

Cookie Monster's Harem in the Sky

by Shawn Misener

Last week I came home early from work and caught my wife having sex with the Cookie Monster.

He was loud and indulgent in bed. I could hear him all the way from the mailbox, where he was apparently in the process of devouring a giant cookie. Below his blaring growls I recognized the persistent and melodic tones of my wife in ecstasy. She was clearly enjoying herself.

I stood there for a moment, utterly confused. At first, I didn't recognize that the male voice booming from our bedroom was Cookie Monster. Maybe the guy was role-playing, I thought, or just letting his inner-animal take over. Yet, as I inched closer to the house I became sure that only one person. . . or thing. . . could make those kind of guttural vocalizations. He was only my all-time favorite television character, for God's sake. I used to sit in front of the tube in my white underwear and tear through half a box of Fruity Pebbles, following his lead and recklessly cramming the cereal into my mouth, bits of flavored rice and skim milk decorating the shag carpet around me. If there was one thing I could rely on every day as a child, it was that Cookie Monster was going to eat the damn cookie no matter how hard he tried to resist it.

Shaking, I entered the house. The screen door shut noisily behind me, and suddenly the ruckus from the bedroom ceased. I stood there, unsure of what to do, frozen with my arms feeling out the space in front of me. I felt caught.

My wife stumbled into the room, almost comically. "Hey Hart,"

was all she said. A cigarette dangled from her mouth as she nervously dug into her robe pockets for a lighter.

I could only stare at her. An air of acknowledgment passed between us that we were both in very uncomfortable positions. I mean, we knew each other through and through. I could tell exactly what she was thinking, her eyes fidgety and failing to meet mine: How the hell am I gonna get out of this one? How do I take advantage of him?

“Were you fucking who it sounds like you were fucking?” I said, hands still leveled off in front of me.

“I . . .” she began, dropping her hands and sighing. “Do you have a lighter?”

I felt the first waves of hysteria jolt through me. “The fucking Cookie Monster, Jenna?”

She turned her head and looked at the hallway floor. “How did you know?”

“How did I know? Maybe because I could hear him eating your cookie from the street!” I stormed off into the kitchen and opened the fridge. “I mean, what the fuck? How am I supposed to deal with this information? It doesn't even make sense! Does he even have a penis, Jenna?” I yanked out a jar of salsa from the fridge and slammed it on the counter.

She sighed almost contentedly. “What do you think?”

“I have no fucking clue! I wasn't just fucking him!”

Jenna leaned forward, her long black hair collapsing on the bowl of fruit in front of her. She seemed to be gaining confidence. “Hart,

he has the biggest dick I've ever seen in my life. He's amazing with it, too."

I had forgotten how she could so easily turn the tables on me when I got angry and loud with her. Now that I was near screaming, she had taken advantage of the situation with ease. She came over to me slowly, tracing her hand across the side of the counter. I dug out an avocado and began slicing into the skin with a dull knife. Green and brown slime leaked out from around the wound.

She slid up behind me and began massaging my shoulders. Her voice whispered calmly, "There is no way for you to understand what just happened in there. And, there's no way we can go back in time and make it go away." Her hands slid away. "And, with that in mind, I'm going to leave this house and you now, forever. You can sell my stuff or whatever you want."

I turned, knife in hand impaling a limp avocado, but she had already made her way out of the kitchen. The screen door closed shut soon thereafter.

* * *

It took almost a half hour of intense fretting and pacing for me to remember that I hadn't yet left the kitchen. In fact, the bedroom was still a mystery. Had Cookie Monster crawled out of a window? Chances are he did just that. But could he fit through the windows, which have always been too small for my liking? Just exactly how big was Cookie Monster anyways?

To me, Cookie Monster had always been fiction, but only of the most intimate sort. I grew up with him, watched his ways, mimicked his voice, and learned the lessons he was designed to teach. When I developed a problem with whiskey in high school, it was Cookie Monster who reminded me that it's okay to have addictions. He was

an addiction-based monster, covered with blue hair and wild googly eyes, and he seemed to have a hard time with English, but he was happy. He was happy because, above all the shortcomings, he was going to get to mash at least one cookie a day. In fact, he would probably mash the table, the plant, and the telephone as well, and it was all good, because that's what he does. His existence is defined by his insatiable appetite.

It was almost cathartic to me when I finally saw the Cookie Monster inside of me, and I abruptly gave up whiskey one rainy night in my early twenties. I could finally leave my lesser cravings with the googly-eyed friend, as a sacrifice. I even remember one night in a moment of lucidity I could clearly imagine him thanking me for the liquor and crunching the glass fifth between his powerful jaws.

