

TRUE CONFESSIONS FROM A LIFE OF LUXURY

# KEPT WOMEN

*Leslie McRay*

*with*

*Ted Schwarz*



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# 1.

## POWER, SEX, AND THE WOMEN WHO PLAY TO WIN

To be a kept woman is to participate in a game of power and control where the players are often the most admired and envied individuals in the world, with their faces gracing the covers of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *People*, *Paris Match*, *Stern*, and numerous other international publications. The clothing the players wear determines the styles followed by millions of others throughout the world. The cars they buy, the places they party, where they live all establish for others what are considered the most desirable life-styles achievable on the face of this planet. They are the objects of our collective fantasies, the people who do what others only dream about, no matter how sensual, costly, violent, or obscene. They counter indulgence in rich food by going to spas costing more per day than the average worker may make in a month. They counter inclement winter by jetting to wherever the sun is shining, even if that location is halfway around the world. And they counter the moral restrictions of society with well-placed bribes, carefully orchestrated violence, and, when it best serves their self-interest, murder.

The male players must have money, influence, or fame, coupled with a fear of commitment, of aging, of losing whatever they have that they value the most.

The women must be beautiful, intelligent, and pliant to the point where they have been so carefully broken in spirit that they

will completely debase themselves while thinking that they are in control. The two sexes have a love-hate relationship which few ever admit to. They are symbiotic beings engaged in a dance of such subtle complexity that each partner both leads and follows without ever being certain when the switch is made.

The female players call themselves “kept women” when they have the courage or insight to put a label on their personal life-styles and actions. They are usually young, because being older is not desirable. Women in their twenties say that they are too old for the competition they once dominated. Women in their forties say that their peak was passed at twenty-four. And women in their fifties are either no longer playing the game, perhaps married to men who were the highest bidders for their well-preserved but overly used bodies, or easing their emotional pain through alcoholism, drug addiction, or suicide.

The women are seen in expensive cars they could never afford themselves. They hostess parties in mansions that are their “homes” only so long as they please the men who pay the mortgages. They travel the world on someone else’s gold or platinum American Express Card. And in the dark, where they are called upon to perform the otherwise unspoken erotic fantasies of the men who keep them, they will do anything that allows them to spend another night, another week, another month, or another year living a life-style that is simultaneously seductive and destructive.

“The first night I met him, he said, ‘How would you like to spend the next year of your life traveling the world with me? I have to go to Greece tomorrow. We could start then.’ I hadn’t had a date with him yet. I was young, beautiful, and fit his fantasy. That was what he wanted—a fantasy. He had no idea what I was like other than my appearance. That was what he wanted to buy.”

—Allison

“We have to be better in bed than other women, more creative. We have to drain him dry and have him begging for more. It’s a control over him.”

—Naomi

“My gimmick was that I wouldn’t sleep with them. I said no and it intrigued them. It kept them coming back to me.”

—Janelle

"He was crude, violent. The first time we were intimate, he pushed me to my knees and said, 'Unzip my pants, take it out, and get me off, bitch!' It was then that I thought he was in love with me. He had taken me to a fabulous restaurant where the meal cost more than I was making in a week on my job. He had driven me to his place in a Rolls-Royce. And there he was telling me exactly what he wanted from me sexually. All other men I had been with just took me. They forced me to have sex whether I wanted it or not. They were angry if I couldn't anticipate their fantasies, which, of course, no one could. This man treated me with dignity in public and told me exactly what sex acts he wanted me to perform when we were alone. It was such an improvement, I stayed with him, taking the emotional abuse for the next three years."

—Frances

The term "kept women" is one that is controversial, even among the women who are kept. "It's the pussy business," said one noted observer of the rich and famous, a writer who had once been kept herself. "There's no difference between kept women and the Beverly Hills or Fifth Avenue women who married their husbands to benefit from their money, power, and influence. They have rings on their fingers and public respectability, but don't let them kid you. They sold themselves to the highest bidder who could offer them the greatest prestige

"They're not whores," said a two-hundred-dollar-an-hour call girl who frequently is paid to travel with men to the same destinations as kept women are—Las Vegas, Monte Carlo, Paris, Rome. "I'm independent. I choose my men carefully, I dress well, I'm intelligent [she has a bachelor's degree in mass communications and a master's degree in business administration], and I can pass for someone who's been born to royalty. But I don't have any illusions. I'm making a mid-six-figure income right now and I can walk away tomorrow. I've got real estate I own, stock investments, some rare coins and antiques. I'll retire when I can't compete anymore and I'll get into something else. No one will know what I did because I'm planning to move to the Midwest, set up my own business, and maybe marry some square john who will never know how I earned my living.

