



Shopping

When her nose was called 'distinctive' once surgeons. Here, she gives an in-depth profile

Once upon a time, a nice little girl had a crush on a not-so-nice little boy down the road. The silly seven-year-old told John she loved him, and, like many male creatures who do not wish to be so informed, his reaction was swift: he socked her in the face. Her nose started bleeding, and she ran home, crying, to Mummy, who immediately rang John's mum (this was in the days before lawsuits and child-aggression counsellors), who soon showed up, scowling son clutched firmly by the elbow. 'Say you're sorry,' John's mum said, through clenched teeth. John mumbled something, and the nice little girl held out her arms to him and said: 'Don't worry, I still love you.'

Now, I expect my shrink would have a field day with this story, except she's never heard a word of it. I'd completely forgotten the pathetic tale until I was in the examining room of Dr Richard Marfuggi, the New York plastic surgeon best known for repairing the face of Marla Hansen, a model (and ex-girlfriend of novelist Jay McInerney) who'd been slashed and left to die by thugs. 'Someone punched you in the nose when you were young,' he said as he studied my honker. 'And he was right-handed, too.'

I looked at him in complete amazement as long-forgotten memories of John, that sadistic bastard, came flooding back. 'How on earth did you know that?' I asked. 'I'm good at my job,' the doctor replied.

My nose is not what you call petite. It's always been big and long and, ever since John, it has had a pronounced bump near the middle. People tell me it's 'distinctive' – a kind way of saying: 'You have a huge thing in the middle of your face.' I'm used to it. But I recently had a non-speaking role in a film, *Tiara Tango*, which a girlfriend of mine produced, and when I saw the stills, I was horrified. There I was, playing Susan, who's rehearsing for a beauty contest and being goosed by Robert Wagner (still a total babe), and all you can see is Nose. It's not

Above, Laura Foster, whose distinctive profile was spotted by cult fashion photographer David Sims when he was visiting his old school. This picture was taken when Laura was 14, less than an hour after her GCSE maths exam. Her first modelling job was an *i-D* cover. Karen Moline's mugshot appears on our Contributors page

for a new nose

too often, Karen Moline felt forced to consult Manhattan's finest plastic of the top three. But which nose best? Photographed by Justine

just big and bumped any more – it's growing. It's undeniable: the very tip of it is drooping. And it's going to droop more as the years go by. That much I remember from physics class. Something about apples dropping and something about the inevitability of gravity.

There are only two ways to make my nose stop drooping. One is to move to the moon, which is a bit of a schlep for a face to endure. The other is to orbit a bizarre little universe known as the Waiting Rooms of the Plastic Surgeons of Manhattan's Upper East Side.

A CUT ABOVE

My first visit is to Dr Marfuggi, who shares a nondescript medical suite on Madison Avenue

the 'before' shots in the before-and-after photo books displayed by many doctors so you can appraise their handiwork.) And finally, he goes into graphic, gory detail about the surgery itself: what to expect, how black and blue my face will be, recovery time, and many other charming facts that made me want to run out screaming. It makes the whole thing seem so real. But, of course, it is real. This is surgery. This is anaesthesia. This is blood. This is Michael Jackson's face.

'All the horror stories you hear are true,' Dr Marfuggi says. 'Any licensed doctor can hang out a sign and call himself a cosmetic surgeon.' This means my podiatrist can suck out blubber and say he's a liposuction expert. 'You've got

doctor's book, *Plastic Surgery: What You Need to Know Before, During, and After*, which is certainly going to be interesting bedtime reading.

Dr Richard Marfuggi, 654 Madison Avenue, NY 10021 (tel: 001 212 317 1188; website: www.askdrm.com)

Waiting-room posh factor: are you kidding?

Waiting-room stare factor: blessedly negligible.

Reading material: downmarket women's mags and a folder of press cuttings.

Quality of work seen in before-and-after photos of previous patients: impressive.

Comprehensiveness of forms to fill out: even my gynaecologist doesn't ask this stuff.

Time spent waiting for doctor: five minutes.

Finally, he goes into graphic, gory detail about the surgery itself: 'All the horror stories you hear are true'

with other specialists. I fill out an extremely detailed, four-page medical history in which I am warned not to lie about drug/cigarette/booze/other bad habits which may complicate the surgery. Yikes. Dr M is terribly nice and a calming presence as I explain how I sort of like the bump and only want the droop fixed, so I can stop thinking about Isaac Newton.

