

# ***Hurricanes and Birthday Cake***

A REAL STORY BY ELIZABETH LEVY WITH PICTURES TAKEN BY HER FAMILY

Whenever my family gets together—uncles, aunts, and cousins—they all talk about the time that Liz ate the birthday cake in the middle of a hurricane. Then everyone laughs, and I do, too. Only I can't remember the hurricane or the cake because I was only two years old.

I wish I could remember. It makes me a little sad that I can't. From what everyone tells me, that was an exciting day, the day I ate the birthday cake. It was the most exciting day of my life, and I don't even remember it.



The hurricane came at the end of a summer during World War Two. My uncle was a doctor, and he worked in a hospital by the ocean. He took care of the men who got hurt on the battlefields of Europe.

My father was fighting in the war. He had seen me only once when I was just a few days old. Since then he had been away fighting, but I was really too little to miss him.



Anyway the summer I was two, my aunt and uncle asked my mother to bring my brother and me and come visit them. We lived far from the ocean, where it was very hot in the summer. My mother was really happy to take a trip to the ocean. My brother was happy, too, because he liked to visit my two cousins.

My aunt and uncle had a house right by the ocean, so we spent most of our summer on the beach. My mother has pictures of all of us swimming and playing in the sand. Even now I think the ocean is scary, so I must have thought so then, too. My mother says even my brother was afraid of the ocean at first.

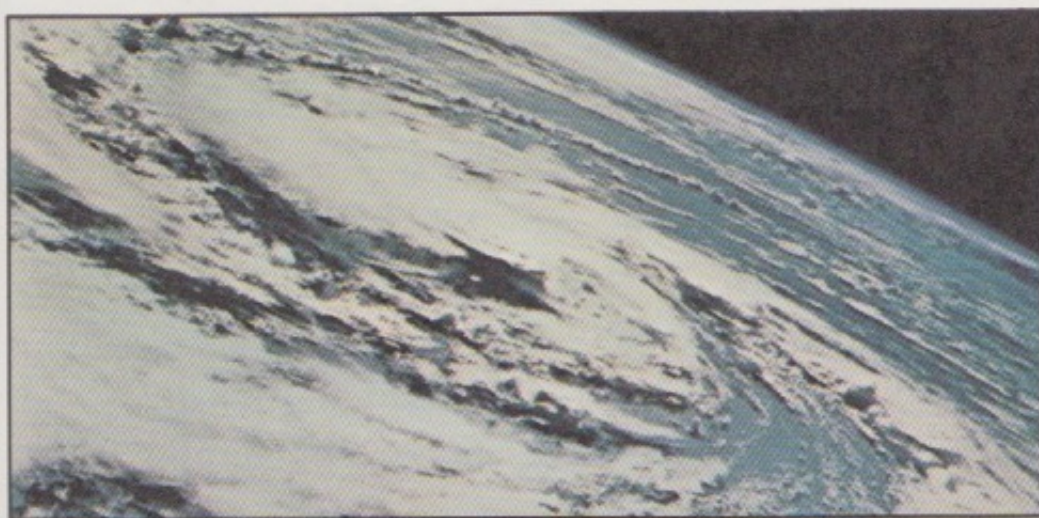


During the summer my mother and aunt helped out at the hospital. My grandmother took care of my brother and my cousins and me most of the time. I guess taking care of us was a lot of work, but my grandmother says that she had fun doing it. She says she misses the time when we were all little.

Soon it was the end of the summer and the end of our visit. We had to get back home because school was starting. We really should have left before. But my mother's birthday was coming up, and my aunt and uncle wanted to be with her on her birthday. I think they were afraid that she might be lonely without my father.

The day before my mother's birthday, we heard about a hurricane. Or I guess my family started to hear about a hurricane. I was too little to understand.

Hurricanes are one of the most horrible kinds of storms there can be. Sometimes the winds go as fast as the fastest cars. The hurricane winds can make houses fall down. They can make the ocean come up on land. Then there are floods.



THIS IS HOW A HURRICANE LOOKS FROM OUTER SPACE.

You just can't tell which way a hurricane will move. That's why they give hurricanes girls' names like Amy, Ellen, Jenny, or Marie. They say you can never be sure just what a hurricane is going to do next, just as you can't tell what a girl will do next.

Whenever a hurricane heads for land, there's trouble. This summer it looked as if the hurricane was heading right for us. All the men in the town started filling bags with sand. They put the sandbags around the houses. The sandbags would help the houses stand up when the winds came.

That night, my aunt and uncle and my mother talked about leaving the house. But they thought they'd be safe with the sandbags all around the house.

My aunt went ahead and made the cake for my mother's birthday party. But during the morning of my mother's birthday, the hurricane really hit. It was very exciting at first. Then the house started to shake. The rain came down harder than anyone had ever seen.



My cousins were so afraid, they started to cry. My brother cried, too. My mother tried to keep them quiet, but she was afraid. Everyone knew that we had to get out of the house, because if the ocean came up, we might all be killed in the floods. But the wind was so bad that if we went outside, we might be killed by the wind.

It must have been horrible, but I was too little to know about the trouble we were in. Everyone was running around. And there in the middle of the table sat the birthday cake.

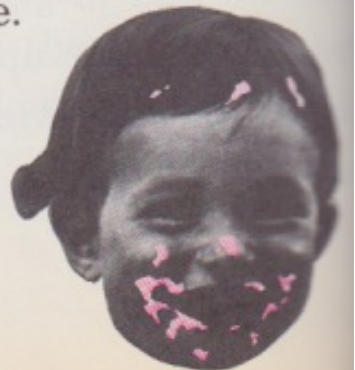
No one was watching me. Somehow I climbed on a chair. Then I climbed on top of the table. And in the middle of the hurricane, I sat on the table and had a big birthday cake all to myself.

I was eating away happily when the police came. They had come to take us to a safe place.

My mother and aunt were so happy to see the police, they almost cried. Before the police came, they were really afraid we would all be killed. They started to get everyone together, and that's when they noticed me.

There I was, sitting in the middle of the table with birthday cake all over me. While everyone was worrying about the trouble we were in, I had had a good time. There was cake all over my face, on my clothes, and even in my hair.

It made everyone laugh. My mother says that just seeing me made her feel brave.



Two policemen carried my grandmother, because she was so old. Another policeman carried me, and we all made it out safely.

Later the floods came and ruined the house. If the police hadn't come when they did, we might never have gotten out of there.



So that's the story of the day I ate the birthday cake. Everyone in my family tells me it really happened just like that, but I can't be sure. I was only two, and I don't remember the hurricane at all.