

HOW TO BRING UP YOUR BROTHER:

An authoritative guide for older sisters

By Mary Morrison

Chapter 1: YOU SHOULD LOVE YOUR BROTHER

My troubles first began when he arrived. I was 14 months old and my first look at my new baby brother told me he couldn't be real. I had to find out, so quietly, I moved my index finger to his face and into his eye, to see if he was real!

“Mary,” my mother cried, “You shouldn't try to poke his eyes out! He's your brother. You should love your brother.”

I didn't.

Maybe if I ignored him, he would go away.

He didn't.

I had to endure the next weeks and months of my mother telling me, over and over, “Bobby's such a good baby. He never cries. Not like you, Mary! You cried and cried and cried! You had the colic.”

So, he was good and I wasn't, all the more reason for me to poke his eyes out. I didn't want anyone being better than me.

Today, I stood beside his crib my hands grasping the white enameled bars, my face pressed up against them as I peered thru at him. I wasn't tall enough to stand above the crib, nor climb on it. So, I slid my arm between the bars, my fingers quietly poking at his side. My index finger worked its way up to the cherub face, poking and poking soft, pink cheek, then to the blue of his eye. I poked. It oozed a little, but didn't pop out. I poked again, harder. It wasn't as easy as I thought it would be.

“Mary, what are you doing?” my mother questioned from the kitchen.

I guess my silence had given me away. I guess I always made noise when I was good. But, I didn't talk back. Well, I couldn't. I was only 16 months old. When I was older, I liked to talk

back. And, besides, I was trying to poke his eyes out. It wasn't easy. The blue of one of his eyes still oozed a little. My mother found me there, clutching the crib bars and never let me be alone with him again, telling my father, "She tried to poke his eyes out today!"

Years later, I would have some revenge when he, a year behind me in school, got the same teachers I had had and they told him how good I was, how smart I was. It annoyed him no end. How sweet the taste of revenge.

But, what did he expect—it was destiny—confirmed by Psych 101 when I got there—that resentment toward new babies is high and a period of adjustment is needed. Even the eye poking routine is common. Further, that first-borns have the highest IQ's of siblings and are the most aggressive as they have to fight the all the battles. The youngest sibling is usually the negotiator/mediator because they have to deal with all of the above. Moreover, colicky babies are very bright. Right! So Right! As the first born, I turned out to be the quiet, studious one and he, as second born, turned out to be the good-natured, congenial one.

But, how was I to know all this then?

So, at any early age, my first born, pre-ordained behavior kicked in and I, over the years, leaned to give out orders and commands and he, as second born, leaned to follow them.

And thus it came to pass that I had a lackey, and I mean a real lackey, for the next 20 years of my life, even if...he still did have his eyes!