

Begrudging His Bedazzling

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A huge Ellen suddenly materialized behind Hillary on a giant screen, interrupting her speech Monday night at a fund-raiser at George Washington University in Washington.

What better way for a desperate Hillary to try and stop her rival from running off with all her women supporters than to have a cozy satellite chat with a famous daytime talk-show host who isn't supporting Obama?

"Will you put a ban on glitter?" Ellen demanded.

Diplomatically, Hillary said that schoolchildren needed it for special projects, but maybe she could ban it for anyone over 12.

Certainly, Hillary understands the perils of glitter. The coda of her campaign has been a primal scream against the golden child of Chicago, a clanging and sometimes churlish warning that "all that glitters is not gold."

David Brody, the Christian Broadcasting Network correspondent whose interview with Hillary aired Tuesday, said the senator seemed "dumbfounded" by the Obama sensation.

She has been so discombobulated that she has ignored some truisms of politics that her husband understands well: Sunny beats gloomy. Consistency beats flipping. Bedazzling beats begrudging. Confidence beats whining.

Experience does not beat excitement, though, or Nixon would have been president the first time around, Poppy Bush would have had a

second term and President Gore would have stopped the earth from melting by now.

Voters gravitate toward the presidential candidates who seem more comfortable in their skin. J.F.K. and Reagan seemed exceptionally comfortable. So did Bill Clinton and W., who both showed that comfort can be an illusion of sorts, masking deep insecurities.

The fact that Obama is exceptionally easy in his skin has made Hillary almost jump out of hers. She can't turn on her own charm and wit because she can't get beyond what she sees as the deep injustice of Obama not waiting his turn. Her sunshine-colored jackets on the trail hardly disguise the fact that she's pea-green with envy.

After saying she found her "voice" in New Hampshire, she has turned into Sybil. We've had Experienced Hillary, Soft Hillary, Hard Hillary, Misty Hillary, Sarcastic Hillary, Joined-at-the-Hip-to-Bill Hillary, Her-Own-Person-Who-Just-Happens-to-Be-Married-to-a-Former-President Hillary, It's-My-Turn Hillary, Cuddly Hillary, Let's-Get-Down-in-the-Dirt-and-Fight-Like-Dogs Hillary.

Just as in the White House, when her cascading images and hairstyles became dizzying and unsettling, suggesting that the first lady woke up every day struggling to create a persona, now she seems to think there is a political solution to her problem. If she can only change this or that about her persona, or tear down this or that about Obama's. But the whirlwind of changes and charges gets wearing.

By threatening to throw the kitchen sink at Obama, the Clinton campaign simply confirmed the fact that they might be going down the drain.

Hillary and her aides urged reporters to learn from the "Saturday Night Live" skit about journalists having crushes on Obama.

"Maybe we should ask Barack if he's comfortable and needs another pillow," she said tartly in the debate here Tuesday night. She

peevishly and pointlessly complained about getting the first question too often, implying that the moderators of MSNBC — a channel her campaign has complained has been sexist — are giving Obama an easy ride.

Beating on the press is the lamest thing you can do. It is only because of the utter open-mindedness of the press that Hillary can lose 11 contests in a row and still be treated as a contender.

Hillary and her top aides could not say categorically that her campaign had not been the source on the Drudge Report, as Matt Drudge claimed, for a picture of Obama in African native garb that the mean-spirited hope will conjure up a Muslim Manchurian candidate vibe.

At a rally on Sunday, she tried sarcasm about Obama, talking about how “celestial choirs” singing and magic wands waving won’t get everybody together to “do the right thing.”

With David Brody, Hillary evoked the specter of a scary Kool-Aid cult. “I think that there is a certain phenomenon associated with his candidacy, and I am really struck by that because it is very much about him and his personality and his presentation,” she said, adding that “it dangerously oversimplifies the complexity of the problems we face, the challenge of navigating our country through some difficult uncharted waters. We are a nation at war. That seems to be forgotten.”

Actually it’s not forgotten. It’s a hard sell for Hillary to say that she is the only one capable of leading this country in a war when she helped in leading the country into that war. Or to paraphrase Obama from the debate here, the one who drives the bus into the ditch can’t drive it out.