"The kept women aren't like me. They get gifts and some of them keep them. But most of them don't care about that. They're totally dependent on the man for approval. They're terrified that they're going to be rejected. They're not in business. They're liv-

ing a neurotic fantasy on a scale that's like some television soap opera of the wealthy. I don't want anything to do with them."

A third woman, currently kept by an Asian whose ancestry is from a royal family, said, "I deserve the best. I'm beautiful. I'm intelligent. If a man wants to buy me fancy clothing, give me presents, take me to expensive restaurants, and put me up in an apartment, why shouldn't I let him? I deserve it. I deserve it all. I'm special and I'm not going out with someone who doesn't recognize that fact."

Would she marry the man, who happens to be single, if he proposed to her? "Sure, so long as he continues to keep me in the same style."

But do you love him? she was asked. What if he lost all his wealth and power?

"I don't know," she admitted. "I've worked in my life. I've worked hard and I've had to go hungry at times. Maybe if the troubles were short-term and I could see that the future would be better . . . I'm a good cook. I can make great meals at home. We don't have to go to a restaurant.

"Things would have to get better, though. Why should I live with a loser?"

But if you love him?

"What does love have to do with it? I'm special. I deserve the best."

The third woman's attitude was typical of the attitude of many of the kept women who were interviewed. At first glimpse, it seems an attitude of vanity and conceit reinforced, in some instances, by the fact that they are beautiful, intelligent, and seemingly special. Yet their statements often belie a subconscious reality few admit until they are older. The exaggerated sense of self worth many express publicly often hides tremendous insecurity and fear. These are women who frequently have an intense dislike for themselves. At some time in their childhoods, many have felt themselves rejected by a strong adult male figure, usually their father, and they are subconsciously terrified of further rejection. They are also desperate for male approval, which comes through being given gifts, being made to feel important at an elaborate party, being sexually desired, especially if the man is married. To not be kept means, to them, that they are as worthless as they feel. They take no pride in their personal accomplishments, which often are worthy of great respect. They have been so psychologi-

cally abused as children that they can not view themselves positively.

Their lack of self worth is even more surprising when you look at the backgrounds of many of the kept women. Almost all the kept women we interviewed for this book have had high-income, glamorous, and/or responsible positions. Their backgrounds include being a top model, a bank executive, a professional magazine photographer published internationally, a talent-booking agent, a producer of trade shows, a motion picture producer, a real estate executive, a syndicated columnist, a successful author, an insurance underwriter, and a commercial pilot, among others. Most of their incomes ranged from thirty thousand dollars to high six-digit figures. Yet their accomplishments don't matter to them; it is only through being kept that many feel a sense of identity.

Perhaps the greatest problem the kept woman faces is the seductiveness of the life-style. So long as the woman has her youth and her looks, the world is literally hers. She can be exposed to experiences that are more exciting than any seen in movies.

For example, once Janelle entered the life-style, she had an experience that she was desperate to duplicate ever after. The head of a nation decided that he wanted to keep her.

Janelle's experience took place in Monte Carlo, one of the most glamorous areas of the world, a city that is a hedonist's delight, with its crystalline beaches and rich blue water. It is also a working city for models and photographers who use it as a backdrop to sell fashions, cosmetics, and other items that are either expensive or meant to give the image of success.

As Janelle explains: "My flight from California was long and tiring; the hotel room I was provided, pleasant but small. My modeling agency had acted as the go-between for a new client who wanted to consider using me for some secret project. I was told that I would be contacted after I arrived, that I was to go to the hotel and wait.

