

The Morning I Fell Out of Bed
A Story for All Ages by Aaron McEmrys

I will always remember the morning I fell out of bed. That was way back in 1925.

I was sound asleep, and having a great dream about a birthday party. But suddenly the dream was gone and my eyes were wide open staring in the early morning light. At first I thought I must still be dreaming, because there was a loud rumbling screeching noise like a freight train was driving right through my bedroom and all the books and dolls lined up on my bookcase were shaking and rattling and falling down. It was like everything in my room had come to life and started doing a crazy dance.

My brother came tearing up to my room yelling that Dad said we had to get out of the house. We jumped down the stairs four at a time and were outside on the front lawn in two seconds. If I could always run that fast I would have been able to easily outrun even our fastest pet rabbit!

Our whole family: my mom and dad and my two brothers were all out on the lawn in our pajamas as the sun came up and the earth stopped rumbling and quaking. I think I was too surprised to be scared. Our house was still standing and seemed to be just fine, really. All our horses and milk-cows were kicking and snorting and rolling their eyes, but after a while they settled down too.

One of my brothers started picking some oranges for breakfast and the rest of us got dressed. My dad disappeared into the barn and then came driving out in our new Model T. He cried, "jump in, kids, let's go to town and see what's going on!"

Mom put a big basket full of oranges, lemons, fresh bread and tins of water in the rumble seat and we all jumped in the car and headed into Santa Barbara. We were almost there when I suddenly realized I was still in my PJs, but nobody seemed to care, so that was okay. It was that kind of morning.

Driving down Castillo street things started out looking pretty normal but got weirder and weirder after that. We had to drive super slow because the street was all lumpy and bumpy as if it was made of hard black pudding, and sometimes we had to steer around big cracks and fallen trees. All the houses looked like a giant had picked them up to play with them and then put them down in the wrong places or at funny angles.

But that was just the beginning. We turned onto State Street and couldn't believe our eyes. There were huge piles of rubble in the street made of bricks and trees and broken windows from where the fronts of all the buildings had collapsed. The buildings all looked like dollhouses, the kind you can open up and see inside. I could

see people hurrying around in those broken dollhouses taking pictures off walls and packing up their very most important things.

We kept going very carefully, stopping a lot so me and my brothers could give people something to eat or some cool water – because it was very hot already and nobody had any food or water.

My dad almost never cried in all the years I knew him, but when we made it to our church, our lovely Unitarian church on State Street, I saw him trying to wipe away his tears so we wouldn't see. I guess he didn't know that it's always okay to cry.

Our beautiful stone church, where we went almost every Sunday morning and for picnics and parties of all sorts was completely smashed. The walls were all falling down and the roof had collapsed as if the biggest dinosaur in the world had stomped on it.

A lot of our friends were already there, helping. There was a big table set up piled high with food and water for anyone who needed it, and there were lots of people who did. A lot of the kids were hanging out in the park across the street, and my brothers and I went over there.

There was one little girl there, younger than me, who was crying a lot. She was holding on tight to her favorite doll and she said she was so sad because their whole house fell down and her family didn't have anywhere to go. My brother gave her some candy he had in his pocket and she seemed a lot happier.

I went back to the church and pulled at my dad's pants until he noticed me. I told him about the little girl, and he came back to the park with me to find her. The little girl took us to where her parents and baby brother were sitting under a big tree with the few belongings they had been able to save. They looked really sad and scared.

My dad talked to the little girl's dad and before we knew it we were loading their stuff into our old car and their whole family too. All the little people had to sit on bigger people's laps, but we all fit in the end like sardines in a can. We kids sang songs all the way home, and when we got there we all got tons of blankets and some tents and made a big campsite in our backyard because Mom and Dad said it wasn't safe to go back in the house yet.

It was really cool. Our two families had an awesome camp-out, and we all got to be good friends. Once night came we cooked our dinner over a campfire and we could see lots of other campfires all around because pretty much everyone was camping out that night. The father of my new friend Sarah got out his harmonica later on and played all kinds of songs for us to sing or dance to. I know we were supposed to be sad and scared, and we were, but it was actually kind of fun too!

On Sunday everyone went to church just like always. The building was still all smashed up, and my parents were already talking about building a new church somewhere nearby – so we all gathered in the park. Everyone was worried, but it felt good for us to be together. Looking around I just knew everything would be okay.

I am a lot older now. A lot older. But let me tell you something; ever since that day way back in 1925 I haven't been afraid of earthquakes. I know that sounds silly, but I guess that ever since that day, when I saw how everyone looked after one another and took care of one another – I always kinda felt like we can get through almost anything if we stick together.

I may not know a lot, but I do know that. As long as we stick together, we'll be okay. We'll get through.