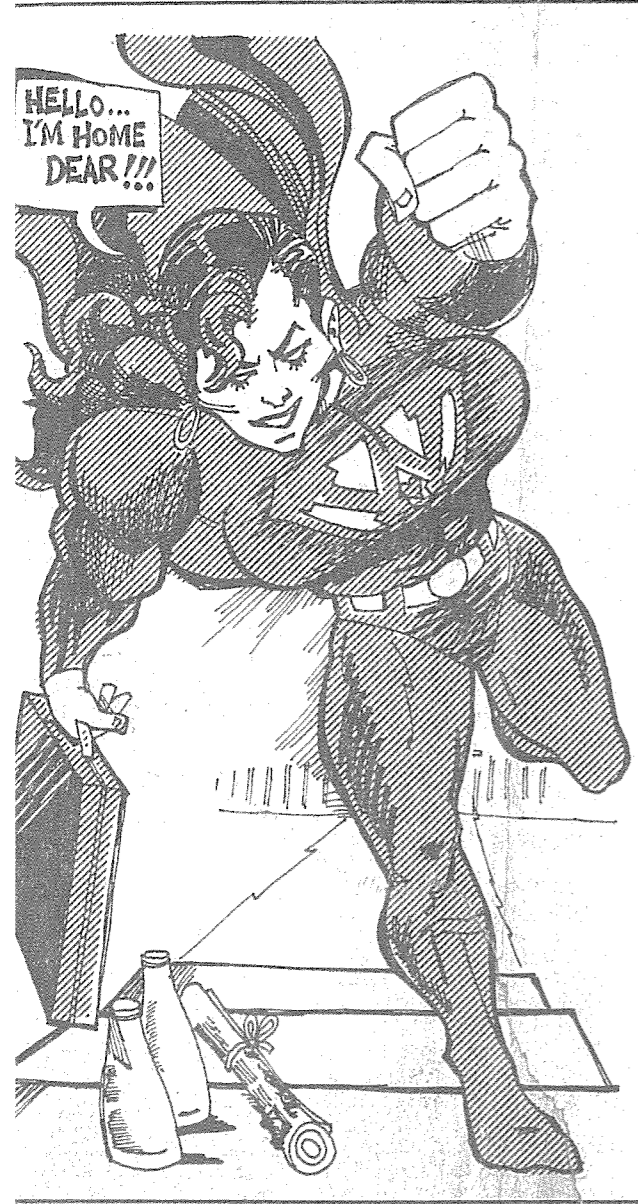


# Being super-perfect is not good enough



IT'S official. The revolution is off.

A high achiever's work is never done.

Just as the dust settles on the motherhood versus career question — with everyone agreeing women want both, if not all — the high achiever gets done like a microwave dinner for trying to excel at everything.

Imagine the scenario. Super-perfect woman comes home from her super-perfect office to find politically sound, non gender-specific toys scattered through her non-sexist domicile and baby girl howling because her blue half-mohawk isn't as bright as her brother's pink long hair.

Her husband, lest we forget him, is a perfect example of the liberated, feminised, late 20th century urban dweller. He is either in the kitchen, dispensed with or a thing — like a handbag.

She who rules slips out of her dress-for-success outfit and into her designer aerobics suit, pours herself a stiff mineral water and sorts through her mail.

Horror of horrors! It is filled with abuse: who does she think she is; doesn't she realise she's failing to fulfil her multiple roles; her body is not her own, it is a mere chattel and fodder for conspicuous consumerism;

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can't she read the signs of stress and conflict; look what she is doing to her physical and mental health; she is the victim to her own success and if she wants to be outwardly positive, inwardly peaceful, upwardly mobile and a woman in control of her own destiny, she better believe it. . .

This is the word according to the latest rash of mostly American hype coming from those who have seen the future — and it is feminine. For a mere trifling, experts with a string of degrees are prepared to divulge how she can learn to avoid walking into disaster.

There are exercises, strategies, diets, workouts, visualisations, meditations, weekend retreats and specialist-designed programs galore for female jugglers of all ages who want to be everything to everyone all the time.

How to choose and check appropriate men; how to deal with excellence anxiety, suppressed dependency and enormous expectations; how to build up stress resistance in just 21 days; how to stop cheating yourself of the real you; how to help your man cope with being vulnerable, sensitive, loving

and creative; how to admit that beneath the tough surface of that female predator is a soft, tender damsel in distress.

Flawed women, of course, will scoff. For instance, they will show you their man. A subtle, rewarding partner. He is not threatened by competent females; he is content to play token man. In victim-of-lust situations he's the first to bow out, admitting he's married to one of the guys and he perfectly understands her needs. He never speaks first. That would be per-

female friends who take care of family, boyfriends, girlfriends, pets, plants, children, relatives and anyone who can claim her attention or a connection with any of the latter.

Her problem is she can't ask for help. She doesn't even know how to. Ply her with strong substances — emotional, chemical or natural — and she cracks.

All she's looking for is a truly intimate love relationship and a strong man, but the minute one appears she panics: what if I depend on him and he leaves me? Be-

## Female jugglers who want to be everything

ceived as verbal assault. He never says hello to strange women in bars. That would be rape.

Alternatively, some flawed women will display all the symptoms of being happily single. Wearing a smirk of glee, she goes late-night shopping for one. She has carefully camouflaged her dependency needs and she is engaged in perpetuating her excessive self-reliance. On the other hand you have the real traitors. Typical

fore she knows it, she leaves him. Safer to play caretaker of everyone else and diminish the importance of her own needs and the male personification of them.

Men aside, what does this woman see when she looks in the professional mirror?

If it's not a model of androgynous behaviour doing a first-rate job displaying vital leadership skills, she is kitchen material.

If her interpersonal relationships in organisations are

crashing around her like saucepans, if her seniors are sending her scuttling back to the corporate scullery, if her performance in affirmative action is as effective as sprinkling hundreds and thousands on sliced white bread, then she could be denying the shift from the machismo society to the androgynous.

Guilty persons are not blending male and female management styles for today's organisations. It's as obvious as the recently tilted nose job on her face. She is either subscribing to traditional management functions which are associated with masculine behaviour (except she's called bossy when she's assertive or bitchy when she's critical) or she's exercising specific sex-role behaviour. When she's persuasive she's called seductive and when she's successful everyone knows with whom she's slept.

If she pulled up her pantyhose and got on with the job she'd have adapted by now to non-specific sex skills. She'd either stop blaming herself or she'd stop adopting a highly competitive, masculine power style.

It might sound a bit like tiptoeing through the tulips or a sexist minefield until she learns how to grow.

The complete woman has

learned to reject her mother, acquire wisdom at great pain, weep, laugh and go through life in a constant state of intelligent astonishment at life's rich atrocities — atrocities like being over 20, over 30 and over 40. Forget 50. The latest literature from psychosexual analysts implies by omission that life has ceased by then.

Cruising through the great supermarket aisles of life and remaining hip, contemplating the meaning of a facelift, new teeth, new glasses, falling arches, dyed hair, the young ones getting married and grandmotherhood can be an ennobling and graceful experience if one reads countless elusive books mostly from California.

They focus on the high cost of separation, standing alone, the private I, guilt, crossroads, what to say when a friend calls at two in the morning, mourning, growing old, the ABC of dying and reconnecting.

The latter is the final tyranny to the super-perfect woman.

If God were a woman would the afterlife be another male chauvinist piggery?

Who knows? There is one consolation. So far no one from the great Californian university in the sky has written her thesis on that.