

HOW TO EAT A CAR

1. You've got to plan ahead.

You can't just wade in there and start eating the damn thing. Think of the smallest car you can. What about one of those new electrical ones, can park sideways in spaces too small to fit a regular car. That's still a ton of metal and rubber and plastic and glass, and all sorts of synthetic shit that you've got to shovel down your mouth and swallow, and then pass through your system. I'm not going to say digest, because you can't digest none of that shit. It's just got to pass through, until you crap it out the other end.

And it's gonna hurt like a fucker.

That's why you've got to plan ahead, and think how you're going to do it.

Most people don't realise that.

When Sharkman announced he was going to eat a car, the internet went crazy with speculation on how the hell he was going to do it. Sharkman was famous for eating impossible, and sometimes downright gross, shit. But this was something else. An entire car, live on a twenty-four hour video feed.

"I always said he was a crazy bastard," Mel said.

She was lying on the couch in just a pair of panties, smoking a cigarette, one arm draped over her face. I hated it when she did that, just let everything hang out. Don't get me wrong, I'm not criticising her for being fat, we've both piled on the pounds the last couple of years. I read in a magazine somewhere, that that's what happens when you start getting older, your metabolism starts slowing down, or something. But shit, I'm not even thirty years old yet.

Anyway, like I was saying, I'm not criticising Mel for all the extra baggage she's carrying, I just don't see why she has to display it like that. It was fucking hot that day, I know, but she could still have worn a tee, or something. Those rolls of fat, just disgusting, man.

"We should go see him," I said.

Mel took a drag on her cigarette. "No way. You ask me, the guy's a loser. He was cool, once, like when he used to eat people's cell phones. Yeah, that was cool, man."

That was back in the day when the Sharkman had been at the height of his fame.

He had his own TV series, where he used to go out on the street, and grab people, and persuade them to let him eat some of their stuff, the more outrageous the better. Some people thought it was magic, or sleight of hand, but nobody ever got anything back. Once he'd eaten it, that was it, it was gone.

The first few episodes of Sharkman's Gonna Eat Ya! didn't make much of an impact. He ate a cheap digital watch, some loose change, an entire copy of the New York Times, shit like that.

It was when the woman challenged him to eat her baby's diaper that the show really took off. Sharkman was in Central Park, and he'd stopped to talk to these two young girls, and one of them had a kid with her, and they were sitting on a park bench, a buggy parked next to them, and surrounded by bags of baby stuff. Sharkman did his usual thing, explaining to them who he was, that they were on TV, and that he wanted to eat something they owned.

The one girl, she said, like what, I can say, like, eat my panties, and you'd eat them?

You give me your panties, and I'll eat them, Sharkman said.

The other girl, the one holding the baby, she said, what about my baby's diaper?

Sharkman didn't bat an eyelid. He just said, sure, I can eat that.

The two girls looked at each other and squealed, like he'd said the funniest thing. And then the mother, she turned back to Sharkman, and she said, the thing is, he's just done a crap. You gonna eat that too?

And Sharkman said, sure, why wouldn't I? I'm the Sharkman, I'll eat anything.

2. You've got to break that fucker up into manageable chunks, before you start eating it.

When I get my teeth into something, I can be a stubborn son of a bitch. Once I'd said it aloud, we should go see him, well, that's what I was going to do. And I was taking Mel with me. She took some persuading, but I can usually talk her around, given enough time. She started in at first bitching about how it was too fucking hot to move, and how she didn't want go putting clothes on, and heading outside where it was going to be even hotter than in here, even though the apartment was like an oven.

I told her she was being a lazy skank, and it was no wonder she was piling on all that lard, sitting around on her fat ass all day, and eating crap. That got her moving, sitting up at least, and she pointed her finger at me, and told me I was mean, and

how come I'd got so mean, when I'd been so sweet when we first met.

