

# The 6th Floor



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## EAVESDROPPING ON THE TIMES MAGAZINE

February 23, 2013, 7:02 am | 8 Comments

### When Living Hand to Mouth Becomes a Career

By MAYA LAU



Grant Cornett for The New York Times. Food stylist: Suzanne Lenzer.

This mouth, appearing on the cover of this weekend's issue, belongs to [Laura Williams](#), a model whose lips, teeth and hands are frequently sought for advertisements.

When we conceived of an image to accompany Michael Moss's article on [the addictive science of junk food](#), we wanted to emulate the way a food

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The 6th Floor is the blog of The New York Times Magazine, where staff members — editors, designers, writers, photo editors and researchers — share ideas, arguments, curiosities and links.

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#### In the Sunday Magazine

##### Innovation: Who Made That Spork?

BY JESSICA GROSS

The medieval tool that led to today's plastic utensil that "swings both ways."

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Readers respond.

##### The Ethicist: Did I Fence a Sign?

BY CHUCK KLOSTERMAN

Black-market gray area; contribution conundrum.

##### Talk: Danica Patrick on Racing Cars and Building Brands

INTERVIEW BY AMY CHOZICK

The Nascar driver says that her brand is "about being feminine but unique and different and kind of blazing a trail."

##### How Is Hamid Karzai Still Standing?

BY WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

Enemies left, enemies right, and then there's his family. Building an Afghan legacy is even more complicated than it appears.

#### Recent Posts

- November 29 1 **The Public Life of Hamid Karzai**  
Select moments in the evolution of Hamid Karzai, seen through excerpts from The Times.
- November 28 2 **Other Great Moments in Eating Fish Alone**

advertisement looks and feels — idealized, clean, enticing. So we called [Parts Models](#), an agency that specializes in body parts, and it led us to Williams.



Laura Williams

Justin Macala

Williams says she initially aimed to do “normal modeling,” never imagining that something so specific as her teeth or her nails would become a focus of her career. While Williams’s mouth is the focal point of our cover, it was her hands that first caught the attention of parts modeling agents (those are her fingers, too, on our cover).

Roughly 50 percent of her modeling work involves parts modeling. The “abnormally close” photographs in parts modeling demand “such a different level of perfection,” Williams says, that if a model has slightly flawed hands, or a strange space between her teeth, it can detract from the product being advertised. She has modeled in advertisements for Revlon, Colgate, Hilton Hotels and others.

But while her teeth are remarkable (they have never been professionally whitened), Williams says she is better known for her appearance on the covers of more than 1,000 romance novels — she has heard that she is the top female book-cover model in the world. Williams has fans who follow her because of this; there are fan sites that offer images of her as desktop screen savers.

Our film featuring Cate Blanchett recalled a poem by Billy Collins that ran in the magazine in 2007.

November 27  
10

### Discovering the D.J. Caroline Corley, Only to Quickly Lose Her

I enjoyed Corley’s on-the-air persona, the kind of cool rock chick we all like to hang out with.

November 27

### How Long Does It Take to Shelve 23,000 Albums?

Watch a big, new music store in New York City get stocked with thousands of CDs and vinyl records in this time-lapse video by Stephen Mallon.

