

EVERY HOUR

ANGELA MURPHY

Her part-time job helps them survive
 Keeps her driven mind alive
 And demonstrates efficient talents
 For a working-mother balance

When she leaves the paid-work scene,
 Face of calm, like plasticine,
 Hides the woman
 Who dons the cap
 Family organiser
 Mental map -

*Did Jack catch his bus at three?
 What's in the fridge to have for tea?
 Did Lucy take her theory book?
 Is there time for petrol? Maybe a chook?
 Has Tom managed to meet his mate?
 Ten minutes to collect them, can't be late!
 Must get Phillip to ring his mother,
 He won't remember it's her birthday tomorrow.
 Need a plumber to fix the tap.
 Buy the worm pills for the cat.
 Must phone Jenny and RSVP.
 The washing in the tub can wait till after tea.*

It's far more demanding
 Than the contract she landed
 Far more exhausting
 Than the table Phillip sanded
 And tonight after eating the stir-fry she cooked
 He stood back, chest pumped and asked her, "Please look".

The polished oak shone with delight
(In the shed, power tools, every other night).
With loving smile
She lauded praise
Her stony eyes
Like marbles, glazed
Something to touch, he felt so clever
What to show for her endeavour?

Those years of effort that can't be measured
Finding time for moments treasured
Steers the path of busy lives
Powered by female enterprise

The clothes are hung, the cat's been fed
The lunches made, the stories read
Her working day, her every hour
Ends in peace beneath the shower.