

Photograph



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PHOTOGRAPH

by Eleanor Darby Wright

“Would you look at this picture?” laughed Peter Yardley, the photographer, freezing the picture on his PVR so that I could look at the brunette model on the screen. She was heavily made up for a photo-shoot, I could see that. Her lips were a luscious red. She had lots of blue eye shadow about her eyes that I’d thought had long gone out of fashion. She was older than most of the models Peter used, older but not unglamorous with her hair drawn back severely, Spanish-style, behind her head. In the black jacket, long black gloves, necklace and earrings, she looked quite sexy.

“You wouldn’t recognize James Franco, would you, Owen?” Peter went on, breathing heavily, while I stared at the ‘woman’ in shock. Just for a moment, I thought he was teasing me, as Peter did a lot. As his ‘assistant’, I was the butt of many of his jokes. When he released the ‘pause’ on the PVR, we saw the ‘woman’ in total, saw her hugging Terry Richardson, his beard

all scrawny, his face lined, just like Peter's. They were contemporaries but Peter was a much bigger man, bigger in the sense of wider, bulkier.

"What, whatever has he done that for?" I gasped.

"After all the gay roles he's played in films, he probably wants to get in touch with his feminine side!" laughed Peter, handing me his newest Minolta to load with film. "Oh, man, that's too much!" he went on, wiping his face though I didn't find it that warm in the studio. We watched James Franco kiss Terry on the cheek just as if he was a fashion model, a female fashion model.

I fumbled with the cameras I was setting up for Peter's own fashion shoot.

"Oh, I see," said Peter, having downloaded a story from the Internet. "It's the cover for *Candy* magazine. What, only a thousand copies being printed? God, what are they going to be charging for a 337 page magazine? And one devoted only to glorifying transvestism?"

"P-Publicity?" I suggested. I had to answer Peter or he'd keep on, making more and more outrageous suggestions. It drove a lot of the models crazy, when we were on a fashion shoot, like today's. Peter's mind leapt from one outlandish thought to another. The models ended up doing goofy, sometimes erotic, stuff they hadn't contracted to do. Sometimes, that showed up on television, making them look silly, as Andrea Campbell once screamed at me.

"Well, Terry's got his publicity, hasn't he?" Peter laughed. "I wonder how much he's paying Franco for that favor. Just imagine, Owen, what that's going to do for both of their careers, having the balls to do that? Wish I'd thought of it first!"

I was glad Peter hadn't. I could just imagine what the studio would have been like with a well-known film star, a male one, dressing up, from the skin out, as



one report on some Facebook site that Peter was accessing, said about James Franco. Peter's crudity wasn't the way I'd have put it about James' bravery in doing what he was doing.

Nicholas Rogers, Peter's other assistant, who dealt with models and scenery, the artistic sets, that Peter used in his photography, came swishing into the studio then. He didn't try to hide his being gay around us. I could tolerate and get along with him when it was just Peter and me but it really was embarrassing to deal with Nicholas when there were lots of people, mainly models, around, sniggering into their hands about him.

Nicholas was in a panic as usual, his exaggerated drawl cutting off whatever more Peter might have said about James Franco. Nicholas, never Nick or Nicky, oh no, was doing his usual thing of leaning into Peter and whispering whatever perturbed him into the boss's ear.

I was glad Peter had got off the topic of *Candy* and the subject of men in dresses. It always made me feel queasy when Peter made jokes about 'trannies', as he did continually, I don't know why. I felt peculiar as well in the company of some of the outrageously gay male models or designers that we, I worked for Peter Yardley as a technical assistant, had to deal with.

Since I wasn't as tall as many of the girls we photographed, nor was I particularly robust, many of the people we worked with, the female models as well as the men, seemed to think I was gay. They always looked so surprised when I disabused them of that notion, which I did whenever the occasion arose.

