I'm NOT My Brother, I'm Me

A monologue by Peg Kehret

JONATHAN:

My brother Steve is four years older than I am. He's always been a four-point student and played centre on the basketball team. One game, he scored thirty-two points and set a new school record.

My brother Mark is three years older than I am. He tends to be on the rowdy side and got into trouble for stealing another school's mascot and trying to overthrow the student council.

It isn't easy to follow two guys like that. People expect me to be like my brothers, whether I am or not. On my first day in Mr. Swenson's chemistry class, he took me aside after class and informed me that he would absolutely not tolerate any experiments with the Bunsen burners other than those which were class assignments. He made it quite clear that if he caught me so much as looking at a Bunsen burner, I could expect immediate detention and would spend it scraping gum off the bottoms of the tables in the library.

I could only blink and nod at him. At that point, I didn't even know what a Bunsen burner was and I certainly didn't know that Mark had once set off a series of minor explosions which resulted in the fire department sending two trucks to school and Mr. Swenson being reprimanded by the principal. For the next two weeks, even though I liked chemistry, I was scared to look at anything in the room for fear I'd end up under a library table with a scraper in my hand.

I had a different problem in geometry. No matter how hard I tried, all those angles and formulas didn't make sense to me. I did my homework, but it was usually wrong, and when Miss Scutter explained it in class, I still didn't understand. So one day I stayed after school to get some extra help and instead I got a lecture.

"It's obvious," Miss Scutter told me, "that you are not working up to your potential. There's no excuse for the number of errors on your last test. You simply aren't trying."

Her angry attitude surprised me because my friend Allen had just as many mistakes, and when he asked for extra help, Miss Scutter was delighted and spent a whole hour showing him how to do the problems.

Then Miss Scutter continued her tirade and I understood. "Your brother Steve always got straight A's in my class," she said, "and I expect you to do the same."

I transferred out of geometry the next day and took Current Events instead. I picked Current Events because it's taught by a new faculty member, someone who never met either of my brothers.

Why can't people wait until they know me before deciding what I'm like? They don't, though. The basketball coach was overjoyed when I turned out. He assumed I would be fast and well-coordinated and deadly at the free-throw line. When I didn't make the team, I think he was more disappointed than I was.

The chaperones at the school dance spent half the night watching me because they expected me to pull some prank, like Mark always did. I felt like I was on parole without ever committing a crime.

Steve and Mark are both in college now. Mark got all A's and B's in his first semester. Not only that, he was elected vice-president of the freshman class.

I got to wondering what happened to change him so much. I couldn't figure out, so when he came home during midwinter break, I asked him how come he wasn't getting into trouble anymore. He told me he used to cause problems in high school because he got sick of everyone expecting him to be exactly like Steve! He said he wasted so much time proving who he wasn't, he never found out who he was.

I'm not going to make Mark's mistake. From now on, I'm going to be me and if anyone mentions my brothers, I'll remind them that I'm not Steve and I'm not Mark. I'm Jonathan.

From: *Sightlines 10*, 2000 Prentice Hall Canada, Toronto, ON

I Have a Dream

an excerpt from an oration by Marin Luther King Jr.

Until the 1960's, African-Americans did not have equal rights in all parts of the United States. The civil rights movement, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., demanded those rights. The following words were spoken on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, August 28, 1963, at a massive rally of the civil rights movement. The US Civil Rights Act became law in 1964, and King's ***speech became a cry for civil rights all around the world.***

…But that is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline… Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting the physical force with soul force… And as we walk we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of unspeakable horrors of police brutality.

We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one…

We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and the Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote.

No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream…

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up, live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day right there in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today. I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day, this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring." And if America is to be a great nation, this must become true.

So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania. Let freedom ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. Let freedom ring from the curvaceous slopes of California.

But not only that: let freedom ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi, from every mountainside. Let freedom ring.

And when this happens, when we allow freedom to ring- when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last, Free at last, Thank God A-mighty, We are free at last."

From: *Sightlines 10*, 2000 Prentice Hall Canada, Toronto, ON

Lather and Nothing Else

A short story by Hernando Teliez

He came in without a word. I was stropping my best razor. And when I recognized him, I started to shake. But he did not notice. To cover my nervousness, I went on honing the razor. I tried the edge with the tip of my thumb and took another look at it against the light.

Meanwhile he was taking off his cartridge-studded belt with the pistol holster suspended from it. He put it on a hook in the wardrobe and hung his cap above it. Then he turned full around toward me and, loosening his tie, remarked, "It's hot as the devil, I want a shave." With that he took his seat.

