

## **Turtles Aren't the Only Things That Can Mutate**

By Stacey Benson

I wish whoever thought of calling off school for a week in the spring would rethink the whole idea before this time next year. I mean it's just Wednesday, and my children saw me go right from calm and in control to crazy banshee today. While I couldn't watch the process unfold myself, I am sure it was not a pleasant sight for my children to witness.

I was holding everything together until I heard my six year old screaming, downstairs in the den, at the top of his lungs. About the time I hit the top of the stairs headed down, my thirteen year old started coming up. He was not in a panic that said, "blood", or "serious injury", but rather calm and nonchalant, teenager style. I said, "What happened to Evan?"

He stopped and said, "Well, it was like this. I had Evan's feet and Ryan had his hands, and we were swinging him back and forth when Ryan accidentally let go."

"So you dropped him on his head?!" I screamed. Mutating to crazy banshee begins.

"Um, yeah," he said.

About this time Evan begins climbing the stairs holding his head. He is still screaming. I did not see any blood on the child, but I was seeing red just the same. I met him halfway, and did a quick once over to make sure he was not truly injured, and I sent him on into his room to lie down, and wait for a CAT scan.

Then I turn to see the eleven year old trying the whole nonchalant thing up the stairs. Oh no you don't!

I said, "So you dropped your brother on his head?"

"Um, yeah," he said, also.

More mutating. Voice pitch raised. Smoke seeping from nostrils.

"Don't you think you should at least apologize?" I ask.

"Sorry," he said.

"Not to me! I'm not the one with the closed head injury!" I yell, very banshee-like.

I sent the boys on to their rooms and tried to get a grip. I failed. The only thing I had a grip on was the hand rail. For you see, this was but one episode in a continuing saga of bad behavior that started at the onset of Spring Break. Generally speaking, my children are mild mannered and well behaved. I rarely have to resort to morphing into some crazed loon to get their attention. So what has happened? I tried again to get a grip on the way to their rooms. Unfortunately, our house isn't that big. The ten seconds it took me to get there just weren't quite enough.

I launched into a tirade about family, and maturity, and personal and familial responsibility, and how they treat our pets better than they do their younger siblings. They look at me then as if I am crazy for saying this. They are, somehow, wise enough not to put words to their thoughts.

"Tell the truth, you would never dream of grabbing one of the cats by the legs and swinging it around the room, would you?" I can tell they want to laugh at the mental picture that comes to mind, but they value life in this moment, if only their own.

The oldest says, "But he asked us to do it!"

I replied in authentic, wild eyed banshee staccato, "He's six years old!"

At his point I am ready to bar them from any manufactured electronic form of entertainment we own for the duration of Spring Break when a small voice of reason from the depths of my consciousness whispers, "Are you out of your mind?" And I realize that all I really want is peace. I'm not even interested all that much in justice for the injured. I want peace. I want to put away my whistle and striped shirt, stop referee-ing disputes, and metting out justice. So I am declaring tomorrow Household Peace Day. No fighting, no arguing, no throwing younger siblings around the house day.

I called my father later in the afternoon to vent. He said, "This is only spring break. What are you going to do with them all summer?" Thanks a lot.

So I asked him, "How many weeks can I book them with you and mom?...Hello?...Hello...Dad?"

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Article Source: <http://www.faithwriters.com>