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SPRING
PREVIEW

FASHION
GOES
BOLD

TOP
SECRET
BEAUTY

She's looked at makeup from both sides now: Therapist and novelist Amy Bloom goes behind the counter

Palmetto's co-owner, Marcia Firesten, was willing to trust me with her customers and gave me a crash course in Börlind (German, totally botanical, and famous before we ever heard of Herbal Essences); Declor, a French line on which I did not have to be sold, since the Neroli Aromessence I wear under my moisturizer inspires strangers to sniff my face appreciatively; Dr. Hauschka (also German, and very serious, as well as unpronounceable); and Astaro (from Colorado, developed with a prize-winning chemist), which I felt confident to sell after Marcia's husband, an Australian-rugby type, put my hand on his baby face and swore that Astaro's face-cleansing gelée had changed him from a soap-and-water man to a proud gelée cleanser guy in a week. (I noted the pat-my-baby-face technique.)

Backstage at beauty shops is not unlike the kitchens of great

my Mason Pearson brush."

Marcia stares at her.

"All the way from Hollywood," the woman says and points to the upended basket of \$98 brushes.

Marcia crawls over the glass to the brushes and throws one to her. "It's on me," she shouts bitterly.

"Thanks," says the lady from Hollywood, catching it one-handed.

A gorgeous blond walks into the store, dark eyes behind Jackie O. sunglasses, perfect tawny mane. She's just mousing around, looking for a better lipstick. (A better lipstick seems to be one of the great, comparatively inexpensive mood elevators. No one has to feel bad buying an \$11 or even a \$20 lipstick.) >

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KEYWORD
ON AOL: ELLE
JANUARY
2001
USA \$3.50
CANADA \$4.50