

BROTHERS

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MONTAGE: TWO PRE-TEEN BROTHERS PALLING AROUND

Clad in identical school uniforms, knapsacks on their backs, BILLY, 10, and JOEY, 9, walk home from school. The suburban streets are ablaze with fall foliage. Billy and Joey talk animatedly. Though a year younger, Joey's taller and huskier than Billy, but it's never been an issue--they're good pals.

Billy and Joey eat a snack and talk at the kitchen table, while their mother, MARY, washes dishes at the sink.

It's now winter, the street and ranch house in which Billy and Joey live covered in snow.

In their ground-floor bedroom, the PJ-clad Billy and Joey read in their bunk beds, Joey on the bottom bunk, Billy on the top bunk. Occasionally one makes a comment the other enjoys.

Summer has come. Billy and Joey throw a baseball back and forth in the street, bantering good-naturedly.

EXT. SMALL FRONT LAWN - DAY

A few neighborhood BOYS laugh and horse-around on the grass. Among them are Joey and Billy, who play-fight.

Joey gets Billy on the ground and straddles him.

Billy laughs. They're just playing, having fun, laughing.

LARRY, an older but smaller boy from down the block, storms over, quite concerned.

LARRY
(to Billy, dead
serious)
You let your younger brother beat
you up!?

Beneath his younger brother, Billy's face tightens. Larry, in effect, is calling Billy a wuss, and Billy doesn't like it.

MONTAGE: BILLY TRAINS TO NEVER BE CALLED A WUSS AGAIN

Driven by Larry's comment, and its huge social significance among boys and men, Billy performs:

Sit-ups.

Jumping jacks.

Hard pushups.

We see Billy's body becoming more muscular.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy and Joey are 14 and 13. They've moved to the basement. They've already reached their full adult height and weight. Billy's 5'10 and 160, Joey 6'1 and 200.

Each reads in his own bed on opposites sides of the room.

Billy gets up, closes the open window, returns to his bed.

Joey stands, re-opens the window.

BILLY
Closed, asshole.

JOEY
Fuck you.

The Boys rush from their beds and start fighting. Because of his superior size, at first Joey gains the upper hand. But driven by a raging refusal to ever again be perceived as weaker than his younger brother, and backed up by his newly muscled body, Billy punches Joey viciously. Joey retreats from the room.

Billy closes the window, climbs back in bed.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

The family driveway descends to a basement-level garage. Now 16 and 15, Billy and Joey work on Joey's bike, which is propped upside down on its handlebars and seat.

BILLY
(angry)
Give me the wrench.

JOEY
(firm)
No.

Billy pushes him and they fight. Billy unleashes a flurry of vicious punches, and Joey walks away, dropping the wrench to the concrete.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joey watches a TV show. Billy enters.

BILLY
We're not watching that crap.

JOEY
I was here first.

BILLY
(an order)
Change the channel.

JOEY
No.

BILLY
Give me the remote.

Joey doesn't, so Billy tries to grab the remote from Joey. Joey leaps to his feet and, standing, they wrestle like animals. Entwined, they fall onto the coffee table, which breaks in half.

Mary rushes in.

MARY
(rage)
YOU BROKE MY GODDAMN COFFEE
TABLE!? GET OUT! GET OUT! BOTH OF
YOU!

The Boys leave the room through opposite arches.

EXT. BOTTOM OF DESCENDING DRIVEWAY - DAY

The garage door's open. Assigned the chore of cleaning and organizing the space, Billy and Joey verbally wrestle over which side to take. The left side looks like less work.

BILLY
I got the left side, you got the
right side.

JOEY
No, I got the left side.

BILLY
Fuck you.

For a change, Joey takes the physical initiative. He confidently steps forward, ready to give his smaller older brother the physical comeuppance he's long deserved.

Though Billy tries to hide it, his younger but bigger brother's move strikes fear in him.

Their tough-guy FATHER heads down the driveway to check on their progress. He sees they're about to fight.

FATHER

Go ahead. I want to see who's going to win.

