

Store Gazing

Bra boutique lifts us up where we belong



Rita Zekas
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It's not your mother's lingerie store.

It's your sister's.

It's actually Secrets From Your Sister, located in the Annex at 476 Bloor St. W.

Owner Jen Klein explains the origin of the name actually has something to do with her mother but the details are murky.

Store Gazing is shopping with Canadian actor and self-confessed "lingerie-aholic" Ellen Dubin, featured in the indie cult hit *Napoleon Dynamite* and co-star of the series *The Collector*.

"I don't smoke, I don't do drugs — lingerie is my fix," she says.

"Anytime I go to a new city, instead of touring museums, I tour lingerie stores. I have pieces from Berlin, Thailand — anywhere I work — as a souvenir."

But *Napoleon Dynamite* was shot in Nowheresville, USA.

"There was a local Wal-Mart," Dubin contends. "I can find interesting stuff at Zellers. I got little half slips there."

Klein studied historical undergarments with an aim to going into lingerie design. Instead, she has been fronting this shop for eight years, stocking larger sizing and Euro brands ranging from Freya, Fantasie, Princess Tam Tam, Chantelle and its sister line Passionata.

"I cater to all sizes of women," she stresses. "I educate them on how bras fit on the body. I want to improve a woman's self-esteem. After a proper fitting, a customer will say, 'They're up — I'm not pillowing!'"

"Fuller-busted women complain about ugly straps and these aren't your grandmother's bras. They are more elegant. The sizes range from a 28 back double A to double J, which is

like two of your heads. I fit an 11-year-old with a G cup."

Why are young girls busting out all over? "It's everything we inject in animals," she says.

Beware of minimizers that "can pancake you and get rid of your waist," Klein warns. "You want to go for a higher look and a long waist line."

Klein is restocking red bras for Valentine's Day.

"Men go to Avec Plaisir to buy (their women) 34 B," she says. "If they come here, they can exchange sizes."

Dubin was busted by the nipple police the other day while shooting the Aboriginal series *Hank Williams: First Nation*.

She plays Amanda Jenkins, a single mother who moves from the big city to a small town to teach at an Indian reservation. It airs in February on APTN network. She describes it as a "Native *Napoleon Dynamite* meets *Corner Gas*."

"We were watching the dailies on the monitor and I hear all this whispering," Dubin recalls. "I'm thinking, 'Is there something wrong with my acting?' Then the director says, 'You have to do something about your nipples!'"

Wardrobe came up with a camisole; Klein comes up with "Dimmers," to prevent headlights. They are spongy, skin-toned nipple pasties that fit under the bra and are priced at \$36. Dimmers also come in cocoa for black skin.

We think they are more chicken McNuggles than cutlets.

Hank Williams was shot in Peace River, Alta., pop. around 6,000. "It's the smallest town I ever worked in," Dubin allows. "It had a Reitman's and a Chinese restaurant."

Yet she managed to buy panties and three camisoles at \$6 each, in pink, white and black.

Dubin is also featured in the upcoming film *Bull*, a darkly comedic murder mystery starring *Kent Tessman*, *Craig Lauzon*, *Jeff Seymour* and *Maury Chaykin*. And she plays a U.S. federal marshal in the film *Ab-*



Actor Ellen Dubin enjoys one of her not-so-guilty pleasures, shopping for lingerie at Secrets From Your Sister in the Annex. Dubin buys underpinnings as souvenirs from her film and TV projects. A thong in her art: she uses undies as the foundation for building her characters.

ducted, shot in Montreal opposite *Sarah Wynter* (24). In Montreal, she struck it rich.

"I shopped at Ogilvy's (a high-end department store), which is Underwear City," she enthuses. "Montreal women know how to wear undies. I bought a lace teddie. I'll wear it with black skirt, high heels and sexy stockings."

In Los Angeles, where she is going for pilot season, she shops at Trashy Lingerie (*Madonna's* fave) and at Macy's.

"Macy's has a wonderful and practical bra department," Dubin explains. "I love practical but with a touch of sexiness, whether fabric or lace. Yes, the Amazon (Dubin approaches 6 feet; her out seam is 42 and in-seam is 38) has feminine tastes. I don't want a lot of gunk."

She considers lingerie shopping as instant gratification.

"It's the quickest way to feel good about yourself and be proud of what you are. I use it in my work — I have the underwear reflect the character. It is the foundation of my character. I am a single mother in *The Collector* and she won't be wearing a thong like I do. She acted with her intellect so I wore a minimizer. I didn't want them to look at my cleavage."

"Sometimes you wear a bra that is smaller so everything will pop out. I come from the theatre where I played big, tall, dumb blonde à la *Judy Holliday* and it was the lift-and-separate look. I'll take from my stash or let's going shopping."

So how many sets of undies

does she have?

"Enough to open my own store," she laughs. "Over 300. I collect underwear like people collect stamps. I'll do a big clean-out and start again."

Dubin is non-denominational, she likes it all: garter belts, teddies, bras, slips and camisoles.

"I have thongs to full panties," she tabulates. "I have a couple of corsets and garter belts from shows. I have to be in the mood to wear a garter belt but boy, does it look good. I shop from high-end to Target. I buy cozy PJs — sometimes I buy men's PJs."

Time to cash out. Dubin buys the Dimmers and assorted undies. Above the cash register is a photo of supe Elle Macpherson, whose bra line caters to smaller busts. Could models be

among the 85 per cent of women wearing the wrong bra size?

"Models especially wear the wrong bras," Klein says. "They wear 34B or 36A and every single model is 28 to 32."

Yeah, but at least they don't have the dreaded back fat.

"It is a sign you are not wearing the right size bra," Klein insists. "The back strap rides up and you are having to pull it down constantly."

"Good undies are like a good husband: look good, supportive, never let you down and don't ride up," Dubin adds.

And she exits on that high note. She is starting singing lessons with *Elaine Overholt*, who tuned up the celeb pipes in *Chicago* and bonded with *Michelle Pfeiffer* here in *Hairspray*.