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Estranged

By Bruce Holland Rogers

11 September 2000

After the divorce, my wife said she didn't know who or what she wanted to be. When I heard that she had become a toaster, I felt vindicated. A toaster! Was that all she could be without me? And she wasn't even good at it. She could only do two slices at a time, and they came out charred on one side and white on the other. Obviously, *she* was the one with inadequacies.

True, I was unemployed myself. But a toaster! I would never fall as low as that. I would take a job as a human being, or I'd stay on the dole.

Later, she worked as a hotel washing machine, then as a high-capacity dryer until she was demoted. She became one of those laundry hampers with four wheels and a canvas hopper. Finally, she lost even that job.

Soon, however, I felt less and less like gloating. I still couldn't find any work at all, no matter how I tried.

I next saw her while on my way to an interview for janitorial work at a hospital. She was in the parking lot, backed into a reserved space. And she was stunning.

There was no mistaking her, even with all the changes. She had white sidewalls. Her body was lustrous teal everywhere but on the inward curving white panels that streaked back from her front wheels. Her chrome sparkled in the sun.

I just stood there in front of her, searching for something to say until a man came out of the hospital and walked up to her.

"Beautiful, isn't she?" he said, fitting a key into her door. "I restored her," he said, "built her up a little from her original 283 small block, gave her some juice. Dual-Carter-carbed. You know cars? Want to see under the hood?"

His generosity made me uncomfortable.

[Before Paphos](#)

by Loretta Casteen

8 January 2007

It starts again. The baby begins to cough and choke.

[Locked Doors](#)

by Stephanie Burgis

1 January 2007

You can never let anyone suspect, his mother told him. That was the first rule she taught him, and the last, before she left him here alone with It.

[Heroic Measures](#)

by Matthew Johnson

18 December 2006

Pale as he was, it was hard to believe he would never rise from this bed. Even in the darkest times, she had never really feared for him; he had always been strong, so strong.

[Love Among the Talus](#)

by Elizabeth Bear

11 December 2006

Nilufer raised her eyes to his. It was not what women did to men, but she was a princess, and he was only a bandit. "I want to be a Witch," she said. "A Witch and not a Queen. I wish to be not loved, but wise. Tell your bandit lord, if he can give me that, I might accept his gift."

[Archived Fiction Dating back to 9/1/00](#)

