THE REVELATION

Jeff Kloss

[Assignment: Write a paper explaining how to train a little brother or sister into a tolerable human being. This topic requires a humorous approach, and it invites exaggeration. Be aware, though, that you can overdo exaggeration, and if you do, you may make your "training system" unbelievable.]

"The Year is 1984, and BIG BROTHER is watching you."

(1) Those words zipped through my brain as my head sagged lifelessly forward until it came to rest upon the cool glass of the hospital's newborn room.

(2) On my side of the glass it was dark and somber. There were no new fathers standing around eagerly wanting to hand out their I'm-a-real-daddy-now-cigars, and no proud relatives "oohing" and "ahhing" over their new bundle of joy, all trying to decide what the "little darlin's" name should be. It was just me alone, and I felt it completely.

(3) My eyes searched the sea of babies and locked in on a little pink card on the outside of one of the beds. I read the name on the card: Amanda Jo Kloss. Amanda Jo Kloss, my new--sister.

"No," is all that I could manage to say aloud. I was a good kid. I wasn't responsible for all of the grey that was starting to show in my parents' hair. No matter what they said, I knew that I wasn't. I was getting O.K. marks in school this year, and I even stopped hiding my veggies in my underpants to sneak off later and feed the family toilet. What more did I have to, no, could I, do?

(4) What, God? What sacrifice would it take to turn that hideous pink card into a beautiful blue one that read "Peter, or John," or anything but Amanda?

(5) I started to cry. The crying became sobs and the sobbing turned into full-fledged hysteria but it all suddenly stopped. I had a plan.

(6) Into my hysterical state flowed a river of "rational" thought. I decided that if I could not change the physical, I would "mold" the mental. Amanda was due home in two days--that didn't leave me much time to prepare.

(7) I put my plan into effect the second that I got home from the hospital. I ran into the room which was going to be Amanda's and quickly sized up her wall space as "four posters and five pennants." I dashed out of her room and into mine, where I began to rip my heroes off my "wall of honor." Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, Robin Yount, and Joe Montana left their time-honored places, revealing a different shade of paint where they had once rested. Next, I took down the ole' Notre Dame, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Penn State, and Harvard pennants, ready to sacrifice them to help my sister become a "thing" I could tolerate, if not one day even love.
The room was complete, and I stood back with a smile on my face as my Dad walked in to see what I had been doing at such a feverish pace. The beautiful sweat of joyous labor stood out on my forehead as my Dad began to talk.

"I don't know what your mother will say when she sees this. Your sister is a girl, you know?" was all that he said. I was not the least bit worried about my mother, for I knew that she would see my gesture as one done out of love, and blindly overlook its true motivation--desperation!

After having Amanda home for two years, things were going reasonably well. The posters were fine with my mother when she first saw them, and she was now actually impressed by the way A.J. (as she became known) and I were getting along. We got along so well because she was very receptive to my second phase of her "programming."

My parents continued to keep an active social life after they had my sister, and the thanks for that being at all possible goes directly to me and ESPN. You see, babysitting was a very beneficial tool for me because it allowed me to feed Amanda a diet of baseball, basketball, tennis, golf, and even drag racing. We loved it. I would cheer for my favorite teams and Amanda would cheer for me cheering for my favorite teams. We both had our roles. Mine was to cheer for the Brewers and hers was to cheer for her brother. I can assure you that my sister has watched more sporting events than any other female in history, at least for one who is now only seven years old.

The last phase of Amanda's "programming" came a few years later. This phase became known as "Operation: Music Appreciation." The love of my life is music and if there is one thing that I cannot stand it is bad music. The influences upon my musical tastes are wide. They reflect a love of Motown by my mother and her sisters, jazz and blues by my father, 70's rock classics by my uncles on both sides, and finally, the choices I have made on my own. This being the case, I knew that I had to try to save Amanda from the clutches of the music young kids today favor.

"Wanna listen to some tunes, Jane?" (my personal evolution of A.J.--and I'm not quite sure why, it just stuck) I would ask her when it looked as if she was thinking about Debbie Gibson or the dreaded New Kids on the Block. We would go into my room and she would sit down in her special chair, and I'd ask her who she'd like to hear. Sometimes I would pull out five or six C.D.'s and quiz her as to who the artists were and, if she got them all right, I would give her a "high five" or even a big tickling. I had her, I worked hard on her, and I was just keeping her safe.

Suddenly, years too suddenly, this all ended. Now that I am away at school, I miss my sister very much and I wish that I could see her every day, well, almost every day. I have often found myself daydreaming about the story that I've just told and when I catch myself, I smile because I now cannot believe that I didn't want her when she was first born. Today I could not give her up. She loves to watch sports with me, she has taken up many sporting activities, and more importantly, she is becoming a fine little girl--a "classic girl." She is the perfect sibling for me. And,
I love her even though she "just adores" the much-dreaded New Kids on the Block—oh well, you try to raise them right.