Maybe that's because you were about fifty pounds lighter back then, I thought. But I kept that thought to myself. I'd already riled her enough with talk about her weight, and it had worked, it had got her up. But if I took it too far, it would backfire, and she'd go into a sulk, and lie back down again.

Anyway, it wasn't like we had to walk all the way across fucking town to see him. Sharkman was eating the car in Central Park, scene of the diaper eating moment.

That was the turning point for Sharkman. That episode went viral, and the following week, it seemed like the whole fucking country had tuned in to Sharkman's Gonna Eat Ya!, just to see what he was going to eat next.

Because, when the mom took the baby's diaper off and showed it to the camera, yeah the baby had crapped all right. I don't know what she was feeding her kid, but that baby's shit looked radioactive. If it had been night-time, and not the middle of the day, I swear it would have fucking glowed.

So, Sharkman, he took the diaper, and he held it close to his face, and had a good look at the contents, and a good whiff, too. He liked to play this part up, whatever it was he'd been challenged to eat, like maybe he'd finally met his match, like maybe this time he might actually fail. Or even worse, he might flat out refuse to do it.

It was all just an act, and everybody knew it. He went through the same routine every week, but he always rose to the challenge.

Never once failed.

Only this week, yeah, this was maybe the one where he took the bullet, man.

I mean, this was a diaper full of baby shit. Fucking neon coloured, glow in the dark, toxic baby shit.

Sharkman made a big show of how revolting it was. At one point he even rushed over to the side and threw up in the flower beds. But finally he hunkered down on the ground, and put the diaper on a little silver tray thing that the TV crew carried around, and he got out some scissors, and he started cutting that diaper up into bite sized chunks.

I always knew he would do it. This was prime time TV, and the Sharkman wasn't going to fail big time in front of an audience.

Yeah, he cut that diaper up into itty bitty pieces, and he popped them in his mouth, one by one. Didn't chew on them much, just swallowed each one down. And

when he'd finished, his fingers were all covered in baby shit, so what did he do? He licked his fingers clean, that's what.

The following week, the ratings for Sharkman's Gonna Eat Ya! shot through the roof, and Sharkman himself was a fucking national hero.

Even though the diaper episode was most of America's introduction to Sharkman, I'd been following his show for a few weeks now, and I'd got his technique for eating stuff down. Break that shit up into bite sized chunks before you start eating it. That's what he'd done with the pencils, snapped them into pieces first, and the New York Times, he'd ripped it up, and chewed it bit by bit.

And if you're gonna eat a car, you gotta do the same thing. Break that bastard down into pieces so small you can swallow them.

That's what Sharkman did every time.

Except for that guy's iPhone.

Everybody else was fixated on the diaper, but not me.

No, for me it was the iPhone. How the fuck he ever ate that I will never know.

3. Believe in yourself.

I know, I sound like one of those crappy life coaches, promising you three steps to permanent health, wealth and happiness.

It's all bullshit if you ask me.

But if you're going to do some crazy ass shit like eat a car, you're gonna get some people who'll try and dissuade you of the notion. You've got to step outside of your skin for a little while, take a look at yourself from a different point of view. Doesn't look so good from there, does it? A man getting himself ready to eat a whole car? All right, it's not a Hummer, or a stretch Limo, you've gone the sensible route, and chosen yourself the smallest car you can find.

But still, at the end of the day, the fact remains, my man, it's a fucking car.

So, you're gonna get people trying to persuade you otherwise, pointing out the many ways in which this might go south. And they're right, this could go so horribly wrong in so many different ways, which is why my number one point is: You've got to plan ahead.

But you've done that, and you've broken the car down into bite sized chunks, and you're ready to start eating.

Now's the moment when you've got to believe in yourself.

A lot of people will point out the exact moment where it all went wrong for Sharkman, and they could be right. It's important to discuss that, and I'll cover it in Number Four.

But me? Nah, I think it all went wrong right here, at point Number Three.

Sharkman just didn't believe in himself anymore.