"Since I was experienced in the business, I thought I knew what to expect. Whenever a new product line was being introduced, especially in the highly competitive cosmetics field, millions of dollars might be spent on the launch. Everything was always kept secret so competition would not know what was happening. I expected that I would be examined by someone from this unnamed company, then either sent back to the States or

hired for an immediate photo session. The location might be exotic but the work would be that old familiar grind.

"When I answered the knock at my hotel door, a gray-haired man in shorts, sandals, and a print shirt was standing there. 'Janelle?' he asked.

"Yes,' I said.

"Good. I've come to look at your book.' He pushed past me, noticing my figure in the robe I was wearing.

"The reality of modeling is that, at times, we are just so much meat. We are measured and poked, our faces studied, our hair checked, and we are generally treated like a fine race horse being placed at auction. It is nothing personal, a fact that seems simultaneously reassuring and insulting. Yet it made me accept what happened next with this stranger.

"First the man looked through my book, a portfolio of photographs, advertising tear sheets, and covers. The best of my professional life was carefully displayed to show my versatility, my looks, and my potential for other work.

"Then he began touching me, running his hand through my hair, adjusting my robe for slightly more cleavage, checking my legs. 'Very good,' he said. 'Excellent. The report I received about you was correct.'

"The 'report' apparently related to a preliminary interview I had had in Manhattan. It had taken place in a midtown office building with men who were obviously from the Middle East. It had also been arranged through my modeling agency and they had never explained the potential job.

"You will join my family and me for dinner at our villa on the ocean,' he said. 'My secretary will be your date. I want to observe you further.' Then, as an afterthought, he said 'You may call me Riza.'

"The name meant nothing to me and the idea of dinner with the family did not impress me. I could not tell if I was going to get a job or an all-expenses-paid vacation. The way he had touched me had obvious sexual overtones, yet that had happened with other men. It was the price of being in the business; something to which you learned not to respond so they would back off.

"That night was interesting but uneventful. I was picked up in a limousine, riding with the secretary who was to be my 'date,' with Riza sitting in back. He obviously expected me to be interested in him but was creating an illusion for his family.

"I suspected his wife was aware of the deception, but I couldn't help playing naïve. I began holding the arm of the male secretary, kissing his cheek occasionally, whispering in his ear. It was as though I found the man fascinating and could not take my eyes off him. Naturally the secretary was both embarrassed and delighted. He knew that he was to be the front for Riza, yet here was a beautiful woman seemingly enamored with him upon first meeting. His face seemed to be blushing all evening; Riza was irate but unable to say anything.

"It was toward the end of the week that Riza informed me that I had, indeed, been auditioning for a job. He was looking for a woman who would become the spokesperson for Iran. The woman, who had to be beautiful and intelligent, would travel with the shah throughout the world. She would represent the Iranian people to the Americans, their most important ally.

"Previously a beautiful blond model from Texas had held this post, but she left after six years. If I would accept, I would take her place.

"The offer was intriguing. According to Riza, if I worked for the shah, I would want for nothing. I would have a house back in the States for myself, another house for my parents, and, of course, housing, food, clothing, and other things in Iran. I would be well paid and either hold the job for life or have severance pay when I left, the amount enabling me to never have to work again. Although it was never said, the implication was that I would also serve as the shah's mistress.

"I didn't know where Riza fit in the government, but it was obvious that he lived extremely well. I could believe that the shah would be generous and the offer was extremely tempting. However, I explained how hard I had worked to reach my level of success as a model. The idea of stopping before I had seen how far I could go did not appeal to me. I wanted to continue working, not leave everything to work for a foreign country.

"Riza only smiled. He told me of a party being held in my honor on Saturday night that he felt would change my mind. What he did not say was that it would prove to be the most exciting experience of my life, a seduction by wealth and power greater than I had previously witnessed.

"For the next few days, Riza and I were together regularly. We went to the beach to sunbathe. We dined at expensive restaurants. We enjoyed the sights of Monte Carlo away from his wife and children. Always he was respectful, yet always he was touch-

ing, encouraging my response, seeing how far I would go. Even if I had been interested, I would have held back. He was the advance man for the shah, or so I assumed, and I had the feeling that how I acted would be related to his employer.

