mills , Abby is wicked , vicious , bitchy , and heartless enough to keep us loving and hating her for years . Abby 's clashes with Karen MacKenzie and Val were legendary , and season two gets things rolling . After a fairly peaceful start to the season , we start to see the beginnings of the rivalry that defines the show for years : Karen vs. Abby . It 's fun watching their early friendship evolve into a bitter rivalry . "

= = = Accolades = = =

