

# The Messenger

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## Smith

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**DAVID STANIUS}{SMITH**

*"Wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up."*

*The young man rolled onto his left side the better to address his youngest brother, age two. Bleary-eyed and shaggy-headed, a bum in a suburban bed, he squinted in the toddlers general direction, opened his mouth, raised his arms, cradled his head and began:*

*"Smith, we have to talk about this morning deal. You understand, of course, that by no means am I to be woken up before noon on Saturday. Every other day this is acceptable, so I understand you confusion, but, Smith, seriously, after all this time, don't you think a reasonably intelligent individual like yourself would have figured the situation out? In many countries, Malaysia for instance, it is a capital offense to wake the head of the house before noon on Saturday. Capital! That means I would have the right to hack your little two-year-old head off! Now isn't that silly?"*

*Smith jumped on top of his elder's knees, giggling, and threw his favorite bottle at the sleeper's nose.*

*"Ow! Smith!  
Come back here!"*

*But Smith was gone, rolling down the hallway to his room, half running, half crawling. The toddler's shrill demon giggle bounced off the walls like a thousand bad checks. His elder stumbled out of the chocolate-soaked bedroom, over the piles of porn magazines, dirty clothes, newspapers (USA Today) and old boxes of chicken nuggets, bringing to earth with a crash a grotesque ceramic Buddha. The prince landed on his big right toe, but the hunter ignored the sound and the sharp shooting pain suddenly radiating up from his foot, seeking only Smith.*

*"Ya liquid eatin' slimy faced blob, ya'd better bring that pampers-wearin' dirty behind back here!"*

*Smith slammed his bedroom door, and, emitting a series of devilish giggles, ran to his closet, opened the door, and hid under a pile of comforters and board games. His brother followed perhaps too close to the young one, for he ran headlong into the just-closed door, his Neanderthal forehead meeting the wood with a sound knock.*

*"Ow! Smith! You're gonna get it now!"*

*Big brother opened the door and stepped on a broken lego robot. Again the sharp pain, again the yelling and swearing. Smith laughed riotously beneath his hibernatory mound, like a frog under the creek bed out of the snake's sight. The elder sat down on Smith's bed (a small mattress placed indelicately and asymmetrically in the middle of the floor) and addressed the closet door:*

*"Well, Smith. It appears you have no respect for authority. You have violated my ordinances innumerable times. No punishment has changed you patterns of behavior, which, I might add, become more immoral by the month. Why, only last week such tomfoolery as this would have never crossed your mind. Yet now it is a common Saturday morning pursuit. I don't understand you, Smith. Tell me what's wrong. What have I done?"*



*Inside, Smith snickered.*

*"Is it because mom isn't around? Is it preschool, Smith? Do you not like the other children? Is it the dog around the corner who uproots daffodils and sniffs crotches? Does not being able to eat lots of solid food do this to you? Have you started doing drugs? Are you in that two-year-old gang, Smith?"*

*Baby Smith laughed a juicy laugh, shook his cubbyhole, and kicked the door three times.*

*"Hm. I see. Another outburst of violence. I'm disappointed in you, Smith. So much potential wasted. You were born a fine young man, you know. Somehow it seems the demands of society are too great for you. Too heavy a burden. It's hard being without parents, isn't it Smith? You have me to look up to, of course."*

*"Ronald McDonald!!" exclaimed Smith from his cocoon, kicking the door open. Sadly, big brother had leaned his temple against the doorknob during his last diatribe, and the impact of the swinging door was enough to kill him without pain. Here*

*Here the writer may be permitted to note with total objectivity that this was no small feat for a two-year-old boy.*

*Child Smith stepped gingerly onto the floor of his small room in the back of the trailer. He looked down at the twitching body of his only brother, saw the single rivulet of blood rolling slowly down the side of his head. Gravity carried it into big brother's left eye, which was open and vacant like a stuffed bird's. Smith's tiny pinkish hand reached out to his brother. He touched his brother's shoulder and shook him, tiny sobs shaking his own body. One-o'clock sun streamed in through the dusty blinds. A board game left behind in the closet cocoon shifted and fell with a muted crash. Smith knelt down and stared hard into his brother's face and moaned his morning cry:*

*"Wake up, wake up, wake up, wake up!"*

