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Little Gods

By Tim Pratt, illustration by Mark Precious

4 February 2002

"I wish I could be a little goddess of cinnamon," my wife Emily says, closing her eyes and leaning in close to the spices. I'm used to Emily saying things like that, so I don't take any notice, just nod and pick up a bottle of peach nectar off the shelf, slosh it around, wrinkle my nose. I know all the gunk in there is supposed to be fresh natural goodness, but to me it just looks like gunk. Emily says that I deny the truth of natural origins. Emily likes peach nectar, so I put the bottle in the basket.

"A little goddess of cinnamon," Emily repeats. "Or brown sugar." She crosses her arms, her silver-and-brass bracelets tinkling together.

"As opposed to a big goddess of cinnamon?" I move on down the aisle with my basket over my arm.

"Little things get little gods," Emily says. "It's only natural." She trails after me, running her finger along the shelves, pausing to sniff at the black teas, to open the lid on a jar of sugar-free gumdrops. Emily is always prodding, smelling, caressing -- she says that she is experiencing the world.

"So big gods are for big things, then? Like, say, whales?"

Emily sighs behind me. "Big things like . . . I don't know . . . love."

"How about hate? Jealousy?"

"Sure. But I wouldn't want to be one of those, nothing so big." She squeals in delight. "Ooh! Chocolate-covered espresso beans!"

"I didn't realize those were in season," I say dryly, but she isn't paying attention to me, has darted off to get a plastic bag to fill with candied caffeine. She'll be up all night, and she'll keep me up with her. That might be nice. Sometimes she likes to make love all night when she's had a lot of caffeine; other times she gets jittery and talks wistfully of the days when she smoked cigarettes.

Emily dances down the aisle, long skirt swaying, silver bells around the hem jingling. She shakes her bag of espresso beans like a maraca.

"Goddess of chocolate?" I say. "Would you go for that?"

"Sure. But I'd be even more particular. Goddess of dark chocolate. Goddess of Mexican hot chocolate. Goddess of hot

[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

