

“Do you you want me to handcuff him?”

*No Dad. Please no. Say no.*

It was a Thursday night after school and I was ready for a memorable night. I had my first swim meet. Ever. My dad rallied Clare, Robinson, and I into the car, and we were off. I was always annoyed that my brother had to come to everything. But he didn't have his own activities, and he needed to be watched at all times. So he came, and I did not argue. We were driving on the road that I had been down a million times. We were so close to the pool, I could see it.

“AHHH, NO DAD NO!!!” screamed Robinson.

I jerked my head up from my phone. *What was going on?*

“Come on Robinson, I need my phone,” my dad said in his cool, calm, and collected tone.

“NO NO NO NO!!!” The same panicked voice I'd heard all my life.

Robinson was having a freakout, or at least that's what my mom called them. I had seen these enough times to know that I shouldn't get involved, and I just had to stay calm. But I had never experienced a “freakout” in the car.

“Bud its ok. You can have my phone,” I said trying to stay calm.

“NO I WANT DADS PHONE!” He yelled before hitting my arm.

Ouch.

Next my autistic brother yanked the door open and leaped out of the barley stopped truck. My dad, shocked, followed and tried to grab him. I turned my head to see who was watching this chaotic scene. A police officer happened to be driving by, and my dad waved her down.

*No. This was not happening.*

My dad has always refused to ask for help, especially when it came to my brother. As his father, my dad always believed that he should be the one to handle Robinson, it was no one's business nor problem to get involved in. My brother's special needs and social disabilities had always stayed within my family. People knew but they never saw him at his worst. No one was there when he would wake up and start screaming because of a nightmare, or when my parents would debate taking him to a hospital because they just couldn't handle him anymore. But now my dad was getting a police officer involved.

She pulled over and started helping my dad with my flailing brother. I felt a lump form in my throat. Breathing felt impossible. I clenched my fists as hard as I could to keep myself from crying and then I started to zone out. I definitely did not want to remember this. I always zone out when I am in situations like these. It's my defense mechanism, I can not be mentally hurt every time my family has a unique, but very hard set back because of my brother. Clare tugged at my sleeve and I was snapped back to reality.

“Let's just walk over to the pool.” Clare pleaded, sounding anxious.

“Yeah ok,” I said.

*We should probably be leaving the situation anyway.*

As we started to leave I glanced back at my brother and my dad. They were sitting on the curb. My dad was trying to talk to Robinson, probably about his feelings. Robinson would never say how he was actually feeling. But if he did, it would be some sort of puzzle my dad would need to figure out. Intentionally or not, Robinson always talked in some kind of riddle. I was hoping this time maybe he would say something, but I knew if my brother said something it would just be to ease my dad.

Arriving at my first swim meet that night, after having an extremely traumatic moment with my family, I realized something. It wasn't that life was hard or that we need to keep going through the tough times. I realized that I had forgotten my swimming suit. My first swim meet and I forgot the one thing necessary to swim. This *was* a situation that a twelve year old could handle, unlike my screaming brother. As I compared these two complications, I came to the conclusion that forgetting my suit on any other day would have been a huge problem filled with tears and lots of stress, but not today. Today, this was a problem my twelve year old self could solve... without involving a police officer.

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