

HOUSE DIVIDED

By Jami Deise

When it comes to the work/life seesaw, ERIN MURPHY is a balancing-act expert. Even though she works for Democrats while her husband JACK is a mouthpiece for Republicans, at home they're totally in sync. Their children -- 13-year-old animal-nut JESSICA and 8-year-old Batman-obsessed MICHAEL -- come first. And her career is as important as his. While her days may be filled with stress and spin, her evenings are made up of pizza dinners, Halloween costumes, baby squirrels and horseback riding lessons. It's a crazy, chaotic mess of a life, but they wouldn't have it any other way. Erin is truly a woman who has it all.

But on Election Day 2014, everything changes. Suddenly, Erin is out of a job ... and Jack has been hired to host a new TV show on The Right Choice -- a network that thinks the other right-wing news organization is too liberal. While Erin fights to stand out in a pack of desperate, hungry unemployed Democrats, Jack is becoming the man of the hour. For the first time ever, Jack actually believes the words coming out of his mouth ... and there's no shutting him up! While Erin's best friend SHELBY promises to help her find a job, PTA President CHRISTINE thinks Erin should stay home with the kids. Shelby finds a lead at the Animal Protection Association, and Erin kills it at the interview. The job is hers ... but then Jack's show debuts. While the right-wing eats it up, Erin's friends are furious -- and her job offer is rescinded.

Jack becomes a celebrity, and he revels in the attention ... too bad the little woman by his side doesn't share his enthusiasm! Every word out of Erin's mouth is a challenge to Jack's nut-job beliefs. At parties and even at Jack's new church, Erin is quick to defend her side of the aisle. Jack can't take her anywhere ... especially the Right Choice Christmas party. (You didn't think they'd call it a holiday party, did you?) Erin finds an ally in her daughter Jessica (Dad is a disgusting planet murderer!), and they plan a "Ride-A-Thon" to raise money for environmental organizations. Jessica knows she'll get plenty of attention as the daughter of The Right Choice Network's Jack Murphy.

Erin goes to a career counseling center, only to be told she's best suited for a job as stay at home parent. No, the test isn't sexist ... it says "parent," not "mom"! Shelby makes partner and seems to be looking down her nose at Erin... at least until the first snow day of the year. Then she's happy to foist her daughter off on her. The only person who seems to understand Erin is Scott, a stay-at-home dad whose son is the other benchwarmer on Michael's soccer team. At a tournament in Florida, Erin gets close to doing the unthinkable ... only Michael's timely intrusion keeps her from an act she'd always regret. Feeling guilty and frustrated, Erin decides to throw herself into the whole trophy wife thing. She didn't count on Jack upping the ante: How about another baby, too?

When Michael takes a gun range bulls-eye to school, the resulting brouhaha shows Erin that Democrats can be just as small-minded as Republicans. She and Jack put Michael in an expensive all-boys private school, where all the parents think like Jack. So naturally it's time to buy a much bigger house.

Then just as suddenly as the fairy tale began, it all comes crashing down. Jack is accused of having an affair and insider trading. Though he swears he never cheated, he admits the SEC has a case. With all their assets frozen, Michael gets kicked out of yet another school. Just when it looks like Erin might have to take a job with Republicans to feed the family, the most unlikely person saves the day: Scott. He has photographic evidence that Jack's rival is the one having the affair. And the Ride-A-Thon has an unexpected benefit: Erin is offered her dream job! Jack is back to his level-headed self, and now it's his turn to be the stay-at-home parent ... and in nine months, he's really going to have his hands full!