I estimated he had a four-days' growth of beard, the four days he had been gone on the last foray after our men. His face looked burned, tanned by the sun.

I started to work carefully on the shaving soap. I scraped some sliced from the cake, dropped them into the mug, then added a little lukewarm water, and stirred with the brush. The lather soon began to rise.

"The fellows in the troop must have just about as much beard as I." I went on stirring up lather. "But we did very well, you know. We caught the leaders. Some of them we brought back dead; others are still alive. But they'll all be dead soon."

"How many did you take?" I asked.

"Fourteen. We had to go pretty far in to find them. But now they're paying for it. And not one will escape; not a single one."

He leaned back in the chair when he saw the brush in my hand, full of lather. I had not yet put the sheet on him. I was certainly flustered. Taking a sheet from the drawer, I tied it around my customer's neck.

He went on talking. He evidently took it for granted that I was on the side of the existing regime.
"The people must have gotten a scare with what happened the other day," he said.

"Yes," I replied, as I finished tying the knot against his nape, which smelled of sweat.
"Good show, wasn't it?"
"Very good," I answered, turning my attention now to the brush. The man closed his eyes wearily and awaited the cool caress of the lather.

I had never had him so close before. The day he ordered the people to file through the schoolyard to look upon the four rebels hanging there, my path had crossed his briefly. But the sight of those mutilated bodies kept me from paying attention to the face of the man who had been directing it all and whom I now had in my hands.

It was not a disagreeable face, certainly. And the beard, which aged him a bit, was not unbecoming. His name was Torres. Captain Torres.

I started to lay on the first coat of lather. He kept his eyes closed.
"I would love to catch a nap," he said, "but there's a lot to be done this evening."

I lifted the brush and asked, with pretended indifference: "A firing party?"

"Some of the sort," he replied, "but slower."
"All of them?"
"No, just a few."

I went on lathering his face. My hands began to tremble again. The man could not be aware of this, which was lucky for me. But I wished he had not come in. Probably many of our men had seen him enter the shop. And with the enemy in my house I felt a certain responsibility.

I would have to shave his beard just like any other, carefully, neatly, just as though he were a good customer, taking heed that not a single pore should emit a drop of blood. Seeing to it that the blade did not slip in the small whorls. Taking care that the skin was left clean, soft, shining, so that when I passed the back of my hand over it not a single hair should be felt. Yes. I was secretly a revolutionary, but at the same time I was a conscientious barber, proud of the way I did my job. And that four-day beard presented a challenge.

I took up the razor, opened the handle wide, releasing the blade, and started to work, downward from one sideburn. The blade responded to perfection. The hair was tough and hard; not very long, but thick. Little by little the skin began to show through. The razor gave its usual sound as it gathered up layers of soap mixed with bits of hair. I paused to wipe it clean, and taking up the strop once more went about improving its edge, for I am a painstaking barber.

The man, who kept his eyes closed, now opened them, put a hand out from under the sheet, felt the part of his face that was emerging from the lather, and said to me, "Come at six o'clock this evening to the school."

"Will it be like the other day?" I asked, stiff with horror.
"It may be even better," he replied.
"What are you planning to do?"
"I'm not sure yet. But we'll have a good time."

Once more he leaned back and shut his eyes. I came closer, the razor on high.

"Are you going to punish all of them?" I timidly ventured.
"Yes, all of them."

The lather was drying on his face. I must hurry. Through the mirror, I took a look at the street. It appeared about as usual; there was the grocery shop with two or three customers. Then I glanced at the clock, two-thirty.

The razor kept descending. Now from the other sideburn downward. It was a blue beard, a thick one. He should let it grow like some poets, or some priests. It would suit him well. Many people would not recognize him. And that would be a good thing for him, I thought, as I went gently over all the throat line. At this point you really had to handle your blade skilfully, because the hair, while scantier, tended to fall into small whorls. It was a curly beard. The pores might open, minutely, in this area and let out a tiny drop of blood. A good barber like myself stakes his reputation on not permitting that to happen to any of his customers.

And this was indeed a special customer. How many of ours had he sent to their death? How many had he mutilated? It was best not to think about it. Torres did not know I was his enemy. Neither he nor the others knew it. It was a secret shared by very few, just because

that made it possible for me to inform the revolutionaries about Torres's activities in the town ad what he planned to do every time he went on one of his raids to hunt down rebels. So it was going to be very difficult to explain how it was that I had him in my hands and then let him go in peace, alive, clean-shaven.

His beard had now almost entirely disappeared. He looked younger, several years younger that when he had come in. I suppose that always happens to men who enter and leave barbershops. Under the strokes of my razor Torres was rejuvenated; yes, because I am a good barber, the best in this town, and I say this in all modesty.

