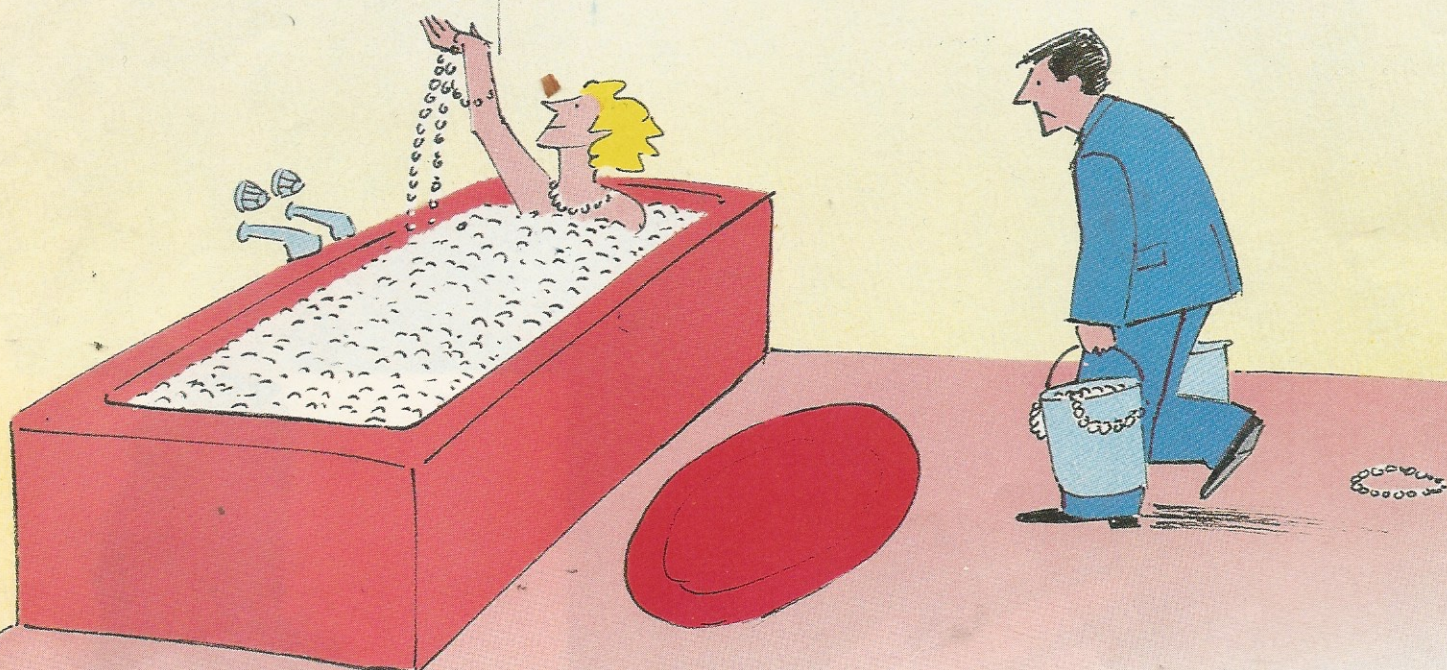


MEN ARE ACCLAIMED FOR THEIR POWER PLAYS WHILE WOMEN ARE DECLAIMED FOR BEING CONNIVING. BUT FROM COURTESANS TO CORPORATION COUNSELS, EXPLOITING ONE'S BEAUTY AND BRAINS VERY OFTEN SEPARATES THE WINNERS FROM THE LOSERS.

# Material Girls

## The Gentle Art Of Manipulation



### The Spoils Of War

BY DALE BURG

I shocked a therapist several years ago by telling her that my idea of the ultimate female was Zsa Zsa Gabor—not that I admired Zsa Zsa, necessarily, or wanted to be her, certainly, but that she knew something about men that I didn't. Just as Felix Rohatyn knows something about money and Carl Sagan something about the universe and my insurance man something about the advantages of whole-life over term that—no matter how hard I try—I never will. And the thing that she knew, of course, is how to get them to marry her.

Nowadays, Zsa Zsa is no longer my reference point mainly because in the interim I

managed to get married myself and realize that's not the secret skill that separates certain women from certain other kinds of women. The women I don't understand at all are the ones who know how to get men to buy things for them—the apotheosis, of course, being the late Duchess of Windsor. (Elizabeth Taylor gets lots of stuff out of men, too, but she is gorgeous and that's different.) As my friend Gail pointed out after the auction of the Duchess' jewelry, the fact that Edward VIII gave up the crown for her was only half the story. Equally—perhaps even more—amazing is the fact that he

spent the rest of his life designing and buying her new jewelry.

I'm not resentful of her, and women like her, so much as curious, in a detached sort of way—slightly more than I'm curious about how fuel injection works and slightly less than whether liposuction hurts. I can't imagine how they go about it, though I suppose that, as in all things, whether or not you get presents

is in part determined by how badly you want them. The message my friend's mother sent her out into the world with was "Wear blue. Boys like blue." What everyone drummed into my

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head was, "Make money." To my friend's mother, succeeding with boys was the big deal; to mine, the issue was independence.

