

full tilt living newsletter

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Tornadoes, fire storms, hurricanes, flash floods, monsoons, tsunamis. Sweeps of land cleared by the hands of huge, unstoppable forces. Landscapes altered, lives drastically changed. Wind, fire and water in deadly proportions. All a part of the precarious, unpredictable balance of living on Earth. Where we cannot do without our wind and fire and water.

The Hindus have a diety given to the care of change, the cherished son of Shiva and Parvati. Their precious Ganesha. He is an endearing, fun-loving kind of god. Who himself experienced a catastrophic change as a baby that resulted in his human head being replaced with that of an elephant. Once I heard him referred to as the god of good luck. But then that was in a tourist trap and "good luck" sells much better than "change." Plenty of us wouldn't necessarily see luck in having our lives "changed." By storms and tsunamis of the natural order, or by those even more unpredictable inner goings on.

I remember being hit by one of those when I was 10. It was all the more disconcerting because to the rest of the world it was No Big Deal.

It was the week before Easter, see, and the Easter Bunny and I were looking forward to his annual visit. I was on to him not being real by then, but I had also figured out that someone who professes belief in the Easter Bunny will continue to be the suprised and pleased recipient of Easter baskets full of goodies on Easter morning. So when my parents announced that the jig was up and, me being the youngest and having arrived at an age that they knew and I knew was beyond what was reasonable for believing in the goofy idea that rabbits can produce candy eggs, there was no need to continue the charade. No more Easter baskets.

It took the air right out of me. I was one deflated ten year old on Easter morning. I just couldn't pull myself out of it. I woke up crying and kept it up all through the Easter service. It was a storm that just wouldn't let up. Even after the service was over and my parents loaded me, red nosed and sniffing, into our station wagon for the trip back home. My sisters and brother sat dumbstruck beside me, silenced by my uncontrollable heaving and weeping. I dragged myself from the car when it pulled up in our driveway, trying to get a smile past the grimace that had taken possession of

my face. I drifted into our little house and into the girls' room, as we called it. I sank down on the edge of my bed, wishing I could stop feeling so miserable and quit with the danged crying.

I'd like to say that I finally came to my senses on my own. What did it had nothing to do with me. It was someone in the family taking the candy eggs we'd gotten at our little shopping center's egg hunt the day before out of their cellophane wrappers and dumping them in the straw breadbasket and then all of them calling out to me that the Easter Bunny had come after all. Fine with me. Whatever requirements my unpredictable heart had established for Easter being Easter had been met. I bounced down the hall and into the dining room, surprised and pleased to be once again remembered by who I knew the Easter Bunny really was.

So what did I get from this little tsunami of the heart? Aside from being relieved that no one at church ever mentioned noticing me gulping and moaning through every single hymn that morning. What I got is that a change not of our choice might have all the earmarks of a catastrophe beyond bearing, but it is endurable. Not so much because we can endure as that somewhere in the experience, compassion can and will emerge. And it doesn't take much. Just enough to get our own spark going once again.

I try to remember this when someone is in a situation that looks hopeless. If I can find a way to be the bearer of the compassion they deserve, I do it. Not big acts, just acts that match the pace and composition of their sorrow. Because while it is not within our capacity to take away the burden, it is well within us to strike that heart cord. To hold them, in a way, in our own hearts until their inner spark ignites again.

And know that I'm behind you all the way.