"It was on a Friday that a designer and two seamstresses came to my hotel door. I had been moved from my original quarters to a suite of rooms, where they took over the living area in order to prepare a gown for the next night's affair.

"There is a trick to being a kept woman that I had already learned. Although I was not interested in meeting the shah, I did want to please Riza in the same manner I pleased the men who kept me over the years. To do this I had to dress in a manner that would hold his attention without upsetting the other women.

"The fabrics I was shown were extremely expensive. The one I chose, a flesh-colored, almost see-through silk, would have cost hundreds of dollars a yard to purchase. It had a paisley print that was large, sheer, and barely visible. On my body, it would be revealing enough to be seductive yet conservative enough to not be embarrassing.

"The gown was to have full-length sleeves, billowing at the wrist, and be floor-length, opening in front. To maintain the conservative image, I had harem pants designed for wearing underneath the gown and a full-cut bikini top. It was a gown filled with promise without ever violating good taste.

"The designer and the seamstresses finished the measurements and the sketches, then promised to return in twenty-four hours. I knew enough about sewing to realize that they would have to work around the clock. I also knew that the same gown, purchased in the United States, would cost a minimum of five thousand dollars. Since it was being custom designed, there was no way anyone else could wear it. As I said, it was an impressive display of wealth.

"My hair was long and worn down, held back from my face by a crownlike garland of baby's breath and yellow flowers. It was much like a wedding spray and had been created to coordinate with the gown.

"It was sunset on Saturday night when the Mercedes limousine pulled up to the hotel. I was taken to the Sporting Club, which had a massive private dining room walled in by glass on three sides to provide a view of the bay of Monte Carlo. There was one large table in the center of the room, where Riza and I were posi-

tioned so that we would have the best view of a large stage that had been erected for the entertainment. On it was an orchestra and a continuing array of acts. As the night progressed, there were production numbers featuring seminude women in the same manner as in the nightclubs in Las Vegas. There were comedians, dancers, and other entertainers.

"The table was equally elaborate. The cloth was burgundy, the China white with a burgundy rim. Instead of centerpieces, a single lilac rose was placed at each setting. Each person also had three glasses, four forks, four spoons, and several knives. It was the most formal array of silverware I had ever encountered and I was bewildered by the arrangement. All I knew was that you start with the silverware farthest away from the plate and work your way in. Everything else I learned by observing the others.

"The light on the table was provided by elegant candelabra, carefully positioned to assure an evenness of illumination. Spotlights adorned the stage.

"The other women were as lavishly dressed as I, though their gowns were older and the styles more oldfashioned. However, they were adorned with custom-designed jewelry made from large diamonds, rubies, and emeralds. One woman wore a necklace with a platinum setting that had layered diamonds going from her neck to her cleavage. The largest stone, a teardrop diamond of fifty carats, easily worth a half million dollars, I later learned, was at her throat. Then the stones decreased in size to only four and five carats at the cleavage. This was planned not only to draw the eye but also to allow for a thinner strand of platinum, since the weight of the lower diamonds was less. Altogether the necklace was worth several million dollars and it was not the most elaborate I witnessed.

"The bracelets the women wore were extremely wide and designed to match both a woman's earrings and necklace. The stones and some of the patterns were repeated. The woman with the fifty-carat, pear-shaped diamond at her throat had matching but slightly smaller two-inch pear-shaped diamonds on each of several rings.

"The display of opulence was made further impressive by the awareness that most of the jewelry was not new. Rather it had been handed down in families from generation to generation. There wasn't a woman at the table, other than myself, who was wearing less than a million dollars in clothing and jewelry, a fact

that again reinforced Riza's apparent importance. In addition, I soon learned that all the guests were titled, from the royal families of numerous European countries.

"The meal itself was extremely elaborate. White fish and a wafer-thin raw meat dish were offered as appetizers. The red wine flowed for those who wished the meat, white wine offered with the fish. Both were of a rare and expensive vintage.

"Then came racks of lamb, artfully swirled potatoes, lightly steamed vegetables, and numerous sauces—curry, hollandaise, bearnaise, a ginger-flavored mint jelly. And in between each dish, a sorbet was provided to cleanse the palate. Lime sorbet followed meat; orange sorbet followed fish.