From my present vantage point, I wonder: Had my mother given me some more advice along the "wear blue" line, would I have had to work less hard making my own money? As it was, I focused totally on ensuring that I wouldn't be a displaced homemaker rather than honing any courtesan's skills. (Of course, the two needn't be mutually exclusive. As it turned out, my friend makes plenty of money, and she also gets lots of jewelry.)

In our house, no one was very excited by the prospect of gifts in general, and jewelry was the furthest thing from our collective mind. If anyone had suggested, as I have discovered they did in other homes, that a birthday was the occasion to get "an important piece," my mother would have thought they were talking about the slice of cake with the roses on it. I never heard any of the following adages other women's mothers told them:

"Big rings look better on youthful hands."

"Mink is a coat for younger women."

"Don't let him tell you he'll buy it for you later. Later, no one will care that you are wearing it."

Or even chillingly, "Let him spend it on you. Why leave it for the next wife?"

I had lessons in the accordion, piano, magic, even etymology—but nothing in the art of the deal. By contrast, Pauline, the well-jeweled wife of a suburban dentist, learned to value the comfort of material goods to the point that a gold-and-diamond bangle helped her through natural childbirth. Her husband had promised to deliver it when she delivered their baby. "Focus on the bracelet," he kept saying—an exhortation by which she's lived her life.

### **You're Never Too Young**

"My earliest memory," Pauline says, "is grabbing for the diamond solitaire my grandmother wore around her neck and being assured that it would someday be mine. At 12, for my confirmation, my mother asked me what I would like, and I said, 'Jewelry.' She took me to the diamond exchange to shop, and that was how I learned. For my 18th birthday, I got 18 real pearls.

"I told my first serious boyfriend that it would be nice for him to buy me a present each month on the anniversary of the day we met. He agreed and asked me what I wanted. 'Jewelry,' I told him. My next boyfriend bought me a clock radio, which I suppose was useful, but my feeling was, I can't wear this. Then I went out with a drugstore wholesaler who brought me Dr. Scholl products and lipsticks. I explained to him that there is a limit on how many lipsticks a person can use and suggested he trade inner soles for jewelry.

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engaged, my husband-to-be took me to the diamond exchange to see what kind of ring I'd want. I pointed to the biggest one in the window. 'Are you sure?' he asked. 'That's the one!' I said. So he took me next door and I picked an even bigger one. And so forth. At the end of the street, he put his arm around me and said, 'Pauline, how about my buying you a zircon, and putting x thousands of dollars in your account under your maiden name, and then you can have the money and no one will know it's not a real diamond?' I told him, 'If this marriage will begin with a falsehood, then I don't think I want this marriage at all.' Two weeks later, I had a four-carat ring."

I had only the merest inklings of why Pauline assumed that anyone would be thrilled to buy her jewelry in the first place and why her assumption proved overwhelmingly correct, but I suspected it had something to do with the lessons learned at her mother's knee (also knuckle, wrist and earlobe). Alternatively, I thought the attitude might be forged by a dotting father. Now I believe it's genetic, something you're born with, like perfect pitch. As evidence, one only has to turn again to the Duchess. According to *The Duchess of Windsor: The Secret Life*, Charles Higham's new biography, her mother couldn't even get Wallis' father to marry her before Wallis was born, and the sickly man didn't survive her first birthday.

Closer to home, I need only look to my friend Barbara, with a father whose personal warmth rivals that of a check-cashing machine and a mother whose comment on each of her daughter's acquisitions is, "Where is it written that you're so entitled?" In the pie chart of her family's budget, personal items for Barbara get a disproportionate slice, and she always knew how to ask for more. Early in their marriage, before they could afford any jewelry, the only thing of value was her husband's teeth; for a long while, he refused

to get porcelain caps, obstinately preferring gold. When eventually they were replaced, Barbara had holes drilled through them and wore them on a chain around her neck. "Gold's gold," she shrugged, by way of explanation.

Barbara claims you can manage to provide yourself with nice things on even a limited income. When she wanted to stop smoking, her husband agreed to pay \$150 for a session with a hypnotist named Dr. Spiegel. "The week before my session, I stopped into Fortunoff's where I fell in love with a necklace and earrings that cost \$150. I called my husband. 'About the hypnotist: Must I specifically see Dr. Spiegel for treatment?' He said no. 'May I see someone other than a hypnotist?' He said yes. 'Suppose a store has a special program to stop smoking. How would that be?' He would consider it. 'Suppose I pay Fortunoff's the \$150 and I guarantee you I will never smoke again?' It was a deal."