Ellen Green, an older woman, a beautician or cosmetologist, another of Peter's assistants, came strolling into the secondary studio I'd set up that morning with Nicholas. A green screen allowed special-effects' changes to the backgrounds in the fashion shoot. Peter

liked to keep up with newer technology, depending on me to be up-to-date to assist him in the latest tech.

Ellen 'assisted' Nicholas with the makeup and dresses of all the models. She came in often to touch up the looks Peter was trying to get in the studio. She was responsible, I suppose, to maintain the 'perfect look' created in the makeup chair. She was smiling cynically as she stood there, looking at the set-up for the day's first shoot. Peter often treated her as the most important member of his staff.

"She won't come out at all?" asked Peter when Nicholas stopped whispering in his ear. Ellen shook her long, dark pageboy, nodding in agreement with Nicholas.

"She's on the phone to her agent," said Ellen wryly, while Nicholas nodded as if he'd been back there with Ellen and seen it happening.

"Owen," snapped Peter. I was ahead of him. I'd carried Peter's Blackberry into the studio. I had Gemma Burton, head of one of the most important model agencies in town, on the phone, asking her to take a call from Peter Yardley.

I could hear Gemma's refined New England accent speaking pleasantries to Peter as I passed the phone to him.

"It's Andrea Campbell," Peter interrupted her angrily. "She's decided she won't work this morning. She's on some kind of crying jag. It's set off the other girls I've lined up as well. None of them are ready to work with Serafina's new collection. I've got Bart and Gregorio ..."

Gemma cut him off. An argument started which increased immediately from anger to vituperation as I stood there, as stupefied as Nicholas and Ellen, at what was going on.

I did gather that Serafina Vilachi, the fashion designer - whose dresses and lingerie, even her perfume

and cosmetics, were the subject of everything we were doing this day - had been a 'monster' to all the girls. That had been at her fashion show just two nights before. You wouldn't have said that if you'd only seen the videos of the show. They were all so kissy and friendly at the end.

But Serafina had deliberately 'stolen' Andrea's fiancé, I gathered, listening to just Peter's astonished side of the phone conversation. "But she's gay," I heard Peter mumbling. I didn't know whether Gemma heard him. Isn't everybody, I thought acidly, shuddering as I listened to Peter blowing his stack. He was red in the face, breathing so hard that I really became quite worried for him, wondering if I should intervene.

Serafina deserved what was happening in Peter's studio, I think Gemma declared. Peter repeated the assertion several times as if he couldn't believe it, going off at a tangent, raving about James Franco and *Candy* and how he'd do better. None of us assistants could follow that. We stared at one another, nonplussed.

Peter was right, I think, to tell Gemma he didn't deserve to be treated as he was, the photo shoot all ready to go. Not by the models. I couldn't think of a time I'd ever heard of such a thing as a models' strike, if that was what it was! These very pretty girls earned great money to pose and be pictured in stunning new fashions.

Andrea Campbell, we all knew of old. We were used to her tantrums. But she was so lovely in front of the camera. Sometimes, if everything went well, she even acted like a human being. The other models supporting her? How could that be? They hated her as much they hated the temperamental Serafina Valachi.

"They'll come back to work if I pay them more money?" asked a suddenly astounded Peter Yardley into the phone. "Is that what this is all about, Gemma?

It's a hold-up! For money! I'd rather do a *Candy* shoot!"

I didn't understand what he was talking about as accusations screamed back and forth, about professionalism, about being a skinflint, about never working again in this town, and about nobody quitting as they were being fired! Peter pitched the telephone at me. I caught it, my reflexes for once not letting me down. He marched off, panting and red-faced, towards the changing rooms.

"He can't cancel this session, Owen, my lad," Nicholas drawled to me, seemingly amused by all the kerfuffle. He was as condescending to me as he always was. "It costs too much to get the sets ready. And the insurance alone on the dresses! He'll have to pay that anyway! Those girls will get what they want. And there's Bart Harriman and Gregorio Filion. They'll have to be paid ..."

