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By David Camelon

JOLIE GABOR lost everything—fortune, business, homes and jewels—everything but the mink coat she wore—when the Russians took Budapest in February, 1945.

She fled to New York City—and there even the mink coat was stolen in a motion picture theatre three days after she landed. Then, at last, Jolie Gabor had nothing left.

But if Jolie were penniless, her daughters were not—those, lovely, unpredictable Gabor girls: Magda, Sari and Eva. They had married well—and Sari and Eva in particular had money. They offered to share it with Jolie:

"Mama, you must let us support you."

Jolie shook her head.

"No," she said. "Then I should be poor, indeed. Then I should lose my last and greatest treasure—self-sufficiency. With that, I can win everything else. Without it, it would be better for me to die."

The girls nodded.

"Yes, mama," they said. "That is the most important thing in life."

There, in those words, lies the key to the fabulous Gabor story—the story of three lovely girls who flashed spectacularly through American life—through successive marriages—searching restlessly for something neither marriage nor wealth alone could give.

Their beauty—and their restless, questing lives—were known to millions. But the secret of their lives—the thing that made them what they were—was not.

To know that, you had to know Jolie—the strong, firm, yet completely feminine matriarch about whom the life of the family centered; an unusual woman, whom ordinary ideas, ordinary standards cannot explain.

The story of Jolie is the story of the Gabors.

It starts in Budapest, in the spring of 1917, when World War I still raged—when Jolie herself was 17, and a dashing officer placed his life and fortune at her feet.

Jolie—Jolie de Kende was her name then—tried to say "no." She didn't want to marry anyone. She wanted to be a great actress—to have all the world at her feet. Even then, Jolie yearned to be self-sufficient.

But Budapest was a romantic city in those springs. The scent of flowers drifted in from the garden—the officer was handsome—and she found her heart melting as he pleaded:

"Marry me, Jolie."

She said she couldn't. She told him her dream of a career. But Major William Gabor was insistent.

"You cannot know that you really want to be

an actress, Jolie," he said. "You are young. One has to work very hard to be a great actress. I can make you happy, Jolie. Let me try. Marry me—be my wife for six months. Then, if you still wish to be an actress, I will let you go."

He was 20 years older than Jolie—but that did not seem important. Jolie yielded.

"Yes, William," she said. "I will let you try. But I hold you to your promise. If I want a career in six months, I will leave you."

"So we tried," Jolie said, recently, in telling the story of that marriage. "We were married, and our life was gay and good. You do not know Budapest? It is a wonderful city—so lovely, so romantic and gay—or it was until the Iron Curtain shut it in."

"My husband was wealthy, and so was my family. My grandfather owned a jewelry factory, and a chain of stores. And it did not take much to live in Budapest."

THE six months passed swiftly. Jolie still wanted a career—but a baby was on the way. She told her husband:

"I will wait until our baby is born, and then I will go."

"If that is what you want," her husband replied, "at least, I will have our son."

But the baby was not a boy. It was a girl, Magda. After Magda's birth, Jolie went to her husband, and said:

"Now I must find my career."

Her husband asked her to stay.



The Self-Sufficient Jolie Gabor and Her Daughters, Magda, Eva and Sari. From the Painting by Paul Fried.

The Mother of the

Though She Had Lost Everything, She Would Not Let Three Wealthy and Adoring Daughters Support Her, but Said, "I Would Rather Die"

"Jolie," he said, "You cannot go now. Please give me a son."

"So," Jolie recalled, "I stayed. In 16 months our second baby was born. Again it was a girl—my daughter Sari. I told my husband:

"Now I must go."

"But again he begged me to stay. He wanted a son so much. So I stayed. In 18 months our third baby came. And again it was a girl—Eva."

"Then I went to my husband again. I was very determined. I said:

"Now at last I go and make my career."

"But he said: 'Jolie, you must not leave now. You must stay and bring up our daughters. When they are grown and married, then, if you wish, you may go.'

"So," said Jolie, with a smile and a shrug of her still-dainty shoulders, "I stayed—I stayed until 1939."

That was the story she told. But there was a twinkle in her eye as she spoke that made you wonder whether Jolie really wanted to leave all those years—whether it was not love and contentment that held her.

"At last," she continued, "my girls were grown—and married. Sari—we called her Zsa Zsa—married Burhan Belge, director of the Turkish

press service. Magda married a Polish count, Jan Bichovsky. And Eva married Dr. Erik Drimmer, who took her to Hollywood."

Again Jolie went to her husband. She said: "I have done what I promised. Now I must think of my career."