A little more lather here under the chin, on the Adam's apple, right near the great vein. How hot it is! Torres must be sweating as I am. But he is not afraid. He is a tranquil man, who is not even giving thought to what he will do to his prisoners this evening. I, on the other hand, polishing his skin with this razor but avoiding the drawing of blood, careful with every stroke- I cannot keep my thoughts in order.

Confound the hour he entered my shop! I am a revolutionary but not a murderer. And it would be so easy to kill him. He deserves it. Or does he? No! No one deserves the sacrifice others make in becoming assassins. What is to be gained by it? Nothing. Others and still others keep coming, and the first kill the second, and then these kill the next, and so on until everything becomes a sea of blood. I could cut his throat, so, swish, swish! He would not even have time to moan, and with his eyes shut he would not even see the shine of the razor or the gleam in my eye.

But I'm shaking like a regular murderer. From his throat a stream of blood would flow on the sheet, over the chair, down on my hands, onto the floor. I would have to close the door. But the blood would go flowing along the floor, warm, indelible, not to be staunched, until it reached the street like a small scarlet river.

I'm sure that with a good strong blow, a deep cut, he would feel no pain. He would not suffer at all. And what would I do then with the body? Where would I hide it? I would have to flee, leave all this behind, take shelter far away, very far away. But they would follow until they caught up with me. "The murdered of Captain Torres. He slit his throat while he was shaving him. What a cowardly thing to do!"

And others would say, "The avenger of our people. A name to remember" – my name here. "He was the town barber. No one knew he was fighting for your cause."

And so, which will it be? Murderer or hero? My fate hangs on the edge of this razor blade.

I can turn my wrist slightly, put a bit more pressure on the blade, let it sink in. The skin will yield like silk, like rubber, like the strop. There is nothing more tender than a man's skin, and the blood is always there, ready to burst forth. A razor like this cannot fail. It is the best one I have.

But I don't want to be a murderer. No, sir. You came in to be shaved. And I do my work honourably. I don't want to stain my hands with blood. Just lather, and nothing else. You are an executioner; I am only a barber. Each one to his job. That's it. Each one to his job.

The chin was now clean, polished, soft. The man got up and looked at himself in the glass. He ran his hand over the skin and felt its freshness, its newness.

"Thanks," he said. He walked to the wardrobe for his belt, his pistol, and his cap. I must have been very pale, and I felt my shirt soaked with sweat. Torres finished adjusting his belt buckle, straightened his gun in its holster, and smoothing his hair mechanically, put on his cap. From his trouser pocket he took some coins to pay for the shave. And he started toward the door. On the threshold he stopped for a moment and turning toward me, he said,

"They told me you would kill me. I came to find out if it was true. But it's not easy to kill. I know what I'm talking about."

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Westray Diary

A radio commentary by Sheree Fitch

7:45 a.m. Sunday

Sunday morning dawns. I get up to put the coffee on, turn on the radio, and hear, "Twenty-six men trapped – underground explosion – at the Westray Mine. Rescue operations are in progress."

It's Mother's Day. Sons and fathers, brothers, uncles, friends are trapped beneath the earth in Plymouth, Nova Scotia.

I spent a week in Pictou County once. Worked with children in the schools- children whose fathers worked those mines. Each day, on the way back to my hotel room, I'd pass the mine and note how the pipes and towers and gravel heaps scarred the landscape. How it seemed to me that the middle of the town was gutted. Yet I knew the mine was work for men, the fathers of those children. Mean who went underground who journeyed into darkness so the rest of us had light. Miners – the men who carved out a living, carving out the rock called coal.

It's 1992 and I hear, "newest technological advances;" I hear, "state of the art;" I hear, "electrically run." It doesn't seem to matter, does it? Is it that the earth itself strikes back, saying you cannot take from it without giving something back? Souls in exchange for coal?

It's too early. Replace the coal black anger with some hope. *They are alive. Of course they are.* I start my vigil at the only window I have- my television screen. I can't bring someone a thermos of coffee or put my arm around the shoulders of my neighbours. The clock becomes a kind of mirror. Its face becomes the face of every waiting mother, sister, brother, father, daughter, son and wife.

Terminology confuses me. I hear a vocabulary – words I have no dictionary for. I learn cross cuts, shafts and mains, bulk heads, rock falls, work area one, two and three, southwest, northwest. Diagrams on flip charts. And a word that when I hear it has a mouth in a skeleton head – methane, methane, methane.

And then, … I learn of the dragger-men. Angels of the underground with air-packs, not wings, upon their backs. They can't fly but must proceed with caution, through a tangled toxic jungle, tunnelling in a time tunnel of a different kind – the angels in an underground inferno. Our hope that a miracle will happen.

