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Into Something Rich and Strange

By Barth Anderson

29 November 2004

As soon as I realized that the rapacious, rot-sucking revenant would not stop till I was dead, I changed my phone number. I changed the locks on my windows, my doors, I let my beard grow out, and I changed—

Wait. Let me rewind. The story of how I came to be known as the Great Bringweather really starts with the muffin—a luscious punk rocker with a strong geek for the guitar. Worse for me, he was a sullen misfit with placid brown eyes and soft hands.

In short, he spun my heart like a pinwheel.

I met the muffin at a Chinese restaurant slash dive called the White Monkey-Tiger. Lank, wax-black mohawk draped over half his face, he sat in a red vinyl booth surrounded by a cadre of what appeared to be either the members of a band or too-old-for-D&D boys (they were both, I later learned), all of them tilting a pitcher of beer into their glasses and conversing with an irresistible intensity that alerted me to the presence of the Holy Fire.

I was in my early seventies, young by the standards of my craft, but shy about leaping across the gulf between our years. It took several Fridays of sidling nearer, like a natural scientist earning the trust of lowland gorillas, but eventually, Devin (lead guitarist, Dungeon Master, and delicious muffin-to-be) invited me to drink with them. I needn't have worried about my age. We found a wide field of things to talk about: Norse mythology, Malcolm McLaren, skateboard technology (I mostly listened), and Wagnerian opera. Over the next few weekends, I became a regular at their corner table.

Then one Friday, Devin's band of musician-adventurers didn't show. It was just me and the muffin, and soon we were knee-deep in his favorite topic, his yet-to-be-performed punk opera about King Arthur. Though he'd been invited to submit it for a grant, he felt his libretto was too breezy, didn't carry proper mythic weight

[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](#)

