

TILL MY BROTHER CAME BACK

A short English tale

My twin brother Edward and I took up one abode together on a hillock in a small weastenish town, Redthorp, one hundred miles roughly Northwest of our elders' house, following their shrewd foresetting, that we should leave their home at such a ripe eld of eighteen, and settle in one of our own; and that in a land so far from a main borough the hardship of getting a house could be well allayed, and what little of it we could not afford, they would yield for. The first sundering was an unblithe time for us, but we were soon gotten over the woe once all our belongings were shrithen into the new house, and we were heartily greeted by the folk of that town; who were winsomely-bent, and made us forget all the sorrow of missing our elders.

Edward and I spent our free time, when we were at leave from our swink, mooting the World, outhwitting (the lore of old and our own ekes), our reasowings on bettering the land and the seel of its dwellers, and manifold things which we were keen on, and wherein my brother was at times wordier than myself, being so stirred by his wit to offer thoughts about these anttimbers which he loved.

Unlike with my other brother and sister, Edward and I had always known frith at home growing up, and seldom flote, but when we were swith young, and when at length wetched by one of our other siblings. This eady hoad lasted into our grownhood, and even wex in its grad, so there was no-one I knew whom I would gladder abide with in a house in the town of Redthorp (still my younger sister harried me with misgivings on our frith and friendship, saying I would hardly stand a week of him, though this happily did not come about).

Living in Redthorp I soon met a bower in need of help for keeping his field (he could no longer do it alone, for his crops had grown too fulsome), who wished to hire me for that end; so I underfanged, and forlet my former work to thew this man of the field.

And my brother took up a less earthy work than mine, of rimekeeping for a feered that was staddled some hundreds of miles far — for he had a craft for rimes and reckoning.

One day upon coming home from the field (it was so near that I walked thither and back), Edward was gleeful to bode, that for his good work he was lathed by his foreman to go on a business-fare to see the

feered in the flesh, which would be wholly yolden for, and would even get him a little spare hire as well. I was fain at that throw to hear he should be afforded so worthful a bire, and that he had grown so dear in his foreman's eyes, which foretokened well for us both; and I spoke these feelings to him. He told me he was to leave in a week and would bide there twice that, so we spent the forthcoming seven days in sundrily near fellowship; till the morning came, and we bid each other well and clipped heartfully, ere he wote with his bags in hand; and thereafter I was sour-mooded for some time.

The first lonesome night I underwent felt some stounds longer than it was wont to, and my sleep was a little hindered, nor the dreams of the likesomest kind.

Three days bewent in my brother's leave, and I had gotten over this heartsickness nigh fully. After swinking hard that evening with rimeless corn-sheaves, and being stricken at home with a wistful eard, I left the house into the yard at Twilight and stilly took to beholding the stars as the dimmer ones stepmeal atewed (the leftover hewen daylight was fast-fleeting, and bared them in its wane).

When I had been at this errand for a fourth-stound, and was much-soothed therein though had no will yet to leave off, I thought I could hear the forthgang of somebody up the chisel of the driveway, and was set aback, being well-hielded to ward myself of this comeling by might. However, upon their coming into sight over the hill — though the footsteps were not couth to me — I undergot that it was my brother eftcoming empty-handed, looking blithe (and wearing the same clothes that he had left in).

"Ed, you're back already!" I said, half in mirth and half sorry that he was let off so ill.

"Yeah, I am," said he while I clipped him (he was slow to answer it in kind).

The stiffness of his lite had little aslaked, so I weened he was upset. Fraining him on this, he said, in not wholly suttel words, that the meeting ended so unforeseenly early; that all his bags were lost, nor had he care for them howbeit; that he seemed downcast owing to the length of the flight hither, and the unfortold stop on the way; and, upon another ask, that he

did not tell me he was coming back since it should make for my greater ferly.

We came together into the house, and he lay at once on the streen, hardly wordful, and speaking mainly to answer my frainings. I thought, since he was loath to speak, I should leave him alone.

He lay idle till I went to sleep on my bed.

Fremmedly, he rose after me in the morning (he was still resting on the streen when I found him instead of his own bed), whereas I was always the late-waker. Seeing him so gramed, I asked again how he was, whereat he got up at last, and answered blithely that he was not ang at all, and was but tired.

We spoke a little, once I had readied breakfast for us, about what befell at his business meeting and amid his fare thither: He said at one time that he got off the flightcraft in Drakeswick, and was brought to the foreyolden inn-room by shuttle; later he said the inn was near enough the lifthaven that he needed only walk there. The foreman was named Steven; later he called him Robert. Asking him to retch his name, for it seemed he had gotten it mixed up, he said his name was Steven Robert.