"We know nothing for sure. It would be *pure speculation* at this time." All is speculation. I want more. But, what can I expect? It's an industry developed by … speculators.

I learn people gather at a church. A community huddles in a fire hall, protects itself. And so it should … away from camera glare. Questions that are senseless, like *"How does it feel?*

A miner talks of miner's dignity, how mining gets in the blood. Another says how, throughout time, blood is on the coal.

Another says, "It never should've opened."

Another says, "My grandfather and my father and my uncle were all miners, and so am I. That's just the way it goes."

They are turning a hockey rink into a morgue and *Hockey Night in Canada* plays on. At 4 a.m., I open up my front door and look up and down the street. Most houses are in darkness. But there are some where I see the light is on in the front room and the neon blinking of a television. There are other people who could not sleep in darkness this night.

No news.

The cab driver tells me he still has hope. "It's 8:35. All you can do is pray," he says.

When we are out of darkness, those of us who've watched from television windows or listened over air waves. When we are out of darkness of not knowing, the long, dark tunnel that is grief remains for the families of the miners. And all we can do is pray again. Hope that in this senseless loss of life their faith sustains and some light remains. *Some glimmer.* Perhaps like the headlamp on a miner's helmet, some light will shine forth to guide them through the coal, black tunnel – sorrow.

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Earthquake

A short story by Jack Hodgins

Do you remember the earthquake of '46? Do you remember how the chimney fell through the roof of the elementary school and down through both storeys of classrooms and would have killed us all if this had not been a Sunday morning? (Would have killed Miss Gordon, too, lying out flat on her bench and fanning herself, in the midst of one of her spells.) Do you remember how the post office, which was the only brick building in the entire valley, collapsed in a heap of rubble where it had stood for twenty-three years, and how we were thrilled to think afterwards that it looked exactly as if it might have been bombed from the air? And how the bells on the little Anglican church went chiming, and the electric poles whipped back and forth like fly-fishermen's rods, and electric wires trooped low like skipping ropes and snapped tight and clearly *sang*, and how the earth came rolling up in waves and sent Cornelius Baxter's car out of control and up onto Millie Weston's porch?

Then you may also remember my uncle, Neddie Desmond? Lived just down the road a ways from us in that little farm with the buttercup-yellow house? Well, my Uncle Neddie was the first one out in our part of the valley to install an electric fence. Power had come as far as Waterville just the year before and none of us had become accustomed to its magic yet, nor learned to trust it. Neddie went out that morning to pull the inaugural switch, and to prepare himself to have a good laugh at the first cow to find out what it would mean from now on to stick her nose into a field where she wasn't wanted. Well, Neddie pulled his switch and immediately the air began to hum, the world began to heave and roll; the trees began to dance and flop about and try to fly. Two Guernseys dropped directly to their knees and started to bawl; a third went staggering sideways down the sloping earth and slammed into the cedar-shake wall of his barn. Chickens exploded out of their pen in a flurry of squawking feathers as if the jolt of electricity had somehow jumped a connection and zapped them. Naturally he thought that he and his fence were to blame for this upheaval but he could not make it stop by turning off his switch. Poor old Neddie had never been so frightened, he started to curse and blubber, he hollered for Gracie to get out and give him a hand. Never much of a man for religion, long fascination with modern inventions immediately. But God took far too long to think this offer over; by the time the earth's convulsions had settled, all of his cattle had fallen and poor Ned had wrapped himself around a fence post and begun to cry.

Now the scariest thing about quakes is that they change the way a fellow looks at the world. You may also remember my other uncle, Tobias Desmond? Owned the little sawmill up a Comox Lake? Uncle Toby drove down from his mill an hour after the quake had worn itself out and told us the entire lake had emptied in front of his eyes. Truly! Right to the muddy bottom, he said – he saw drowned trees and slime. Drained entirely down a crack which had opened up in the earth, and must have gone right out to the ocean somewhere, because it came back with tangled knots of golden-brown kelp and furious crabs and bouquets of brilliant purple anemones torn off the ocean floor and flung up onto the driftwood and

shoreline trees ad sorting deck of Uncle Toby's mill.

He was uneasy about going back to his sawmill after that. Though the sound of the lake emptying all at once like water down a sucking drainpipe had been horrible enough to haunt him for the next few years, it would not have the effect upon him of those remembered moments when he stood and watched the water returning to the empty lake – leaking in at first, and spreading, then racing outwards across the mud, and swelling, deepening, rising up the nearer slopes. *He* had o reason to believe it would know when to stop. By the time the first waves slapped against the pilings under his mill, he was in his truck with the motor running, yet later confessed that he knew he would not have the will to drive out of there even if that water had kept on climbing up the posts and started out over the land. He would just have to hang around to see what happened next.