"Champagne was the beverage of the evening, the bottles turned upside down in an endless array of ice buckets when they were finished. Keeping the bottles on the table and being certain they never ran out was part of the show of opulence Riza used to dazzle me.

"When the desserts came, they were flaming crepe dishes and cherries jubilee. *Cafe au lait*, extremely strong by American tastes, was also offered. These were followed by a liqueur, the glass for which was adorned by an artfully cut orange rind that was set on fire. It was both dramatically colorful and a taste I had never before experienced.

"Throughout dinner there were singers, comedians, and, oddly, a shadow maker. He positioned himself in the spotlight so he could make silhouettes of a variety of animals with his hands. It was like watching an act for a children's party and I was surprised to see it, even though he was quite good. The comedians were apparently quite good as well, at least it seemed that way from the laughter that rippled throughout the table. Unfortunately they spoke no English and I had no idea what they were saying.

"Finally Riza asked me to accompany him onto the dance floor in front of the stage. As I did, I looked down and realized that the dance floor was made of a special glass and it was directly over the bay. Discretely positioned underwater lights illuminated the depths. I had never encountered anything quite like it.

"'Janelle, I want you to take the job in Iran,' said Riza. He was dressed in a tuxedo like the other men. 'I know how much the shah will delight in you. In fact, I'd like to surprise him by having you come to his birthday party.'

"Again I explained how thrilled I was to be offered the job but also how much my career meant to me. I would be giving up

everything familiar, everything I felt that I wanted, to move to a new country.

"Still he would not take no for an answer. He smiled again and said, 'I have a little surprise for you.'

"Then, as we stood on the dance floor, I looked through the glass wall at the bay. Suddenly a rocket flew into the air, exploding. Then another one was launched, and another. I was mesmerized by a growing fireworks display, cascading colors lighting the sky.

"For twenty minutes we stood together, entranced by the spectacle he had arranged. And when the grand finale came, dozens of rockets exploded red, white, and blue patterns in honor of my homeland.

"And then the evening was over, Riza making it clear that he wanted my decision in the morning. I had seen the wealth his country could provide. I recognized the power that this man, whoever he was, could muster. I was convinced that the promises of wealth were genuine. I would be a mistress, but my pay would be beyond my greatest dreams.

"Yet somehow I knew it was wrong. I was unaware of the international political situation that would disrupt Iran. I was unknowing of the violence to come. I could not imagine the shah having to flee a nation in turmoil, dying outside his native land while hostile forces took over. All that was still in the future. I only sensed that to agree to Riza's proposal would not be in my best interests.

"My final decision caused Riza to explode with anger. No one had ever refused the shah before, he told me. The shah would be displeased. The shah would be hurt. The shah . . . the shah . . . the shah . . .

"I left immediately, discovering that the generous shah had no intention of paying for my return flight. Money was promised for reimbursement but I never received it.

"It did not matter. I boarded a flight that would eventually return me to Los Angeles. At first I dozed, then did some crocheting, then took one of the news magazines the flight attendants offered me. To my amazement, there was a picture of Riza or, as the caption corrected me, Mohammed Riza Pahlevi, the Shah of Iran."

Janelle did not yield to the shah, but the efforts to which a rich and powerful man went to both please and acquire her were seductive. She craved the excitement, the gifts, the adoration that

the kept life-style could bring. For her, like so many others, it was to prove a near fatal addiction.

There is also a second side to being a kept woman. It is a more positive side for the woman who wants companionship, a degree of physical security, and a long-term friendship without the emotional involvement of marriage. Often this woman is older, at least thirty when she enters the life, and frequently has experienced abusive males in her family and/or among men she has dated. She may have been unhappily married or had a long-term live-in relationship with a man who was physically or emotionally abusive. She has come to value her privacy, value extensive time alone. The idea of being kept by a man has tremendous appeal.

"He comes to me for reasons quite different from those he would have if we were married. He does not appear at my condominium when he is under stress and explosive. Such moods, if he has them, are shared with his secretaries, his salespeople, his wife and children. I don't see the dark side of him. I don't know if he has a temper, if he knows how to cut people with his words.

