

Q

in the penthouse of Milk Studios, in New York City's Meatpacking District, watching photographer Mark Abrahams shoot Daria Werbowy for the cover of *Glow*. As I wait, Daria's agent comes over, talking loudly to someone on her cellphone. "She wants to be in New York as much as she can, because she's going sailing in June, July, August," she says. I've heard this about Daria: that she is passionate about sailing. She stays away from the spotlight. She is tight-lipped about her life. But I have come prepared. A good friend of mine is a competitive sailor, and he gave me a few questions to ask.

I sneak behind the crew of stylists to catch a glimpse. Daria is in a white one-piece Chanel bathing suit. Her hair is long, blown-out and perfectly tousled, surrounding her in a corona of honey highlights. She's raising her arms above her head. "Expression!" says Abrahams, and suddenly her countenance goes from attitudinal to warm—subtle adjustments to her features that help explain why she gets paid top dollar.

If you live in New York City, you see models everywhere. They're easy to spot, loping down the sidewalk with their long limbs. There are so many of them you start wondering: Why do some become major models? Is it luck? Is it some technical thing, like the shape of the jaw or the eye-to-nose ratio? Is it an innate inner glow?

While many models remain unsung, Daria is one of the select few who has hit the fashion industry's apex. She's been on all the coveted covers—*W*, *V*, the *Vogues*—as well as represented countless brands, including Prada, Gucci, Louis Vuitton and Lancôme (this issue coincides with the spring release of Lancôme Ô de L'Orangerie). She ranked sixth on *Forbes'* the World's Top-Earning Models list last year (2010 to 2011), with an estimated earning of \$4.5 million. Basically, if it were 1995, we would be calling her a supermodel. Or if it were 2005, we'd be calling her a top model. What would we call her today? Maybe model mogul?

The shoot is done and Daria's agent waves me over to the makeup area. Daria has changed into her street clothes: fitted black leather leggings and a diaphanous white T-shirt. A few studs of coloured stone climb up her ear, and a long, thin spike dangles down from her left lobe. She has long arms and legs, and she folds herself into a chair that seems too small for her. The hairstylists help her remove her hair extensions. "Wait till you see this transformation," she jokes. "By the end of this, you're gonna be like, 'Who is that!'"

Of course, even without makeup and billowing hair, she is still completely compelling to look at: Big eyes, an almost cat-like nose and a soft mouth. Her face is more magnetic than perfect. You can't stop looking at her, trying to figure out what it is that makes her so beautiful. Maybe that's what it takes to be an international face: mystery.

She's been living in New York City's Chinatown for seven years now, Daria begins to tell me. She first started modelling at 14 in Canada, where she moved from Poland with her family when she was three. Now that she's 28, she's been in this industry for half of her life. I mention this to her. "Oh, my god, thanks a lot," she says, sarcastically. "I honestly never thought about it until you said it right

now." While she talks, people from the shoot keep coming up to her to say goodbye. She stands and hugs each of them.

I mention my sailing friend. "Oh! Is this an interview for him? What's he like?" she asks, jokingly. I mention he's gay. "Oh, well," she laughs.

One thing is for sure: The next person to capture her heart better have sea legs. Daria's father was a sailor in Ukraine. He shipped her and her siblings off to sailing camp when she was nine years old. In the summer of 2008, just before being inducted into Canada's Walk of Fame, she took three months off to sail across the Atlantic Ocean with her family. At one point, they hit a storm. There were gigantic waves. They had to bring the sails down and, for 10 days, just ride it out. "The ocean changes in a second. You kind of go into survival thinking," she says. "You are so close to the elements. There is no room for daydreaming." When she talks about the ocean, you see her face light up. *Expression!*

Society has become over-saturated with choice, she says. "I mean, there are [too many] stores that just sell sneakers. You can get option paralysis. On the ocean, you have no choice but to make decisions, to act." Does she ever feel scared out in the ocean, during a storm? "No. Never, 'I'm gonna die!' More like, 'Yes!'" She pumps her fist and grins.

I wonder aloud what it's like for her to go from sailing back into the fashion world, which can sometimes seem like a hall of mirrors—literally. "I've always struggled with that. But it's not a superficial industry. It's a superficial world," she says. "We've always been obsessed with youth and beauty. The best thing I can say is that I think it's wrong for women to look at magazines and want to be *that* girl. I was raised to believe that this is all entertainment."

She tells me she feels her life is in a transitional phase. "Not because I'm coming on 30, but just what exactly I'm going to do next. When I started out, I wanted to make money, I wanted to work. But that part of the reason is over. Now I am investigating *why* I am doing this."

Whatever is next for her, you can be assured it will be different. "I don't think the world needs for me to design clothes," she says. Daria is kind of the anti-Victoria's Secret model. Nothing feels forced or calculated about her. Maybe that's what makes her so captivating.

Another stylist comes by to hug her. She bends over and puts in her nose ring. She's excited to go sailing this summer. This time "it's just around the Med [Mediterranean]," she says. "But next week I'm going heli-boarding!"


Daria, you start to understand, doesn't just want to be a model; she wants to be herself. And she's figuring out who that is by jumping out of helicopters and sailing in the lawless ocean, wherever she feels most alive.

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EAU DARIA

Lancôme Ô de L'Orangerie, 75 ml, \$54, is the latest spritz in the Ô collection. About its magic mix of orange flower essence, orange zest, jasmine petals and aquatic notes, contributing perfumer Dominique Ropion says, "We had in mind the idea of fresh and dazzling femininity." Enter Daria as the fragrance's ideal frontwoman.





GALE FORCE GIRL

DARIA WERBOWY—FACE OF LANCÔME AND ONE OF FASHION'S MOST RECOGNIZABLE MODELS—IS AS INTERESTED IN CHALLENGING NATURE AS SHE IS THE CAMERA LENS.

BY MIKE ALBO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK ABRAHAMS

FASHION EDITOR: JULIANA SCHIAVINATTO

Dress, Anthony Vaccarello, anthonyvaccarello.com.
Boots, Ann-Sofie Back Atelje, annsofieback.com.
Earrings, Daria's own.