

My Dad Believes in Big Brother.

A word of advice, do not teach anyone over fifty how to use technology. Wondering why? Let me tell you a story. A beam of sweat lined my father's forehead as he twitched at the sight of me opening an email on his phone. His jaw clenched as my sister opened the Google app for him as he attempts to complete his Ebay purchase. Excessive blinking begins when we ask for his password as he stutters an array of 'whys' and 'carefuls'. My sister and I smacked our hands against our heads as we came to the conclusion teaching the Big Brother believer, was going to be one of life's greatest tests. Let's take a moment to introduce to you the kind of man my alpha male father is. When approaching the silverback, you must assess whether he's showing you his shiny back or standing upright on his legs, beating his chest and screaming. If it is the later, put down the iPhone with Apple Pay. I am not a destructive person but never in my life have I been so close to, hurtling a brick at him with such power it would knock in the sense I wish he had. Do not get me wrong, he is smart and owns a successful business to prove that. However, he very much has the mindset 'if it wasn't invented in my prime it doesn't count'. Yet, he has still somehow decided that owning a tech-savvy iPhone with sausage fingers was a good idea. So, when contactless payment on cards and most smartphones came into play, you can only imagine the size of the lump that formed in my dad's throat; to this day he still refuses to use it. You may be thinking that I have a patience that runs so thin it's collecting up leaves, but let me give you context.

My mistrustful dad and brother work together running our family business. They often travel around in a black VW Transporter Sportline Van powered by diesel, the fuel of men. You know the common belief that owners look like their dogs? Well, my dad resembles his VW Transporter Sportline Van; they make the same low rumbling when attempting to compose

another traditionalist thought. My brother and fourteen stone, wodge of meat father who somehow squeezes into Lycra on the weekends, were approaching a services for a top up on the 'man fuel' and grab some sandwiches. My brother went into the shop ahead of him and my dad fueled up. The sun was rising on the way to work that day, all taking place on their way to Birmingham. Dad was in a rush, as a result of overcompensating how much time he had, thinking everything in his life will take 'two ticks' (his words). With his red face, my dad instructed my brother,

"You get sandwich, I'll stay out here".

My brother dragged his feet into the shop with my dad yelling,

"GET MINE TOO! GET MINE TOO! YOU GET MY SANDWICH TOO?".

My brother then sighed and said,

"Christ, yeah".

None of us know where this panic comes from, it's just the way he is, but no one can figure it out. It's just a constant state of panic. My brother was scanning the fridge for a sandwich for himself, then my dad hurried past him. This black mass dashed by and pointed back commanding,

"Yeah, that one. Ploughmans. They got Ploughman's? Yeah, that one".

At this point, my brother is grabbing whatever he can and my dad is at the checkout. He hands over his debit card and my brother hears him snap at the cashier,

"STOP! WHAT DID YOU JUST DO?".

My brother swings round to assess only to be greeted with more confusion. My dad had given the cashier his card and this guy was about to put it on the card reader but dad had thought that he'd put it next to or on his arm and barks,

"STOP! You just scanned that".

Everyone in the shop froze and then the manager comes out and dad takes it upon himself to point at him and yell,

“STOP! You stop!”.

I don't know what it is with people and dad but they just abide by his rules, like this is his service station. The manager stopped, not saying a word. Dad turned back to the cashier, took his card and paid for himself, inserting it into the card reader and got back into his VW Transporter Sportline Van.

All this behaviour comes from the fact that my dad somehow believes that they have scanners in their arms. You may be thinking, who does? Well, in the words of my dad ‘THEY do’. Still confused? I understand, ‘they’ is the proverbial they, them, thieves, people stealing. As my dad and brother drove away he muttered,

“They're like that son aren't they?”.

Raising his brow, my brother responds,

“Who? Who is like that? Who is doing that at petrol stations?”.

Lone behold, my father threw his right winged opinion and said the dreaded ‘P - Word’. For those confused by what I mean, let's just say he was describing a certain ethnic group in a socially wrong way. He has got it into his head that these ‘people’ immigrating over to the U.K stealing our jobs and money are now finding new ways to steal our money, through tiny scanners on their arms. The greatest thing from all of this is my dad claims he doesn't remember.

I don't think my dad is a psycho but the people on the receiving end and reading this story probably do. But, my siblings and I don't even notice these days. For example, when my dad and brother were on their way to Southampton for work, my brother had never seen anger go from nowhere to so much before; from slouched shoulders to flared nostrils. Most people

have to build up to anger, but dad's goes from zero to one hundred in seconds. My dad was talking to him, everything was normal and then he sees him pinch his lips and grit his teeth at this man driving in front. He continues the conversation as normal, my brother thought it was a fleeting moment and had now passed. However, the rage had gone inside, but a half smile was on his face, so he seemed fine. However, he pulls up next to this car on the motorway slip road, rolls down the window and yells in a blur of words,

“FUCKING HELL MATE, I SAW YOU, FUCK YOU, I SAW YOU”.

Then continues to yell muffled angry words at him, that only someone just as angry could understand, flailing his arm up and down and then the car drives off.

Baring in mind, matching blind anger was reciprocated from the other man. So they just shout, words clash, nothing gets communicated and they both move on. All my brother heard was growling and noise that sounded something like arguing. My brother was reading something on his phone and had an adrenaline kick that could have restarted a dead man's heart. The situation diffused just as fast as it rose and my brother is there, trying to calm himself, while my temperate dad asks,

“Oh, can you just send a text to mum?”.

My brother tried to respond but just choked on his words as his heart sank back down from his throat.

I know my dad may come across as an illiberal man, but what happened in this story is not any reflection of what kind of father he is to me. While I do not accept some of his right wing views; he has raised my siblings and I to be respectful, kind and fair to the people in our lives. He has taught us to be money wise and invested in each of our futures because he has only ever wanted us to have the best. He helped me buy my first car, going to university and move out. My mother being quite liberal has probably reined him quite a bit though.

However, after hearing this from my brother, it got me questioning the bigger picture. What does this level of racism and paranoia say about the older generation in society? My father grew up in a generation where men were the breadwinners and women stayed home. He has worked in a alpha male, blokey, football fan, factory environment most of his adult life. His life has been built around this, with little to no change and leading a linear path (house, wife and kids). So with extreme technological changes, feminist movements, gay marriages and immigration all gaining quick acceptance in the current generation, is it so wrong for his sense of identity to feel threatened when the world around him is changing?

With all of this in mind, I made a revelation about his paranoia; it makes total sense. He is finding difficulty keeping up with so much change and it is fair to assume he is cannot comprehend it, therefore, targeting 'the outsider' to secure his sense of belonging. I don't agree with the behaviour, but I can understand his way of thinking. However, the fact he wants to own an iPhone, learn how to use it and encourages my sister and I as women to peruse our careers and lead any kind of life we want shows his slow conformity to an ever changing society. He just needs to reel in the crazy; I think my brother was just happy he got his sandwich in the end.

Word Count: 1599.

