

## Brothers

Age 6. My annoying two brothers had brought upon themselves to barge into my room and quickly take my boxed shape computer screen that I had borrowed from my father into their hands and yank the keyboard into their fingers. Being a child of much curiosity, I simply stared at them as they typed words I couldn't read at my age onto the screen and clicked the first video and appeared. It displayed a red dot following a neon blue pathway.

"Just follow the red dot and keep staring at it," they advised. I was extremely obedient, eyes never leaving the screen as it slowly moved across the screen. I grew impatient, wondering if this was simply what they wanted to show me. At one point, even my finger traced the red dot that travelled from one side of my screen to another. But suddenly, a large horrid picture of a type of grudge and high pitched scream filled my vision and ears. It wasn't long until I was screaming at the top of my lungs, running out of my room with tears streaming down my face. That was the first time I had been jump-scared and the first time I truly established my grueling hate for my siblings as they laughed at me, getting the reaction they wanted.

Growing up, I hated my two brothers. I was the only girl out of the siblings and had prayed to my parents numerous times, begging for a sister. But being a child and having conflicting thoughts, I soon cried when they suggested having another daughter themselves, not wanting their love and affection for me to decrease because of more 'competition.' My brothers and I would fight continuously, bickering whenever we could and disagreeing on the smallest things. The three of us were all born a couple years apart, making it hard to understand one another.

One vivid memory would be of us all physically trying to hurt one another. Some may call it 'play-fighting' but frankly, it wasn't. I would scratch one of my brothers' faces as he would kick me in return, trying to wrestle each other until victory occurred. The oldest would typically try to hold back a little, knowing that his strength can easily knock out the both of us. Our mom would scold and yell at us, telling us to sit in corners for what felt like forever. I could never grasp the concept as to why my mom wanted the siblings to bond with one another. It simply made no sense to me. She claimed that we would be able to depend on one another when our parents would no longer be there, but that seemed absurd to me. Even when finding my old assignments from Kindergarten, I'd write down how much I disliked my brothers. Although the three of us lived under the same roof, we could never bond with one another.

In fact, I couldn't wrap my head around the reason as to why my mother wanted me to get along with my siblings. At the time, I didn't have a role model of any sort (other than aspiring to be Hannah Montana), and I definitely didn't think my brothers would be one. How they acted and their values at the time were things I never really cared about nor wanted to. Additionally, they were people I grew up arguing with. Our sibling banter got in the way of me seeing what they were actually like as human beings. I feel as though that could apply to them as well.

This is understandable as well. I was still within the single-digit age and you can't expect someone that young to have their life entirely figured out by then. It's simply the evolution of my relationship with people who I thought I would hate forever had grown into something I somehow began to treasure dearly.

As we collectively aged further into our lives, my two brothers began sharing a common interest with one another: gaming. It was typical for the two of them to be discussing games and leaving me to be an outcast within their conversations. But just because they shared an interest with one another, they were siblings in the end, therefore picking fights with one another whenever they could. Being a child, I wanted to be included in everything and always wanted the center of attention to be around me. I tried my best to fit in, but it didn't work out in the end.

My brothers always sparked a weird emotion in me growing up. I hated them with burning rage as the three of us would never collaboratively get along but I was also forced to love them. Perhaps it was because of my mom's doing and influence that the siblings should stay together, but deep down I knew I loved them no matter how much I denied it.

Now, don't be mistaken, we did have our moments where we got along. It was never a case where the three of us couldn't be in the same room together. We shared some laughs and sometimes even played together but in general, it was hard for us to maintain that same happiness with one another.

*Age 11.* I was gifted a tablet for Christmas and had definitely abused the power of having instant access to the internet at such a young age. I stayed up to watch a movie on my tablet and soon went down a spiral of watching more videos throughout the night. Before I knew it, I was up around 3AM with my stomach grumbling, begging for food. My brothers were infamous for staying up late at night due to their gaming and having a meal together in secrecy (usually a cup of instant noodles, preferably the Shin Ramyun brand since it was convenient and the most delicious). To my surprise, I was awake to hear their soft whispers in the kitchen and see the light from the dining room glow against the walls beside the stairs.

