

**SAMPLE CHAPTER FROM:**

***“Not Tonight, Honey Wait ‘Til I’m a Size Six”***

My son has asthma directly related to cats, which means my family has always resorted to the crappy pets. Fish, hamsters, crabs, sea monkeys, Triops eggs that hatched into prehistoric and evil looking tadpoles that grew huge and died belly up and bloated.

All of these starter pets croaked after just a short time. The hamster had a heart attack and we found it stretched out clutching its chest in rigor mortis, yellowed teeth long and jutting. I double covered it in Reynolds Wrap, put it in a shoe box with a couple of toys and buried it as deep as I could dig. The next day, the neighbor’s dog ate it.

“Is that baked potato, Hammy?” my son asked. He had watched the burial preparations, including placing the rodent in his Reebok coffin. “Why does the dog have Hammy in his mouth?”

“That’s not Hammy, son. Lots of people have cookouts and throw the potatoes out into their yards for the squirrels.”

“With tinfoil on them?”

What can a mother say?

It was time to get a dog. A real pet. Only problem was my husband Tidy Stu hates dogs and kept telling us if we brought one in the house, he would up and bolt.

I obeyed for many years, but when my boy turned 9 and my daughter was 3 \_ I decided the family needed a dog, an animal that would return affection, unlike hermit crabs and plenty of husbands.

Because of his job, Tidy is gone most weekends and we're home alone, the kids and I. A dog would be great. Part of the whole American family picture. Two kids, a mini van, an SUV, and a dog.

Giving it about three hours worth of thought on a Saturday, I drove north toward Tennessee and bought a Jack Russell terrier. I didn't do a bit of research on the breed, like normal responsible pet owners would. I simply wrote the check and took the wild and wiggling thing home.

It peed and pooped everywhere. It jumped higher than acrobats and would bite holes in our clothing while we were wearing them. One day the tiny thing dug up four fully mature rhododendrons that Tidy Stu had spent years tending and coaxing into huge flowering bushes.

Needless to say, he was miffed. "Either find it a home, or I'm leaving."

"How 'bout I find you a home?" I said under my breath.

I mulled it over, and in the end, caved and found it a good home. The kids and I grieved. So we bought another hamster, which died two weeks later from a festering condition called Wet Tail, which gave my husband more fodder for his raunchy sex advances that get him nowhere.

Here, Mama," my poor son said. "Here's the Reynold's Wrap."

Well, that did it. Giving a child's dog away just because it shredded bushes, clothing and made stinky pie on the carpet was pure mean. The nerve of some men. I'd show him who was Mother of the Century. Denying us a dog when we were allergic to cats was like denying a vegetarian greens when she can't eat steak.

One weekend, soon after Hammy II died of anus rot, Tidy Stu took off for a two-day gig - one of the perks of being married to a musician. During his absence, Putt-Putt entered our lives. I was reading the paper one Saturday morning and there it was, an ad straight from heaven.

**“Beautiful female miniature dachshund for sale. Unique markings! House trained; great with children. Wonderful disposition! Yours to love and cherish for only \$150.”**

I called the number and the woman was ready to jump through the phone and hand over her prized miniature dachshund. She went on about Putt-Putt’s beautiful, one-of-a-kind markings and how she was the family’s true treasure. I kept wondering and asking why they were getting rid of her but the woman continued avoiding the question.

“You ain’t gonna believe this dog,” she said. “I got six people want her right now, but you sound nicer than them and plus you got young’uns and I want Putt to go to just the right person. She does best with young’uns. Only certain people Putt likes and I can tell it will be you.”

After she told me that fate had intervened and Putt was “destined” to come into our home, I agreed to drive an hour down to Hickory, N.C. and meet this super dog, this divine canine that puts all other dogs to shame.

“Bring cash,” the woman said, voice turning rough and demanding. “I’ve had trouble with my other dogs and people writing me bad checks.”

Other dogs? Lord have mercy.