He carefully examines my nose – looking straight up it must have been a real thrill – and reminds me of the childhood trauma that has obviously warped me for life. 'Technically speaking, I can't just snip off the end,' he says. 'It's more complicated than that.' Then he gets technical about cartilage and something called the 'columella'; how the tip is longer than the base; how crooked my nose is and how deviated my 'septum' – although not deviated enough for my insurance company to cough up the dough to reimburse me for the operation.

Next come the mugshots of Nose from all angles – photos I hope never to see. (These are

to make sure he's [specialist] board-certified, and that the operating room is an accredited facility. If anything kills you, it's most likely to be the operating room.' People who have countless procedures must be mad. 'They are,' he says. 'And I won't do them. But a lot of doctors will. You see them for one procedure and they try to sell you more. Be very wary of anyone who tries the hard-sell approach. I certainly don't believe in it.'

He looks at my nose again. 'You know, to be perfectly frank, you really don't need this done right now.' He smiles at my shocked look. 'I'm not kidding,' he says. 'I can fix the droop and leave the bump, but you have a fantastic nose. Think about it. In the mean time, Pat, my office manager, will talk to you about the fees if you want to go ahead.' Well... this is a surprise, the anti-hard-sell approach.

Pat, who is as low-key as the office, sits with me in the hall (decidedly low on glam) and discusses money with me. I buy a copy of the

Time spent with doctor: 45 minutes.

Time spent with consultant to discuss fees: 10 minutes.

Consultation fee: \$175.

Surgery fees: \$5,300, if done in his New Jersey surgery; at least \$1,500 higher for a Manhattan operating room.

Pushiness factor: less than zero.

NASAL GAZING

Dr Darrick Antell has a gorgeous waiting room on Park Avenue: wood-panelled, with overstuffed chairs, botanical prints, soothing music, and a needlepoint pillow on one of the chairs that reads: 'Mirror, mirror, on the wall – I am my mother after all.' Oh great – my mum's nose is not exactly what you'd call petite, either. I sink into comfort to fill out a short questionnaire that asks typical questions about drugs, bleeding, previous surgery, and so on. (There is one very inappropriate question: 'Have you ever consulted a plastic surgeon?' ▷

◁ As though the ladies who have liposuction for lunch are going to tell the truth about their encounters with another Park Avenue slice 'n' dicer.)

There is only one other person there, an elderly lady, who turns out to be waiting for her husband. I visit the loo, which is larger than most Manhattan kitchens, and delve into the doctor's press kit. He used to be a dentist, so he does a lot of jaw reconstructions. The guide to procedures is full of little drawings showing all the incisions. (Then I read the small type by photos of some very attractive people: 'It is not suggested that these individuals are actual plastic-surgery patients.') The very pleasant staff are murmuring in the background, and they apologise for my short wait as I am ushered into the examining room.

Dr Antell is down to earth and reassuring. We talk about my teeth (once a dentist...) as he examines my nose. 'Cartilage is springy and has memory,' he explains, as he asks me to push my droop around. 'Because your nose has

Comprehensiveness of forms to fill out: not very detailed.

Time spent waiting for doctor: 23 minutes.

Time spent with doctor: 20 minutes.

Time spent with consultant to discuss fees: five minutes.

Consultation fee: \$150.

Surgery fees: \$6,000, plus \$1,000 for anaesthesia and \$1,400 for operating room.

Pushiness factor: low.

HIGH PROFILE

Dr Thomas Loeb is the man responsible for fixing the nose of Paula Jones, one of Clinton's least favourite former gal-pals. Her nose was so disproportionately unwieldy compared with the rest of her features that carving it down gave the equivalent result of Gerard Depardieu's *nez suprême* turning into Meg Ryan's perky button. The results were amazing. His office, unlike Dr Marfuggi's, is not nondescript – it's glam, oozing a sleek richness. And it oozes with rich, comfortable people either hiding behind

nose that is so big, and that you can be helped.' He turns my head from side to side, but doesn't take any photographs. 'You can't just snip off cartilage,' he says. 'The only way to get the tip up is to take away most of your bump.' But I like my bump, I protest, not telling him it's a love token. 'Well, it has to go,' he says. 'The tip is going to keep drooping, as you put it, but what worries me more is the crookedness.' He smiles kindly. He can fix it.