Peter strode back to where I stood with his camera and Blackberry. "Lock the doors, Ellen," he panted at her, his voice very firm, nonetheless. "They weren't ready at all. I told them to start acting like professionals and they all started leaving, saying I was yelling at them! They said they'd had enough of that from Serafina. The last of them didn't bother to lock up the front when she sashayed out!"

"Oh no," said the older Ellen Green, pursing her lips in disgust. She hurried off through the door Peter had left open. We could hear her high heels on the stone walkway and the bang of the front doors she locked back into place.

"This will cost you a pretty penny, boss," muttered Nicholas, sounding all concerned, the hypocrite. "All this stuff unused!" The sweep of his arm took in the racks of dresses from Serafina, as well as the sets where the models were to have posed. My shooting script was thirty pages long! Hours of work wasted.

"We're going to use it all," said Peter Yardley, his eyes gleaming. "If Terry Richardson and James Franco can do it, so can I. We'll do our own shoot of Serafina's collection, *Candy*-style."

Peter was looking at me, smiling for the first time in the longest while. I felt my temperature shooting skywards as spiders crawled inside my stomach. I was the only one under the age of forty! But, surely, he must mean Nicholas, mustn't he? Nicholas was the gay one among us. I couldn't imagine him, however, in a dress.

"No," I squeaked.

"*Candy*-style?" asked Nicholas with a frown.

"You, me and Ellen are far too old," said Peter with a grin. "But, with our talents, we'll do a much better job on Owen here than Terry's people did on James Franco. Ever wanted to see what kind of girl you'd make, Owen my boy?" I was shaking my head violently as I heard Nicholas gasping in astonishment. Or was that me? "Well, today's your lucky day because we have all day and these gorgeous dresses to be posed in for my camera. Ellen and Nicholas will help you cross-dress and get in touch with your feminine side!"

I did protest. I really did. But Peter had that gleam in his eye as he did whenever he'd decided to do the outrageous. I wouldn't have my job if I didn't do it, I knew full well. Nevertheless, I shook in terror, as I succumbed in the end, and went into makeup with Ellen to be transformed 'to see if it could be done'.

"I can't do this!" I hissed at Ellen as soon as Peter turned back to an astonished Nicholas, staring at me, his mouth curled in derision, through the opened

doorway. "Open the outer door, Ellen. I'm gone from here, as well as the girls!"

"What's the matter?" asked Ellen with a coy smile. "Don't you think, Owen darling," she drawled deliberately, like Nicholas, at his most affected, "I can make you as pretty as Andrea Campbell? I'd have done a much better job on James Franco than Terry's staff, you know. With all the makeup and padding we have around here, we can make any man into a girl, I promise you. You'll look beautiful, my sweetie, I promise you!"

"But I don't want ...!" I wailed as Ellen began to heave my shirt out of my pants, her long, thin fingers undoing buttons right up to my neck.

"So, you're not gay," mocked Ellen as she pulled the sleeves from my arms. "You should have told Peter ..."

"I did! I did!" I protested, trying to push her away as she undid the belt on my suit pants. "He won't listen!"

"... before he got going on this harebrained idea," Ellen went on. "Now lie back, Owen, and take it like a man. You're going to be very well paid for this gig, you know. You can set up your own camera shop with what Peter will have to pay you, believe me. And I can assure you, Owen, your own mother won't know you when I've finished with you!"

Ellen reminded me several times of the bonuses I'd be getting if Peter used any pictures of me in drag, as if there was some doubt he would. Then, I got the idea she was possibly hinting at. I just had to be terrible when I was in a dress. I must not co-operate with Peter. That way, there wouldn't be anything he'd want to use. This 'shoot' would be over as fast as it had started. I lay back nervously as Ellen began to plaster makeup on my face and neck.

Ellen pinned my hair back as she did the girls' hair when they sat in this chair, chattering on about all kinds of girlish things. She used brushes and tweezers on my eyebrows, and all kinds of brushes and liners about my eyes, before finally adding thick eyelashes to my own to make me look ridiculous. I only objected when she popped holes in my ears and made me wear these huge dangling earrings. I screamed at her for 'mutilating' my ears.

