

1955

*One of the world's most glamorous women reveals her unorthodox  
and sometimes cynical views about the other sex*

# The Men in My Life

by ZSA ZSA GABOR

I'M TOLD THAT I CAN BE CONSIDERED one of the foremost feminine living authorities on men. I'm not sure how I've earned this title: I'm not even sure if it's meant to be a compliment or an insult. But I make no apologies for choosing to write about men.

Still, I'm afraid I will be condemned by some women who will think I'm being too bold. These are the women who say they're not really interested in men—and that men bore them. The hypocrites! What they mean is that men haven't shown much interest in them.

However, I don't want you to think that I've been conducting a kind of Kinsey investigation, going about the country asking men impertinent questions. This is a purely personal report about the men I've met—actors, diplomats, writers, politicians, businessmen, bad men, good men, silly men, passionate men, cold men. All varieties.

Mainly it is about husbands, my own. I'm happy to say I've been able to conduct most of my studies as a married woman. In fact, up to last April, when I divorced George Sanders, I couldn't remember when I hadn't been married.

Of course, I can't say that I have spent my whole life in a state of marital bliss with one man. Who can? I've just been married almost continuously, with very little breathing space between my three husbands.

Each marriage lasted several years—to be exact, two, six and five, respectively. So I can hardly be accused of rushing from the altar to the divorce court.

Like many European girls, I started my marital career very early. I was only 16 when I married for the first time. I know now I was much too young. My husband was a diplomat and an important member of the Turkish Government. Burhan Belge was 20 years older than I—suave, worldly, well-bred, Oriental and tolerant. Saddled with an impetuous, inexperienced, temperamental girl bride who knew nothing of

his ways, he had to be tolerant.

My next husband was Conrad Hilton, owner of a chain of hotels. He was a typical successful American businessman—hard-headed, hustling and impatient. He won't mind my saying, as I often told him, that he was also emotionally immature. I think most American men are. It's the fault perhaps of their women, who mother and dominate them too much.

My third and last husband was George Sanders, an actor, and therefore a member of a race apart. Since I now make some claim to being an actress myself, I can't pretend not to have understood him. He was moody, of course, supremely egotistical, but overwhelmingly charming when he wanted to be.

Well, that's the trio. I have met other men. Men that I've worshipped, mainly from afar. Men who've taught me that they can be attractive, fascinating and appealing, though they are not good-looking. There have also been men I've met with no claim to fame or distinction, except that I've found them exciting and interesting.

I have to admit—and this seems to be the place to do it—that I get on much better with men than with

women. Leaving out my two sisters and my mother, I have few real friends among my own sex.

I can't remember exactly when I first discovered I had more understanding with the other sex than with my own. Perhaps it was back in Budapest, where I was born.

On my fourth birthday I was given a large, well-dressed doll. The other little girls at the party either wanted to take it away from me or pull it apart. But the boys not only left my doll alone but borrowed bits and pieces from their sisters to add to its wardrobe. I was beginning to learn about the protective, helpful male, in contrast to the destructive, jealous female.

At school, it didn't take me long to find out that the French teacher (male) would be much more lenient when I had some mistakes than the history teacher (female). I am sorry for any girls who don't make a similar early discovery.

I remember I fell madly in love with that French teacher. He was tall, brown-eyed and very French. But he was married. When I first heard that, I experienced a feeling of hopelessness which I'll never forget. I was ready to commit suicide—a girl can be very foolish at the age of twelve.

Still, I was learning lesson No. 2. Stay away from married men. I know it's been said before, but it's still being ignored by girls who end up with nothing but heartbreak. He may swear undying love and promise to leave that wife who doesn't understand him, but he always crawls back for forgiveness, even taking his presents with him if he gets the chance.

Now I can confess that I pro-

posed to my first husband, Belge, the Turk. I met him at a party in my father's house in Budapest when I was only 14. I suppose I looked fetching in my pigtails, ribbons and party dress, for he said jokingly when he was introduced: "One day I'll marry you. Remember!"

I remembered. About two years later when I was not quite 16, I entered the Miss Hungary Beauty Competition unknown to my father but with my mother's connivance. I remember on the night before the competition, my older sister's party dress had to be altered to fit me and a shoeshop was specially opened after hours so I could get a pair of high-heeled shoes. I stumbled to victory in those first high-heeled shoes and became Miss Hungary 1938.

THE TITLE BROUGHT stage and film offers, and sparked my ambition to be an actress, but my father firmly said "No!" So I decided the best way to escape his control was by marrying. I called up my Turk and said: "You made me an offer of marriage two years ago. In case you've forgotten, I'm now proposing to you."

