

# BLAH BLAH

by Carol Novack

Nobody knows why the manatee hurled itself headlong off the curb into the oncoming traffic. Officially, the Secret Police don't know, though of course one never can tell with them. Obviously, I stopped short the instant I noticed the animal, but I couldn't help tossing the tee into the sky, and when the poor creature fell, it was mangled and inedible. Actually, I recognized it immediately as a mutant side effect of oil spill; its eyes were lopsided and one ear was missing. And you could taste the oil in the air, feel it seeping through the intricate loop-ah-dee-loops of your cerebella if you hadn't been lobotomized.

So I steered away from the spillage, proceeded along the highway and met Slomo at a truck stop, no, a pit stop, no, a rest stop. Not that I meant to meet Slomo or anyone else anywhere. I was in this stupid old cockroach colored car -- what the hell like I should remember the brand name when it had combustible issues -- and I seemed to be fatally entombed in the stale casket with the three fuckacta kids of the waning boyfriend in Louisville Correctional Facility; and those kids had bad bad issues. They were playing at killing each other in the back seat, screaming to make me deaf and threatening to shoot me with plastic silver laser guns... real *real* looking weapons of destruction. *Zzzzaaapppp zzzapppp... ziiipoww zii you're GONE!*

I just had to stop and find a quiet toilet stall, an extemporaneous room of my own where I could bang my ears against a wall of shit so I wouldn't have to bang the boyfriend's fuckin' car against a useless mountain or steer the Chevy clear across a cliff and I had to pee off a few cans of diet coke anyway. Always good at golf; get it? So okay, I stopped, so sue me. I decided to meditate, cogitate, ruminate, flagellate, confiscate some soap and swig a shot or two of tequila I kept in the boot for apparent reasons, but I had to try to avoid crashing with the little shittots playing shootouts in the car so their

daddy wouldn't kill me in case I survived. Ohm's and tequila might do it. I also took some heavy duty blood alcohol deleters so I wouldn't get stopped and thrown into some fuckin' clinker. Always wise to plan for shit to happen, although it usually does no matter.

Enough with the fuckin' and shittin'. I was boring me, the kids were boring into me, Greg and Bobby, punkstar wannabes with pins in the middle of their tongues and purple neon goo in their hair; could never get enough sleep or fast food. I occasionally tried to tuck them in at night and introduce them to Salinger, as if maybe they could identify, but those kids always pushed me away.

Why and how was I happening to be in this predicament? Stupid adolescent obsolescent question. Old Dickhead used to be a better than average technician with the tongue and thrust and I was in my alleged prime, barely spitting on 30 despite the post-op degrees, JD and MFA. Jimmy Dean, Fuckowski, and Kerouac had long ago passed out dead, for Chrissake. Dicky would have to do. Maybe it was the way the guy's mermaid tatoo danced in the moonlight over Loon Lake and the way his lips curled like a new wave. By night, he looked enough like Elijah Wood to get me greased. At least, I'd had my tubes tied, condition of inheritance that turned out one big fat zero 'cause the Feds ended up seizing Daddy's assets under RICO, citing nefarious collaborative criminal activities with members of some family in Florida. Daddy knew about Dicky. *Worthless trailer park shit*, Daddy would spit. Smart-assed D.A. Daddy who loved to send crims to the frying chair. Capitol punishment did him in; D.O.A., telephone wires. (He always talked too much.) Ah, the sweet and sour taste of revenge. Mommy was so delighted! I was annoyed 'cause the telephone was out of order for days.

Blame me for everything that happened. So go ahead; nothing new. I get out of the pitstop at the reststop, wade through parking lot hiphop. Hummers with *Jesus Luvs George W* bumper stickers, and a subdued slow hurricane of dour obese women in powder blue and tepid brown walking about the place like zombies. And I see the

car's gone. The fuckin' car with the alienated kids has been abducted by aliens. So I panic. I have breathing issues when I panic, going back to the days when Mommy ... no, I'm not going into that. Mommy believed in the classics, love do us apart, watched too many idiot TV shows during the 50's, all about classic families who never fart with their legs apart, particularly in elevators. Enough said about my childhood. I walk straight into the food mall, where all these pathetic lard heads named Wendy and Ronald and Kernel and Bud are getting their sustenance for Road Rage and Kill. And I'm skinny, see. Too skinny, I realize almost anorectic despite the density of dark meat in my head and I'm about to scream if I don't shut myself up. What the fuck am I going to do? I don't eat enough. I think I'm starving.

So of course that's when I meet this guy Slomo. Yeah, Slomo as in Slow Motion fingers, tall and full of sinews, Slomo standing by a video game in front of the mini Burger King, watching me and grinning like crazy. So I go "fuck you," and he holds up his hands as in *don't shoot*. And he says, "It's just your skirt, ma'am. It's stuck to your pink panties in back, ma'am. Thought you might want to know. Very sweet panties, coochie coo."

"Maybe I don't want to know," I reply. "I have more important things to think about, like where my brilliant, psychotic boyfriend's idiot kids have taken the car for a joy ride and what he'll do to me when he gets out of Louisville Correctional Facility if nobody finds them dead or alive, but especially if somebody finds them dead."

So it becomes a guy to the rescue type of lickitty split thing. He gets on his digital pacifier faster than old John Silver ever got on his horse. Gets some local sheriff named Barney hot on the trail of the cockroach while we two cruise in Slomo's fancy red car to the nearest roadside bar and wait for word. Apparently, there are a dozen cop cars driving in all directions. One of them spots the cockroach with the kids sputtering, almost out of gas -- yeah, both

the car and the kids. But I was out with the sunset by that time, at the Sunset Motel, no kidding. Dusty but clean. So according to Slomo, the sheriff asked him, "Where do you want the kids dumped?" So Slomo gave naïve Barney the address of the local whore house (*my aunt Madam Rose*, Slomo said) and we've been together since, waiting for Dickhead to come out of the can and kill us. But we have super bug spray and I keep my nails sharp as kitchen knives from Home Shopping and Slomo's my hero. But it really isn't my fault about the kids, is it? I have bad bad issues too!

We're living in the white bread burbs now. I try to love Slomo's designer car and lap up his lines. We spread them out on the IKEA coffee table. Then we make furious sounds that might sound like love if you were tone deaf. But I know Slomo's only a room with a limited view and I'll be very off one day soon, I think, as long as I can shake my guilt about those kids. Probably have AIDS or Syphilis by now, maybe the Plague that's settling in the hoods of the untouchables. I should find those kids. I mean, I know they were hurting when they were shooting each other; no mother, barely a father. But what can I do? I'm only a womanatee, temporarily lodged in the Universe,

trying to swim. I can't help politics and my severe limitations and my manatee's fish tattoos are jumping around like crazy and I'm having heavy problems breathing and trying to figure it all out. I'm a mutant and there's a stinking spill of bullshit all over the place and I'm stepping in it all the time, off the curb.