He shakes my hand warmly and scurries out. That was quick. His office manager takes me into a lovely book-lined office to discuss the particulars. She is quite nice as she cleverly encourages me to set a date, but I am not really paying attention. I am transfixed by her diamonds: a dazzling wedding band, another enormous yellow-diamond ring, a large solitaire on a fine chain, and huge ear-studs. Would I rather have a diamond or a less droopy nose? A couple of carats would cost about the same as the operation.

As I leave, the waiting room is full of teenage

We start talking about Paula Jones: 'That she went public was good for noses all over the country,' he says

been crooked for so many years, it may have a tendency to want to go back to its original position, even after surgery,' he explains. 'So I'm going to have to shave down the bone where your bump is, because it's part of the crookedness.' He hands me a mirror. I think of the needlepoint pillow in the waiting room. 'Do you see how crooked your nose really is?' he asks. I force myself to look at it closely. He's right: it's hideously crooked. 'I see your point,' I say. 'But I like my bump.'

'I'm a conservative person and a conservative doctor,' he reassures me. 'There's a lot that's good about your nose. I'll give you a new, improved version – it'll look better, not different.' Slightly mollified, I let him take mugshots, and then sit back down as he explains the surgical procedure. His operating room is downstairs from his office. 'In the basement, you mean,' I tease. 'We don't have basements on Park Avenue,' he jokes.

I am ushered out and handed the form with the fee. I laugh with his assistants about the horrors of the insurance company as I tell them I've forgotten my policy card. 'Don't worry,' one of them says. 'If we have your social-security number, we can get it.' Oh dear – what else can they find out about me?

Dr Darrick Antell, 850 Park Avenue, NY 10021 (tel: 001 212 988 4040)

Waiting-room posh factor: uptown plush.

Waiting-room stare factor: none that day.

Reading material: rather tired women's mags.

Quality of work seen in before-and-after photos of previous patients: none available.

shades or pretending to read the oversized art books. Heads swivel every time the door opens.

I fill out a short medical history and start reading the press kit I'd received, replete with information about each procedure, as well as cuttings about Dr Loeb from the best women's magazines. The info sheets are designed to be chatty and reassuring, but whoever wrote them is a tad over-fond of exclamation marks. 'If your chin is weak, I'm going to tell you,' it reads. 'The best-looking noses are natural-looking.' Yes, they are, and I didn't see any in that book of before-and-after photos. The noses all look the same, including Paula Jones's, with a slight uptilt and imperceptibly widened nostrils. It is a subtle look, but striking nevertheless. I don't want my nose to look like Paula's nose. I want it still to be *my* nose...

After 45 minutes, I am staring into space, thinking about Pinocchio and wanting to gag the young woman who's been yakking non-stop on her cellphone as she flicks through *Vogue* and snaps her gum. 'Yeah, he's gotta re-cut the muscle,' she says. 'Yeah... I know... and I'm supposed to leave as soon as possible to do that documentary – y'know, *that* one.'

Mercifully she is called into her consultation, and I sit for a while longer, stewing, before being called in myself. Dr Loeb hurries in, apologising profusely. He's a very attractive man, with an engaging bedside manner, so I melt. He examines my nose and we start talking about Paula. 'That she went public was good for noses all over the country,' he says. 'She proved that you don't have to live with a

girls out from school, nervously accompanied by their mothers. They look at me. I look at them. 'If your chin is weak, I'm going to tell you,' I think. But I don't say a word.

Dr Thomas Loeb, 655 Park Avenue, NY 10021 (tel: 001 212 327 3700)

Waiting-room posh factor: ultra-glam, baby.

Waiting-room stare factor: bring your darkest sunglasses and biggest hat.

Reading material: Herb Ritts photography books and glossy mags.

Quality of work done in before-and-after photographs of previous patients: the facelifts and eye-jobs are amazing, but all the noses look exactly alike.

Comprehensiveness of forms to fill out: a bare minimum.

Time spent waiting for doctor: nearly an hour.

Time spent with doctor: eight minutes.

Time spent with consultant to discuss fees: 10 minutes.

Consultation fee: \$150.

Surgery fees: \$7,500, plus \$800 for anaesthesia and \$1,000 for operating room.

Pushiness factor: intense.

What's a droop to do? I would go to Dr Marfuggi if I wanted no-nonsense, straightforward care; Dr Antell if I wanted to calm reassurance; and Dr Loeb if I wanted to feel pampered and have a very popular nose. For now, I'm going to live with the inevitable... And next time I see a photograph that is all Nose... well, I'm going to dream of punching John, smack in the kisser. □