

- [CONTENTS](#)
 - [Art Gallery](#)
 - [Articles](#)
 - [Columns](#)
 - [Fiction](#)
 - [Poetry](#)
 - [Reviews](#)
 - [Archives](#)
- [ABOUT US](#)
 - [Staff](#)
 - [Guidelines](#)
 - [Contact](#)
 - [Awards](#)
 - [Banners](#)
- [SUPPORT US](#)
 - [Donate](#)
 - [Bookstore](#)
 - [Merchandise](#)
- [COMMUNITY](#)
 - [Forum](#)
 - [Readers' Choice](#)

Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Boy

By Ray Vukcevic

20 May 2002

I hope it isn't raining, but if it is raining, I hope the wind isn't blowing, but if the wind is blowing, I hope there aren't a lot of puddles in the streets and cars zooming by to splash me, but if there are cars, I hope Karen isn't driving one of them, but if she is behind the wheel, I hope she doesn't see me, but if she does spot me, I hope she doesn't realize I'm not wearing the goofy earmuffs she gave me for the holidays, but if she does notice, I hope she'll stew slowly in silence instead of boiling over and calling her henchmen to snatch me off the street and drag me back to the hacienda for torture by chili peppers, but if it must be the heat for me, I hope I can be manly and not break down crying, "Karen, Karen, please stop feeding me those red hot peppers," burbling, breathing fire, babbling, begging for water, water, water, like I didn't get enough out in the street where I hope it isn't raining, but if it is raining, I hope there are no wet dogs chasing me through the puddles, and cars honking, and drivers yelling, "Hey, get off the street, you moron," but if there are dogs and puddles and honking and yelling and running and hiding in an alley behind some garbage cans, I hope there are no rats, but maybe I shouldn't have mentioned the rats, I hope Karen didn't hear me mention the rats, but if she is listening, maybe from behind that curtain in the window high up in the alley, or maybe she's actually inside one of the cans, hold on, let me check, nope, but if she does somehow hear about the rats, I hope she'll have too much on her mind to remember to use them on me when her henchmen finally find me and drag me back to the hacienda for jalapeños, but if she remembers, maybe the rats will be too smart for her, I hope they'll be too smart for her, but if the rats are dumb, dumb and mean, all teeth and no brains, easy to catch and be transported back to the hacienda in little wire cages, I hope they'll be gullible rats so I can make a deal with them, something like you don't eat my eyes and maybe I won't blow up and burn down the place and everyone in it, which reminds me that burning down the place with everyone in it would not be such a bad idea, you didn't hear me say that, it's just that they're always so mean, Karen's henchmen and the other inmates, no, kids, call

[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."