Being a gallant gentleman he replied: "Of course I haven't forgotten. I expected you would take a little time to think it over."

Three days later we were married. It was a long time before my father forgave me.

The Turk took me on our honeymoon to Albania, where his brother-in-law was Turkish ambassador. I was treated like a princess and I enjoyed every moment. But when we arrived in the Turkish capital of Ankara, I was in the newspaper

headlines as "The Foreign Wife." I then learned that my husband had broken the official rule that Turkish diplomats should not marry foreign wives. This didn't make life any easier for the first few weeks. But the "mistake" was soon forgiven and I settled down to my new environment as well as I could.

I couldn't have been an outstanding success as the 16-year-old hostess at my husband's formal dinner parties with princes, counts, prime ministers and occasionally a king among the guests. I was completely lost when the conversation got around to international political problems, as it always did.

I still blush when I think of the time I was asked by a minister what I thought of the Nazis. I hadn't been listening closely, so I replied: "Aren't they the dull couple who left the ball early last night?"

My husband luckily had the patience and philosophical understanding of an Oriental. He was highly educated, spoke 11 languages fluently. I could only chatter frilly nonsense in five, including Turkish which I had managed to pick up with my husband's help.

When we had an evening to ourselves, he would read to me from the classics—Balzac, Voltaire and Shakespeare. I think he enjoyed the role of teacher. And I have learned since that all men do. They prefer their women to be just bright enough to realize what bright people *they* are.

At this time in Turkey, I was no match for my husband intellectually. He knew it and I knew it. But at least I had some decorative value at the receptions and balls which filled the calendar. I was young,



pretty and vivacious. I was also flirtatious, but in a harmless way. I was feted and flattered by the men, hated and ignored by the other wives who gossiped maliciously about me. No wonder I welcomed the prospect of a change when my husband took me to England on a diplomatic mission in 1939.

We arrived just before war broke out, and the visit was a hectic round of parties and receptions. I met a host of celebrities, the most fascinating being George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells. Meeting my husband at a party, Wells had been impressed by his intelligent conversation and had suggested to Shaw that he invite us to lunch. I expected as we drove to Shaw's house that I might be bored: I was prepared to be neglected while the talk flowed on a level above my head. I didn't know then that Shaw and Wells were by no means blind to feminine attractions.

Sitting between them at lunch, I was plied with attention and flattery. When Shaw told me for the tenth time that I was an attractive woman, Wells said: "You're much too old for philandering!"

Shaw replied: "A man is never too old. But anyway, you're mistaking gallantry for philandering."

Back in Ankara, I found it impossible to settle down again to the old life. I was bored with the endless receptions and parties and functions. I was bored with the gossiping wives, I was bored with my husband. I had never really loved him. It had been a marriage of conven-

ience and now I realized it was over.

Which raises the vital question: how does a wife get a divorce in a case like this, without recriminations? Whatever she does, she shouldn't ask for it directly. That's a blow to man's vanity. It's better to maneuver him into a position where he does the asking.

Conveniently, my husband, I had noticed, had been casting an Oriental eye in the direction of a dark-haired young beauty. So we parted good friends and I set out for America, where my sister Eva was making her home.

I was bewildered and a bit disillusioned when I arrived in America in 1939. I had formed my whole impression of America from the movies. I was surprised to discover that all the secretaries did not have mink coats, and that the shop girls didn't ride in Cadillacs.

During the first days in New York, a newspaperman came to my hotel suite to interview me. In his direct American way, he went straight to the icebox for a drink. He was amused when he found there only two rows of orchids, which had been sent by friends, and a salami which I had bought myself.

What he wrote about me was headed "Orchids and Salami" and from then on, the label stuck. It still, I suppose, describes my personality and approach to life very well.

After a short time in New York, I set out for Hollywood to stay with Eva who was then working for Par-

amount. During my marriage with the Turk, I had almost forgotten my ambition to be an actress. Here in Hollywood I had an opportunity to do something about it.

Soon I was taken to one of those large Hollywood parties, where some of the stars act more than they do before the cameras. Lana Turner arrived with a tall, suntanned, athletic-looking man. He was Conrad Hilton, the hotel owner. He introduced himself and asked me to dance. We danced together for the rest of the evening.

During the last dance, he said: "I'm going to Miami tomorrow. Why don't you come with me for a few days?" I was shocked—genuinely shocked. All I could say was: "But Mr. Hilton, I hardly know you!"

