

– a colour that accentuated her almond-shaped eyes. She was small, slight, no more than five foot tall and reed-thin. Too thin, concluded Edwin. His thoughts drifted back to the sanatorium and the young women who arrived each week: skeletal patients, moon faces atop stick bodies, flesh wasting away as they sought his father's cure: fresh air and bed rest.

Matilda's hair was cut very short, as if it had recently been shaved and was just beginning to grow back. Yet it suited her. There was an aura of intensity about her, Edwin thought. It was strange to be confronted by a bride who looked so serious; one who stared back at him as if the camera was no more than a telescope. He had the impression that she could look through the camera and into his eyes and, although he knew it wasn't possible, he felt vulnerable.

In his experience, it was very rare for a subject to make eye contact with the photographer. It was even more unusual for a woman to do so. In most cases, women were too uncomfortable with – and critical of – their bodies to look through the camera at him. Only professional models had learnt how to face the camera. Other women held back, conscious of their supposed shortcomings. He was always amazed at the way women dissected themselves into parts rather than viewing themselves as complete: their ears were too prominent, their lips uneven, the skin around their eyes too puffy, their skin tone too red or blotchy, their hips too thin or too curvy. Even brides – women who had given hours of thought to make-up, hair and gowns – usually wore an expression of resignation. It was as if they knew the photographer as they viewed themselves. For some reason that