



Law

## When a Man Needs a Woman

... he calls Corri Fetman, a no-nonsense divorce attorney with an all-female firm and a client base that's 70 percent male

**WHEN CORRI FETMAN STRIDES INTO COURT**, heads turn and mouths drop. Her four-inch heels, patterned stockings, close-fitting suits, and tangle of blond hair seem the trappings of an *Ally McBeal* extra, not a hard-driving divorce attorney.

But that's exactly what Fetman is. In her 14 years of practice, she's become known as one of the most aggressive attorneys in a field filled with nothing but. "She allegedly is aggressive; some would say obnoxiously so," says divorce attorney Herbert Gliberman.

Apparently, that's just what men want. Fetman's aggressiveness has garnered her all-female firm, Chicago Women at Law, Ltd., a client base that is 70 percent male. Fetman herself carries a reputation for being a tough-as-red-lacquered-nails lawyer who poses a formidable challenge in the courtroom.

"She is always prepared, and she is impossible to intimidate," says Judge Grace Dickler of the Circuit Court of Cook County's domestic relations division. Adds former client Daniel Sullivan, a 38-year-old Mount Prospect man who hired Fetman to handle his divorce: "She is really tough, even on herself. She was surprised when I gave her positive feedback. But I don't think I could have gotten better counsel."

A native of Lincolnwood, Fetman buried herself in schoolwork to escape a depressed mother and a father she alleges was violent. At age 11, she started working at a

bakery in Skokie, and kept working right through high school, then college at DePaul University. A desire to be financially self-sufficient propelled Fetman to DePaul's law school, where she made law review despite working 40-hour weeks.

Fetman started her career at the Peoria office of a Chicago firm specializing in labor law. A bit of hopscotching landed her at a firm where a male supervisor seemed more interested in her looks than her skills. A string of comments culminated with an invitation to bed. She reported him and quickly found another job, but the experience led Fetman to

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hire only women when she hung out her shingle in 1995. Her firm now employs four women lawyers; their Jackson Boulevard space is replete with office chairs upholstered in leopard print, and a steady supply of Chips Ahoy! cookies. "I wanted it to be a comfortable environment where women could be themselves, some place they'd like to work," she says.

Ironically enough, her biggest troublemaker lately has been a woman, not a man. Two years ago, a woman whose ex-boyfriend she represented in a paternity suit filed a complaint against Fetman with the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission, charging that Fetman had flashed her, à la Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct*, during a hearing. The complaint was dismissed. "That doesn't happen to anyone else," Fetman says wearily, running her hand through that enviable hair. "I'm a target."

Nevertheless, she expects that her reputation will net her even more male clients. "Men are where my referrals come from," she says. "They're very loyal that way."  
—LISA BERTAGNOLI