"Oh, shut up," Ellen snapped at me, putting a wig cap over my head, as so many girls, who'd sat where I was, had to do. "Earrings make your ears look prettier than they are. They'll match the necklace you'll be wearing as soon as I clear off some of the hairs on your chest."

That wasn't all the hair I lost. Ellen decided the hair under my arms had to go as well, then the hair on my arms and fingers as I twitched and fidgeted in the chair. My lips were so sticky while my eyes felt as if I was wearing a veil in front of them. With 'tidying up' done, Ellen put a blonde wig over my head which she pinned and worked on for quite a while. I'd seen her do that many times with the girls, of course, but, really, she shouldn't have bothered with me.

Ugh, I felt hair where I never normally felt it, about my ears and on my neck. I managed to sit up then and get a look at what Ellen was doing to me.

Ellen stopped and grinned as I shrieked in fright at what she'd done to my face and head. I was totally made up like a girl! From the neck up, blonde hair swirled around my neck and the earrings we'd argued over. But the most terrible thing was that I looked like a girl, a girl with pouting red lips, and curled blonde hair. My mother wouldn't have known it was me, Owen. I wouldn't have known it was me, Owen Foster, either.

Nicholas Rogers came bursting into the makeup room. "How long's it going to take ...?" he began, be-



fore stopping and staring at me. I shuddered at his astonishment.

"I can't do this ..." I began again as Nicholas, looking at me with a grin, made my flesh crawl.

"I may need your help," Ellen said to Nicholas. She wanted to take my pants down. So, she did need Nicholas's help. She also wanted to make my legs as smooth and hairless as a girl's.

"From the skin out," said Ellen, repeating what Peter had said in his joking manner. He'd said we'd do better than James Franco. He'd take pictures of me and show I was a girl from the inside out. I shook my head furiously at Ellen but she wouldn't listen to me then or later, when it got worse.

Nicholas helped her pin me to the chair as Ellen slathered my bare legs with something that made the hair disappear into tiny balls when she wiped it later from me. "You have to be a girl from the skin out, Owen, which means no unsightly hair. Hold him, Nicholas!" she said several times.

I made attempts to escape. I protested them forcibly detaining me against my will. I accused them of kidnapping which only made them smile. One thing I'd not known before was how strong Nicholas was. He held me down easily in the chair as I lost my shoes and socks, my pants and underpants. He held me so firmly I could smell his aftershave as he leered at me when Ellen put the corset and panties onto my naked, squirming body.

"Hey! Hurry it up!" Peter yelled from the doorway, his florid face bulging. Ellen was more concerned for him, telling to him to take it easy. He didn't want another heart attack, did he? Peter glared at me, not commenting at all on the way I looked in female underclothing and blonde wig. "The set's all ready. The black first, Ellen, then the brunette chignon for the or-

ange dress which means a change of makeup, stockings and shoes. Come on, people. Time is money!"

"She's getting what Andrea and the other girls would get for this session, isn't she?" asked Ellen as I wriggled in the chair and tried to protest again. That word Ellen used to describe me made me shudder. Peter looked surprised.

"Well, I guess so," Peter said, frowning as he saw me struggling as Ellen closed the corset about me, Nicholas pinning me to the chair. "Thirty thousand is enough, Owen, isn't it? Hey, you make up into a really pretty looking, convincing girl, my boy, don't you? All right, I'll pay you residuals as well for all the photos used in Serafina's ads. Can't say fairer than that, can I? So, why are you struggling so much, Owen? I told you you'd be prettier than James Franco, and you are! This should be a lot of fun today!"

