

Bread

by Kathy Fish

Zach is fixing us his famous fisherman's omelets and fried potatoes. The omelets are filled with mushrooms and crabmeat and whitefish and scallions and the smell of them cooking in butter is making me swoon. And we are, let's face it, a little drunk already. We're all in town, the siblings, for the first time in two years.

Zach slides an omelet onto a plate and piles potatoes over the top of it and hands it to me. "Eat up. You could use a few pounds."

My brother Rob is already chowing down. He pats his belly. "Contentment," he says, like he always does. I pull a chair up next to him.

"I work out is all." I shake the ketchup bottle over my potatoes and it comes out all at once. I mix it all together with my fork.

"That is truly disgusting," Rob says and for a second I think he's referring to my working out.

Zach sits down with his own plate. A beam of sunlight hits the top of his bald head, like a penlight flicking on. Ted, our other brother, the one whose son has died, is at his house with his wife. The movers are coming tomorrow; they've decided to go ahead with the move to Santa Fe.

"Remember Mom used to make creamed eggs on toast? Does anybody make that anymore?" Rob's talking around his food.

"Creamed eggs on toast is a poor people food," I say. We also used to have bread and gravy for dinner; we all remember this, though

our mother denied ever having given us a dinner that lacked essential protein.

Zach lifts his glass. "Look at us! We eat like kings. Kings!"

Rob and I lift our glasses, too, and we're laughing hard. Nothing's funny really. Zach looks at the clock.

"We'd better hustle. We're supposed to be there by 10:30." He's saying this to Rob. They're to be the pallbearers. We all go quiet, like we've been switched off.

Rob pushes his plate away. He's messing around with his napkin, folding it and unfolding it. He leans over and covers his face with his hands. "I still can't fucking believe this," he says. I pat my brother's broad back. He's sobbing and I can't even work up one tear. I don't want to go to the funeral. I don't want to see my brother grieving. Or my sister-in-law. I don't want to see my nephew in a casket. The last time I saw him I gave him some of my pot, teased him about his girlfriend. I drink the last of my Bloody Mary. The phone is ringing.

