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Spillage

By Nancy Kress

27 September 2004

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When the coach broke for the third time, the second coachman was flung sideways over the shrieking axle and down an embankment. He rolled in the moonless darkness, over and over, brambles tearing at the velvet of his livery and whipping across his face. He uttered no sound. There was water at the bottom, a desultory and dirty little stream: the coachman lay in it quietly, blinking in pain at the stars, blood trickling from one temple.

A rat fell on top of him, squeaked once, and scurried off into the brush.

From far above, the coachman heard a sudden feminine cry. It was not repeated, but after a while there came to his dazed ears a muffled sound, not quite footsteps, as if someone were dragging along the road above. *The lady in the coach, or the First Coachman himself*— The sound receded and died, and no other took its place.

He lay in the ditch without moving, at first frightened that some bone might have broken in the darkness without, later more frightened by the greater darkness within. No matter how hard he looked, there was nothing there. Not a name, not a place, not a history.

Only the lady in the coach, and the First Coachman: the lady more beautiful than stars, the First Coachman portly and sharp-eyed as he peered back over his shoulder at his apprentice hanging on behind, to make sure he was doing it right. He had been doing it right. He had stood tall and unsmiling on the perch; the jeweled night had flown past the shining sphere of the coach; the horses' hooves had struck sparks from the stone road. They had passed other coaches, each a glow in the darkness growing to an exhilarating rush of beast and metal, and then the thlock-thlock dying away behind, leaving the scent of perfume and oiled leather, with never a word spoken. And finally the destination: leaping from the perch to let down the carriage steps onto cobblestones so polished they reflected perfect rectangles of yellow light from the windows above. Lowered eyes, and the lady's hand

[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