Well, I suppose it was a lot of fun for the others. I was the one who was utterly humiliated and shamed all day long. I was the one who had stockings attached to the frilly garters of the corset I had to wear. I was the one with padding at my chest to make it appear that I had breasts. I was the one who had false, red nails on my fingers and two tight pairs of panties at my crotch, the outer the same color as whatever dress I had to wear. I was the one in a dress and called 'she', all afternoon.

I was the one who was yelled at for the way I walked, like a man, for God's sake, as if I could walk any other way, in the black evening dress that swirled about me so embarrassingly. "I can't ..." I protested to Peter but he expected me to walk and pose like a model. He showed me what to do, looking as ridiculous as I must have, as I tried to imitate him and get this awful session over as quickly as I could.

After all, I could use thirty thousand dollars, whenever I got it. Peter Yardley was a notoriously slow payer. That might have been what the models and he

were actually arguing about. He had quarrels all the time with agents over slow payments. But still, wasn't it worth losing the hair under my arms for a little while, I thought anxiously, for the amount of money coming in six months' time?

I tried to smile, the lipstick on my mouth making my lips want to stay together. I shakily put my hand on my padded hip in a modelling pose that girls can do in their sleep.

"Oh yes," Peter would say as I did that, clicking away furiously even though I'd no real idea what I was doing. He'd lean forward and move the dress to expose my legs. He snapped me as I swirled and twirled on the set, as he ordered me. He made me lean forward and photographed my 'breasts' and the neck-lace I wore.

Yes, I had breasts, sort of. Ellen taped my chest and created some kind of valley there which she accentuated with makeup and perfume which had made me gag. It made me feel so effeminate. I really didn't know how James Franco stood for what I went through. It really wasn't worth the money, I decided.

I became a brunette in an orange dress that hugged me, my earrings, necklace and bracelets changed. My hips were padded a little more to have more of a female figure. I compressed my lipstick mouth and glared at Peter for making me do what I was doing for him. He loved the look, so different from what I'd done before. Nicholas was doing what I normally did, the green screen showing a red carpet arrival at a film premiPre. I remembered what I'd prepared, and the order.

I was an auburn-haired girl in a short dress. It swirled about me so much as I moved as directed. I shuddered at the absurd, feminine feelings, much worse than those inspired by long dresses that rustled and clung to me, to my legs and the nylons or tights I had to wear.

It was the dresses, of course, that made me feel so weird, as I couldn't see much of the rest of me. Even the underwear was so different from anything I 'normally' wore. Oh, the stockings and garter belt, never mind the corsets, bras and panties! Peter screamed at me to swirl my dresses and lift the hems and show him my pretty legs.

Like an idiot, I did what he wanted. I knew I was looking like a girl in a dress as I twirled and swirled for the camera, flushing beneath the vivid makeup each time I saw Ellen or Nicholas smile at me, or my dress, or my long dangling earrings or my hair swirling about me. I even got to see myself, hand on hip, walking along the 'street'. Oh, gee, my heart fluttered and jumped as I saw myself as a really pretty girl. I almost stumbled in my high heels, forgetting to take the short steps I should.

"Got that one!" said Peter gleefully. "Do that again, Jessica! Stand still and swirl the skirts with your hand! Now, pout at me. Yes, that's the look. Now sashay your way to Ellen for a change."

I didn't do that right. I had to do it over and look over my shoulder, over the bra and dress strap at Peter until I got it right. I flipped the skirts of the dress I was wearing at him in the anger I felt at being so humiliated by him. Of course, he snapped pictures of me all the time. He thought that that was just great, me showing off my underwear and garter belt. For a while, he wanted me to be just as sassy in the 'little-girl' dresses that Serafina had designed. I must have worn and modelled over twenty of them.

I had wigs changed for almost every picture. Ellen changed the mini-dresses, or the flirty dresses or tight skirts as well. I almost forgot that Nicholas and Peter were watching me change down to my stockings, panties and corsets each time. Nicholas even helped me change the colorful, contrasting sashes Serafina had designed for some of her dresses.

