

## Cupid bedevils modern women

By Suzanne Fields  
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Valentine's Day changes with the ages. In pagan Rome, young women dropped their names into a great urn, and young men retrieved them with high hopes. Thus began a courtship that often led to marriage. Early church fathers perceived sexual dangers in such pagan ceremonies and substituted the names of saints for young men to emulate. Not quite so much fun.

In the Middle Ages, the drawing of names was revived and a young man drew a young woman's name from a bowl and wore it on his shirt for a week, thus giving meaning to the saying that a young man sometimes wears his heart on his sleeve.

How we celebrate Valentine's Day today is more complicated, determined by the changing relationships between the sexes. Nevertheless, Cupid's capricious use of his bow and arrow continues to make trouble, some of it delicious. But Cupid is blindfolded, and most of the time he doesn't know what he's doing. He makes a lot of bad matches. Cupidity is not an attractive quality.

Mating has always been a difficult business, because the first stages of love hide the darker side of human motivations. These emerge only with familiarity. Traditional values once contributed to coupling, for better and for worse, bringing people with similar assumptions together in a marriage. But such traditions were blasted away when the patriarchy came tumbling down.

As women entered the workplace and gained financial independence, which certainly has its advantages, they were bound to face consequences they hadn't expected. Freud famously said that the sources of happiness were "love and work," but he was talking about individual choices, specifically for men.

We all know he didn't have a clue to the distaff psychology, infamously asking, "What do women want?" (Aren't men supposed to know that?) Today love and work is an issue for couples, and if Freud were around to ask the question, it would be, "What do men and women want together?"

Working women have become prey for gold diggers. "Now that women are snaring a majority of both college degrees and professional jobs, they're getting a taste of something else that used to be a male-only province: gold-digging dates," the *Wall Street Journal* tells us. As women have been liberated to be ambitious in their careers, some men have become slackers. They want only to be supported by women.

Not so long ago, "marrying up" subjected men to the ridicule of other men, and career women were often abandoned to a lonely office at the top. Now women must fret that they're loved only for that office. Match.com, a dating Web site with 15 million users, reports a significant rise over the past three years in men who specify that a date must make above a certain income. They want a honey with the money, a doll with the dollars, something gorgeous with the green.

**True.com, a dating Web site with 2.7 million users, reports that 35 percent of its male customers request women who make more money than they do. Honeys and dolls, gorgeous or not, beware.**

In their defense, some men say they're searching for high-dollar earners because such women are more interesting. Of course, but did anyone ever hear a gold-digging woman stress Mr. Bigbuck's "poisonality." Most women who married for money were honest: Diamonds are a girl's best friend. Those two little girls from Little Rock were not looking for *little* rocks.

The gold-digging guy is mainly a problem for a woman in her 20s or 30s. Women usually wise up as

they get older, and they have greater expectations of older men. But older couples have a different set of love-work problems. Many husbands retire before their wives, which alters the marriage relationship in the sunset years. The reversal changes the nature of identities.

"This is the first generation that's ever had to deal with this, because in the past it was one retirement per family, and that was the husbands," Phyllis Moen, a sociologist at the University of Minnesota, tells *The New York Times*.

When the retired husband has been on the golf course all day, and his wife has had a strenuous day at work, husband and wife come home with different expectations. Even if he gets more money from his retirement plan than she gets from her paycheck, time is money, too. Who cooks? Who cleans? The rules require renegotiation, debate and sometimes wounded egos. Men become defensive, women resentful.

But it wasn't Cupid who promised rose gardens, and the hearts pierced by his arrows have always learned the hard way to overcome obstacles to true love. Shakespeare, as he always does, said it best: "Some Cupid kills with arrows, some with traps."

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