

Cheese

by Gary Moshimer

So, my wife got fired from her job for being three minutes late five times. But he had it in for her, the fatty boss. He was lazy and she was smart, in line for his job. And she had a workman's comp case against the hospital—she'd slipped in pudding in the cafeteria and hurt her back. Real pain but hard to find the exact cause, so they assigned a suspicious looking nurse to barge into her doctor appointments, and I swear I saw a camera lens poking from the cornfield behind our house.

My wife was stoned on her pain pills, buying things from the home shopping network. I went to the basement, where I hung out when I was upset. Her job had been in a Catholic hospital, yet they didn't seem to care. She'd done so much extra for them, like fixing and painting the old Jesus statues. There were some left down here, looking at me with sad eyes. They probably wouldn't make it back there. I picked up one of the syringes she used for gluing and filling cracks. I put the long needle on it. I thought of Fatty's eyeballs, his neck. I smiled.

When I went back upstairs they were selling cheese. The shopping network guy opened a tin of one and said, "Whew!" and laughed heartily and made a face.

I poked my wife and said, "I have an idea."

A few days later the world's worst-smelling cheese arrived by UPS.

I experimented, melting it down. I gagged. My eyes watered. I found the ideal consistency, drew some into the syringe, practiced on an old pillow. Yes. I could not get the pillow far enough from the house—I burned it.

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Sam was the excellent old security guard who loved my wife. He sent her selfies of his droopy face. At midnight he drove his stealthy scooter, blacked out security cams and let us in the back way. The long halls had alcoves with religious statues, most of them repaired by my wife's loving hand. She hobbled along and touched those, saying, "Forgive us."

I carried my black bag with loaded syringes like an executioner.

Our sons were along, dressed in black, faces smudged. DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME. Do not involve your kids in illicit schemes of this nature. It will not make them better people in the long run. It will only provide a brief but overwhelming joy they'll remember always. Do not teach them that revenge is sweet. Teach them to love all people, like Jesus, even fatties, especially when they're jolly and red-faced and powdered like big donuts.

The scooter whined softly. Sam moved his flashlight beam rapidly from face to face, then statue to statue, like a spotlight in a horror movie.

He opened Fatty's office. There was a puff of cheesy-ass smell already. Damn it! What if he doesn't notice? There was his big-boy office chair, a swiveling monstrosity with a sad squeaky help-me cry already set in its deepest bearings. Such suffering. We will put down this misery. In its next life it will have a jockey, in a fresh bright office overlooking the track, speed and color and muscularity, no longer trapped in the total smothering darkness of the giant ass. Not that I have anything against a giant ass which is well-meaning, with clean crevices.

On the wall was a framed photo of the family. They were on vacation, on the water. His wife and two kids were huge as well.

They were standing on a raft, smiling, not noticing how the raft was going down, water to their shoulders already. They'd sink or swim, but there were no more pictures, no rescues.

I worked quickly, held my breath and jabbed the first needle, injected with a smooth pressure. I shot at several angles, like a dentist with Novocain. I thought of how this chair would heat under that ass, cheese under pressure, fermenting and awesome. My sons giggled and gagged.

I packed my stuff, gloves and all, nothing in the trash, and escaped quickly.

We didn't feel like going home. We were revved up. I drove around with no real destination in mind, and my son Kyle, the youngest, said, "Let's stay up all night!"

After a while we all agreed we were starving. I pulled into a diner. I wanted breakfast. "Dad," Kyle said. "This is the best night ever."

My wife got up to go to the bathroom. She was standing straighter, proud. And we were proud.

"I want an omelet," said Kyle. "Ham and ..."

"Don't say it," I warned.

