

# Women (cleaners) reign supreme

My television set does not work anymore. Deprived of the joys of television, I now can only reminisce on all the strange things I watched for enjoyment.

As a person who just cannot stand NBC, I spent a considerable amount of my monthly income subscribing to our local broadcaster's competition. Even then, I have to wonder about the content which is forced upon us innocent viewers. I have no doubt that tens of thousands of other non-NBC viewers also have had the pleasure of seeing the advertisement for a popular cleaning product which I will only refer to as H.A. (and which rhymes with Mandy Handy.) I learned from the internet that this product is one of the "world's prestigious groups of Superbrands."

The story in this ad goes something like this: The setting is a far-off medieval fortress. As the cameras zoom in on the castle itself, it is clear that all defensive measures are useless against the dirt and grime which is encroaching on every nook and cranny. The overlord of the castle therefore enlisted every man in his vassalage in the fight against the all-pervasive grime - but alas, they are fighting an uphill and futile battle.

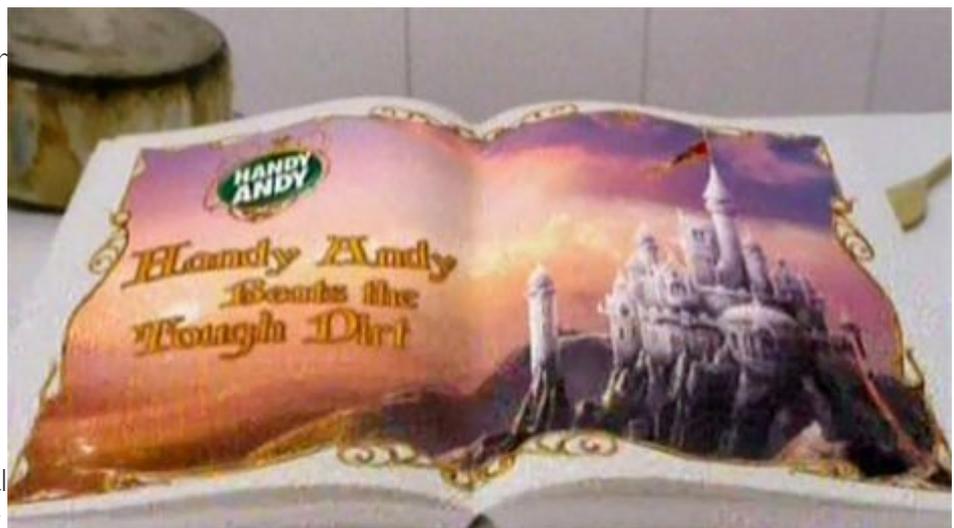
That is, until a shining knight on a dapper steed appears. Armed with a trusty flagon of H.A (which rhymes with Andy Mandy) the knight fearlessly falls upon the grunge invasion, rendering the stronghold spick and span in no time! It is at this point that visor which concealed the true identity of the courageous knight is lifted and lo and behold, the knight really is a woman – not just any woman, but a particularly fine-looking specimen of a woman with tumbling tresses. For her gallantry and bravery – but especially for her ability to clean the dirt, this Joan of Arc is then crowned queen of manor Mcrubbish. This ad truly, is a marvel to me in the sense that it is able to convey two directly opposing messages about women. The first is a somewhat optimistic view which suggests that a woman can or could also be the hero protagonist in a feudal narrative. However, no sooner

has the women protagonist crossed the threshold into the story she is sent straight to the kitchen where she is allowed to become queen of the shiny pots and pans.

My question: How on earth is it even possible for (apparently clever) advertisers to believe that women will be flattered into buying their product by suggesting that we can enter the domain of men (represented by the feudal army in this case) only to be relegated to cleaning if we are to breach into the pretend equality of the narrative? The ad tells us that our real collective forte lies in cleaning, more especially cleaning after men. This is what we are, pre-destined naturally-born k – I mean- cleaners!

The fact that the ad assumes a child-like narrative (which according to my internet source is also amplified in volume above normal programming sound) is a further slap in the face of all women. In its parred-down simplicity the advertisers made sure that every (obviously dumb) woman, and every five-year old girl can identify and understand the message. It tells us, in so many word that we must forget any ambition that they may have had for becoming even a lowly knight and to accept that we will always remain queens of grime!

By Laura Sasman



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