

Sound Advice

Beth Newcomer

Never wear white shoes or carry a straw purse after Labor Day.

Moisturize daily. Find a face cream you like and stay with it no matter what. And whatever you do, don't neglect your throat.

Two-dollar bills are lucky and silver dollars are magical. Keep them in the false floor of your jewelry box. Don't forget they are there.

Put away glasses and cups upside down on shelf paper. Change that shelf paper every spring when you take the winter coats to the cleaners to be put in mothballs.

Make green beans in the pressure cooker with bacon, sliced onion, peeled potatoes, and carrots. Even if you do not like carrots, add them anyway for color. Never, under any circumstances, prepare or serve beets. They are a loathsome vegetable, and a person who likes them should be kept under close scrutiny.

Which reminds me: You can't count on men.

Be sure you always have a little money saved away someplace in case you need it. This is called "mad money"—available in the event you get mad or go mad.

Hold a piece of yourself untouched, even when you think you're in love. If you give too much to a man at one time, he'll waste you.

Never trust a woman with a name that ends in "ie" or "y." Tammy, Susie, Laurie, Sherry—when they aren't giggling morons, they are slutty cheerleaders who will steal your date.

When you prepare the laundry, it's not enough to sort by color but also

by the texture and type of fabric. Use hot water and bleach on towels, sheets, and underwear. Never wash dishtowels with bath towels. Men do not know this. Never let a man do the laundry. Not that they ever would. In fact if you catch your man doing the laundry, make a note of it: He is undoubtedly up to something.

Being smart is more important than anything else. Nice gets you walked on. Pretty fades before you learn how to use it. Happy dissolves the moment you recognize it. But smart keeps you informed. And being informed will keep you armed. When armed you are safe.

Always serve beer cold with a frosted mug and a cocktail napkin. Put out a bowl of salted nuts. Store the mugs in the freezer and buy cocktail napkins for each season and holiday. Salted nuts keep a long time in the pantry and go well with beer when visitors drop by unannounced. The men will not use the mug, but the women will—which is a good thing because you can swipe the lipstick from the rim of the glass and compare the color with the bright-pink smear on the Kleenex you found in the bathroom trash. Certainly it is not your shade; only sluts wear bright pink.

Patience is the most difficult virtue to develop, and the most worthy of the effort.

When another couple is coming over to play bridge on a Saturday night, be playful and affectionate with your husband in the afternoon. If he is relaxed it will be easier to read his mind. This will give you an advantage at the card table during the bid, and also later when the pitcher of Manhattans is empty and no one can tell the spades from the clubs anymore, and the four of you have left the card table and are lolling around on the sectional sofa down in the conversation pit. Let him feel relaxed and free to be himself, free to exchange a glance with Cindy, to touch her knee, to look at her again just a moment too long.

Watch him carefully. Watch and wait.

He'll make mistakes.

Soon you will have enough evidence that you no longer need a confession to be vindicated.

Evidence is your comfort. Information is your power.