

# Slug On A Cheese Grater: An Autobiography



My baby girl is licking the glass bottom half of the storm door in big, sticky slurps, like she wants a taste of the hot day outside. She's getting it all smeary but I can't seem to make myself care. That's the whole story of my life, anyhow: the "fuck you" of other people's messes.

Through the punched-out window screen, I can see her brother and sister riding their bikes, looking like sick, sad birds, circling the gravel cul-de-sac out in front of the trailer. I love them dearly but they're ugly kids, pale and lumpish from a low-income, high-carbohydrate diet.

Half an hour ago, I stuffed my son into his sister's outgrown Pocahontas t-shirt and shoved both kids outside in the nick of time before their dad woke up, hung over and mean. Now, I need to get this mess cleaned up before they want back in. Not that they'd be all that upset by my split lip or the blood lake soaking into the landlord's ugly carpet but they would definitely be sad about the broken-handled knife sticking out of their dead father's eye socket. They gave me that steak knife set for Christmas.







The velvet painting that got yanked down off the wall over the couch has a howling wolf and a mentally ill-looking Indian chief on it and now, of course, from about the shoulders up, my husband Donnie's body. The acrylic velvet looks pretty leak-proof and I remember to lift with my leg muscles, not my back, as I tug him more into the middle of it. Damned if I want to have to rent a carpet shampoo machine so we can get the deposit back when we leave here.

The baby stops slobbering and flops onto her butt with a sound like a huge, dropped amphibian. It feels like she weighs an extra five pounds in pee when I pick her up and set her on the face of the velvet Indian, but there's no time to change her now. Her tiny, perfect razor teeth glint briefly blue in the light of a Jeopardy re-run on TV then very, very red.



"Good girl," I tell her. "Yum, yum".



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The lazy electric fan shoves the metallic smell of blood around the room, only slightly more noticeable than the usual sweated-on furniture and cooked pork stink of poverty. How did I let my life come to this? Why did I put up for so long with Donnie's screwing around and the random, almost casual beatings or fuckings he gave me when he came back, red-toothed, from running under the full moon? Why didn't I stand up for myself instead of crawling through my life like a slug trying to wriggle across a cheese grater?



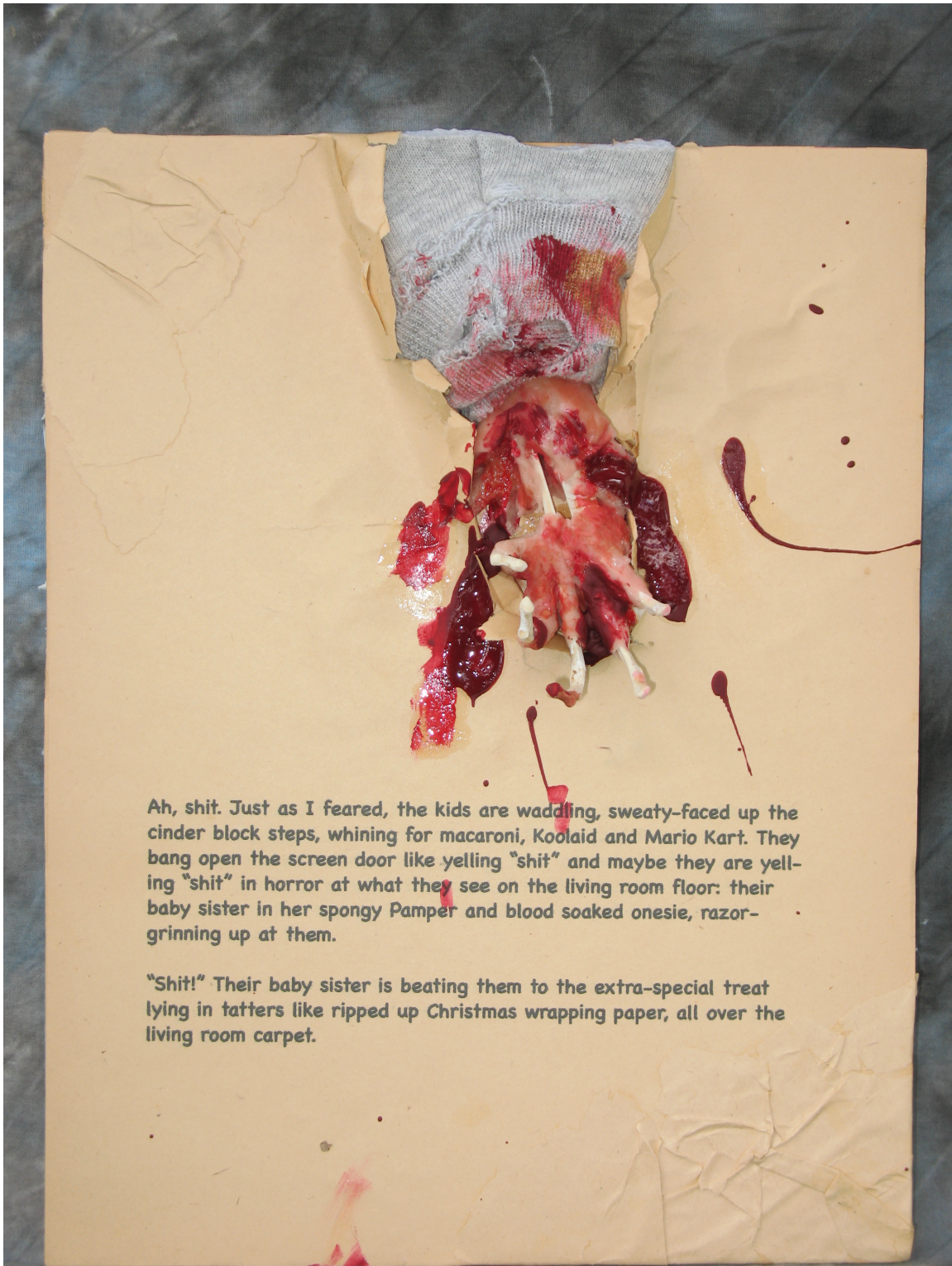
I guess because Donnie was my kids' father and because they loved him almost as much as they feared him and in between smacking and ignoring them, he'd do something crazy like bring them home a puppy.

Well, ok, MOST of a puppy.









Ah, shit. Just as I feared, the kids are waddling, sweaty-faced up the cinder block steps, whining for macaroni, Koolaid and Mario Kart. They bang open the screen door like yelling "shit" and maybe they are yelling "shit" in horror at what they see on the living room floor: their baby sister in her spongy Pampers and blood soaked onesie, razor-grinning up at them.

"Shit!" Their baby sister is beating them to the extra-special treat lying in tatters like ripped up Christmas wrapping paper, all over the living room carpet.







Now, finally, I will admit  
what has hurt me most  
in all these terrible  
years since I married  
Donnie:

It is having to tell my  
kids "No" so much.

And now here I am  
again, yelling  
"No, Angie! No,  
Donnie Jr.!"

Yanking what's left of  
their baby sister out  
of their ravenous  
jaws and shredding,  
suddenly extended,  
knife-sharp talons.

"No, kids! Stop it!"  
Although now there's  
almost nothing left  
but her torn,  
bloody/poopy Pamper.

"No...no..."  
Fuck, how I hate  
that those  
are my last words...

torn out of my ruined  
and blood-spraying  
throat...





