

It's 3.45 on a Friday evening. Always one to make an entrance, my 16 year old brother Luke bangs through the front door. We are greeted with confused screaming and loud, repetitive speech as Luke tries to make sense of the transition from school to home. 'Quick, off the computer,' 'Put on "You've Been Framed"', 'Keep out of Luke's way' mum calls to my sister and I before she has to attempt the impossible task of calming Luke down by trying to communicate to him his evening timetable (tea, bath, bed...one sleep walk the dogs). Though having just arrived home from school myself, there is no time to discuss my hectic day of problems and news, and my acknowledgement of Luke has to wait until he is calm enough to notice me. Fifteen minutes later, the screaming has subsided and the atmosphere is no longer at pressure point. We have approximately 10 minutes to recover before the next outburst. Having established exactly where every member of the family is at that moment, and after watching some home videos of donkeys, horses and our friends' dogs, Luke comes bounding into the sitting room, where I'm sitting on the laptop on Facebook.

'Hello Hannah!' Luke rushes over to me, his eyes wide as he laughs and laughs and launches himself at me. I give him a big squeeze and ask him whether he missed me over the week. Luke's understanding and speech are so limited, but his excitement is conveyed through reciting the names of all the lorries he saw on his journey home (Asda, Argos, Eddie Stobart...). The numerous 'Hello Hannah's' he throws out randomly every few seconds reassures me that he is pleased to see me... in the sitting room... exactly where he wants me to be. As long as I don't announce I am going out, make any sudden movements or crowd his space, he is perfectly at peace with me. Luke launches into a chorus of 'Happy Birthday' as he leaves the room, and though it is the only song he sings and it can drive me mad, he associates it with happiness, so everything's good in our slightly dysfunctional family. The second dad walks in from work, however, the house is suddenly too crowded for Luke, and off we go again...

When I was younger my embarrassment when out with Luke in public was immense. His complete lack of social etiquette, constant loud noises and funny mannerisms makes him stand out like a crash in a silent library, whether he is walking hand-in-hand with mum down the street, or screaming outside Tesco's because he can't get past the automatic doors. Once, we took Luke on the ferry for a couple of weeks in France. Never again, said mum and dad. The new surroundings and noises were just too intense for him - a trip to the beach turned into 'The Great Escape', mum and dad chasing after Luke, who would routinely decide to make a run for it, whilst my sister and I were trying to find a spot to lay down our beach towels. Basically, family holidays were miserable for everyone involved, so now we jump at the chance of a week in the sun when Luke is at respite. A few years ago whilst on holiday in a seaside town my old

embarrassment reached a new peak; Luke was having a screaming session in the town square, and whilst mum and dad were trying their hardest to diffuse the situation, I could see people coming out of shops and peeping round corners to see what all the commotion was about. Sometimes I would hear snitches of conversation about what a 'naughty boy he is'. 'Complete ignorance. If they had any idea', I used to think. That used to upset me a lot. Now, however, I try not to care. I'm happy for people to know I'm *with* Luke, although I think that's a maturity thing. I just accept that people *will* stare and point, but Luke's totally in his own world, so I try to be too, and focus my energy instead on telling Luke a story to calm him down. Things are different in my hometown; I live in a small place and am yet to meet someone who *doesn't* know that energetic character with the blond curls who automatically draws the attention of everyone in the vicinity. Luke loves the Co-op; he must be their most regular customer, hovering by the storeroom doors, waiting with anticipation for the next metal crate of food to be wheeled out.

Luke absolutely adores Charlie from 'Charlie and Lola'; in fact I think he believes he *is* Charlie. He laughs and laughs at my stories, though he prompts me as we go, as the stories have to be all on his terms. Funnily enough every story has to mirror the tale when Luke had to go to hospital for a broken ankle. Through traumatic at the time, Luke relishes the memories of the attention he got from the hospital staff, and the wheelchair he had for a few months. Luke has little sensitivity to others' feelings, with 'You've Been Framed' on repeat when he is at home. He has his favourite episodes and takes no greater joy than spending all evening laughing at the misfortunes of others, the built-in fake TV laughter stimulating his own. When I sense a good mood I can go up to Luke and give him hugs and squeezes, usually much to his delight. He is often very playful. Sometimes I misjudge his mood, however, and I can be greeted with a painful pinch or a well-aimed kick instead. There are definitely traits of normal teenage boy-ism.

Naturally, growing up with Luke has made me a lot more aware of other people's feelings. I am not afraid for standing up for Luke and have overcome many problems as Luke helps me see the world through a whole new multi-coloured lens. Difficult as family life can be for myself, my sister and mum and dad, there are certain aspects of life I could never begin to understand or appreciate if I didn't have my lovely weird and wonderful brother by my side.