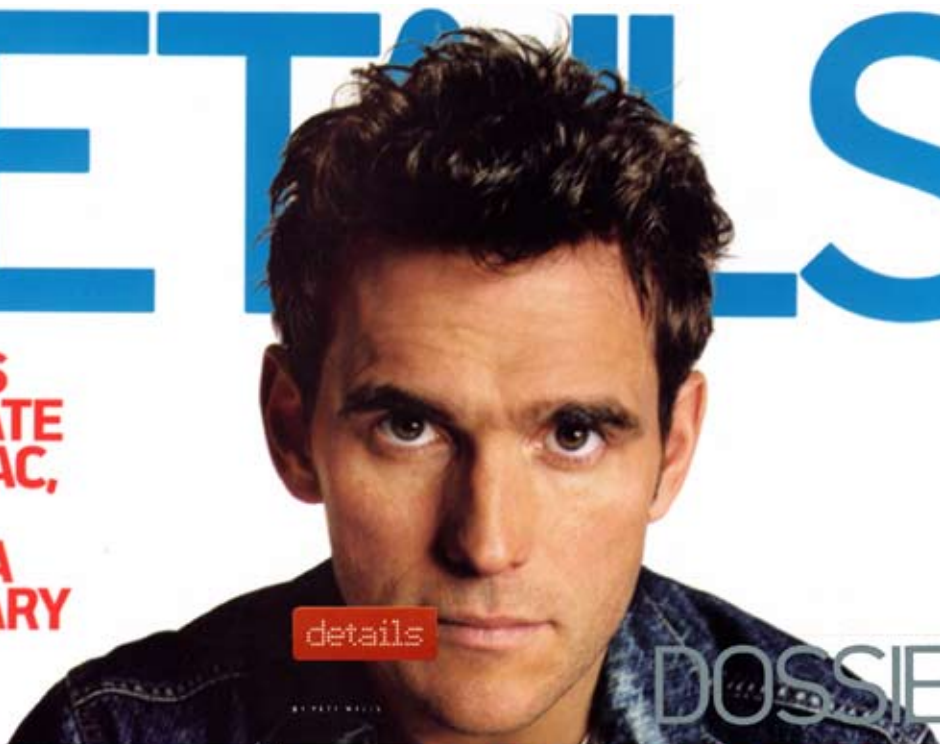


DETAILS

**IF POWER IS
THE ULTIMATE
APHRODISIAC,
WHY DON'T
YOU WANNA
BANG HILLARY
CLINTON?**



**IF POWER IS
THE ULTIMATE
APHRODISIAC,
WHY DON'T
YOU WANT
TO HAVE SEX
WITH ANY OF
THESE WOMEN?**

UGLY MEN WHO RUN THE WORLD
HAVE NO TROUBLE GETTING LAID. SO HOW
COME IT DOESN'T WORK FOR LADIES?

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GENTLEMEN, I WANT YOU TO READ THE FOLLOWING NAMES to yourselves in a private room. Tell your girlfriend you brought work home from the office so she won't disturb you for a few minutes. Get comfortable. Dim the lights.

Now picture these women, and let their images wash over you: Hillary Clinton. Condoleezza Rice. Martha Stewart. Margaret Thatcher. Queen Elizabeth. Oprah Winfrey.

Okay, now check yourself. Who's got wood?

Nobody? I don't understand. Aren't these some of the most powerful women alive? Isn't power, in Henry Kissinger's immortal phrase, the ultimate aphrodisiac? So why aren't you feeling it?

None of these women are hideously disfigured. They're all sort of okay-looking, actually, with the exception of the queen, and she was born the year Germany was admitted to the League of Nations, so you'd expect a little wear and tear. And God knows that men who look like the Ore King but who happen to own a Fortune 500 company have no trouble finding young ladies to bear their children. If you're the kind of guy who sends shock waves through the stock market every time you clear your throat, Slavic models fresh out of high school will chain themselves to your mattress. And while politics maybe show business for ugly people, that doesn't mean that the misshapen lumps of flesh prowling Capitol Hill have trouble getting a date. Strom Thurmond and Newt Gingrich both carried on affairs with much younger women, and you can go online right now and buy a thong printed with an image of Karl Rove, that bubbling cauldron of eros, inside a big pink heart.

Yet you're not exactly salivating at the prospect of these female warriors. You're threatened, obviously. You're afraid that you and Martha will be going at it on top of a duvet filled with the down of heirloom geese she raised herself when she'll suddenly roll over and sniff, "You just don't fit in." Or that you'll forget Oprah's birthday and she'll make you go on her show and grovel for forgiveness before an audience howling for your blood. Or that Condi will drop a bunker buster on your ass if she doesn't like the restaurant you pick for your anniversary dinner. The woman's gone to war with entire countries for less.