### Calculated Risks

There are many books on the market about how to get a man down the aisle. They offer the obvious advice. Feed him soup. Rub his back. Flatter his ego. One seeks in vain, however, for what would surely be the real best-seller: How to Get Him to the Jewelry Counter. I'm not talking here about inspiring the impulse; I'm talking about the mechanics of it. How specific do you get? Mention, casually, an approaching birthday? Say, "Let's go look in the window at Cartier"? Actually talk carats?

Clearly, getting a man in your thrall is only part of it. We've heard the rumors about the boudoir tricks the Duchess may have mastered to catch the Duke. But what's really mysterious is how one cultivates a husband who can write in his diary, "Today I rose late, ate a big breakfast and watched the Duchess buy a hat." How do you sustain whatever

magnanimity you've inspired in the bedroom through the whole process of getting dressed, into a taxi (make that a limousine) and to the store?

One friend, insisting on anonymity "or I'll never get another earring," claims, "It's simply a matter of choosing the right man—someone who believes that buying you something is the only way he can show you his love. The diamond people have been a big help in this regard, since the message of their advertising is, 'If you love her, you'll buy her a diamond.' When this sort of man does buy you the gift," she adds, "don't act too grateful. And never return anything: You'll get more only if you give positive reinforcement."

"Any man can learn to get excited about buying you jewelry if you make it interesting," Helene maintains. "Adorning you is a way of showing off. Get his competitive spirit going. Show him something you own and love and mention who gave it to you. He'll try to do better. Or send away for an auction catalog and introduce him to paddle power. When my husband realized he was head-to-head with a big name on Wall Street over one piece, he was hooked. Making a purchase at auction is winning for him."

Suppose the man's not insecure? Suppose his idea of one-upmanship is arm wrestling? Then, think guilt. "I give men big, expensive gifts so they feel they owe me one in return," Pam tells me. She makes it sound simple, but I know there's more to it than that. Her persuasive powers should be put to use on an arms-control committee. She not only received a safety deposit box full of gifts from her former husband, but also convinced him he should make the presentations artfully. He had one Cartier box baked into a wedding cake and, at a romantic dinner, complained of a strange sensation in his chest, encouraged her to put her hand (CONTINUED ON PAGE 384)



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on his heart—and surprised her with a brooch.

This pales beside her major triumph: Learning that the current girlfriend of a man she left a few years ago was sporting a Barry Kieselstein-Cord necklace, Pam called him the next morning to ask why *that* woman was wearing things *she* never got from him. Within 15 minutes, he was offering to take her to lunch and buy her a present.

Her contention is that men *expect* to buy you gifts, and Gail agrees. "Some of them will try to tell you they don't like being forced to get you a present just because it's a birthday or anniversary, or whatever. Don't let them get away with that. You think the guy will come home with something special just because it's Tuesday? It'll never happen."

### Friendly Persuasion

"When they know a present is expected, before a birthday or anniversary, the tension mounts for them," Gail believes. "They don't know what to buy. Consider that you're doing them a kindness by letting them know what would please you. My husband is relieved that he doesn't have to choose. I let him know what I'm dying for and then he's all set.

"Sometimes I help him 'surprise' me by pointing out something I like—in magazines, on wrists—and saying it's the most beautiful

thing I've ever seen. Or I bring him to a jewelry counter when I go shopping with him. Even men who aren't shoppers have to go into stores *sometimes*. Just make sure it's a department store with a jewelry boutique. Do the legwork in advance so you know just what to point out. Another good thing is to find a jeweler to mix with socially. Then your husband has his own consultant."

And if none of this works?

"A leg lock," she counsels.

Pauline puts it more subtly. "Each year, my husband tells me to pick out something I might like, and then he comes to help me make the final selection. This year, he made me go back three times. He was having trouble with the numbers. I finally got my present, but long after my birthday. I told him I didn't like having to wait and I was icy for a few months. I think he got the message."

Never, ever, I'm told by women who are successful at this type of thing, make the mistake of substituting something practical for an indulgence. My friend Josie agreed that her fiancé should buy her a car instead of an engagement ring. "Where's the diamond?" my friends would ask. "Parked at the corner," I'd tell them. When the marriage broke up, he drove the car to Mexico to write his novel. You can bet he wouldn't have taken the ring off my finger."

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Remember: The operative word is "practical." When Malcolm Forbes gave Elizabeth Taylor a Harley-Davidson, she said, "Motorcycles are more fun than diamonds." Volkswagens, one assumes, are not. Moreover, she made the motorcycle remark sporting "tight jeans, cowboy boots and sweatshirt, and her famous \$1.5 million diamond ring" and in the

course of a cruise during which—that Liz!—"she changed diamonds on an average of every six hours."

Well, I don't think I'm necessarily better than the women who know how to go for the gold, but I'm certainly different. As definitive proof, I offer the fact that at my own suggestion I am wearing as a wedding band the ring

my husband's ex-wife left behind. When I told him I preferred a gesture to a gift, he took me at my word—not that I don't get presents every now and then, but nothing I could pawn. There are compensations. It does keep the insurance premiums low. And when my future daughter-in-law tells me, "Stay well," I won't wonder if she means it.