Edward was slow to eat his swinesflesh, eyren, and bread, though I had known him to be a swift eater, ever hying to free his hands to get back to some cunning undertaking of his. When I asked him if he were still tired, he said no; and when I frone him whether he would work on his shapelorely writs (he had wished to find the metes of sundry limbs of the body, big and small, and retch their endbird), he said he had forgotten them, and would forbear freeming them awhile.

Most of his speech was answers to my frainings. I left for the field.

Upon edwharft, I found my brother resting on the streen once more, in a treyed eard at my words.

"Are you upset with something?" I asked him.

"No. But I think you should leave me alone." He looked up at me from the bolster with a grim lite, which affrighted me enough, that I spoke no further and left him to go into the yard where the Sun still shone dully.

Later I went back inside to make evenmeal, a broth with wassoms and meat. Edward said he was not hungry (slinking away from the eating-beed), so I ate a fuller share, alone, and went to sleep soon, while my brother roamed the house, unwinsome each time I had undertaken to talk to him.

I was awoken at about two in the morning, when he infore my room, opening the door softly and standing at my side some time before I made my awokeness known to him; whereat he stepped back (seeming startled, though it was I who ought to be), bode still a braid, and left speechlessly after that.

He was not in the house when I rose in the morning, yet his work began stounds later; when I sought him, thinking to hearten him from whatever ang had beset him, I found him holding a spade in the fore-yard by my wain, staring down the hill. Asked what he was doing with it, he answered with some smart word that I had become nettlesome with all my frainings, and that, "he'd like me to keep out of his business sometimes."

I left him, dreeved. Right as I was shutting the fore-door, already come inside the house, I heard him swing the spade and strike the earth with it heastly from where he was standing.

That evening, while I trod the dirt-road from the field to which I was knave, I underfanged a sand on my handset, which was a likeness of an eatinghouse, sent from my brother; who said he was eating there right then, that his fare was going well so far, and that he was wicking at the Kingly Inn in Drakeswick, where he would swether to after his meal.

It was then that I understood wherefore my brother had behaved so selcouthly since his home-coming, and what brow I was in.

I was half a mile from the house, the late evening setting in; and I durst no longer go my wonly way home, sundrily bethinking what sake that spade should be brooked for in the hands of a fremmed foe, as I acknew had been living with me a few days.

I umb-lothe the hill which the house was on half-way, to the hindward side, whence the unhawed backyard might be clumb to. I walked up with as much stealth as I could; and, getting in, at once hied to the tool-shed, fanding to fetch from it the axe.

However, upon opening it, I found it had been emptied of all its long-hafted tools, only the hand-shovel and other small things like it left.

This unstilled me ormetely, but I left with the hand-shovel for the slightest ward it gave me, and began to flee. I had been too loud, it seems however (or I was yeemed in another way), for in my flight down the hillock's hield I beheld behind me the gleam of an axehead in the waning daylight, which was reared in my "brother's" hands as he came out from the side of the house.

I made quick time down the hill, whereas he kept in his stead, and, suddely, had an evil draft which he would brook against me: he would bide by the house, and be ready for me if ever I should come near or become too wearied for further flight from him.

Once I was back onto the main road, and could barely see his grim ansen as he stood on the portick with the axe, I strode with as much speed as I needed back toward the farmhome where I was hired.

After reaching there, I found among the tools the deadliest, the scythe (wherewith I had mown corn a few times for the bower I thewed). This one's blade was swith long, and the snath no shorter, so I felt it should make a worthy weapon for me. Unseen, I went back to the road with it, and saw a shift in my foe's draft: He was forthgoing up the road toward me, neither slow nor swift, and bearing the axe in one hand.

I walked boldly to meet him (his blithe eard had once more overwon him).

Upon coming nigh, he swung the axe for my head early (seeing the length of my weapon outdid his), which was at the nearest ord not a foot from the blade; however, in this stirring he was no more shielded, so I freely made a swing of my own with the scythe for his mid-riff; and, my brother's twiganger being ill-framed enough, the scythe clove him asunder, felling both halves and the axe he had stolen to the ground, where he bled a green blood.

Still my fiend was not fordone, however, since his upper half could yet make a show of biting, though it was idle. Then it went forth to speak: "Do the same to your other brother when he comes back!"

He could utter no further, for I hewed off his head with the fallen axe; and he lay dead, snithen in three.

I shall not swench the reader how I dealt with things till my brother came back: Only I buried the wight that I had slain down the hill from our yard, found the tools he had taken from the shed and stowed them back, and overall gathered myself from these happenings; only long after the end of my brother's business fare telling him them.

He weened a few reasowings what that evil wight was, and how it cloved his likeness, though could not be wiss of their rightness.