This I know is a very corny line of dialogue which you hear in the movies, but I still maintain a girl should never leap too eagerly at a man's first offer. At the same time, don't discourage him too much but remember what's easy to get isn't valued and cherished.

Remembering all this, I allowed Mr. Hilton to go to Miami alone. Every day while he was away, he sent a large bouquet of roses with his card, saying: "Hoping to know you better."

When he came back in a few weeks, he set out to woo me in the high-powered American way—more bouquets, presents and a barrage of phone calls. When the first call of the day started at 6 A.M., my sister Eva announced: "Better marry him immediately or look for a flat of your own!"

We were married two weeks later at one of his hotels in Santa Fe.

The hotel was decorated throughout with white camellias and orchids. There was an endless flow of champagne, caviar—and, of course, salami.

We were a happy couple at first. He represented the security I had missed since I had left Hungary. In America, where the dollar is worshipped, it was difficult not to be impressed by his financial success. If I said I wasn't, I would be a hypocrite (and whatever else I'm called, no one can call me that).

I was proud of his achievements. At 45, he had known failure and had started again with only \$5,000 to build up his immense hotel empire. But I would have been just as proud if he had fought for success in some other field with smaller cash returns.

The difference in our ages—he was 33 years older—seemed to make little difference, for he had youthful enthusiasm and energy. I used to think at times that he needed two wives, because no one wife can dance till 4 A.M., and rise to play golf at 10 A.M. as he liked to do.

I settled down to being a Californian hostess and wife, and once again forgot my ambition to be an actress, though I was meeting movie celebrities all the time. Maybe I was held back because I was meeting too many stars, who didn't always impress me.

I used to feel sorry for the wives of movie stars who had to cope with their egos and their belief that they must bestow their irresistible charms on as many women as possible. I am sorry to disillusion millions of girls who dream about marrying one of these celluloid Don Juans, but it seemed to me there

**"HOW NOT TO  
LOVE A WOMAN"  
by JUDY GARLAND**

A young actress  
who has known  
both happiness and  
despair tells what  
every man should  
learn about the  
woman he loves.  
In February  
Coronet.

could be no unhappier fate, unless you're very generous and don't mind sharing the gift. I never thought then that I would be finding out for myself in a couple of years.

At that time, Conrad Hilton and I were very close friends as well as husband and wife. We shared day-to-day troubles and helped each other as much as possible. I even helped him to choose his clothes. I also tried to take an interest in his business.

WHEN HE WAS first offered the Plaza Hotel in New York, he came to me and said: "How can a Texas man win out against all these smart New Yorkers?" I encouraged him to go ahead and told him he was as good as any of them. From then on, there was no stopping him.

But there were few moments of light relief and few moments of connubial bliss as he got more and more engrossed in his hotel empire. He would be away from home for weeks on end, and he became so busy that he had no time even to phone me. Instead, I would be told by his secretary to meet him, for example, in El Paso for the Christmas holidays, and she would ask what I would like as a Christmas present from my husband.

It was becoming increasingly obvious to me that the marriage was more or less over. If there had been another woman, I would have known what to do. In a case like that, a wife should a) have a complete beauty treatment and make herself as attractive as possible; b) spend as much of her husband's money as she can on some stunning new clothes; and c) find herself an

other man. The jealous husband will come running back quickly.

But this was different. How could I compete with the Plaza or the Waldorf-Astoria? I would have left immediately and sued for divorce, except that I was expecting a baby.

For the last few months of our marriage, I didn't stay with Conrad. I moved out of our home and lived alone. After the baby was born, I received a note from my husband asking me to go back to him, but I refused. We might have patched things up for a while, but I knew it couldn't last.

I had another reason. I had fallen recklessly in love with George Sanders. He had met me at the psychological moment when I needed sympathy and understanding. Apart from that distinguished appearance of his, he had an engaging personality, worldly charm and a sense of humor. And he had European background and breeding as well.

I was in revolt—for the moment—against the American male. I was too blinded by love for George to notice that he had any faults at all. I found out about them later. I also found out what a mistake it is to think that any mere man is perfect.

If you find yourself falling in love, there are several tests you can try, like asking yourself if he is 1) always loving and devoted, 2) never selfish and thoughtless, 3) always generous and honest, 4) never mean and just a little dishonest, and 5) if he would refuse an invitation from a Hollywood star to spend a weekend with her. You'll be surprised how imperfect he can turn out to be.