Mel finally got dressed, a strappy top and shorts, and a pair of sandals. The top didn't reach her shorts, and so you could still see her flabby belly hanging out, and the stretch marks, looked like she'd been carrying triplets once, but she'd never been pregnant in her life. She was just fat, that's all.

Like I said, I've piled on the pounds too, I'm the first to admit it. But I've still got a fair amount of muscle tone under all that fat, so I carry it better. You know how it is, you can put two overweight people side by side, and one of them looks flabby and out of shape, but the other one can look powerful, and fit.

That's me.

So I pulled on a tee, and a pair of shorts and my trainers, and we headed outside. It was fucking baking out there. You could've cracked an egg on the sidewalk and you'd have had it fried in a minute straight, I'm not shitting you.

So we took it easy, heading west, down 54th Street. Before we'd got very far, Mel's hair was plastered to her scalp, and her face was red and blotchy, and the sweat was dripping off the end of her nose. Fuck, but she looked a mess.

We had to stop halfway there so she could get herself a Coke, a two litre bottle for crying out loud, and one of those humongous bags of Doritos, could feed a family of four for a week.

"We could have a picnic at the park," she said.

Fucking Mel, that's all she ever thought about, was eating.

When we got to Central Park we had no trouble finding Sharkman, he was surrounded by a huge crowd of onlookers.

What they'd done, the TV show producers, they'd had a massive, oblong box built, out of steel and glass, and stuck it in the middle of the park. Sharkman had been locked inside with the car, an old VW Golf. He had also been left with tools to break the car up into smaller pieces, a water fountain to drink from, and a cubicle with a toilet.

There were some people didn't like that cubicle being in there. Wasn't it possible that Sharkman could smuggle bits of the car into the toilet, maybe in his mouth,

where he could hide them for later collection? After all, the toilet was a chemical one, and got emptied every day.

Sharkman said he was up for most things, but he wasn't about to start having a crap in front of an audience. It was agreed that if he wore nothing more than a pair of boxer shorts the whole time, and visited the toilet as infrequently as possible whilst eating the car, he'd have nowhere to hide the pieces.

Today was a Sunday, and Sharkman had been in the box just over a week. Another couple of weeks, tops, and he was supposed to make his grand exit from his glass prison with no sign that he had ever been sharing it with a car. His first couple days in the box had started off well. He'd got the tyres off and scarfed them down, and then he'd made decent work of the upholstery and the roof lining.

But when he got to the rigid plastic, and the metal and the glass, he had started slowing down.

It doesn't matter how small you make a piece of a car, once you've swallowed it, it's gonna hurt like a bastard as it heads for your gut

I reckon that's what slowed him down more than anything.

Me and Mel, we managed to push through the crowd and get to the front. To be honest, Mel's my secret weapon here. She just doesn't give a fuck, and the size of her, you're gonna get out of the way, or you're gonna get squashed. So Mel did the pushing, and I just did the following.

I'm gonna be straight with you now, okay? Sharkman was kind of my hero. He'd made a name for himself, doing stuff that nobody else could do. He'd dragged himself out of the gutter, out of grinding poverty where, he said, that was how he learnt to eat most anything. He'd had to eat some crazy shit as a child, just to survive.

I loved him for that.

And so did most everybody else for a few years.

They ran five seasons of Sharkman's Gonna Eat Ya!, and they could have run five more, he was so popular.

But then came the episode with the crying boy.

Sharkman's doing his thing, out on the streets, asking people to challenge him to eat something impossible, something they have on them that they think he won't be able to eat. To be honest, this is starting to get difficult now, as most people know he can eat just about anything you can name.

He still gets the occasional bad ass challenge, though. Like the old guy, who said Sharkman could eat his dead wife's ashes, if he wanted. That one had to go through the court before they let him, but he did it, even though he had to drink, like, two gallons of water to get that old boy's dead wife down.

Anyway, in this particular episode, Sharkman stops a mother and her boy, and he's crying, and the mother's shouting at him, and she offers up the boy for Sharkman.

