

Cracking Open

by Ethel Rohan

Her addiction started with dry roasted nuts, and quickly jumped to peanuts. At her worst, she was consuming a large glass jar of peanuts daily. She loved while hating their salty taste and greasy feel, the repetition of tossing them into her mouth.

“You're making a monkey out of yourself, and me,” her husband said.

Her weight nudged three hundred pounds. She couldn't afford therapy and had no success with Weight Watchers, and so attended local Alcoholic's Anonymous meetings Friday evenings, inwardly substituting “peanuts” in all the pertinent places.

After several weeks, she abandoned AA, too weird, but replaced the peanuts with shelled nuts, lower in fat and calories, and limited herself to a cup or two a day. Happier, she especially enjoyed the messy process of cracking open the fibrous shells and fishing out the shriveled nuts. Her husband complained about the litter of shells and shell dust throughout the house. She took to gluing the shells to the kitchen appliances, and sticking them to the walls and furniture.

“You've turned our home into a monkey house,” he said.

One Saturday morning, he appeared in the kitchen, a suitcase hanging out of either arm.

In a rage, she jumped up and down, the house quaking, its contents teetering. Most of the peanut shells fell to the ground. Still jumping, she sprang her skinny self out of her carcass.

Her husband dropped the suitcases, reaching for her. “Baby, you're back.”

She pushed him away. “Take the peanuts when you go.”

She whirled around, lifting her leg and kicking her enormous husk full in the chest. Her husk thudded to the linoleum, shaking the last of the glued shells to the floor. She danced from

room to room, lifting the shells and throwing them up into the air,
naked and loud as the day she was born.

