

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Jean Meyers day starts at 6:30AM with husband Tom yelling to her, "Can't you keep those kids quiet?" He wants to sleep in the mornings and she wants not to be yelled at. Finally Tom, the husband, got up and dressed himself as Dora, the baby was playing in his used pipe cleaners near the ashtray. As the baby started to put them in her mouth Tom yelled to Jean in the other room. "Jean, Dora's putting something in her mouth." His ashes and pipe cleaners in his ashtray were her responsibility to clean up. That's how he saw it, anyway. Finishing his coffee, Tom got up from the table and left for work, leaving his dishes at his place. As he left he tousled Kevin's hair, the 5 year old, and playfully punched the boy's shoulder. He patted Dora ever so softly on her hair and kissed Jean on the cheek trying hard to keep his body as far away as possible from the threat of stain or smell. Jean was left in her world of diapers and dishes, but when Tom was away she didn't feel nearly as angry and resentful as she did when he was home.

Once Kevin's bed was made, she moved along to Dora's room. I'm glad I had a girl, she thought looking at Dora. In a couple of years I'll have somebody to help me in the house. Kevin was a lost cause, you couldn't get that boy to put his clothes in the hamper, and making his bed, Ha! She'd tried that too. Why Kevin was just like his father. Men!

When Jean heard Tom's key in the lock, she quickly combed her hair. Tom was not really glad to be home, but he was relieved and glad not to be at the office any more. Tom was exhausted and needed some peace and quiet. Jean better keep the kids out of his hair and out of earshot. They were going out that night and Jean had an hour to bath Dora and finish Kevin's evening routine and get herself ready. Jean always perspired before they went out for an evening. Tom hates to be late. If I'm late he'll be snapping at me all night.

- Separate worlds. He supplies the money. Jean supplies everything else. She serves Tom, and fears that he could throw her out at any time. Tom is not her friend or partner, he is her master.
- All family members are left wanting. Jean feels put upon that all the child-care and housework are hers alone. Tom feels lonely and pressured with the worrisome money responsibility.
- The children are subjected to a mother who is exhausted by repetitive burdens of house and childcare. They are robbed of a relationship with their father. He never physically cares for them and will never get to know them.

The Spencer-Millers day begins at 6:30 AM when baby Blake is up and begging for liberation from the Crib. Since it is Robin's morning to get up early so M.J. can sleep a bit, Robin grabs the baby and trundles off to the kitchen for a bottle. Today M. J. will dress five-year-old Jordan for school before dressing for the office. Robin is in charge of the kids during the day and tonight at dinnertime. Then M.J. will do the bathing, the story reading, and bedding down.

The schedule at home works quite smoothly now, both parents sharing as equally as possible the maintenance of two small children and the attendant work to run a single-family home. It took some time for the practice to evolve, however. M. J. and Robin had first made a list of tasks necessary to run the house; then they divided the tasks in half. They divided down the middle such jobs as the laundry, shopping, cleaning, food preparation, mealtime cleanup, contacting babysitters, and making repairs. One week Robin did half and M. J. did the other half. The following week they switched halves.

The wife didn't want to have to give up her work until the children were in school. He didn't want to miss out on the children's formative years; he wanted a real love relationship with his kids. And as the author of this perfect life, I will allow my Robin and M.J. to find rewarding and secure three-day-work-week jobs in their chosen fields. The jobs are good and the pay is decent.

Are you troubled that you don't know what sex the Spencer-millers are? They aren't confused about what sex they are, event though I've chosen to confuse you. There is a mutual responsibility for the maintenance of life, which the children share. The girl isn't cast in the role of housekeeper of tomorrow by her mother. The boy cannot be slovenly because he's male.