"I'll make a collage of all those," Peter said, after I'd twirled and sashayed in a string of seven or more similar, sashed dresses. "All those other girls are going to wish they hadn't quit so soon when they see how lovely Jessica looks in their place."

Yes, they'd decided that I must have a girl's name. I nearly ended up as Prudence or Penelope, which Nicholas thought suited an 'old-fashioned girl' like me. Peter, though, wanted a 'modern' name. For a while, I was Brittany, but then Ellen suggested Jessica and it stuck. I had no say in the naming of my feminine self, not that I wanted any.

"You're not thinking of using these pictures," I asked, trembling in panic at the way Peter was talking. "Not for true!"

Ellen and Nicholas stared at me with funny kinds of grins. "Why not?" asked Peter, nodding at the other two. "Don't you guys think Jessica is as lovely as Andrea Campbell in these dresses?"

I almost fainted as Nicholas nodded his head furiously. The skirts of a new dress swung about me, lightly, femininely, stroking my stockings, making me feel so girlish, so gay! The long hair of my ash-blonde wig swirled over my neck and bare chest. I saw the girl again who was me, smiling at me and the humiliation I was allowing myself to be subjected to. Gosh, I even felt like a girl in a dress!

I should never have succumbed and let them put me in a dress Serafina had designed! I felt as embarrassed as I had when my mother had dressed me in my sister's clothes once for Halloween. No-one had realized it was me. They kept on asking all the time where Owen was. I was too frightened and ashamed of them laughing at me to tell them I was Owen, in my sister Gillian's frilly, enervating dress.

"Now, when Bart and Gregorio get here," said Peter, with a glance at his watch, "our Jessica will go out

with you, Ellen, each time to change. Let's do the Parisian dancer first, then the Las Vegas showgirl, the bride and so on, as far as we can get down the list."

"I won't ..." I began fearfully as the doorbell rang. A highly amused Nicholas ran to unbolt the doors and let the male models into the studio.

Panic-stricken, I was glad to take Ellen's hand and be escorted out of the set where Peter had been last set up. Of course, it was just from the frying pan into the fire as Ellen had me put on the costume of a can-can girl, with black garters and stockings and the white, frilly panties.

"Ah, here's Jessica," said Peter as I was half-dragged, half frogmarched onto the Parisian set where Bart had already changed into nineteenth century evening dress. The most awful thing was that neither Bart nor Gregory Filion seemed to have an inkling that I was not Jessica, not even a model. Not even a woman. And not a silly guy who was feeling so girlish as he pranced in front of them.

Maybe because I had seen so many girls working in Peter's studio, I knew how I had to move, how I had to smile with each of the male models. I knew the 'look' that Peter was trying for. I'd heard him enough times expounding on his ideas, after all. Ellie sprayed me with perfume again before I went on the set with the men. They each told me how delightfully fragrant that I was. I was so frightened I couldn't even whisper my thanks to them. I just looked away, knowing I was blushing. Why, oh, why couldn't they see that it was me? Or did they and they were only joining in the joke that Peter wanted to play on Serafina with this photo shoot?

I was a showgirl with Greg, my temperature shooting up a hundred degrees when I saw myself and my legs in the glittering stockings and lacy, frilly garters I had had to wear. I was pretty much in shock then so late in the terrible day that I'd had. I'd come in to prep

the equipment for Peter to use and what had I done all day? I'd worn pretty women's lingerie and women's dresses, women's shoes and a woman's wig. I was even beginning to feel like a woman, I thought with annoyance, as Peter called for his girl to make another change, of her panties.

I did everything that Ellen told me so that we could hurry and get the day over. I was a blushing, shaking bride with Bart, the tight white bustier dress making me look so shapely, womanly-shaped that is. I had my skirts lifted and showed off the panties and garters that I wore as Greg smiled at me and stroked my arms. I looked back at him then in fright, as Peter clicked even more pictures of 'the bride'.

I went again through a whirlwind of changes, in and out of Serafina's dresses and wigs, my makeup being changed on the sets as I stood there, wobbling on my high heels while the guys changed suits and paid me compliments on all the different looks I could take on.

