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Pottery

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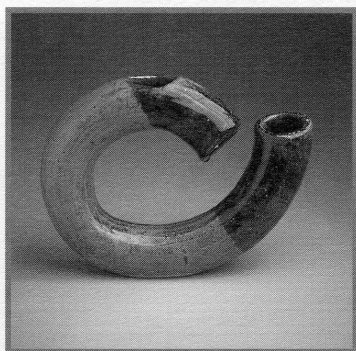
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dead asleep. I had to walk over and make sure he was still breathing, after I got over my surprise. This technique still works, but I've found that I've got to get just a little madder each day for it to take effect. So, the upshot of it is that I've now got to practically shout at the little red devil for him to drop off, but it's worth risking waking up Alissa. He really does give me the willies when she's not around, you know?

And, to make matters worse, I think he's stealing from us. Yes, the same monster that so cheerfully and willingly helps his little friends learn morals and proper behavior on practically every Sesame Street episode ever produced is actually stealing from me! I've caught him with his hands in my jewelry box more than once, and although I've not actually caught him with his little red mitts on the goods, I'm missing a few junk jewelry pieces that I



haven't worn in ages. It's just weird-why would he want my jewelry? I think he's also pinched a few dollars out of my purse, and once I caught him on a chair trying to get to Jim's handgun box in our closet. That scared me, and I scolded him roundly for it, but it didn't seem to sink in. He just stared at me like he always does with that glint of malfeasance in his cold eyes, and so I put him to sleep, right then and there. He fell off the chair in mid-snore and, of course, that made me feel guilty, so I put him in our bed and watched him for a while to make sure he wasn't hurt. Later, I had to laugh. Really...feeling guilty over a

stuffed puppet! Alissa certainly seems to love him, and I wouldn't want to have his 100% polyester stuffing on my hands. But then again, if he'd reached that gun box....

Alissa's waking up. I can hear her on the baby monitor moving and snuffling around in her crib. I'm going to have to make a decision soon as to what to do with Elmo; things just can't continue like they've been going. For one thing, I've decided to go back to work at the publishing company to help make ends meet, and I really don't want the babysitter to freak out the first time Elmo steps out of the TV and asks for a Zwieback. And the other reason, well, let's just say that I think things have gone a bit too far. Alissa won't play with any of her other little friends, and all my attempts at asking Elmo to stay home once in a while just aren't working. I suppose I could just stop letting Alissa watch Sesame Street, but it's her favorite program, bar none, and I know I don't have the will power to leave the TV off, even for a day. I've gotten too used to hearing it on in the family room, hour after hour, even if it is public television, and I never really watch it. I mean, it makes me feel like someone's here in the house with me all day, keeping me company. God knows, Alissa isn't exactly what you could call a great conversationalist, especially since she spends so much time playing with that damned ball of red fur.

I can hear Elmo stirring now, too, whispering to Alissa from his bed next to hers. I can just imagine the two of them with their heads close together and Elmo's bulging white eyes glimmering in the half-dark of her room. If I close my eyes it makes me think of conspirators and dark scary things and shining knives, but then I shake myself and think, come on, he's only a monster from a children's television program, and what on earth have I got to fear from that?