November 27

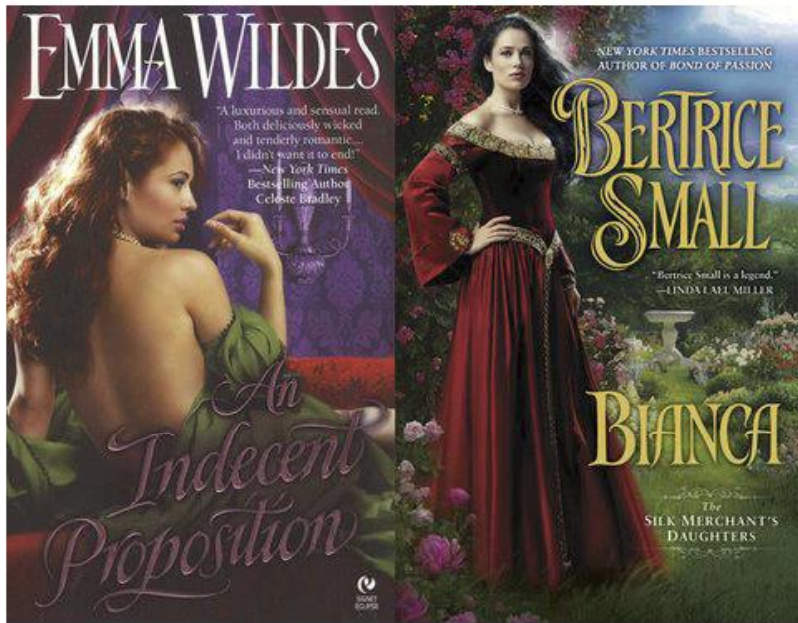
### The Lives They Loved: Submit Your Memories

We are inviting you to contribute stories and photographs of your loved ones who died this year.

Archive

Select Month





Shirley Green

Williams says that she has to be careful of actions as simple as digging around in her purse — she could break a nail. (Unlike some obsessive hand models, though, she does shake people's hands). Williams stays away from cigarettes, harsh soaps, most sports and anything that poses a physical risk.

"If you're a normal person and you break your pinkie finger, it's not a big deal, but when you're a model, it could mean you're out of work."

This is Williams's first time on the cover of a national magazine.



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## 8 Comments

Share your thoughts.

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**Christine** · Manhattan, NY

I live in NY and I see this model everywhere. Isn't she the latest Revlon model? I saw her on their site doing the Colorstay lipstick ad. So pretty and I have seen her on about 100 Romance Novel covers. Great article...I would love to find out if she has a fan club? I would like to get a novel signed by her to give as a gift for my friend whom collects them!

March 4, 2013 at 10:19 a.m.



**Justin** · Chicago

I've been obsessed with this model for years. My sister has always been an avid romance book reader so I've been following Laura Williams' story for years. It's amazing how she transforms from picture to picture. She's not only a goddess on this earth and the ultimate male fantasy, but her life is fascinating. Please bring us more to read about Ms. Williams.

March 4, 2013 at 10:19 a.m.



**Captain Franklin Grimes** · Lyme

That's kind of chilling, really. Life as a walking billboard, no thanks.

Feb. 25, 2013 at 9:58 a.m. · RECOMMENDED  1



**Walter J Machann** · Bangkok

The attraction of eye candy?!?

Feb. 25, 2013 at 9:58 a.m.



**Adam Weis** · NYC

Laura is just amazing, a true beauty and consummate model. Each magazine, commercial, film and fashion runway is greatly enhanced by her presence. I have known Laura for many years and her inner grace, sweetness and charm are matched only by her physical stature. A perfect selection for your NY Times Magazine cover story.

Feb. 25, 2013 at 9:58 a.m.



**Chris Lynn** · NY

Wow excellent article on model Laura Williams. I knew she was the top Romance Novel cover model but didn't know there was such a thing as a parts model. I've seen her in so many magazines! Beautiful woman.


Feb. 25, 2013 at 9:58 a.m.



**marly harris** · Southern California

Laura Williams is gorgeous all over, absolutely stunning! I was briefly a hand-model in Manhattan in 1956 when I was a young opera singer; it is nerve-wracking to worry about one's hands. I didn't pursue hand/nail perfection for very long.

Now, at 80, I model costume jewelry with my ancient hands. Fortunately, the jewels are the focus but I still take meticulous (perhaps obsessive) care of my nails and hands.

Feb. 25, 2013 at 9:58 a.m. · RECOMMENDED  1



**David Larkin** · NY, NY

Terrific image, and this girl is lovely, I hope we can see her again in the magazine, including her beautiful face.

Feb. 25, 2013 at 9:58 a.m.

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