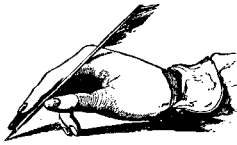


Diary



Who ya gonna call?

SOMETIMES YOU DON'T realize how truly dangerous a theory is until you are confronted with it in practice. Recently I've had two rather harrowing encounters with our local emergency services—the fire and police departments. Both incidents left me wondering afterwards how many lives are being put at risk in order to promote more female fire fighters and cops.

The first time was a few months ago, when my dishwasher caught on fire. Black smoke billowed impressively from its insides. My little fire extinguisher, kept on hand for such an event, did not work. Within minutes we heard the sound of sirens approaching. I flung open the front door and saw a man who, at first glance, appeared to be eight feet tall and, with his gear and yellow coat, about four feet wide. His neck was the width of a hydrant. "This way," I said, as he pushed past me.

Striding down our hallway, his heavy axes and tools swinging back and forth off his sides, he made our whole house suddenly feel doll-size. I fretted his head might bash the light fixtures. I thought, boy, if my house goes up in flames, this is the man I want carrying me out of it—along

with my husband, two children, cat, dog, and possibly a few armchairs as well, all effortlessly tossed over his left shoulder. My little son, evacuated outside with the pets, thrilled at the arrival of three more mighty firetrucks.

The fireman, meanwhile, glanced at the smoke pouring out of my dishwasher, which only moments before had seemed so scary and engulfing, and made an unimpressed remark into his walkie talkie (to the effect of, "You can wind the pumps back up boys. Don't bother with the axes, etc."). I thought he was going to put out the fire by spitting on it. Instead he took out a pocket extinguisher and blew the thing out in about two seconds. "Look," he said pointing to a melted cup lid stuck in the motor. "That's what did it."

"Oh."

"You might need a new one."

"Cup?"

"No. Dishwasher."

And indeed I did. Fortunately, it was the only thing we needed.

"Thanks a lot."

"Uh huh."

The other incident involved two policewomen. They'd responded to an alarm at my mother's house while she was away. The security company called me to unlock the front door. The officers had found an open window at the back of the house and were concerned that an intruder could still be inside.

I sized up the officer, and she sized up me: We were both pretty frail as body types go. An intruder—even an unarmed, beer-bellied intruder—would make short work of us both. Her female companion bravely suggested that she would wait in the patrol car in case they needed to radio

for more help. All in all, the situation seemed like some bad, made-for-TV movie.

"I'm going in," she said finally, her hand reaching for her holster as she entered the house. This was not reassuring. I waited outside, nervously listening for shots or screams. She returned after a few minutes, looking extremely relieved. Perhaps the wind had blown open the window. No sign of intruders. We locked the house back up.

BUT WHAT IF there *had* been an intruder? As a woman, you are made to realize the importance of sheer physical presence. Men know this, whether they are facing down some mouthy jerk in a bar or confronting a burglar in the hallway at night. A gun is an equalizer it's true, but it shouldn't be necessary in all situations. How much more quickly will a female police officer reach for her pistol? Or shoot at the first hint of trouble?

For the sake of making women more "equal" in professions that require brute strength, advocates blind themselves to the true victims of inequality—those of us whose lives may depend upon affirmative-action hires. So what, they say. Or as Gloria Steinem once memorably put it, to ABC reporter John Stossel: It is actually *preferable* for fire victims to be dragged—bumpity bump!—from burning buildings rather than be carried because "the air is better closer to the floor."

Thanks, but in any future life-threatening situations, I'll opt for Arnold Schwarzenegger over Meryl Streep.

- Danielle Crittenden

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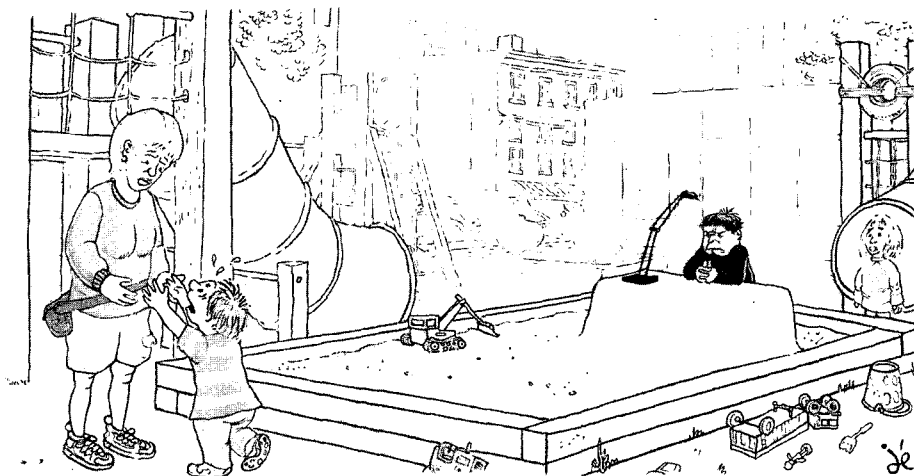
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IN THIS ISSUE

Diary: <i>Danielle Crittenden</i> prefers to be rescued by men.....	2
You're in Trouble Again, Johnny: <i>Jessica Gavora</i> reveals the White House's latest attempt to punish boys.....	4
Look Who's Losing: <i>Kimberly Schuld</i> shows Title IX's true victims	6
The Token Man: <i>Peter Worthington</i> defends the strap.....	9
Nice Girls Who Kill Their Babies: <i>Patricia Pearson</i> explains these maternal monsters	10
The Abuse Excuse: <i>Sally Satel</i> reports on a new bill that would hurt welfare reform.....	17
Dispatch: <i>Danielle Crittenden's</i> worst family vacation ever.....	18
The Weaker Sex: <i>Jo Anne M. Randall</i> remembers her impeccable Aunt Roz.....	21
Correspondence.....	23
One Last Observation: <i>Dale O'Leary</i> unearths Ruth Bader Ginsburg's early musings.....	27



"Mommy! Billy keeps downsizing me!"

You're in Trouble Again, Johnny

Not satisfied with squashing boys' teams across the country, the Clinton administration is getting ready to impose quotas on every other aspect of education, reports *Jessica Gavora*



SAY, HERE'S A thought: Why doesn't the federal government regulate the number of boys permitted to take biochemistry in every university in the country? Crazy? Not according to President Clinton, whose administration is already at work drafting rules that would give it just that power.

For once, the administration is remarkably candid about what it is up to. In most areas of law, the Clinton administration makes a point of denying that it favors quotas while in fact insisting upon them. But in the realm of education, Clinton has given the country fair notice of what he intends to do: police the number of women and the number of men enrolled in every academic program in the country. The regulations to do it are being drafted by the Department of Justice at this very moment.

The tool the president intends to use is Title IX of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Until now, the law has been used to ban sex discrimination in college athletics. But last June, at a White House ceremony honoring the twenty-fifth anniversary of the addition of Title IX to the act, Clinton announced a dramatic new initiative. He told his audience of educators, athletes, and women's groups that he believed Title IX's reach should be extended beyond sports. It should be broadened to bring about "gender equity" in every academic program that in any way benefits from federal aid—that is, virtually all of them. "Every school and every education program that receives federal assistance in the entire country must understand that complying