

I believe that all families fight. Whether it is a silly argument or a bitter dispute that has permeated the family for decades, fights are always expected. However, I do not think one ever expects these conflicts to escalate into physical violence. This is the story of my domestic violence encounter with my brother, Reed.

I don't ever ask why things happened that way. The memory is burned into my brain, but no real emotion or care has faded. I don't view it as a reason to be hateful, embarrassed, or frightened of Reed. However, fear was the most vivid.

I was playing basketball with my neighbor, Nolan. We had a worn-down basketball goal in the driveway, so after-school basketball was a constant staple. Being 12 years of age, I took on my younger opponent in the paint, ripping down rebounds, blocking shots, and doing reverse dunks. I always played rough, even when I knew I had the advantage.

My parents were out of town on their anniversary, and I had the concrete court all to myself. Life was good. There are equally bad feats that are waiting to occur.

The garage door creaked open, making an ugly, whiny sound. Out walked my brother. He stood at 6 foot 1 and weighed just over 200 lbs. His lower lip was fat from his mouth, holding the fresh preserves of Copenhagen snuff.

He strutted out with a sheepish look and the smile only a pervert could feel comfortable with. He was fresh out of college, full of arrogance and spunk, yet he was unsure of himself and his future. But that was not unlike me, his younger counterpart.

The first thing he exclaimed was, "What's up fags?" Now homosexuality, even in 2022, is a taboo subject for most males. Whether it is not wanting to be thought of as being gay or not wanting to be associated with homosexual themes or practices, it is taken as an insult to be called a gay slur. But I wasn't hurt by these hurtful slurs. I understood "fag" was a word meant to harm

and disparage a community of people, even though I wasn't well aware of their struggles. It had nothing to do with me; I just wanted to keep playing with my friend.

His footsteps drew closer as I lined up to shoot a jump shot. Every click and clank of his steel-toed boots filled me with uneasiness. I bent my arms and extended my toes up. Then, with near-perfect form, I launched a beautiful bank shot off the glass. Unfortunately, I was struck in the head just before I could retrieve the worn, round, beige ball.

A football bounced off my left temporal lobe. I stumbled backward and fell on my back. My brother stood over me, his dark shadow consuming my physical space. So there I lay, cloaked in literal darkness.

"Listen pussy. When I talk to you and your little boyfriend, you answer. Got it?" He towered over me at 23 years of age and used every bit of his sheer size to intimidate me.

I was in utter humiliation. He knew I couldn't fight back. He was going to pull out all the stops, using his vast playbook of profanity and slurs, that I lacked the experience and insight to understand.

Knowing I could not win but not wishing to submit to cowardice, I looked up. I uttered a two-letter phrase that could ignite even the coolest and calmest of individuals to an individual that was as hotheaded as a patient running scarlet fever. "Fuck you."

In an instant, his menacing smile was gone, and it turned into the most intense frown I have ever seen. That is the last thing I remembered before I was hurled into the shed.

I never actually felt the collision. I expect it was from the shock of being thrown through wooden doors. Nevertheless, I saw the blood as it trickled down the back of my head. Never seeing it drip like this, I was amazed at how hot it was. It was practically steaming, like what a 15-minute-old black coffee would feel like, dripping on your hand.

When I finally came to, Reed had clasped his hands around my shirt collar. His burly hands, balled up in fistfuls of cloth, engulfed my neck space. It was reminiscent of what a rabbit must feel when its neck is trapped around the vise-like grip that is the jaws of a mountain lion.

My brother shook me in utter indifference to what he had just done. “Don’t ever say that shit to me again, you little bitch!”

He threw me back on the ground and walked away. Then, slowly but calmly, he disappeared into the interior of our house just as quickly as he had emerged.

Reed was able to explain away the damage to the shed due to restless coyotes. But unfortunately, my parents were too exhausted to investigate the matter further.

Reed and I are very close today. We have never spoken about the subject. We watch Mavericks games, drink Shiner Bock, and share a fondness for Larry David’s “Curb Your Enthusiasm.”

I look forward to being the “best man” at his wedding next month.