

Fighting Your Memory

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I had never wanted to be a mother. I don't particularly remember the exact reason that I had made such a decision, but I know that I had done so at a relatively young age. Perhaps it was that I considered myself to have this big plan for my life and I thought a child would ruin that. Perhaps I was just a bit too selfish.

I wasn't very old when Mom sat me down and told me that I would soon be a big sister. If I'm being completely honest, I don't actually remember having that conversation with Mom. I mean I'm sure I did because when you're a parent having a second kid you kind of have to make the first kid aware of such a situation. What I do remember is me starting to help Mom more, especially once she became mostly confined to her bed. I also remember that on the night that Mom finally went into labor, after I had grabbed the hospital bag that we had packed for this moment, I laced up my brand-new pair of light-up pink and blue sneakers. I was so excited to show them to my little brother. I was determined to be an amazing big sister.

Though I think that type of big sister would have remembered more than I do. I thought that I could remember more. I wanted to remember more. I know that there was a time before it all got bad, but I'm sorry I just can't think of what that was like. Maybe it's easier to remember the hard times, but the more likely option is that I don't want to hope that those good times can return when it now feels like they never will.

Mom would be gone for hours on end. You and I would get off the school bus, run inside, grab a Pop-Tart or Go-Gurt, both off brands of course, and then retreat to our separate rooms in hopes that she would be home to make dinner. However, time went on and I eventually started thinking that I should just be the one to make dinner if Mom wasn't going to be around to do so. Once I started making dinner, I thought I might as well do the dishes, perhaps the laundry, and maybe I could ask you to take out the trash since you were getting old enough.

"You're not Mom. Why should I do what you say?" You asked.

"Because I'm here and doing everything else. I'm just asking you to do one thing."

I don't know what I did, but I did something by saying that. I still wonder what it would be like if I could go back and undo it. All of sudden you were screaming and throwing whatever was within reach at me. I ducked for a while,

but at one point I definitely threw something back at you. I don't know if it was me retaliating or what, but you just got angrier. Those things in your reach suddenly weren't enough and you started throwing your fists at me instead. This went on for likely half an hour before we both retreated to our respective rooms.

After sitting in my bed for a while trying to find an excuse for what just happened, I decided it would be best to go and check on you. I truly didn't care about the trash anymore, but I cared about my little brother. When I cracked your door open slightly that's exactly what I found. My little brother, you, were lying in bed, shaking, crying, looking more scared than I had ever seen anyone. I started walking towards you when you jumped up and hugged me.

"I'm sorry," you choked out.

"It's okay. Are you okay?" I asked.

"I don't know what that was. I don't know who that was. It wasn't me. I'm so sorry."

"It's okay. I think you're just upset and angry."

"I shouldn't be angry at you."

"It's okay. We'll be okay," I said as I held you until you cried yourself to sleep.

That's how the next four years went. It was me and you without Mom. When you first started having your episodes they only happened probably once a month, but it progressed. At one point it was every other week, then every week, and eventually it felt like it was every day. Nothing I said helped anymore. I can't deny that at one point I got angry too. My manner of dealing with our situation was accepting it and improving myself where I could, namely school. However, you refused to do such a thing, and I hated that you wouldn't just do what I asked. Over time, our mutual resentment only made your episodes worse until eventually I no longer saw the point to check on you afterwards.

Once I graduated from high school, I chose to go away to college. I left you with Mom. Admittedly, I think it was good for both of you. There was no one left to take care of the house or to serve as an intermediary to your growing issues. She was forced to be a mom again.

The thing about being in a new place is that it makes you long for those places that are familiar to you, even if those places weren't the greatest. At least that was the case for my nineteenth birthday when I had no friends at school to celebrate

with and all I wanted was to go home and celebrate with family. I worried as I hadn't really talked to you since I had started classes. Mom had started therapy and was working to rebuild our relationship via constant messaging and a couple of calls here and there. I figured that for the party Mom would gather grandparents and decorate the house in a theme she thought I would like while also fixing a meal that she claimed to be my favorite. She would be wrong about the theme and the food, but she would appear as the pinnacle of motherhood and hosting, and I knew that's what she really wanted so I didn't say anything. While I knew what Mom would do during the celebration, I had no clue about you.

On the day of the party, I walked our grandma who passed her mothering skills, or I suppose the more appropriate understanding would be her lack of mothering skills, onto our mother. I was in the kitchen, so can't say that I saw what happened to start the chaos, but I can remember what was said.

"What the fuck are you doing here," you yelled.

"That isn't how you should talk to your family," Grandma replied.

"Please not today," Mom begged.

"No cause why is she here? She's a terrible fucking mom with a fucking disgusting taste in men. Mom, you know that better than anyone. She needs to fucking leave."

At this point, I was slowly beginning to step towards the living room. Everyone that was at the party had obviously heard the conversation and I was starting to get embarrassed as well as mad. I had to say something. I knew that me stepping into the situation would only make it worse, because it only ever made it worse, but I couldn't stay quiet.

"Can I not have just one day? One day where you aren't the center of attention. Today is my birthday and I thought maybe you could just be normal, but I guess I was wrong," I said.

"Like you aren't the center of attention all the time. Sister graduated top of her class. Sister went to college. Sister is so amazing," you said mockingly. "Just shut your mouth cause you're no better than anyone else here."

"No, you shut your mouth. Don't ever act like I didn't work to get where I am. You have no clue what it's like to work for yourself and not have everyone cover for you."

"Whatever. If she's not leaving, then I am."

With that, you turned and ran out the door. Everyone turned to look at me and I fought back any tears that seemed like they might fall. I wasn't going to cry over you. When I looked at Mom though she was crying, and also contemplating whether or not to follow you out the door. Eventually, everyone went to either help look for you or just went home. I stayed and waited.

Later when you finally walked back through the door you were bloody, bruised, and tear stained, but I couldn't look at you for more than a few seconds. I wanted to see my baby brother. I wanted to see someone that in twenty minutes I could go check on and comfort, while also being comforted by, because I knew I wasn't alone in all of it. Yet, on that day, when I looked at you, I couldn't see my baby brother at all, no matter how hard I tried.

No longer did I have someone by my side. I was alone. You were alone.

I never wanted to be *your* mother. I'll admit that I tried to be. However, I know now that I never could have been that for you. I'm just your big sister and I wish that could've been enough.