“You know I think I better give this some more thought,” I said. “I don’t believe my husband would approve and he can get really – ”

“Honey, if you gone deprive them children ‘cause you got some mean sumbitch in the house acting like King Hole, what kind of example as a mama you setting? The good Lord meant for children to have dogs. Pardon

my language earlier. I just get so passionate about Putt-Putt, and I know this is meant to be. I got that feeling.” She let her voice soften, realizing I’m the stupid sucker type who gives \$5 to winos instead of the finger.

“Oh, well, all right,” I said. “Could you give me directions to your house?”

She coughed a couple of times. “It’s best we meet somewhere other than my home. How about the Taco Bell parking lot?”

Why didn’t she want me coming to her house? Things weren’t adding up. Cash, parking lots, beloved dog that is too adorable for words but not adorable enough to keep as a personal pet? Bad checks from other “customers” of her dogs.

The kids were overjoyed, hearing all the dog talk, and my heart soared. Just to see her babies happy a mother will endure almost anything.

We sang all the way to the ATM, swiped the crisp bills and then crossed over to Interstate 40 and drove 45 miles to the Hickory Taco Bell. I pulled in and saw the woman’s van. She was a fleshy-faced lady who glared at us, trying to assess the situation. She puffed her cigarette and then held up the little dog. All I could see was Putt-Putt’s precious face staring out the window. I started to open the door and the woman about had a heart attack.

She rolled down her window and screamed from half a parking lot away.

“Don’t dare come to our car. It will upset Putt. Let me bring her over to you. It’ll be better that way.”

My children were bouncing around in the backseat and overflowing with excitement.

“I love her already,” my boy said.

“Me too,” echoed his little sister.

The big jowly woman jiggled toward our car, preceded by one of those front asses split in half by her red polyester stirrup pants; what my daughter

believes is a rare breed of humanity known as a “two-fannied” person. She insists people with front fannies don’t have back fannies. I tell her some have both, but for the most part, she’s a keen observer of the human form.

“Do not under any circumstance say a word about her two fannies,” I warned.

The dog lady got closer to the car, her dachshund pressed against her chest and two children about 7 and 9 tagging along behind. She had her thigh-like arms wrapped around the dog, covering up everything but Putt-Putt’s heartbreakingly cute face.

I rolled down my window. The dog snarled. I saw two tarter-stained fangs. “Here,” the woman said, “I’ll just toss her back there and let them get acquainted. Don’t get out. That might upset Putt.”

She flung the long black dog toward my children and they fawned over her just the way this conniving bat wanted them to. Oh, she had a plan all right. She knew how to trick a family.

“You bring the cash?” she asked. “I don’t have much time to talk. You don’t want her, eight more do.” It had grown from six to eight overnight. “Three of them seem like great homes, too.”

She had me. No mother likes that much competition.

“Well, I wanted to see first if the children would – ”

“Look, at that would ya? The good Lord knows who to pair his pets with, don’t he? I ain’t never seen two happier young’uns.” She held out her meaty hand for the money. I placed it in her palm and she licked her fingers and counted. She kept saying how she’s gonna really miss Putt, the beloved family dog.

“Why was it you’re having to get rid of her?”

“She’s just like a member of our family, but Tuck, my live-in, he’s right allergic to her, you might say. The two of them don’t see eye to eye.”

It was at that point I turned around and got my own eyeful. OH MY GOD. OH, PLEASE MOTHER OF THE GOOD AND DEAR LORD ABOVE. I wanted the parking lot to open its mouth and swallow us up.

There, dripping and oozing, were what seemed like a dozen flopping teats, each nearly as big as my own. Poor Putt-Putt looked as if a fresh litter had been yanked off her swollen, achy chest.

“Has she just had puppies?” I asked and the woman’s flab started trembling in the sun’s glare. She squinted her raccoon-rimmed eyes.

“A while back,” she said, the lies curling out with the Virginia Slims smoke.