Soon enough, I joined them and became part of their secret mission to not be caught by our parents for staying up so late whilst feeding our hungry stomachs. I clearly remember the feeling of adrenaline from all the movies I had watched that night keeping me awake and the odd, but welcoming, emotion of being embraced into their circle. Just because I formed new habits didn't mean that we instantly began getting along, but it was a start.

My brothers soon became people I was able to bond with. The bickering would still be there and the small fights over idiotic topics never left, but we shared more interests and slowly tolerated one another more and more.

Something clicked inside my head when growing up into adolescence that my brothers mean a lot more to me than just two mean bullies. Perhaps it was because of their sudden love and care for me or perhaps it was because I began to realize their subtle hints of affection towards me through strange ways. We were never a verbal bunch, meaning that saying how we actually felt was foreign to us.

I'm forever grateful that this transition happened. Now, hearing siblings that aren't in touch with one another like I used to be with my brothers is something I can no longer imagine so vividly. And from the bottom of my heart, I hope that will always stay like that.

*Age 13.* Their importance to me began to seep into my head more. I grew to appreciate them growing up but I feel as though they both now have a very special spot within my heart. Not only did we grow as people, but our relationship also strengthened together as siblings. They've brought me tears, joy, pain, and happiness and soon became the people who influenced my life the most.

"How?" you might ask yourself. "How does a relationship where everyone hates each other grow into such a treasurable connection?"

I've always claimed that the reason why I get along with my siblings is due to a collaboration of reasons. Yes, it began to spark when I screwed up my sleeping time and joined their group of trying not to get yelled at by our parents at 3AM, but there were some other reasons as well. Our parents emigrated from Vietnam and had us in Canada. Therefore, the three of us were surrounded by the English language much more than our native tongue. This caused some language barriers growing up and resulted in our capability to understand one another with much more ease. Don't get me wrong, I love my parents with every inch of me. But it was much easier to communicate with my brothers in contrast to my parents.

Additionally, the three of us faced the same battles at one point. Our parents would argue, which is completely normal for adults to do. But the effect it had on us collectively brought sentiment to our hearts and placed us all at the same position: the unknown. We didn't know what to do or how to deal with the discourse going on between our parents. We were unsure of what could happen in the future and if their arguments grew: what effect would that have on us siblings?

Vulnerability comes with fortitude, allowing for one to grow from their struggles. Being raw with one another and sharing tears from anger due to the position we ended up in allowed us to relate to each other on a stronger level. I was panicked that one day they would suddenly pack up their bags and leave the home we shared out of sheer frustration from the continuous arguing they had to hear. But they shared their words of gratitude and empathy towards me, placing ease on my anxious heart. It brought me easily to tears as I realized I was so fearful of them no longer being there and leaving me in the unknown by myself. Though this may sound cliché, but I am no longer scared

of obscure outcomes that could possibly happen as long as I know I have their unconditional love and support.

*Age 15.* In fair honesty, we're still siblings. I cowardly don't tell them my feelings and their importance to me frequently simply because those words hold so much value now. My eyes easily begin to rain teardrops even thinking about the topic of how grateful I am for them. Growing up, I'd never expect for my brothers and I to build a relationship that I am so satisfied to be in now.

Though my admiration for my siblings could be cheesy to some or cliché to others, there's simply no other way I could possibly put it. They've played the biggest role in my life in shaping who I am today and had helped me through situations I could have never imagined to get through without them. We still argue and banter from time to time, but all in all, our bond with one another makes it desirable for me to want to be near them.

I've realized over time how only their words will truly strike me the most. Though I'm grateful for everyone who has helped influence who I am today, hearing their words of affirmation or acts of kindness truly brings warmth to my heart that I could never bring to words. I believe that home is more of a feeling than a set location. This feeling can be embarked by people who hold a special place within your heart.

My brothers were people who I had always thought only contributed negative emotions in my life. From every inch of my short body, I hated them with a deep rage. But as I grew and their acts of kindness or subtle hints of affection became more obvious underneath our bantering, I grew to have a strong admiration for them. As I grew to the age of 16, it became clear to me that my brothers are my feeling of home and comfort. They are a fragment in my life that I will treasure deeply. A concept I never understood why my mom wanted to teach.