

## **The Last Man On Earth by Al Mollitor**

“I wouldn't go home with you if you were the last man on Earth!” the pretty young woman sneered over the din in the crowded bar. Yet again, he walked home alone through the rainy city, the street lights casting shadows on the wet, grimy sidewalks. The man was disappointed but not surprised. Rejection was his lot in life, but what else could he do but keep trying? Only hope kept him going.

It all ended in a blinding flash. Most felt nothing while others twisted in charred agony. Only a few survived. None were unscathed.

Somehow, against all the odds, the man survived. When he finally emerged from the broken concrete and warped steel, clawing his way out of the hot mud, it was all he could do to crawl across a shattered landscape that was devoid of life. Subsisting on the remains of a world that once had too much, he tried to accept his destiny of solitude and pain.

He found it somehow fitting that he who longed so much for love should be so lost and alone in a world where love did not exist. His will to survive was strong, but after months of loneliness, hunger, pain and grief he contemplated joining the other lost souls by ending it all. After all, what was the point of continuing when there was no hope for love?

Is a life without love a life worth living?

Shocked by a reflection in the shards of a broken mirror, he saw a skeleton of a man: naked, hairless, emaciated, scarred and terrified. It took him a full minute to recognize himself, or, to recognize the shell of a human that he had become.

As he pawed through the rubble searching for something to eat, something green and living caught his eye. It was only a weed, growing from a crack in the dusty cement, but it was the first growing thing he had seen since the event. Then he heard a sound. He thought it was a human sound, but he had been alone so long he couldn't be sure. Was he dreaming again? Was he hallucinating? The first cool breeze he felt in months blew across his face.

“Who's there?” he croaked, not having spoken aloud in many weeks.

There was a stirring behind a crumbling block wall and, like a wet feral cat, a small human form peeked out from the shadows; shaking and afraid.

“Come out,” he said. “I won't hurt you.”

There was a movement and then a small person in shredded rags emerged. As he approached he realized that it was a young, dark woman. He reached out to help her over the rubble and as he stood before her and looked down into her wide, searching, tear-filled eyes, she clung to his arms and returned his gaze.

“Who are you?” he asked. “Are you alone?”

“Yes, I'm alone,” she nodded, barely audible. “My name is Havah.

But you can call me Eve.”