

How To Win With Mom

by Marda Miller

"I don't want to wear the polka dot dress!" I screamed while stomping up the stairs where I sat and crossed my arms in protest. My mother's voice followed me.

"Your Aunt Agnes, who bought you this dress, is flying all the way from Florida. It's the polite thing to do." My mother was the epitome of calmness when dictating orders. It made me furious. Was her argument meant to mollify me? My great aunt Agnes was seventy three years old and thought polyester was still fashionable. The "polite thing to do" was to forbid her from buying clothing for anyone outside her own nursing home.

"But Mom, it's *my* birthday, why can't I wear what I want?" I yelled with such a force that every last bit of air was expelled from my lungs. My lips quivered and I felt my throat begin to tighten. The realization that I was going to lose this fight set in. I buried my face into my palms and sobbed, letting the salty wetness stream down my cheeks and into the corners of my mouth. My eyes burned and my throat was raw. I cried until I could no longer squeeze a single tear from my eyes.

"Are you done feeling sorry for yourself?" My mother's serene and patient voice flew up the staircase once again. She was right. Throwing a tantrum was for children and I was thirteen now. Surely that meant I had earned some control over decisions that involved my life. I used the sleeves of my sweater to wipe my eyes and the snot from my nose. I stood up, straightened out my skirt, tucked the loose hair behind my ears and proceeded down the stairs, but my mother was already gone. My dad was in the living room reading the newspaper. Aha, I thought. I could gain both sympathy and support.

"Dad, how come I can never win with mom?" I pouted.

"There is only one way you can, sweet pea." he replied. "Become a lawyer."

