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Straw

By Sarah Monette

28 June 2004

Mostly, now, they leave us alone.

We aren't news any longer; we have been wrung dry of "human interest"; even the tabloids have given up hoping for a miracle to put us back on the front page.

Generally, someone shows up around the anniversary, but they are not allowed to see us, and I do not know what they write. Harry asked once if I wanted him to tell me, and I said I did not.

We are the debris left after you save the world: broken bricks and dirty straw. I spent three years waiting to be tidied away, cast into the fire like chaff, but last night I had a dream.

For three and a half months after the flash, I was in a coma.

And for every day of those three and a half months, Harry talked to me.

He did not sit beside the bed and hold my hand—neither he nor I could have borne that, even if they would have let him—but we had been left, like two abandoned walkie-talkies, tuned to the same frequency. The effect has faded with time, though never entirely disappeared; we must converse aloud now, like ordinary mortals, but I do not have to ask to know how he is feeling.

The only memory I have for nearly six months after the flash that is neither pain nor grief is that interior sound of Harry's voice: scratchy, careless, tender.

It was how I knew, as soon as I woke, that Harry was no more responsible for what he had done than I was.

Once, almost a year ago now, Harry said in the middle of the night, knowing I was awake, "They let me have a mirror today. I'm like the Elephant Man, only not as cute."

[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](#)

