

In 2005, sales of beauty products online rose by 33%, with over-the-counter sales also increasing 32%. The cosmetics industry is a \$12.4 billion / year business in the United States and that number is expected continue to climb to \$16 billion by 2010. Skin care products lead the pack, with 52% of overall sales. As the population gets older, anti-aging products have become increasing popular.

The Gift of Beauty & Truth

That, she said, was when I knew it was over.



We were sitting in the bar. It was late on a Friday night. It was cool and dark in the bar and the overhead lights dimly reflected on the granite counter-top. She was drinking wine.

The first gift he gave me, she said, was a bracelet. It was really very lovely; it was very sweet of him. It wasn't my birthday, or our anniversary. He just did it and I thought it was a wonderful thing to do.

She sipped her wine. She was lovely and it amused me to watch people in the bar watch her. Sometimes they tried to be covert about it but some of them just stared.

Often they stared because they were certain they recognized her. You could see them turn to a friend, without taking their eyes off of her, and you could see them saying: isn't that - she's that actress, the woman who does the weather, the sports, that commercial.

None of it was true. It was funny but she didn't like it at all. It made her uncomfortable.

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Once, she said, I had come from the gym; I was downtown, standing on a traffic island, waiting for a green light. A woman was standing next to me. She kept staring at me. Finally she said: Can I have your autograph?

I looked at her and said she was mistaken; I'm not



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The woman insisted and I told her she was wrong and then she said: Why are you being a liar? You're that Basic Instinct woman, and I don't see why you have to be so rude.

I laughed but it wasn't that funny.

I had been with her once when the same thing happened. We were walking into a restaurant and everyone stopped what they were doing. Then someone dropped a glass. In the silence it was very loud.

She ignored it. But in her eyes it was clear to me that she knew exactly what was happening.

I had taken photographs of her. I put them up in the window of the camera store I was working for. I watched people stop and stare at the photographs.

In the bar, I overheard a waiter talking to a friend of his. He was talking about her.

That's her, he said, the woman in the photos. I told you she was someone.

I told her about it and she smiled, shyly.

You see, she said, everyone believes that because I look a certain way, I am someone else, and not who I really am; and if I looked a different way, they still wouldn't see me.

Well, I said, what was the second gift he gave you?

She paused and looked down at the reflections on the bar-top. She looked back at me.

He gave me an oil lamp.

An oil lamp?