Not having made the tests, I accepted George's proposal without

hesitation. We married shortly after my divorce from Conrad Hilton came through. George moved into a house I had bought, and brought one or two pieces of his own furniture, including his piano. But he never gave up his bachelor apartment in the heart of Hollywood.

It was an excellent arrangement for him, but not for me. I imagine most husbands would like to hang on to as much of their freedom as possible. The only way a wife can counteract such a move is by threatening to open a private little boudoir of her own, outside the home. I didn't, of course, until it was too late.

When I was still in the worshipping, doting state, I pretended that the apartment didn't exist or that George only went there to read or study his scripts. A woman in love can make herself believe anything. But then, as the inevitable disenchantment began to set in, I started to worry and wonder.

This was life with a movie star—and I had asked for it. I had seen it happen to other Hollywood wives, so I shouldn't have been surprised when I was expected to applaud at parties while other women threw themselves at my famous husband.

Life with George became even more complicated when he started going to a psychoanalyst. I had to cope practically every day with a different personality when he came home from the couch.

In 1952, George decided to leave his psychoanalyst and me to go to England and play one of the leading parts in a film version of "Ivanhoe." I asked him to take me with him, but he said straight out: "No, I'll have more fun on my own." So

I knew where I stood. I said to myself, now is the time to do something at last about that career. The first step, however, was more or less unplanned.

I was invited to appear as a guest in a new TV panel show called "Bachelor's Haven." Just a week before he left, George had made me turn down a similar offer because he said I was "too dumb." I was determined to show what I could do, so I immediately accepted the new offer. The show became a success and in a few weeks, MGM studios sent for me.

I didn't have an agent of my own so I asked George's agent to come with me. As we drove to the studios, we discussed the salary I should ask for if they offered me a part. He told me George had started at \$400 a week but suggested we try for \$2,000.

We were met at the studios by director Mervyn Le Roy, who was preparing a new Technicolor film. He offered me one of the leading parts. My agent winked at me when he said I would expect a salary of \$2,000 a week. He almost fainted when they agreed immediately.

That evening I phoned George in London to tell him the news. All he could say was: "Extraordinary!"

Three months later, when he



came back, George found a star-in-the-making instead of the hausfrau he had left behind. When his plane landed in America, three of the leading magazines carried cover pictures of me. George didn't exactly jump for joy. In fact, he resented my success.

Show me a husband who doesn't resent, in some degree or another, an ambitious career wife. They all insist, these husbands, that a happy marriage is impossible unless the wife stays home all the time to look after them. What some of them would prefer, I think, is a kind of robot mechanical wife—a combination of washing machine and vacuum cleaner, which couldn't disobey them and which, of course, had some female sex hormones.

As my career prospered, little incidents involving George and me took on new proportions. One night when we were walking down Sunset Boulevard after a film premier, we were stopped by a bunch of teenagers who screamed: "Zsa Zsa, give us your autograph!" One of the boys looked up at George and said: "You look very familiar but I don't remember your name."

Not a major catastrophe, but, remember, to a famous actor, the remark was a great insult.

When George went to Italy to make a film with Ingrid Bergman, I knew our marriage was more or less wrecked. Although I knew that nothing could be salvaged, I flew over to see him in answer to a personal SOS.

It was on this trip that I met Ingrid Bergman for the first time. When we

were introduced, she said, "You must be George's wife?" I replied: "Yes, and you must be Roberto's wife?"

A few months later back in America, I became George's ex-wife.

After I divorced him, I sat down to take stock. My third marriage had failed, and I decided, not surprisingly, that I wouldn't embark on another in the immediate future. I didn't rule out marriage altogether—and I still don't. Being a romanticist at heart, like most women, I still think I can experience the almost completely happy marriage. (The completely happy one is of course an impossibility.)

I knew myself too well to make any rash decisions about existing with no men in my life. Besides, I had met Porfirio Rubirosa. Our first meeting was in New York in 1953, when George was in Italy. We started to go together, but my conscience didn't trouble me, because at that time my marriage to George existed in name only. I confess I fell in love with Rubi, but it happened only after I had fallen out of love with George.

Rubi was attentive and flattering while George had become distant and cold. Rubi was charming and exciting while George had become morose and absent-minded. But Rubi, with his volatile Latin temperament, could also be jealous and demanding. He kept asking me to speed my divorce from George, but there was a series of postponements. It was this that led to the over-

publicized quarrel in Las Vegas last year when I was appearing there in a cabaret.

