

Two Weeks Ago
Musings from "The Plague"
by Brit

I felt like crap. Not that I'd admit it. Though I guess compared to how I felt just over two weeks ago, I had a lot to be thankful for—like feeling like crap. Two weeks ago I would have felt 'dead.'

There's a certain—I don't know—*feeling* you get, being on oxygen. It's more than a feeling, more than a scent or taste. I guess it's hard to describe if you've never experienced it. There's a desperation that takes control of you when you can't breathe; can't get enough air. You feel like you're starving and drowning all at the same time. Two weeks ago I was in an oxygen tent. Two weeks ago I was dying.

The virus I'd contracted—I can't hardly even say the word "plague" anymore—was eating me alive from the inside out, and I was scared. No, I was downright terrified. There wasn't a blasted thing I could do at that point. And even though I hated my helplessness, at least I knew I wasn't hopeless. I just prayed we'd have enough time.

That was two weeks ago.

Now I'm sitting here at the dining room table, watching my partner scramble madly throughout my kitchen, putting together what he calls the "finishing touches" on a belated Thanksgiving dinner. Actually, it's more like he's *destroying* my kitchen. Every pot, pan, bowl, and utensil is taking the counter space, the stove, a chair...even the floor. I told him he didn't have to bother; Thanksgiving was over two weeks ago. Sure, I told him it wasn't necessary. He just looked me square in the eye like he does sometimes and said, "yes, it is," real seriously. I can always read Starsky like a book, know him better than I know myself, I think. There's more in that expression than the typical euphoric sentimentalism he clings to every holiday. I can still see the fear lingering there, the hurt. The desperation that drove him for days and miles well past his reserves in order to track down Callender and the antidote before...well, before I slipped away from him.

That was two weeks ago, but the fear of almost *not* making it—not being smart enough, strong enough, fast enough still haunts him, and I can see it in his eyes.

So, I'm going to humor him while he annihilates my kitchen, even though we both know I don't have an appetite. Starsky cooks the same way as he lives his life: with reckless abandon. Thank God Edith wrote out the instructions simply enough so that even Rosie could have fixed the meal.

I guess I had dozed off on the couch at some point earlier, because when I woke up, Starsky was sitting on the coffee table, fanning a rather deformed pumpkin pie in my

direction with an oven mitt pie—burnt crust and all—supposedly to entice me into waking up.

After following him to the dinner table—which surprisingly looked pretty impressive, courtesy of the Dobey’s, I’ll bet—I thanked him for all the time and effort. He grins back at me like a little kid, complete with some lingering flour dusting his temple and chin.

“You know, Starsk,” I say to him, “this almost reminds me of Thanksgivings at my Grandparents’ house.” I know this pleases him by the way his face lights up further. He tells me, again, how before his father died Thanksgiving was always a big deal at their house; his mother and grandmother putting out this really impressive spread. Just before they’d demolish it, his father would pray, thanking God and asking a blessing.

“Would you mind,” he asks me almost hesitantly, “if I did that now?”

I was a little bit surprised. We’d shared holiday meals before, but this was a first. I smiled and nodded, then bowed my head along with his.

There was silence.

I glanced up at him, his elbows on the table, face in his hands. I wasn’t sure if I should say anything or not, then I heard him whisper.

“Thank You, God.”

When he looked up at me, his eyes were bright. He didn’t have to clarify what he was thankful for—God knew, and so did I. We’d been given another chance when two weeks ago we didn’t have a prayer.

Dried out turkey never tasted so good.

11/21/2001

Happy Thanksgiving