"He comes to me to celebrate our life together, his successful business deals, his personal triumphs. He comes to me when he is hurting and ready to be comforted. He comes to me when he wants to escape what he feels are overwhelming pressures, taking me to the ballet, to a concert, to an expensive dinner, or to a runaway place like Las Vegas or Monte Carlo.

"We're comfortable together because there is nothing to drive us apart. He dresses casually when we have a few days together, but I never see the torn T-shirts, that foul-smelling 'good luck' hat he always wears when fishing with the family in the Bahamas. He told me of a camping trip he took with his wife where he didn't shave or bathe for a week and he only brushed his teeth when he couldn't stand the smell of his own breath. He won't do those things with me.

"We lead a storybook existence. He gets only as close to my emotions as I want him to and he does the same with me.

"Would I marry him? Probably. Or maybe I say that because it is not an option and maybe never will be.

"My father was an abusive drunk who beat up my mother every Saturday night. She loved it. She always said that it took a 'real man' to stand up to her moods and put her in her place. Being hit was foreplay for them, though I vowed I would never lead the same kind of life.

“So what happened to me? They say you’re drawn to the familiar, so maybe I subconsciously knew my first husband would be abusive. He didn’t do it often, but the second time around you get the message.

“I had a couple of serious relationships after that, though the men were the same way. Sometimes it was physical. Sometimes it was emotional. Either way, if I kept my distance, I was always safe. Nothing ever happened during the early stages of the relationships.

“I guess what I’m doing with Harold is prolonging the courtship phase forever. He’s kept me for several years now and everything has always been perfect. We don’t share a real life. We both know that. It’s like he has the real world with his wife and kids and job. And he has the world we’ve created together. That’s a world of good sex, laughter, good times. There are no problems here. I suppose you could say that we’ve come to love each other, though I question that. Love requires far more honesty, commitment, and . . . I don’t know . . . vulnerability, I guess. Neither of us lets the other see quite enough for the other to cause irrevocable pain.

“Maybe that’s what commitment is really all about. The ability to hurt the other person in ways that are totally destructive and without redemption, yet choosing to not cause that pain. It’s knowing that you can literally kill the other person with words, yet choosing never to say those words.

“Harold doesn’t know those words that will hurt me and I don’t know the ones that will hurt him. I could make a guess, a really good guess, I suppose. But I wouldn’t be sure. If we loved each other, really loved each other, we’d have that extra power yet never use it.

“I don’t want to love anyone that much again. I want to be safe and what we have is safe. It’s like the happiness of a good book, a warm fire, and a fine wine on a cold winter’s day. I feel good all over when he’s around, yet I get along perfectly well when he’s not. I don’t think we’ll ever stop this arrangement, not even if he could no longer be my sole financial support. We’ve found everything we want in our arrangement and hopefully he’ll stay happily married for the rest of his life so we never have to consider anything else.”

A similar perspective, though for different reasons, was stated by Ronna, now thirty. “I was sixteen and a half when this wealthy actor began keeping me. He was going through a mid-life crisis

and his wife was emotionally disturbed, frequently beating their son. He told me that putting me in an apartment of my own would make our being together easier than his trying to see me while I lived with a roommate, having essentially run away from an abusive home life.

“So there I was, living in a beautiful old apartment with real parquet floors and a fireplace in the bathroom. The rent was paid. I never saw the landlord. I had a car to drive, nice clothes, and six hundred dollars a week to spend as I pleased. Six hundred dollars a week was a lot of money back then and I never wanted for anything. I never tried to learn what real life was like because I didn’t have to. Why should I have bothered with all that?” The world of the kept woman is a fascinating one that can be both idyllic and a nightmare depending upon the reasons for the relationship. Yet the question remains as to why a woman would want to be kept and why a man would keep her. After all, we are at the close of the twentieth century. The American feminist movement has concerned itself with ensuring that women have the freedom to choose any job or life-style they desire. Being kept implies being out of control of one’s own destiny. So who are these women? What has happened in their lives to cause them to seek such an existence? And who are the men who feed what is either their pleasure or their overwhelmingly destructive addiction?