I won't deny that in a moment of anger Rubi hit me, and that next day I had an unsightly black eye. The incident was exaggerated out of all proportion by local publicity men. And perhaps I made a mistake by wearing a black patch which drew attention to the eye. But don't forget, I was appearing in public at the time. I had to cover it up somehow and try to look as glamorous as possible.

As everyone knows, Rubi married Barbara Hutton after our quarrel in Las Vegas. I don't know—and I don't want to know—the reasons, but in six weeks the marriage was over. And in approximately two months, Rubi and I were together again.

RECENTLY WE HAVE spent most of our time in Hollywood, New York and Paris, where he owns a beautiful 18th-century house which he has furnished and decorated himself in exquisite taste. He is the only man I've known whose taste extends to women's clothes. He has an unflinching eye for the right color, the correct line, the becoming curve.

If he says: "Zsa Zsa, take that hat off—it doesn't suit you"—I do.

I have to accept other corrections from him. Recently, we were having lunch in his home when one guest admired the Queen Anne cutlery. I said, "They are real antiques—bought in London." Rubi looked up and whispered: "They are antiques. You don't have to say real."

I was mildly irritated, though of course he was right. I had been too long in Hollywood, where everyone

is anxious to make it clear that their imported antiques are the real thing.

We have discovered that we have a lot of common interests. We disagree about car racing, which fascinates him and scares me to death. But I'm just as enthusiastic as he is about horse-riding and I like to watch him play polo, his favorite sport. He owns a string of polo ponies which are his pride and joy. I was amused, and a little insulted, the first time he told me, "I love you even more than my polo ponies." Later I realized it was the greatest compliment he could pay.

For the moment I'm very happy with Rubi. My only worry is his unjustified jealousy. But it goes with the Latin temperament, and though it's a little trying on the nerves, it's certainly good for the feminine ego. A woman likes her man to be possessive and demanding. She likes him to insist on devotion and faithfulness—though she knows he has no intention of offering the same.

That brings me to the question of what else I've learned about men and from men. Here briefly is the Gabor Guide for Other Women.

Always marry older men as I have done. Women mature more quickly than men. If you start off by marrying a man of your own age when you're in your twenties, you'll almost certainly find he is your inferior—emotionally and physically. The older men are more thoughtful, more experienced, more gallant and more grateful.

Whatever you do, don't marry a man younger than yourself, unless you're 65—and desperate. Or unless he has just inherited millions. But remember, millionaires don't



necessarily make good husbands.

Concentrate on one man as far as possible while you've got him. But don't hesitate to leave when love has gone. At the same time, don't discourage the casual innocent flirtation with the man who sits next to you at dinner. And don't turn away from the roguish looks thrown by the man who sits opposite you in the bus.

But, please, don't over encourage, either. Kept in hand, there's nothing better for a woman's morale than the flirtatious attention of a strange male. And nothing better for a husband to know than that his wife is admired by other men.

If you and your husband can afford it, have separate holidays at least once a year. The quickest way to get fed up with each other is to spend every day—and night—together. I also recommend separate bedrooms if possible so that the woman retains some of her mystery allure—so that she can be mistress as well as wife.

Don't be surprised if you find your man is interested in another woman—or has got beyond mild interest. Men are made that way. But don't try to hold him with tears and recriminations. You'll drive him even further away. Try disappearing mysteriously in the afternoon and make him wonder what you're up to. If this isn't enough, try

to find out what she's got that you haven't—and get it!

Never ask a man for a present although he were under obligation to you. Make him feel subtly and indirectly that he wants to give you a present—the most expensive one he can afford.

Don't fall into the mistake of dressing too loudly to catch a man's eye. You'll probably scare him away instead. Men don't like their fiancées or wives to look like musical-comedy stars. After you've got him, don't make that common mistake of thinking you can afford to let your appearance slip. If you don't keep it up to scratch, you'll lose him to some other woman who has.

Don't try to change and reform your husband too much. If he resists, he'll be unhappy, and if he does change, you may not like the new man at all.

Try to take an interest in his work. He'll be happy if you just listen attentively when he's talking about it—or look as though you are. And even more important, try to share the same hobbies. Otherwise you may find he's taken a hobby you can't share, like taking his secretary away for weekends.

Finally, always flatter a man. Tell him that he belongs to the superior sex, and that he's the dominant partner. But never, never believe

### Suppose It Happened To You

(Answer to brain twister on page 104.)

JOHN FIRST PAINTED every other step. While these steps were drying, the family walked up and down the unpainted ones. Hours later, when the paint dried, John finished the job by doing the other steps.