

PUFFY PURSE SAVES MARRIAGE

“Deb, what’s the phone bill doing in your purse?” my husband asked.

“I believe that’s beside the point, darling,” I replied, grabbing for the bill. “The question should be, what are you doing in my purse?”

“I’m looking for a wrench.”

“In my purse?!”

“Yeah, here it is.” my husband, said extracting a channel-lock from the depths of my bulging bag.

Feigning surprise, I gasped. “Now how in heavens did that get in there?”

“The question should be,” my husband said, rummaging through my personal possessions, “How come the pliers aren’t in here too?”

I grabbed my purse from his groping hands and dug deeper into the bottom. “You mean these?” I asked, pulling out a pair of pliers.

“You’ve got everything in there but the kitchen sink!”

“You’re absolutely right.” I confessed.

There was a time when I resisted carrying a purse. Because a purse says, I’m responsible. And the bigger the purse, well, the more responsibility, until you literally have the weight of the world dangling from your shoulder.

But carrying a big bag is a progressive disease, which creeps up on you when you're not looking. My purse peril began at the impressionable age of four, when my mother bought me a black patent leather with a one-snap close, to match my Sunday shoes. Basically it was like carrying a Ho Ho on a strap. At the time, my sole responsibility amounted to batting my wispy little eye lashes, and enamored adults eagerly tossed coins my way. A bat here, a coin there. A bat here, a coin there. After a few years of working the room at communion and graduation parties, I made a few bucks. It wasn't much, but it covered the down payment on a timeshare condo in Hawaii.

The next bag in my grasp, was barely big enough to carry my driver's license and lipstick. It said, "I'm single! I don't care about anyone else but me."

Then came the married model, a slightly larger version of its single counterpart. So that when you get in the car and your husband turns to you and says - "Did you bring my allergy inhaler? Do you have a piece of gum, breath mint, salami sandwich? or "Here honey would you hold my car keys? And this map too. And put this flare in there too" - you can accommodate him. Your husband walks around with an almost imperceptible bulge in his back pocket and you trail behind, lugging your luggage down the street, and he turns, shakes his head as says, "Do you really need to carry all that stuff? Look at me. I can get by with one slim wallet. By the way, did you bring the jumper cables?"

When I became a first-time mom, I toted more parcels than UPS. My right shoulder sported a portable crib and a diaper bag the size of Russia. But my left shoulder supported even heftier baggage - a complete photo album of every burp, gurgle and gas smile of my son, Marcus. I didn't locate my purse until Marcus was six-years-old.

At a baseball game or an afternoon outing at the zoo, everybody seeks out the mom with the big purse.

“Excuse me, mam. Would you happen to have a Kleenex?”

“Have I got a Kleenex!” I say, snapping open my bag. “I’ve got Kleenex, napkins, baby wipes. . . and give me those eye glasses. I’ve got special glass cleaner. It’s a miracle you haven’t walked right into the lion’s cage with these things. . . oh and there’s something on your face. Here. I’ll just spit on this Kleenex and wipe it off for you. Okay fine, walk around with a dirty face.”

“You must admit,” I continue explaining to my husband, “the contents of my purse has saved many a tense moment in our family. The dental floss came in handy when we took our kids out to dinner. It’s durability allowed us to tie them to the chair without fear of breakage. And how about the crayons and paper, we gave your mother on that long car trip? She was quiet for hours. Have you forgotten when our daughter Lauren cut a hole in your dress shirt on the way to the awards ceremony? If it wasn’t for my battery-operated sewing machine, I wouldn’t have been able to repair it in the car.

“And if it wasn’t for the scissors in your purse, Lauren wouldn’t have been cutting shapes out of my back in the first place.”

“You must admit I saved the day.”

“And exactly what, pray tell,” my husband asked, “were you trying to save by carrying this month-old phone bill around in the deep recesses of your pocketbook?”

“Simple.” I said grabbing the bulging bill out of his hands. “Our marriage.”