Now my Uncle Toby was a truthful man. We believed him. You only had to walk along the lakeshore yourself to see things drying in the sunlight that shouldn't be there. The problem was that this incident would trouble him far too much, he couldn't stop telling people about it. And every time he told it there seemed to be something new he'd just remembered that he hadn't told before. A whole month had gone by when he turned away from the counter of the general store one afternoon, watched a car speed past outside, and turned again to Em at the till: "My God, I just remembered! Why didn't I think of this before? There were two old me in a boat – I remember seeing them just before it started – two stiff gentlemen in coolie hats out on the lake in a punt." They weren't fishing or anything, he said. Just floating, talking, way out in the middle.

When the waves started sloshing up they rocked and bobbed but didn't start rowing for shore. They started turning, slowly turning around, turning around and around this whirlpool that had opened up, this funnel that was sucking the entire body of water down a hole somewhere. They didn't stand up, they didn't holler for help, they just turned and turned and eventually slipped into the chute and corkscrewed down out of sight. "Now what do you think of that?" said Uncle Toby. "They didn't come back; they must've gone sailing out to sea." Of course no one believed this new addition to his tale. But he continued to tell his story to anyone who would listen, adding every time a few more details that would make it just a little more exciting and improbable than it had been before. He seldom went back to the mill, or sold much lumber. He spent his time on the streets of town, or in a coffee shop, talking the ear off anyone who came along. The earthquake had given him the excuse he'd been looking for to avoid what he'd always hated doing most – an honest day's work.

So you see – that's the other thing. People will use an earthquake for their own purposes. My uncle's sawmill will eventually collapse from neglect, under a heavy fall of snow, but he hardly noticed. That's the worrying part. They're telling us now that we're just about overdue for another one. For an island situated smack on the Pacific rim of fire, as they like to call it, we've sat back for far too long and smugly watched disasters strike other parts of the world. Apparently all those tremors we've wakened to in the night have not done anything but delay the inevitable;

we will soon be facing the real thing all over again, with its aftermath of legend.

Myself, I was nearly eight at the time. My brother was five. My sister was less than a year, and still asleep in her crib in one corner of my parents' bedroom. My mother, who was kneading a batch of bread dough at the kitchen counter, encouraged the two of us boys to hurry and finish breakfast and get outside. It appeared to be the beginning of a warm June day. My father had gone out to milk Star, the little Jersey. He'd soon being the task of sharpening the little triangular blades on his hay mower, which would be needed within the next few weeks for the field between the house and the wooden gate. Now, he had just started back towards the house with a pail of milk in order to run it through the verandah separator, when it seemed the air had begun to hum around his ears. Something smelled, an odour of unfamiliar gas. Off across the nearer pasture the line of firs began to sway, as though from a sudden burst of wind. The hayfield swelled up and moved toward him in a series of ripples. Suddenly he felt as if he were on a rocking ship, in need of sea legs, with a whole ocean beneath him trying to upset his balance. He could not proceed. He stopped and braced his legs apart to keep from falling. The milk sloshed from side to side in the pail and slopped over the rim. Before him, our old two-storey house he was still in the process of renovating had begun to dance a jig. The chimney bent as if made of rubber bricks, then swivelled a half-turn and toppled. Red bricks spilled down the slope of the roof and dropped to the lean-to roof of the veranda, then spilled down that in a race to the eave where they could drop to the ground directly above the door I was throwing open at that precise moment in order to rush outside and join him. This was the end of the world he'd been warned about as a child himself; it was happening in exactly the way his own father had told him it would. In a moment a crack would open up somewhere and snake across his land to divide beneath his feet and swallow him, would swallow his house and his family and his farm and all his animals at once, but not until he'd been forced to stand helpless and unable to move on the bucking surface of earth while he watched his family bludgeoned to death by the spilling cascade of bricks.

My brother laughed, but wouldn't leave his chair at the kitchen table. The sight of a fried egg dancing on his plate was not an entertainment to walk away from. Cutlery chattered on the tablecloth. Milk tossed up bubbly sprays from his glass and splashed on his nose. His piece of toast hopped off his plate and landed in his lap. This was a matter for giggling. The world had decided to entertain him in a manner he'd always thought it capable of and this would make a difference to his life. From this day on, he would take it for granted that he might demand any sort of pleasant diversion he wished and need only wait for all laws of nature to be suspended for the purpose of giving him a laugh.

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