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Living with the Harpy

By Tim Pratt

27 October 2003

Living with the harpy presented certain difficulties. Her feathers clogged the shower drain, and the smell of unsavory meats cooked over chemical fires drifted from her room. She screamed profanity sometimes, as if afflicted with Tourette's, but with obvious glee. I occasionally found drowned mice in the coffeemaker.

Even so, I'd had worse roommates -- during college I shared a house with three boys who were always trying to catch me naked in the bathroom (though I wasn't as beautiful back then as I eventually became). The harpy seemed content with our living situation, too. It is in the nature of her kind to roost, if not to nest.

Besides, I loved the harpy. I always loved the *fact* of her, and sometimes, when she was in her pleasanter moods, I even loved the particularity of her.

I met Jocelyn at a dyke bar in the city. She had clearly never been in such a place before, smiling awkwardly, dressed in glittery club-clothes that didn't seem to fit quite right; I later learned that no clothes hung on her properly, that she always seemed ill-attired, that she only looked comfortable when she was naked.

I knew she wouldn't approach me, or anyone else, not tonight. She was trying to get the lay of the land, not to get herself laid. I liked her right away, if only because she was so different from the other women in the bar -- her hair was all crazy nut-colored curls, held in a clump on top with a clip, as if she'd given up hope of taming it, and despite her stylishly sequined black top and short skirt, she carried a big purse, rainbow-striped, clearly homemade. I found the unself-consciousness of her fashion clash endearing, but it just drew sneers from the rest of the crowd.

[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](#)