We had a history that was deep and textured, at least in my mind. Therefore the fact that this personal mythological figure had just slept with my wife and was possibly still in my bedroom was impossibly strange and intense. I checked the light switch and read a line from a phone book just to see if I was dreaming. I wasn't.

I had just thrown myself into one of the kitchen chairs when a deep, methodical shuffling emerged from the hallway.

Then, in a voice unmistakably that of the furry man: "Me alone?"

I sat, silent and frightened out of my skull.

"Hello?" More shuffling.

Two eyes the size of baseballs peered out from around the corner. The black pupils were bouncing around their surfaces. I couldn't tell if he saw me. Slowly, two fuzzy blue hot dog fingers reached around and pulled the Cookie Monster into view.

He was at least seven feet tall, and as wide as the doorway. He could have been a dominant center in the NBA. His arms were thick and meaty, unlike his flimsy fabric arms on television. And, instead of the shabby triangle of a body I had imagined as a child, his torso and midsection resembled a giant, tight egg. Cookie Monster was truly a monster.

Yet his face, which was the size of a station wagon tire, was so innocent and confused. He couldn't seem to focus.

I still wasn't sure if he could see me at the table. I felt a strange emotion that is really hard to describe. It was like a pang of extreme excitement mixed with a coating of grave fear. It rushed through my body from my solar plexus to the front of my face, and I almost fainted.

That's when he saw me. His body sort of oriented itself to me, even as his eyes still goggled out of control. He jumped back a step, and the floor shook between us.

"You Hart?" He said, pointing one huge finger in my direction.

I would have fled if I hadn't been absolutely frozen to my seat. This was too much to handle. Catching my wife cheating on me with this impossible fantasy character. Maybe I had finally lost it and popped that screw my mom always said I was bound to pop. This wasn't real.

"Yes, I'm Hart," I said. "And you are the Cookie Monster."

"How did you know? Was it me. . .grumbly voice? Was it me. . . crazy eyes?"

I took a breath for the first time in what seemed like minutes. He

was intimidating, yet dumb and discombobulated, like he was constantly reorienting himself to his surroundings. My fear slipped away a little.

“I think it was the blue body hair,” I joked nervously, finding the torn avocado on the kitchen table and fiddling with it. “What was going on with you and Jenna in there?”

“Oh! Me sorry! Me sooooo sorry!” He held his palms up in the air in a defensive gesture. I noticed that he was only a few feet away from me now, his huge blue feet covering acres of cream-colored tile. “Cookie Monster blush, me so embarrassed! Should me go now? Me not try to break up marriage!”

“I think you already did.”

He crashed down into the other worn kitchen chair and put his head between his hands. “Oh no, no, no!” He lamented.

I once again thought to myself that I had to be dreaming.

He began sobbing. I was absolutely at a loss trying to figure out what to say or do as his bawling continued on for minutes. Finally, his googly eyes emerged from the tips of his enormous fingers and he began to speak, quietly, “Me have things that me cannot do without. Me cannot live for one day without a cookie. Hopefully more than one cookie. Lots of cookies. But me cannot live without other things as well, things that they not let me talk about on the TV. Me cannot live without cigarettes. Do you have any cigarettes?”

“I don't smoke.”

“Too bad. Me worst problem is making love to women. They call to me in their dreams. They say 'Cookie, oh Cookie, come satisfy me with your hunger.' And of course me come. Sometimes me come

three times a day!" He bounced a little in his seat, saw the sour look on my face, and resumed slumping.

"Sometimes the women are married. They always leave their husbands and live with me. There are maybe thousands of women at my house."

I was astonished. "Your house?" I asked.

Cookie Monster nodded. "Yes. Me house in the sky. You can only see it from television. And my boss won't bring cameras there." He once again began to bawl, louder this time. Intermittent apologies crept out from behind the tears. He really did seem sorry.

I thought of Jenna. Was she now staying at Cookie Monster's harem? Would she be happy there? Would I be happy without her? I hadn't yet considered the fact of her absence, and I expected to suddenly feel sick or devastated, but it must not have hit me yet. I was numb.

Cookie Monster had collected himself and was silent, looking at me and breathing heavily. He stood up and walked over to the kitchen cupboards, reaching up and grabbing a fifth of whiskey. "Why this here?" He asked, examining the bottle.

"It's for guests," I said. "I don't drink."

"Me know," he replied, pulling down two shot glasses. "but now is the best time for strong drinks. What have you got to lose?"

Slowly, Cookie Monster poured out two shots. I felt like this moment- his back to me, preparing my long forgotten poison- was going to determine the rest of my life. And he was right: There was nothing at all to lose.

