

Fight

Sooner or later, little girls learn fighting is wrong. The ways we're taught this are as varied as the little girls of the world. In my case, society told me that, unlike my forefathers, I was not allowed in battle nipping my army dreams at the bud. My family wasn't much help either. My father, a diplomat, believed in resolving disputes over a nice glass of chardonnay. My mother, who was nothing but pithy, would repeat two of her steadfast rules to me:

- 1) "There is no problem in being a hairy woman. The problem lies in not doing anything about it." And,
- 2) "God forgives sins, not scandals."

Conclusion: pouring boiling wax over my skin was ok as long as I didn't scream.

That rule about scandals sunk in when I was 7. My parents dragged my sister and I to yet another social engagement that was more business than pleasure: a birthday party for some snott-nosed stupid kid I barely knew. In fact, me declaring that to his face, after tolerating his incessant mocking is the first memory I have of that day. The second thing I remember is his mucus-covered fist taking a swing at me. My eye socket plummeted to the back of my skull, but the greatest injury was the violation of a social code. Little boys are not supposed to hit little girls.

My sister, not adept at following etiquette, proceeded to beat the crap out of the little shit. I opted to interrupt polite conversation. "Mom! I got punched!"

"Shhh! Don't make a fuss. Fighting is wrong."

Before you begin to judge her-Cause we learn that, how to pit one mother against another-you should try to understand. Daughters are so difficult to raise. Unlike little boys who'll grow up to commit 90% of violent crimes, 99% of rape, and 88.8% of murders, little girls are a handful. They're emotional. They overreact. They're so sensitive when it comes to dresses,

Disney, and physical assault. It's hard to discern what's true and what's the runaway imagination of little girls. Snot-nose ratted my sister out, and she was grounded on the spot. Never a good student, the consequences of her actions did little to reform her. As an adult, she'll be in therapy for, among other issues, her willingness to fight.

I incorporated those lessons. Fighting is wrong, and from that day forward, I became a well-functioning member of society. When another little boy punched me, I pretended to be unfazed. If we want equality, why should I betray my sex with my weakness? When playground tussles transformed into bedroom struggles of my teens and early 20s, it was sometimes easier to let boys be boys. Because no one likes a moody girl, let alone a girl who isn't in the mood. When the men in my grad program are given perks, I'll agree it's merit based because no one wants an unsupportive female colleague. Isn't support what we do best?

This isn't to say little girls are defenseless. We have tactics. We argue. We debate. We talk back. We have hissy fits, catfights, and bitch slaps with our purse. We annoy, badger, berate, bitch, clash, complain, confront, contest, disagree, dispute, dissent, feud, fuss, irritate, moan, nag, nitpick, object, pester, prod, protest, quarrel, quibble, rival, strive struggle, vex, wrangle, rant, and rave. But we don't fight.

We lean in but never fucking stand up.

So parents, if you want little girls to become accomplished ladies like myself, take note. Tell her fighting is very, very wrong. She'll give up on a writing career before it's even begun because it's easier to give in than to fight for what she wants. Her husband- one of those union thugs Fox News warns you about- will have to give her pointers before a co-op meeting about recycling. Because she is terrified to fight for her right to put paper and plastic in a separate bin. True, she might find herself one night unleashing a battle against a hermetically sealed jar, tears

brimming in her eyes, because she can't tell what makes her more uncomfortable: Bothering said husband to open it for her? Or realizing she can't even win against an inanimate object?

Don't fear, though! That kind of self-questioning is fleeting, and she'll carry on the only fight little girls are allowed: a fight against herself, but never for herself.