Their Father's refusal to stop them from fighting increases Billy's terror.

Using his Father's presence as an excuse to not fight Joey, Billy begins cleaning and organizing the left side of the garage.

Joey's both proud to have intimidated Billy, and disappointed he didn't get to change the fight dynamic between them.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Joey sits at the kitchen table.

Mary's making hamburgers for him.

Billy walks in.

BILLY

(to Mary)

I have to leave for work. Can I eat first? I can't be late.

Joey looks at Mary.

JOEY

No way--I was here before him.

Before Joey can fully rise from his chair, Billy's gotten him in a headlock and hurled him to the linoleum floor.

Joey, not wanting to anger their mother, calmly stands, returns to his seat.

MARY

(to Billy)

GET OUT! GET OUT! AND DON'T COME BACK!

Billy walks out the front door.

MONTAGE: BILLY AND JOEY'S FORTY-YEAR ESTRANGEMENT

Billy, in cap and gown, poses for a photo with Mary at his graduation from college. Joey's conspicuously absent.

Someone offscreen snaps a picture of Joey and Mary at Joey's college graduation. Billy's not there.

Billy, sitting at his kitchen table, cradles his week-old infant, Brian. Mary and Billy's wife, Gwen, look on, smiling.

Joey holds his newborn Danielle on the living room couch, between Mary and Joey's wife, Tara.

Billy, Gwen, and Mary pose with Brian, now 21, at Brian's college graduation.

Joey, Tara and Mary smile for the camera beside the graduation-gowned, 20-year-old Danielle.

Now grandparents, Billy and Gwen, and great-grandmother Mary, sit in the dining room with Brian, his wife and their new infant.

Great-grandmother Mary sits with grandparents Joey and Tara. Danielle and her husband play in the backyard with their two-year-old.

INT. BILLY AND GWEN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Retired, Billy and Gwen read on the couch.

Billy finds it hard to focus on his book.

Gwen puts hers down.

GWEN

Try him once more. If he doesn't want to come to the phone, so be it. But it's been *forty* years. He's your *brother*.

Billy looks at her, his face full of remorse.

BILLY

I just didn't want to be known as a wuss growing up.

GWEN

(rhetorical)

So what if anyone thought you were a wuss.

BILLY

You're a terrible mother.

GWEN
(enraged)
What?!

BILLY
You feel that rage? That's the
pink button you were socialized
with. I was socialized with the
blue button of not wanting to be
a wuss.

Hurt, she looks at him.

GWEN
Am I a bad mother?

BILLY
No. But that's the worst thing
anyone could ever say to a woman.
Just like the worst thing anyone
could ever say to a guy is he's a
wuss.

Neither speaks for a while.

GWEN
Whatever.
(long pause)
Try your brother again. Before
you're both in your graves.

After a few moments, Billy anxiously, apprehensively
removes his phone.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Joey and Tara barbecue. It's just the two of them.

The landline inside the house RINGS. Tara enters the house
to answer it.

She exits with the cordless phone in hand.

TARA
(hopeful)
It's Billy.

Joey stiffens. Tara gently holds out the phone to him.

TARA
(tender)
Come on. Life is short. It's time
to end all this. For God's sake,
he's your *brother*.

Joey looks at the phone in her hand for a long time.
Finally, he accepts the phone from her.
After a long few moments, he brings the phone to his ear.

JOEY
(into phone, as if to
a stranger)
Hello?

INTERCUT

BILLY
Hey.

Neither brother speaks for a few moments.

BILLY
I'm sorry for what I did growing
up.

There's another long silence between them. Both men's
glisten.

Gwen softly caresses Billy's neck. Tara tightly holds Joey
from behind.

JOEY
(finally, voice
cracking)
So how's it hanging?

Billy smiles bittersweetly at this invitation back into his
brother's life. Both men are quietly crying now.

BILLY
(catch in his throat)
Loose. Real loose.

THE END

Establish asap that billy's mercurial/temper personality—and the tremendous unconscious fear of ever having his younger brother beat him up—results in him typically taking the initiative, which helps him win most of the fights.