

# THE CALTRAIN HARPIES

by Bob McDiarmid (November 2009)

A particularly annoying brand of chirpy loud heterosexual female - the problem is worsened by factor of gazillion - when they swarm at Caltrain platforms - then next climb aboard.

Let me start at the beginning; The warning signs are clear that you are about to spend a Caltrain ride with CH's - when you see one on the platform. You've arrived a few minutes early and are sipping on your coffee when you see her.

She's in her late 30s/early 40s - she's learned that the high hair of her southern baptist youth was too high - but she obviously keeps the final net spray can in her arsenal. The closer you get - you get a woft of the official perfume of Caltrain Harpies - - Chanel AnnoyingAsBatshit Someone told you that floral scent smelled good. Why do you get a woft? Because Harpies bathe in this elixir of evil. You can see people walking in wide circles around her because of insidious perfume.

She stands there alone. Made up for a cocktail party instead of the office. She wears knee high fauxleather beige boots with 4-6" heels. (for practical purposes I've never asked to measure their heels fearing puncture injuries or passing out from Chanel exposure). She's wearing a vaguely animal pattern dress that comes just about to her knees at the top of the boots - and over it all - the powerblazer(tm).

How do you know this particular woman is a CalTrain harpy. She stands there alone - and you can see her twitching. You can see the hiiiiiiiiiiiiilarious stories of her life building in her brain - waiting to explode in a fit of heartfelt laughter with her fellow harpies. It's like watching a human capacitor - building with energy - waiting for release. She keeps glancing up at the clock display on the platform, "Where are they?" her eyes nervously say.

Then it happens. Another harpy appears at the far end of the platform. it's like one of those smarmy parodies of romantic dramas. (Roger! Marsha! MARSHA! ROGER! then they run to each other in slow motion? remember those?) Well - the two harpies start to vibrate on the same frequency - and while the arriving harpie doesn't RUN to be with Miss FauxLeather booties - you can see that her husband dropped her off on the platform before he had to hear any of her hiiiiiiiiiiiiilarious stories. I am sure that Husbands of Harpies know their wives are Caltrain Harpies - and get to the Caltrain to drop them off as soon as humanly possible.

So - two harpies - soon turns (in the particular gaggle on my Caltrain route) into four. Four women - chatting at 900db above the pain level - finding everything uproariously funny - and all four of them drenched in Chanel Le-Blech.

You can imagine how popular they are once they are on the train - and you are stuck in an airtight train car with them. I've literally witnessed formerly sleeping gaming coders and businessmen - let out large sighs - and give you that look of "no chance in HELL am I commuting to SF with - - - - them." They get up - collect their stuff and flee without looking back.

They sit in one of the banquettes and start their 40 minute HarpyChat. I've tried watching them - like a naturalist - a Caltrain version of Jacques Cousteau if you will - to figure when - in the constant chatter any

of them breaths. I am sure at least one of them has gills - so she can chatter and laugh, guffaw and giggle for 40 minutes without stopping. They speak so quickly and loudly - it is almost like they speak a different language as they tell about the best Halloween costumes they saw - or they're favorite LOLCat - or (and this is the worst) on and on about the latest television show they all watch. I wonder if they have a shared Google Calendar of events to watch and shows to experience. This morning they discussed some tv character they all agree is the sexiest man on television. (sorry pop culture addicts - through the thick Caltrain Harpy dialect - I didn't get the name)

Here's the BEST part. After we stop at Millbrae - and the conductor announces we're heading to 4th and King in San Francisco. They all break out makeup kits and do touch up. and you guessed it - we just passed under the Interstate 80 underpass - and I've just been gassed - a terrified homosexual in a heterosexual CalTrain Harpy gas chamber. They break out their beakers of perfume and do a touch up spritz. Eventually I'm going to work up the nerve to tell them that perhaps they've had enough perfume and the rest of us would like to breathe. But that day is not today. I sulk like the rest of the doomed passengers of Express Caltrain #313 - in a cloud of eyeburning foul "floral scent."

So if you ever run into me - on my walk from Caltrain to Moscone Center in the mornings - and I smell like Chanel Le-Blehch? Now you know why.