

Judy brady: i want a wife

Literature



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Judy Brady: “ I Want a Wife.”

Summary.

Judy Brady’s essay, “ I Want a Wife,” lists the duties and obligations of a wife, presented from the supposed viewpoint of the husband. Brady makes a comprehensive list of the roles the woman is expected to play as a wife and mother. She is to work and provide financial assistance for her spouse to complete school, take care of his clothes, maintain a clean and efficient household, provide him with good meals, entertain his friends, sympathize with his woes, help in his studies, satisfy his sexual needs and tolerate his infidelities. As the mother of his children, she is expected to take complete charge of the children’s needs, from feeding and clothing them to nursing them through illnesses and entertaining them. Brady includes the woman’s obligation to stop working, once her financial contribution is no longer necessary, and to accept responsibility for the children when the man decides on a divorce and remarriage.

What is the tone or mood of the essay? How do you know?

Judy Brady’s essay calls attention to the inequities in the role of husband and wife, using a very tongue-in-cheek tone of writing. When Brady assert her identity as a wife, and then goes on to ironically declare, “ I, too, would like to have a wife,” (310) she piques the readers’ curiosity and grabs attention. Brady writes from the supposed point of view of the stereotypical husband. However, it is evident that Brady’s essay is very much from a woman’s perspective. After all, which man would be so familiar with household duties and childrearing that he could give such a comprehensive details of what this entails? Only a woman could give an account of entertaining guests which includes making them feel comfortable, providing them with ashtrays,

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passing them the hors d'oeuvres, offering a second helping of the food, refilling the wine glasses and serving the coffee according to individual taste!

Brady's tone is liberally laced with sarcasm. This comes across most effectively by Brady's use of little conversational asides: " He had one son, who is, of course, with his ex-wife" (310); " because, of course, I cannot miss classes at school" (311); " And, of course, I want a wife who will not demand sexual attention" (312). She assumes a deadpan attitude, and uses a technique which parodies the making of a mundane list: childrearing, cooking, entertaining, working, sexual compliance and fidelity. This deliberately comprehensive listing unequivocally brings home to the reader the multitude of tasks assigned to the wife, and allows Brady to decisively make her point: the role traditionally assigned to the husband and wife is heavily weighted in favor of the man.

Brady's sarcastic tone incorporates a biting wit, laced with understated humor. As the ' I want' wish-list goes on, it is increasingly clear that the author is striking a blow for feminism against male chauvinism. The traditional allocation of duties permits the husband to have it all his way. The role delineated for the wife is that of a submissive spouse, always deferring to the wishes of her husband, and subserviently running the household for his convenience and pleasure. The stereotypical male takes his wife, and her services, for granted. Brady's tone is tremendously effective in making " I Want a Wife" a powerful attack on entrenched male attitudes, and in arousing awareness of the exploitation of women.

Works Cited.

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