

My Little Brother

by

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When we were youngsters my little brother and I were inseparable. My parents were pretty strict. They rarely allowed us to be out like everyone else but we had each other and we did everything together. His name was Christian and he was my best friend. We were only three years apart and went to the same school. I always protected him even at home. For as long as I can remember I was always in trouble because of him. I used to tell him, “Don’t worry about it. Just tell them I did it” whenever he broke something. It was a trend that went all the way into our adulthood. I knew what I had in my brother; I just never thought that his life would end so abruptly. His loss has changed my whole outlook on life and made me realize the importance of family as I try to come to terms with the debilitating rage that I am left with.

We left El Salvador in 1980, trying to escape a war torn country where children were recruited to fight in the war. Upon arriving here, we found the streets of L.A. not much different: gang violence and police brutality were rampant. Being harassed by crooked cops was the norm which we experienced first hand.

One day Chris had an argument with someone he considered like a brother who came over the house looking for a fight. After they exchanged a few words Chris asked him to leave and he did. At this point I told Chris something I have always known to be

true: there is nothing stronger or more important than family ties. Before I left I said to him, "It has always been about family and he has proven he really isn't family. You know you're my brother and I love you. I would die for you".

The next morning around 7 a.m. I got a call from my mother.

"Hello?" I answered.

"Are you sitting down?" my mom asked.

"Why?" I asked.

"Chris was killed last night by the police!" she cried.

"No! No! My god, no!" I screamed in horror. I threw the phone at the wall. My wife came to my side and asked what happened. I told her Chris was dead, and that he was killed last night by the cops. I picked up the phone and my mom was still on it.

"I'm coming over right now" I said.

"No, the streets are still blocked off, the cops are still here," she said.

"I'm coming over," I repeated. My wife and I drove over to the house. When we pulled up the media and onlookers were talking to my parents, trying to interview them. How insensitive! I was outraged I walked over to my parents, put my arms around them and walked them in the house. The news reporters were still trying to talk to them. I shoved them off and said, "Now is not the time." As we walked into the house, everything seemed so unreal. There was an emptiness here where I had spent most of my life and where my brother's was taken.

Sitting in the living room, trying hold back my anger, my rage, my tears, sitting in disbelief trying to be rational, I asked my parents, "What the hell happened?"

According to my parents, Chris was sitting in his car parked in the driveway. The sheriffs

drove by and stopped in front of their home. With guns drawn they approached my brother screaming, "Freeze!" and shot him twice before he could react. My parents witnessed the entire incident. When my father saw his son lying dead he screamed at the cops, "You killed my son, you killed my son! Shoot me too, shoot me too!" I could not believe it. If I was pissed off before, with this information I became enraged. My anger had just sky-rocketed. I can't put into words the feelings, the rage I felt. I wanted to do something. I wanted to kill the cops, and in my mind I could. "All they are is just another gang," I thought. "Easy targets," I figured. Nothing made any sense. Why would someone kill Chris? He was always willing to help someone. Chris was not the type of person to look for a fight or a confrontation. He hated arguments. He was a peaceful guy. I will never understand what happened that night. My brother's murder was a senseless killing that destroyed my family.

Looking back at what happened has made me realize how screwed up this system really is. How ironic that we were brought here to save our lives so they would not kill us in El Salvador only to have my brother murdered in his own driveway by the people who are supposedly here to protect us. If only I had done this, or said that, but none of that really matters now. My brother is dead and nothing can change that. That night changed my life. I don't sleep much any more. I cry often. Sometimes, out of the blue, a certain song that plays on the radio or a street brings back a certain memory. My brother and I spent almost thirty years in this wasteland. One thing is for sure: I hate cops now more than ever and although not all of them are bad, I don't care. They can all suffer a slow and painful death like my brother did as he lay dying in my neighbor's yard by himself, choking on his own blood, taking his last agonizing breath. If I had a dislike for cops

before, I abhor them now. Their very being, the air they breathe. Yeah, that night changed me. I am very different now. I learned how to hate that night, the night I lost my brother. Part of me desires unspeakable evil towards them.

I was very close to my brother. I will never forget his smile and the way he clowned around all the time. His killer didn't just take my brother; he took my best friend, my right arm, the guy I would call in my time of need. Now I look at my wife, my children, and my parents and know that with Chris gone they need me more than ever. I must not succumb to my rage. They don't need two brothers dead. His loss made me appreciate those around me a little bit more. Life is very fragile and we must enjoy those around us now and to the fullest, never taking them for granted. People say you never know what you have until they take it away. I know what I had in my brother: a friend I will forever miss and love.