Michael Swanwick's Periodic Table of Science Fiction

79

Au

Gold

196.9665

Crown of Beauty

Is there anything so beautiful as a woman wearing gold? The delicate hues of her skin contrasting with the boldness of the metal that is synonymous with wealth ? It's as classic a combination as peanut butter and chocolate. It makes a matron handsome and draws our mind to her wisdom and experience. It renders a young woman sylphlike, and moves our thoughts to places that make us blush.

Yet there are disadvantages to gold jewelry. It can be stolen. It can be lost. It's soft and thus, even during those passionate moments when a woman least desires distraction, must be tended to. Worst of all, it is not Milady herself, but an accessory to her perfection. Which is to say that whatever admiration it may draw does not belong entirely to her alone.

That's where genetic engineering comes in.

Our new Natural Gold process lightly tweaks a woman's natural bioprocesses to allow her to ingest molecular gold and then plate it out on the surface of each hair. Because of gold's natural ductility, the hair can then be plaited, braided, cut, or styled as easily as ordinary non-precious hair can. A few milligrams of gold a year suffice to keep a full head of hair lustrous and bright. It never tarnishes. It always keeps its shape.

Natural Gold has been product-tested on thousands of volunteers in Paris, Nairobi, Hong Kong, Moscow, and Rio de Janeiro?places synonymous with romance and beautiful women! It has proven itself safe, non-toxic, and easy to use.

Side effects include lovesickness, the singing of mournful songs under balconies, giddiness, elation, despair, obsession, and in a few rare cases, romantic suicide. However, since these side effects are confined solely to their admirers, this is a price that women are prepared to accept.

The End

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