

BROTHERS

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MONTAGE: TWO PRE-TEEN BROTHERS PALLING AROUND

BILLY, 10, and JOEY, 9, walk home from school, talking animatedly. They wear identical school uniforms and carry knapsacks. Fall foliage lights up the street/block. A year younger, Joey is 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, ANNE, washes dishes at the sink.

The street and ranch house in which Billy and Joey live are now covered in snow.

Wearing winter pajamas, 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.

It's summer. Billy and Joey play catch in the street, bantering good-naturedly.

EXT. BILLY AND JOEY'S SMALL FRONT LAWN - DAY

A few neighborhood BOYS laugh and horse-around on the grass. Billy and Joey, now 12 and 11, play-fight.

Joey gets Billy on the ground and straddles him.

They're just playing, having fun, laughing.

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

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

Beneath his younger brother, Billy's face tightens. Larry, in effect, is calling Billy a pussy, which enrages Billy.

MONTAGE: BILLY TRAINS TO NEVER FEEL LIKE A PUSSY AGAIN

Driven by Larry's comment, and its huge social significance among boys, over the next two years we see Billy perform:

Sit-ups.

Jumping jacks.

Hard pushups.

We see Billy's body gradually becoming more muscular.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Billy and Joey are 14 and 13, and now live in the basement. They've already reached their full adult height and weight, Billy 5'10 and 155, 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 aided by his mercurial temper, newly muscled body, and a raging refusal to ever again be perceived as weaker than his younger brother, Billy punches Joey with all his might. 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. Billy and Joey, 16 and 15, 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 Joey and they fight. Billy unleashes a flurry of vicious punches, causing Joey to drop the wrench and march away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Joey watches a TV show. Billy enters.

BILLY

We're not watching that shit.

JOEY

I was here first.

BILLY
(an order)
Change the channel.

JOEY
Fuck you.

BILLY
Give me the remote.

Joey doesn't, so Billy tries grabbing the remote from Joey. Joey leaps to his feet. Standing, they wrestle like animals. Entwined, they fall on the coffee table, breaking it in half.

Anne rushes in.

ANNE
(rage)
YOU BROKE MY GODDAMN 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. Billy and Joey stand inside, having been assigned to sweep and organize things. The left side looks like less work.

BILLY
I got the left, you got the
right.

JOEY
No, I got the left.

BILLY
Fuck you.

For a change, Joey takes the physical initiative by confidently taking a step toward Billy. He's ready to give his smaller older brother the physical comeuppance he deserves.

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

Their tough-guy FATHER descends 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 proud to have intimidated Billy, but disappointed he didn't get the chance to finally kick his older brother's ass.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Now 17, Joey sits at the kitchen table.

Anne's making hamburgers for him.

Billy walks in.

BILLY

(to Anne)

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

JOEY

(to Anne)

No way--I was here first.

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

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

ANNE

(to Billy)

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

Billy walks out the front door.

MONTAGE: BILLY AND JOEY'S FIFTY-YEAR ESTRANGEMENT

Someone offscreen snaps a photo of Billy and Anne at Billy's college commencement. Joey's not there.

Joey's graduating college. In cap and gown, he poses for a picture with Anne. Billy's conspicuously absent.

Now married, Billy sits at his kitchen table, cradling his week-old infant, Brian. Smiling, Anne and Billy's wife, Gwen, look on.

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

Twenty years later, Billy, Gwen, and Anne pose with Brian, 21, at Brian's college commencement.

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

Twenty more years have passed. Retired grandparents Billy and Gwen, and great-grandmother Anne, sit at the dining table with Brian, his wife and their new infant.

Great-grandmother Anne sits at a backyard picnic table with grandparents Joey and Tara. They watch Danielle and her husband play on the grass with their two-year-old.

INT. BILLY AND GWEN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gwen and Billy, now 68, 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 *fifty* 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 considers this for a few moments. Finally:

BILLY

(angrily locking eyes with her)

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 most women. Or that their kids are brats or losers. 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 him again. Before you're both dead in the grave.

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 holding a cordless phone.

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 stares at the phone in her hand for a long time.

Finally, he accepts the phone from her, slowly brings it 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 eyes glisten.

Gwen softly caresses Billy's neck. From behind Joey, Tara tightly holds him.

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