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Bone Women

By Eliot Fintushel

12 December 2005

"What I wanna wake up and see ugly?"—Redd Foxx

Hildy loved me bad. Pudding of a woman, the moons behind her cheaters waxed for the love of me. She bleated after me, udders wagging, tongue lolling, buttocks dimpling, attended by flies. She was all armpit hair and thigh flesh. The cheaters, thick as hog's hooves, slid, slid down her nose, till arrested by the bump. She nudged them with a fat finger, then grinned. She wrote me love notes. I let her visit me up at the A-frame where I lived with Matt and Al. Matt: laconic, tight-muscled, trim as a bull's pizzle. Al: electric, slight, sizzle skip on the hot griddle of his libido, all eye and brow. They hated her being there. Her mouth foamed with abashment—she spoke, she didn't speak: ecstasies of impossible love. Don't ever let that person come here again, they'd tell me. She haunted the window seat and the fridge nook. She left the imprint of her navel in the screen door. Bowl-like, it was, like the sag in a cake fallen in. She mumbled half to herself, half to me, barely daring to exist, much less to love, much less to love *me*.

The mirror arrests me. I pull the hem of my shirt out of my pants, and I am deflated at the inflation of my belly. See it puddle over the beltline. Pouches and pannier bags of fat. I am 56, and things are now an issue that never so much as entered the consciousness of the young man I used to be—"things": i.e., my girth. If a trim and pretty woman catches my regard, I have to look at the geezer on her left, at the child on her right, dissembling. Or I screw up my eyes as if abstracted, sublime.

But I had loads of capital back in the A-frame days. Why did I put up with Hildy? "Put up with?" Hell, I encouraged her. A friend of Hildy's reproached me: I kept her around to flatter myself, she said. That's an odd thought. How could I be flattered by a courtier like Hildy? And yet it stung me to hear it—a sure sign of veracity. All this was shortly before my suicide attempt. Did I keep her around out of

[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](#)

