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Hanging In, Solo (So What's It Like To Be the Only Female on the Job?)

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Abstract

A poem.

Keywords

poem, women's rights, gender

Hanging In, Solo

(So What's It Like To Be the Only Female on the Job?)

*On the sunshine rainbow days
womanhood
clothes me in a fuchsia velour jumpsuit
and crowns me with a diamond hardhat.
I flare my peacock feathers
and fly through the day's work.
 Trombones sizzle
as my drill glides through cement walls
 through steel beams.
Bundles of pipe rise through the air
at the tilt
 of my thumb.
Everything I do
 is perfect.*

*The female of the species
advances 10 spaces and
takes an extra turn.*

*On the mudcold-gray-no-
sun-in-a-week days womanhood
weighs me down in colorless arctic fatigues;
hands me an empty survival kit;
and binds my head in an iron hardhat
 three sizes too small.
I burrow myself mole-like into my work, but
my tampax leaks;
my diamond-tip bit burns out after one hole;
my offsets are backwards;
all of my measurements are wrong.
At each mistake, a shrill siren
alerts all tradesmen on the job
 to come laugh at me.
Everything I do
 must be redone.*

*The female of the species
loses her next turn
and picks a penalty card.*

*On most days, those
partly sunny days that bridge the
rainbow sunshine days and the mudcold-
gray days*

*womanhood outfits me in a
flannel shirt and jeans
and hands me a hardhat just like
everyone else's. I go about my work like
a giraffe foraging the high branches:
stretching myself comfortably.
As I hang lighting fixtures and make splices,
I sing to myself*

*and tell myself stories.
Everything I do
is competent enough.*

*The female of the species
advances 1 space
and awaits her next turn.*

Susan Eisenberg ©1982

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- Susan Eisenberg is a member of Local 103 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) in Boston. In 1982 she graduated from IBEW 103's apprenticeship program in its first class to include women. A recent book of her poetry, *It's a Good Thing I'm Not Macho*, is available from Whetstone Press, 94 Green Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. Eisenberg gives poetry readings for labor and women's groups and conferences.