The fact is that despite all that's changed in the past few decades, Kissinger's law still doesn't apply to everybody. Sure, power can work as a pheromone in gay circles, but straight men often seem to be immune. "It's interesting, because even though money and power enhance a man's ego, many men feel diminished by those things if they are accoutrements of the woman they are dating," says Arianna Huffington, empress of the Huffington Post. She's been thinking about such

issues lately as she finishes writing a book of advice for women called *On Becoming Fearless*. "Some men definitely don't want to deal with someone who is completely independent." Yet Huffington insists that not every man slinks away like a whipped dog when he meets a strong, self-possessed woman. "It's by no means universal," she says. "It maybe the big dividing line among men. There are many guys I've been fortunate to know who find it a positive attribute."

One such man is Michael De Luca, former head of production at New Line Cinema. "What I find sexy about women in Hollywood who have achieved positions of power or influence is that most of them are incredibly passionate about the movies," De Luca says. "Passion is what I find

contends that American women are especially confused about this. "In France, an educated professional woman is allowed to be powerful and economically sound without having to give up her identity as a woman," she says. "We're about 30, 40 years behind other parts of the world."

There is comfort here for men. Maybe you're not a closet chauvinist with an ego as thin as a cobweb just because you don't want to do Martha. It's not your fault - it's hers! She doesn't want you to get aroused, because she's afraid all the blood will drain from your brain and you won't notice what a totally kickass mogul she is.

Fear, in fact, seems to be a recurring theme in the way powerful women present themselves. Female politicians are afraid to look too alluring

PERHAPS YOU'RE AFRAID THAT IF YOU FORGET OPRAH'S BIRTHDAY, SHE'LL MAKE YOU GO ON TV AND BEG FORGIVENESS.

really attractive. I think I had one lunch and one meeting with [studio head] Sherry Lansing. She radiated love for the business and the art form - I found that intoxicating." De Luca goes on to name Amy Pascal, Donna Langley, Mary Parent, and Stacey Snider as film-industry brokers he finds charismatic. True, he works, has worked, or might someday work with all these women. On the other hand, they're also objectively pretty hot. Maybe women in Hollywood, despite all you hear about glass ceilings and paycheck differentials, have parity when it comes to being attractive and powerful at the same time.

A difficult trick, that, although not for a man. A guy can look sexy without appearing to try to look sexy. Any genre of menswear you can name comes in a sexy version. We've got sexy and relaxed, sexy and athletic, sexy and literary, sexy and formal, sexy and firefighter, sexy and Ivy League, sexy and commander-in-chief. Where does a woman buy a dress that says sexy and former First Lady with lots of baggage and probably running for commander-in-chief?

According to Samantha von Sperling, an image consultant in New York and Boston who often leads grooming seminars for corporate clients, many working women still worry that they won't be taken seriously if they're sexy-and-anything. "I spend an awful lot of time telling women to put heels back on," von Sperling says. "There are women who think that because they went to Harvard, lipstick is going to make them dumb. And it won't. People assume that if you look put together then your mind is put together too." Von Sperling

lest they come across as slutty and louche (read: liberal and unelectable). Female executives are afraid they'll be sent out for coffee while the boys divvy up the spoils. And fear is never appealing. No matter how strong you are, you seem weak if you're not at ease with your own power. Exhibit A here, as for so many other lessons in *Getting It All Wrong*, is Hillary.

"My problem with Hillary Clinton is her inauthenticity," Huffington says. "Exuding a sense of self-confidence is incredibly attractive, and with Hillary Clinton I get the exact opposite. There's always the sense of looking over her shoulder to see how she's going to be perceived. To me that is the most unalluring thing in a woman - when you radiate calculation instead of boldness. Men who in fact are not particularly attractive can radiate confidence. And the same thing can go for women."

Which is why von Sperling takes heart in what she perceives as an emerging worldwide trend: independent women who keep boy toys. "As women break through certain boundaries, they are starting to create their own rules," she says. "It used to be reserved just for older wealthy women to keep a younger man. Now the choices are broader."

As soon as she says this, I know that von Sperling has hit on the very thing that's been missing from the lives of our powerful women: If Condi and Martha and Oprah truly want to be taken seriously, what they need is a male Monica.

Beret optional. ■

Pete Wells, *Details*, May 2006