

BROTHERS

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MONTAGE: TWO PRE-TEEN BROTHERS PALLING AROUND

Clad in identical school uniforms, knapsacks on their backs, BOBBY, 10, and JOHNNY, 9, walk home from school. The suburban streets are ablaze with fall foliage. Bobby and Johnny talk animatedly and smile often. Though a year younger, Johnny's taller and huskier than Bobby, but this has never been an issue--they're good pals.

Bobby and Johnny eat a snack and talk at the kitchen table, while their mother, MARIE, washes dishes at the sink.

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

In their ground-floor bedroom, the PJ-clad Bobby and Johnny read in their bunk beds, Johnny on the bottom, Bobby on the top. Occasionally one makes a comment to the other, who smiles.

Summer has come. Bobby and Johnny throw a baseball back and forth in the street. They banter good-naturedly.

EXT. SMALL FRONT YARD - DAY

A few neighborhood BOYS play and horse-around on the grass. Among them are Johnny and Bobby, who play-fight.

Johnny gets Bobby on the ground and straddles him.

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

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

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

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

MONTAGE OF BOBBY TRAINING TO NEVER BE CALLED A WUSS AGAIN

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

Sit-ups.

Jumping jacks.

Hard pushups.

We see Bobby gradually become more muscular.

INT. BASEMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bobby and Johnny are 14 and 13. They've moved to the basement. They've already reached their full adult height and weight. Bobby is 5'10-1/2 and 160, Johnny is 6'1 and 200.

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

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

Johnny stands, re-opens the window.

BOBBY

Closed, asshole.

JOHNNY

Fuck you.

The Boys rush from their beds and start fighting. Because of his superior size, at first Johnny 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 the muscle he's packed on, Bobby punches Johnny viciously. Johnny retreats from the room.

Victorious, Bobby closes the window, climbs back in bed.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

Now 16 and 15, Bobby and Johnny work on Johnny's bike, which propped upside down on its handlebars and seat.

BOBBY

Give me the wrench, I said.

JOHNNY

No.

Bobby pushes him and they start fighting. Bobby unleashes a flurry of vicious punches, and Johnny walks away, dropping the wrench to the concrete.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Johnny watches a TV show. Bobby enters.

BOBBY

We're not watching that crap.

JOHNNY
I was here first.

BOBBY
(an order)
Change the channel.

JOHNNY
No.

BOBBY
Give me the remote.

Johnny doesn't, so Bobby tries grabbing it from Johnny. They wrestle, then crash onto the coffee table, which under their combined weight breaks in two and collapses to the floor.

Marie rushes in.

MARIE
(rage)
You broke my goddamn coffee
table!? Get out! Get out! Both of
you!

The Boys leave the room in opposite directions.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Johnny sits at the kitchen table.

Marie's making hamburgers for him.

Bobby walks in.

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

Johnny looks at Marie.

JOHNNY
No way--I was here before him.

Bobby rushes Johnny. Before Johnny can fully rise from his chair, Bobby gets him in a headlock, hurls him to the linoleum floor.

Johnny, not wanting to irritate their mother, calmly stands, returns to his seat.

MARIE

(to Bobby)
Get out! Get out! And don't come
back!

Bobby leaves the house.

MONTAGE: BOBBY AND JOHNNY'S FORTY-YEAR ESTRANGEMENT

In cap and gown, Bobby poses for a photo with Marie at his college graduation. Johnny's conspicuously absent.

Someone offscreen snaps a picture of Johnny and Marie at Johnny's graduation from college. Bobby's not there.

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

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

Bobby, Gwen, and Marie pose with Brian, now 21, at Brian's college graduation.

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

Bobby, Gwen and Marie sit at a dining room table with Brian, his wife, and their new infant.

Marie, Johnny, Tara, Danielle and her husband play in the backyard with Danielle and her husband's two-year-old.

INT. BOBBY AND GWEN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Now retired, Bobby and Gwen read on the couch.

Bobby's finding it hard to concentrate 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 way, way too
long. He's your *brother*.

Bobby looks at her, his face full of remorse.

BOBBY

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

GWEN

(rhetorical)
So what if anyone thought you
were a wuss.

BOBBY
You're a terrible mother.

GWEN
(enraged)
What?!

BOBBY
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
known as a wuss.

Hurt, she looks at him.

GWEN
Am I a bad mother?

BOBBY
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 dead.

After a few moments, Bobby apprehensively removes his
phone.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Johnny and Tara are barbecuing. It's just the two of them.

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

She comes out holding a cordless phone.

TARA
(hopeful)
It's Bobby.

Johnny stiffens. Tara gently offers him the phone.

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

Johnny looks at the phone in her hand for a long time.

Finally, he takes it from her.

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

INTERCUT

BOBBY
Hey.

Neither brother speaks for a few moments.

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

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

Supporting their husbands, Gwen softly caresses Bobby's
neck, Tara tightly hugs Johnny from behind.

JOHNNY
(finally, voice
cracking)
How's it hanging?

Bobby grins bittersweetly. They're both quietly crying now.

BOBBY
(catch in his throat)
Loose. Very loose.

THE END