Oh Brother

My older sister told my brother of my HIV status, and I didn't know how to handle it. The best way we knew was through love.

April 2, 2018 By JMV

In December of 2010, I woke up out of a blackout in a hospital bed. My friend Robert was the first thing I saw. I didn't recognize him at first. I had to collect myself. I didn't know exactly what had happened other than what seemed to be a suicide attempt. My mind was clouded, thoughts foggy. I didn't look like myself. I just remember saying, "When I get out of here, I'm only going to try it again."

My mom and sister drove down in the middle of the night from upstate NY, worried sick and not knowing what I was going through, the things going through my head. When they contacted my brother, he only replied, "He's like a butterfly..." and I didn't want to hear anymore. I decided in that moment that my brother didn't love me, so I was going to hate him with all I had. I didn't want talk to him after that—and I didn't.

The day I left the clinic, I made sure to tell my mom and sister not to mention anything to my brother. He didn't deserve to know what was happening or to be a part of my life. There was no way he'd be able to handle this if he handled my suicide attempt the way he did.

Later on, my sister called me and told me she gave my brother the news, and I grew angry. I didn't even know what it meant yet and I'm supposed to talk to my brother about it.

What was I going to say? What would he say?

My heart was filled with rage and resentment. How could she have done this to me? "Ricky, will you please call Bryan? He is really worried and he loves you, but he's respecting that you don't want to speak with him." Talk about how big of a drama queen I was, obviously. Something inside said to call him, so I did.

That moment that needed to happen, happened. "Ricky, are you okay?" He and I spoke for about twenty minutes and I burst into tears in the first twenty seconds. He loved me. He was there for me. He was everything I needed him to be in that moment. He had no comprehension of my diagnosis, but he wanted to make sure I was safe. He wanted to talk to me. He wanted to be there to listen.

That night was the beginning of my brother and I reconnecting. He is one of my favorite people in

the world. I wanted him to be there so many times in my life when he wasn’t — and when I NEEDED him, there he was. Since then I’ve only thought about how human it is to react to certain situations the way he did. We are human and he did the best he could with everything he has going on in his own life. I love my brother very much, and our relationship continued to grow, but it only happened when I was able to see him again a few years later. (TO BE CONTINUED)

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