I ended in a short, white, frilly dress that Bart spun me around in, the skirts spreading out as I felt like such an idiot as Nicholas started some music. I was actually dancing with another man. It was worse when Bart bent me over and kissed me. Peter's camera never stopped clicking.

"That looks good," Greg said, pushing Bart off me as I stood there trembling with his arm about me. Then, Gregorio, whom I knew was gay, was kissing me as well, his lips moving in exploration over mine, making me cringe inside, even as I couldn't let go of him, my lips seeming to be stuck to him.

"Really tasty," murmured a smiling Greg, as I shook in his arms before he let me go. "Hope you enjoyed it too, beautiful Jessica."

The guys left as Ellen came at me to wipe my mouth and show me how to freshen my lipstick before we

had to join the men, that's the way she put it, me still in drag. Peter grinned at me as I sat down in a swishing of skirts, a white wine in front of me as Ellen always had at the end of a session. Now I had one as well, a girl's drink, not the shot that I normally had with Peter.

"Can't be a whiskey today, Jessica," said Peter with a smile. "Not when you look so pretty. You did a marvellous job with Jessica, Ellen. She's really hot. I could see it in the lens all day. This shoot is going to be fantastic."

"We're not to tell Serafina about Jessica?" asked Nicholas in surprise, which I felt as well. But the way that Nicholas looked at me made me squirm in my rustly dress, tight, shaping corset, silky stockings and lacy panties. I had the distinct feeling Nicholas liked me being dressed up as a girl. I knew he was gay. Everyone did. But I hadn't thought his predilection would be for drag queens, which I wasn't. And I'm still not gay, I thought angrily..

"We won't tell Serafina at first," said Peter Yardley, raising his glass of Johnnie Walker to us, celebrating the 'community' effort. Huh, was all I thought of such a toast. Peter was breathing really heavily as if the day had been a real effort for him. Not as much as it had been for me, I thought angrily. I drank and left lipstick on the glass which made me gag a little.

"Let's pay Gemma Burton back as well," Peter gasped on. "We'll have the best Jessica pictures out as soon as I develop them. We'll wait till everyone wants to know who the lovely model is. Serafina will want her for her Milan show, for certain. Then, we'll spring it on them."

"You don't have to, you know," said Ellen seriously. The men looked at her with frowns on their faces. I felt a huge void open in my stomach as she spoke, especially as she used the female pronoun all the time for me, 'Jessica'. "If you expose her, Peter, you

won't be able to use Jessica again. I really do think that you could, you know."

That led to a heated discussion in which I was referred to as 'Jessica' all the time. It was as if I wasn't even there as Ellen mapped out a career for me as a girl model, to my utter amazement. Ellen said what she'd do to make me, Jessica, more presentable in a show. She said I'd have to practice, my walk, my voice and stuff like that.

"You wait and see," were Ellen's last words. "I'll bet, Peter, that the next new shoot you're offered after the photos from today come out, is going to be based entirely on you providing Jessica here as part of the lineup of girls to be pictured."

It takes a while between taking photos for a shoot and for them to find their way into the media. I couldn't forget the shoot at all. How could I? But I went back to work the following day as Owen Foster. Yes, my mind kept going weird on me as we plotted work, more fashion shoots, but, strangely, none of the other three said anything about my thinned eyebrows or about 'Jessica' at all. It was as if they were in a conspiracy of silence about the whole thing. And I didn't want to discuss the stupid feeling I kept having all the time.

The feud between Gemma Burton and Peter simmered. But Peter had a stream of assignments that kept all of us hopping from locations out of doors to indoors. His bookings were suddenly so heavy that it was inevitable Gemma's models were at some of the shoots we did.

"So what did you guys do when we walked out on Serafina?" Andrea Campbell asked me out on Market Street as I was changing cameras and re-setting the light exposures as the afternoon clouded over.