

## Sunflower seeds â€” so it goes

by Jason\_Love

My wife is a crackhead. She eats sunflower seeds by the siloâ€”chewing, spitting, crack-crack-cracking. I suppose she eats like a bird.

The seeds have nothing to do with it; Yahaira is after the salt. Glorious, iodized, vein-bloating salt. Each bag of seeds comes with enough sodium to kill the Niagara Falls.

But itâ€™s okay, see, because my wife has only â€œone more handful.â€• That is the crackheadâ€™s mantraâ€”â€œone more handful.â€• Yahaira has been on her last handful since last August.

An important part of crack addiction is that you do not, for any reason, stop moving your lips. It dates back to Freudâ€™s oral stage, where people get hooked on things like sunflower seeds and, say, cigars.

Once Yahairaâ€™s teeth reach fifth gear, the best you can do is keep your hands and feet away. She crams in new seed even as the old falls out, a gerbil with one day to live.

Finally her jaws grow tired and she turns to me with those pouty lips and says, â€œCould you please take these from me?â€•

And I take the bag, saying, â€œHoney, is this moment perhaps a red flag for you?â€•

Yahaira doesn't answer. Her mouth isn't up to it.

We tried to wean her from the habit, but pumpkin seeds were too bland, peanuts were too oily, and she just didn't take to the morphine. I tried to scare her straight by swearing that the Morton Salt girl died of sodiumiastris, which first ravaged her girlish physique.

Yahaira considered this a moment, fondled her bag, and decided it was worth the risk. So it goes.

But I see the pain in her eyes and know that she longs for the freedom she knew in the days before lockjaw. Here is how she put it in one Barbara Walters moment:

“Each seed is like a chore on a to-do list, and when I get to the bottom of the bag, I feel a strange sense of accomplishment.”

Strange sense indeed.

Yahaira is making efforts, bless her heart. She promised to eat seeds only in the car, her favorite hidey-hole.

Youâ€™ll find spent shells in her glove compartment, on the dashboard, in the carburetorâ€¦

That was all very well until Yahaira missed work while â€œtrying to finish her bag.â€• I listened to the story with an open mindâ€”sickness and health and all thatâ€”then asked, â€œNow what if you lose your job? Would that be a red flag?â€•

Maybe itâ€™s time for an ambush. I could take Yahaira to a field where all her friends jump out from behind a billboard.

â€œIâ€™m sorry, Love. This is not, in fact, Seed Fest '06. Itâ€™s an intervention.â€•

And though sheâ€™ll hate us at first, her veins will finally return the blood to her brain and she will see that there are no elevators, only twelve steps.

If you or someone you love is a crackhead, please act now. Do not let it go as we have. The other day I found a bowl of shells beneath the living room couch. Confronted with the evidence, my wife lied with the conviction of O.J. Simpson.

â€œThose are definitely, one hundred percent, absolutely not my shells.â€•

Left unchecked, your loved one could end up in some alley, hair turned to pedals, leaning pathetically toward the light. As people pass she will cry through puckered-shut lips, "Help me." A man will reach for a dollar, but his wife will stop him, saying, "No" she'll only use it to buy more seed.

And then, at her absolute low, your loved one will grab his coat and say, "Can I at least lick your skin?"

So you see the urgency of this situation. My wife and I stand here with a banner reading "SOS," only her end keeps dropping while she reaches for the stash.

"One more handful! One more handful!"

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