Well, what about that milk pouring off her like sweat, I wanted to say, but the woman was extremely intimidating with her fake blond hair and front ass.

“How old is the dog?” I asked. “Your ad said she was a year old.” The dog was covered up in swirls of gray hair on closer inspection. She had more gray than my granny. Her whiskers were silver, her eyebrows, her paws flecked with gray. She had to be 10 or 11.

“I said all that in the ad. She’s a year, give or take. ”

“How many litters has she had?”

“You a smart little thing ain’t you, with your fancy questions. This was her first.”

Oh, you front-fannied liar, I wanted to shout, but she was digging in her purse for what I thought may have been a gun. Turns out it was a fresh pack of cigarettes.

“I was going to get her spayed, but I’m afraid I waited too late.”

REINHARDT

“Too late?”

“She’s in heat, already. Them little wiener dogs get their pelvic itches right often. Weren’t two days ago I saw a bit of the blood on her booger. I figured right then and there it was starting up again.”

Blood on the booger? Her children snickered. I turned to check the dog’s nose, wondering if it had a cold something. But her nose was black and shiny. No blood. No booger.

“I’m not sure I know what you’re talking about. What do you mean by ‘blood on the booger?’”

She inhaled her nicotine and rolled her eyes up into the fat folds of her brow. Her daughter, who may have been about 7 or 8 didn’t flinch. She walked toward the window, poked her head in and said, “Ma’am, a booger’s a pussy.”

The mother didn’t do a thing but smile and her son cracked up, as did my own son. My daughter didn’t understand what was happening, other than she had sticky dog milk juices all over her.

“Mama calls the pussy a booger,” the girl said again, because she liked saying it.

“When there’s blood on the booger, the little old vaginer” the woman said, “you’ll know not to let her get outside.”

“She’ll hump anything in sight,” the little girl said. Then the boy stepped up to the window. “Hump means ‘fuck’, ma’am.”

My son was on the floorboard laughing, grabbing at his sides, his new front teeth looking huge in his mouth. I thought he was going to wet his pants.

I tried to pry my daughter’s hands from the old hanging-tit dog but she screamed and cried.

“I love her. I want to take her home.”

“See what I mean?” the booger lady said. “Putt’s great with the kids. I reckon we best be going. I gotta get this money to the bank before Monday.”

She walked off, this two-fanned human kennel who’d just ripped me off with an ancient, gray-haired, saggy-titted dog that was beginning to howl and grieve, tremble and piss everywhere.

The ride home was the longest in my life. I was short \$150 and my daughter had heard the words Fuck and Pussy and she wasn’t even 4. I knew I’d made a second mistake. I knew before we got into the driveway that what was about to happen was not going to be a good thing.

“Oh, son I just wish we’d gone ahead and looked at guinea pigs. They’re a step up from hamsters. Oh, what have we done?”

Oh, why didn’t I just let my husband rule his roost? Why did I have to go on yet another dog search and come home with this poor old trembling wreck?

*Because*, a voice in my head said, *it was meant to be*. That poor old wreck of a dog needed rescuing from any kind of fright who would rip puppies right off her chest and call her sacred parts a booger.

Yes, oh yes. It was meant to be. At least for six months, until my husband finally put his foot down. All because Putt hated people, especially men. Especially him.

He didn’t like our 4-year-old’s new language either.

We were at our elderly neighbors’ one day, precious Yankees of all things, chitchatting, when my daughter spotted their new dog. She picked it up and tried to look at its hiney.

“Does she get blood on the booger?” my girl asked, and my face flamed with what I knew would come next.

REINHARDT

“I’m not sure I understood you, sweetheart,” our neighbor said.

I squeezed my daughter’s hand hard as a warning. “Ouch!” she screamed. “Let go of me.” She turned to the neighbor and smiled, shaking her hand as if I’d broken it. “A booger is a pagina,” she said, pointing to her crotch.

“Girls got paginas. Dogs got boogers.”

Oh, I guess it could have been much worse.