"Eat the kid," she says. "I've had enough of him, eat the little bastard."

Of course, Sharkman didn't eat the boy. But he made a big deal of pretending to, really put on an act, you know, and the kid starts screaming and wailing, and getting so upset, one of the crew stepped in to put a stop to it.

But it was too late.

Seemed like the entire fucking country turned on Sharkman, said he'd gone too far, accused him of terrorising that poor kid. Hell, there were celebrities going on TV saying it was a kind of child abuse. Can you fucking believe that?

Ratings plummeted, and then the show got cancelled, and Sharkman disappeared out of the limelight.

Eating the car was meant to be his big comeback.

Mel and me, we got to the front of the crowd, and there he is, my hero, the Sharkman.

The dude looked like shit.

Like I said, they'd built this big, glass prison for him, you could see him from all sides, apart from that toilet cubicle in the corner. The Golf had been taken apart, the wheels were off, the doors, and the seats, and the bonnet, and lots of other shit, just scattered across the floor. The Golf looked like a skeleton.

Sharkman, he was standing by the car, wearing nothing but a stained pair of boxers, and his flabby body was running with sweat and blood. Yeah, Sharkman, he'd put on the weight in the years since his show got cancelled, looked fatter than Mel, which I hadn't thought possible. His eyes were bugging out and he was shouting at his audience, flecks of blood flying from his mouth and hitting the plexiglass wall.

He was holding something in his fist, I think it might have been a spark plug, and every now and then he stuck it in his mouth and chewed and sucked on it.

"They should end it," a woman said next to me. "The poor man's gone crazy, they should let him out."

“No way,” her husband said. “I wanna see him eat the car.”

4. You must never give up.

My dad always said, you tell someone you’re gonna do something, you’d best follow on through and do that shit, no matter how unpleasant it gets. The old man, he could be one mean fucker most of the time, but he got it right that time. You don’t ever give up.

Sharkman said he was gonna eat a car.

He should have eaten the fucking car.

Me and Mel, we sat in the park for maybe an hour or two, Mel glugging on her two litre bottle of Coke (and how she can drink that sugary crap I’ll never know) and stuffing Doritos in her face, and watched Sharkman pacing up and down, chewing on that spark plug, and not making any progress with it at all. I could see he had an angle grinder in there, and what he needed to do was grind that spark plug down into metal shavings, and then he could swallow them.

But Sharkman looked like he’d lost the plot.

Someone must have called the paramedics when he tried to eat the windscreen.

First thing he did was take a sledgehammer to it, and start smashing it up. You know what this safety glass is like, it got all scrunched up but didn’t shatter straight away. Sharkman kept pounding away at it, the rolls of fat on his torso jiggling around, and the sweat flying off him, until he had some bits of glass he thought he could eat.

But the stupid fucker didn’t make them small enough.

He shoved the shards of windscreen into his mouth and started chewing and trying to swallow. Blood began pouring from his mouth, and he started staggering, and pawing at his neck and face, and then he sank to his knees, and I swear he was fucking crying.

Looked pretty gross, man.

Then the paramedics arrived, and took Sharkman away, and that was the end of that. There was some moaning and bitching about how he never ate the car, but really, what did people have to complain about, it was a free show, right? It’s not like they could get their money back, because they never paid any in the first place.

Me and Mel, we headed back to the apartment, and Mel bitched all the way about what a waste of an afternoon that had been, and what a loser Sharkman was.

And I looked at her waddling along 54th Street, and I thought about that red

patch she got between her thighs whenever she walked anywhere, because her legs were so fat they just rubbed together all the time. And I thought, *what a fucking mountain of lard you are*, and I thought, *not even Sharkman could eat you*.

That's what I'm thinking now, as I look at Mel lying in the bath, that big, ugly bruise on her forehead where I smacked her one with the crow bar.

Not even Sharkman could eat you.

But I think maybe I could.

With apologies to Harry Crews, June 7th 1935 - March 28th 2012.

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