

26 APR, 2020

## A woman's work is seldom done (by men)

Sun Herald, Sydney

Penguin  
Random House  
Australia

Page 1 of 2

# A woman's work is seldom done (by men)

Kathy Lette

**W**ith the glimmer of hope that we're emerging from hibernation, what will life be like after lockdown? Imagine it – no more supermarket queues so long there are Cro-Magnons at the front. The only lines will be for waxing salons. (Like most middle-aged women, I didn't like my beard at first – and then it grew on me.) Casual sex will now be over too. Yep, sex will be as formal as possible – nasal swabs, thermometers, doctors' certificates, lie detectors, the works. At least I won't have to serve any more penis pasta for dinner. (After hoarders stripped supermarket shelves of staples, sex shop websites' novelty pastas became my secret source.)

Another upside is that there'll be far less crime. Apparently the police caught the majority of their Most Wanted gangsters because they were self-isolating at home with their families watching Netflix. It gives a new meaning to a "captive audience". In fact, from now on, when masked men enter a bank, we'll just be so relieved to realise that it's only a stick-up.

What else will change? Some people will emerge from the corona cocoon with gourmet cooking skills. Others will find it hard to self-isolate from the gin bottle. Besides the Zoom boom, there'll also be a baby boom, a spate of very bad novels and a huge upsurge in divorce. At least that's the trend in China – and where Wuhan goes, the world does tend to follow.

The cause of this sudden increase in husband-ectomies is mostly domestic. It seems a woman's work is never done ... Not by men anyway. Suddenly deprived of their cleaners due to lockdown, women quickly realised that their spouses were not pulling their weight on the shopping, mopping,

cooking and cleaning front.

I do all my research in an in-depth, scientific fashion – over cocktails with girlfriends. (Online cocktails during corona, obv.) And what became clear during quarantine is that giving a room a sweeping glance is the closest most men come to housework. (Not all men, obviously. I wanted to get that in before beardy blokes start pelting me with their homemade quinoa quiches.) But generally speaking, it's true that the enlistment of labour on a subsistence basis is now forbidden except in one state – the holy state of matrimony.

Consequently, most wives I know are ready to impale their hubbies on a fork. Having prepared three meals a day for months, a mother's favourite recipe is chauvinist pig, roasted slowly on a spit.

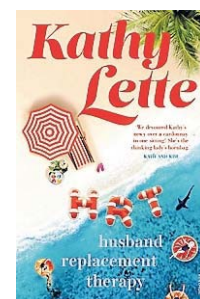
Resentments may have been assuaged if men had helped more with the home schooling. But most hubbies seem to have taken on the role of PE teacher, which consists of getting the kids to ride their bikes up and down the street while Dad plays games on his phone. In many marriages, kids are the glue that keeps couples together, but with home schooling things have come unstuck. When frazzled mums take conference calls with their teams while simultaneously making scale models of the Acropolis out of sustainable materials for overdue history assignments, sniffing the homework glue becomes a very attractive option. Followed by a tutorial for fractious offspring on the guppy approach to parenting, i.e., eating your young.

One of my girlfriends has announced that she's finally decided she doesn't want to have children. She'll be telling them tonight, straight after dinner. Then she plans to divorce her husband before he embarks on yet another ridiculous home project that he'll get bored of halfway through and move onto something else (watching telly

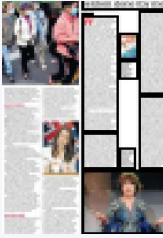
probably), leaving his beleaguered spouse to clean up the mess. How many women do you know who have a half sanded dining room table that she's not allowed to put anything "hot" on until he finishes it – in, oh, about 2033?

Before lockdown it was easy to turn a blind eye to a partner's annoying habits and general failings. But in lockdown, Helen Keller could see them coming. Is it any wonder so many women are practising social distancing – in their matrimonial beds. "Lay, lady, lay" is simply a tune to be warbled at the backyard chooks your husband bought on impulse and with no discussion so you could be self-sustaining ... If only he'd got around to finishing the coop because the escaped chooks have just dug up the educational vegie patch you planted with the kids. As you'll tell your lawyer, it proved the coop de grace.

I think I speak for all mums when I say it'll be so nice to get back to work to have a rest. But until then, wives are self-medicating with chocolate and chardonnay and, if blokes don't lift their domestic game, huge doses of HRT – Husband Replacement Therapy.



Kathy Lette's new novel, **HRT – Husband Replacement Therapy**, is published by Vintage on April 28.



26 APR, 2020

## A woman's work is seldom done (by men)

Sun Herald, Sydney



**Author Kathy Lette: "The cause of this sudden increase in husband-ectomies is mostly domestic."**  
Photo: Wire Image