

ROBERT LUHN

The cheap guy's guide to love, or whatever

IN THE 1970s, we cheap guys had a secret hero: Alan Alda. The M*A*S*H man showed that a guy could wear the same clothes for years, shower every three months (during the Nielsen sweeps), live in a place called the Swamp and still end up in the supply room with a shapely nurse.

Thanks to sensitive-yet-wacky guys like Alda, you could hold onto a hot babe simply by co-nurturing — without ever having to spring for \$80 dinners or a skein of Miki-moto pearls.

But the '80s ushered in a dark time for us Cheap Guys. Trump. Yuppies. Leveraged Buyouts. Having — and worse, spending — money. As a breed, we almost died out, forced to wear three-piece Armani suits, drive cute (and expensive) Mercedes 190s, and bring flowers and Veuve Cliquot home every Friday night.

Just when extinction threatened, the '90s dawned and, with it, our salvation. Trump. Boesky. The Exxon Valdez. Junk bonds. Bright Lights, Big Bust. In short, the collapse of conspicuous consumption, the routing of everyone from Adam Smith to Louis Rukeyser, the blooming of the less-is-more (right on!) environmental ethic.

But how can the modern, co-nurturing, financially retentive (not cheap) eco-guy impress that special babe without looking too retentive? Some tips:

► Scorn all that is materialistic and bourgeois. This makes it easier to convince her to go dutch. (Advanced tip: With the '70s revival already under way, Marxism is

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bound to make a comeback. Quit shaving and grow a beard to support the valiant Castrotistas struggling against the oppressive Disney-inspired federales in Washington. This also saves money on razor blades.)

► Talk movingly to your proto-love about ozone depletion, global warming, the U.S.'s oil addiction and the evils of internal combustion. Take her on long, health-giving walks. Save your Michelins for serious driving.

Talk about resource re- duction, holistic sex and the joys of friction

► Promote recycling in your community. Get your main squeeze involved in scavenging paperboard, picking up stray aluminum cans during your life-affirming walks together, and selecting affordable, 100 percent cotton recycled clothes at the Salvation Army. Remind her about the noble heritage of used clothes and the importance of earth tones.

► Save energy by turning off unnecessary lights and central heating. This will encourage your honey to snuggle with you underneath your vicuna blanket woven by cruelty-free, non-cocaine-growing Colombian Indians. Talk about resource reduction, holistic sex and the joys of friction as an energy alternative.

And if this doesn't do it, buy the pearls. That always works.