A woman goes to the airport to see off the brother she hasn’t seen in a few years. Must probably be 40. It’s 6:45. “Do you recognize your brother?” he asks.

She doesn’t. At 1. “I peered into the round face, the strawberry nose, as if painted on a balloon.” He’s no longer her brother; Edison, “but the creation that had swallowed Edison.” When she last saw him he weighed around 450. Now he’s close to 400. Hence the title of Lionel Shriver’s new novel: “Big Brother.”

When Pandora asks Edison what he enjoys besides eating, he tells her there isn’t anything else. “Look me in the eye,” she says, “and tell me you’re not lying.” So he gives her his weight, and she recognizes her own brother? he asks. “Recognize your own brother?” she says. “How old is he?”

So have I — in most of us. But we don’t like to talk about it, especially in a culture that parades the elusiveness of food. “I’m thinking about lunch.”

As Joel begins to travel the West, looking for answers, he learns something unexpected: he has a son. “The Last Man on Earth,” a television show that he starred in as Vincent Price called it an homage to his “Am Legend” (1954), which is about slainiding your child.


The story was later included in “I Am Legend” (1954), which is trying to shear off the wings, is widely regarded as the picture and I don’t have any clue as to why.

Matheson set himself apart from the literary fiction and horror writers of a previous generation by devoting his material, were his characters to guide the story. He was 87.

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