Her husband again tried to persuade her to remain with him.

"After 22 years, Jolie?" he asked. "You really want to leave? You cannot be an actress now."

"I know," Jolie told him. "But I want to be independent. I can be a business woman."

As she told the story, Jolie turned to a picture—a picture of her mother, Francesca de Kende. She said: "You ask about the Gabors. There is where the story really starts. She was a great woman, a lovely woman. She had inherited my grandfather's business. I went to work for her. Mother said:

"Jolie, life without work is nothing. You must earn your holidays if you are to appreciate them. Work hard, Jolie."

"She had taught me to rely on myself—and she had taught the same lesson to my daughters. When I told her I had decided to leave my husband, she said:

"Do so if you must, Jolie. But take nothing

Painting by Paul Fried



Gabor Girls

from him. There must be no claims, no unpleasantness, no scandal. Leave with nothing but your personal possessions."

That is what Jolie did—left with nothing but her clothes and jewels, and went to work with her mother.

"I learned the business," she said. "I worked hard—and I found what I wanted: self-sufficiency. I found the rewards of hard work, and they were good. My husband and I remained the best of friends—I lunched with him every day. When he saw I was serious about my work, he agreed to a divorce."

MEANWHILE, even though the "phony war" of 1939 developed into the shooting of World War II, Jolie heard news of her daughters—and could see in them her own fierce urge for self-sufficiency.

Eva, in Hollywood, had entered the movies, and was on her way to stardom.

"She did it the only way it could be done," Jolie said. "She worked hard."

"In Ankara, Turkey, where she was with her husband, Zsa Zsa heard of Eva's success. She wanted to be an actress, too. She cried and cried, until her husband said:

"All right, Zsa Zsa. You can go. But remember, it takes more than beauty to be an actress."

"So Zsa Zsa went to Hollywood. Magda was with me in Budapest. Her husband had been

forced to leave her there when he joined the British army."

But events were swiftly approaching that were to test Jolie's courage and her new-found independence. By the end of 1944, Nazi armies were collapsing on the west and east. January of 1945 saw the Red armies converging on Budapest, and Jolie knew that she must escape from the city. The Portuguese minister offered to take Jolie and Magda with him, as his cook and secretary. But Jolie would not go without her former husband.

"I could not leave him to the Russians," she said. "It was difficult to arrange for him to come with us, but the Portuguese minister did it. There were so many in his car I could take no luggage, no jewels—nothing but the clothes I wore and my mink coat."

America was the goal of Jolie, Magda and Major Gabor. To Jolie, it was the symbol of the independence she sought. It was the home of two of her daughters. Eva and Zsa Zsa, Jolie knew, had divorced their first husbands, and had married millionaires—Eva had married Charles Isaacs, and Zsa Zsa had wed Conrad Hilton, the hotel man.

They reached New York early in 1946. Three days later Jolie lost her coat in the theatre. Zsa Zsa, who was with her, was amazed at her calm. But Jolie said:

"Zsa Zsa, I have lost everything else. Why should I cry over a coat? Now that I have

nothing at all, I can start over again. This America is a country where one can do that. You will see—I will have things again."

There followed the girls' offer to support Jolie—and her refusal. Jolie said:

"Instead, give me now the money you would give me in the first year. Let me use it to open a business."

The girls gave her \$7,000—and Jolie opened a jewelry store on Madison Ave., in New York's fashionable 60s.

"It was a very small store," she said. "The first year was tough. I worked until 10 or 12 o'clock every night. I swept and cleaned the store—I did everything that had to be done. But it was good. I was not afraid to work."

"I learned what a privilege it is to be in America. You have to know the things I have been through to understand that. I would fight for America."

SOON people came to know her—and like her. Business flourished, and late in 1948, she opened a new and bigger store. Magda, married to Sidney R. Warren, a New York attorney, came to work with her as a jewelry designer.

Twice—once in Budapest, and again in America—Jolie had found the self-sufficiency she needed. Nothing, it seemed, could shake her confidence in herself—not even when, in late 1949, Mrs. Dorothy Kelen D'Oxylian sued her husband, Stephen Kelen, Baron D'Oxylian, for divorce, and named Jolie as the "other woman."

"Of course it is not true," Jolie said. "He worked for me. Sometimes, in the course of business, we dined together. That is all."

Jolie, meanwhile, had married William Christman, New York restaurant man.

The Gabor story was not finished. Eva was opening in a Broadway musical; Zsa Zsa was newly married to George Sanders, the actor; Jolie and Magda were busy in the shop; and her former husband was in Europe, trying to save something from the wreck of her fortune.