

# Fist Fight

By Cristian E. Caroli

I'm not a fighter, but I've always loved to see a good fist fight. Back in school I had this friend, his name was Ron, good kid. And I'm not saying *good* as in "he did his homework", which he certainly did, but *good* as in "I'd give him a hug on his birthday". Then the first day of middle school came another kid, the new kid, he went by the name of Córdoba. He was a bad kid. And I'm not saying *bad* as in "he didn't do his homework", which he certainly didn't, but *bad* as in "who gives a shit if it's his birthday?".

I remember being *fatural* (somewhat fat and somewhat popular), I considered myself to be likeable enough so my only concern was minding my own business. For a guy who likes fist fights I was always very far away from trouble. That's one of the perks of growing up in a bad neighborhood: you learn to stay away from trouble at a very young age, especially high school. But other people, especially Ron, they also never look for trouble: trouble finds them. Probably that was why at 12 he was already a brown belt in karate.

In my school your desk was assigned alphabetically, because fuck vision, height and attention spans. As if Ron didn't have enough problems with astigmatism he found out that for the whole year his desk was going to be behind Córdoba's. Cordova was rather big for a 15-year-old, and he was 13. Ronald might as well be sitting behind a rock wall.

Ronald had always been very polite. Too polite if you ask me. When he realized he couldn't see what the teacher was writing in the lower part of the chalkboard he wasted no time.

"Hey, Córdoba. Nice to meet you. Look, I can't see very well, can we have a code that when I tap you in the shoulder it means I'm asking you to lean a little bit to the side?"  
"A code?"

"Yes, a code. Like if I tap two times you lean to the right. Three times you lean to the left. Dunno."

Córdoba rolled his eyes, turned around and gave him the bird, no one else in the class noticed that, just me. That was the end of that conversation and the only exchange they had for the day. That was trouble finding Ronald.

The next day Ron went all in with his idea and tapped Córdova a couple of times in the shoulder. He groaned. Ron tapped again and Córdova turned around, his elbow slowly knocking down everything in Ron's desk.

"What?"

"Can you lean a little to the left?"

Córdova leaned to the right.

"I meant your other left," said Ron with a candid smile.

"This is the only left I'm turning to."

"You really don't like shoulder tapping," Ron replied.

*What an asshole*, I thought. Shoulder tapping had nothing to do with that attitude.

In my catholic school we all wore uniforms. They were a pair of jeans and a blue polo shirt with the school's logo embroidered on the left side. You could either buy the shirt with the logo in the school and live for a year trying to find comfort in the itchiest cotton the world has seen, or you could buy the logo and patch it yourself. Of course, the school wants you to buy the shirt, not the logo. So logos run out. Many kids would start the year with plain shirts waiting for a logo, trying to make some time as the new logos arrive. Ron was one of them.

The first thing our teacher did that morning as she came into the room was ask if we all had our outfits on point. She darted a quick glance across the class. Córdova decided to lean a little bit to the left and uncovered Ron as if a mountain rolled over from one valley to the next.

"Ron, your shirt!" said the teacher.

Ron scratched his head. "Oh, yeah. About my shirt."

"There's nothing to talk about. Come here. Go have a word with the Principal. He'll call your mother."

Ron obliged not before making an angry fist and biting his lip.

It was a smart move from Cordova. He didn't take credit for the stunt and I was sure as hell Ron was still giving him the benefit of the doubt, as if Cordova didn't lean on purpose. This wasn't going to be his first public and premeditated attack. That would have to wait for the next day.

I'm sure Ron didn't collect a single fond memory from that Tuesday when he got home after they sent him back for not having the appropriate uniform. But that's how school works, it's a series of sad memories that amount to enough rage that pushes you to become someone who wants to get out of that mosh pit we call youth.

On wednesday, things really escalated. Ron asked for permission to go to the bathroom as politely as usual and a quick nod gave way to a quick run to the toilet. On his way back he found a nice little drawing in his notebook: a dick. A glorious veiny dick, drawn with a blue ballpoint pen on top of his notes from the day. I'm not going to say it was a work of art, but it was as good of a dick as you could draw in the 3 minutes it took Ron to take a piss.

He glanced at Cordova. Cordova was completely ignoring him. Ron bit his lip and silently asked me for confirmation on who had taken those artistic liberties with his notebook. *Who else?* So Ron did what every sane person would never do in school: rat him out.

"Miss, Cordova drew a dick in my notes."

"Pardon?" said our teacher.

"A dick."

"Yes, Ron I understood that part. What do you mean?"

Cordova lifted his notebook and flashed his blue inked dick to the teacher.

"He drew one first."

Another dick, but on Cordova's notes. Two dicks at the same time. He disguised his vandalism as an act of revenge. While Ron went to the toilet, Cordova drew two dicks; one on each notebook. Each dicks anatomically different and with unique strokes, no pun intended. Anyone would think these two dicks were drawn by different cultures. Ron's dick was one of a higher class, groomed and well fed. Cordova's was raunchier, better hung but at the mercy of the elements. A dick of the wild.

But enough about dicks. They were thoroughly scolded and grounded with extra homework. Ron was on fire, and the rest of the class couldn't stop laughing. As the bell rang one last time for the day I noticed Ron's face swelling red in anger, his lips staggering practicing the words he was about to say. As the rest of the kids walked out of the classroom Ron snapped.

"Hey, you," he said to Cordova.

"What?" he stood in front of Ron two heads above him.

*Shit.*

"Look, here's the thing. I had enough."

"No shit," Cordova raised an eyebrow.

"I know your kind. You bully your way around every new place you go to. You push around the little people and suddenly everyone thinks you're the big deal. And you're not." And he pointed an accusing finger to him, full contact.

This was insane. I was flipping out. What I was seeing is someone for the first time in the history of the Universe genuinely standing up against a bully. The situation had been completely defused and Cordova was out in the open for what he was.

Then Ron ruined everything.

"So we either become best friends or we're gonna have to fight each other."  
*Motherfucker.*

When bullies are given options, they tend to take the violent one. Especially when the other option is becoming *best friends* with someone. I think that the problem wasn't so much on the *fighting each other part or else*, but definitely on the commitment required to become best friends with someone in high school. Obviously, Cordova made up his mind rather quickly.

"See you in the yard in 15 minutes," he said with a thumbs up.

"Son of a bitch, we're gonna have a fistfight!" I yelled to everyone in the classroom. For a moment I thought I was taking the coming events with too much enthusiasm. But soon enough everyone reacted with the euphoria of a coliseum. This is what Rome was built for. Our gladiators walked out to the courtyard surrounded by the cheers of bloodthirsty teenagers and the scorn of girls we didn't want to kiss... yet.

I probably explained 20 times to everyone how everything led up to that moment during the 3 minute walk. Then everyone explained it to someone else and suddenly the story became a legend: "*He drew a dick in his shirt*", "*he tapped him with his dick on the shoulder*" or "*he tried to rip off his dick*".

Quite the crowd gathered to watch the fight. Both kids warmed up their punches, stretched their muscles and circled each other within the schoolyard thunderdome that we formed. Ron took off his glasses, watch, necklace and handed them to me. I nodded in respect.

This was it. David versus Goliath. Two kids go in, one kid comes out. Good versus evil. You just don't draw dicks in a man's notebook and get away with it. All that bullshit, but the real thing was Ron was trying to send a message. He was trying to prove there was something genuinely good in standing your ground. He was not only fighting for himself but for everyone Cordova was ever going to push around. You can punch the air out of someone but you can't punch out respect. Plus, Cordova was about to find out what a brown belt of karate can do to your ass.

Ron winked to the crowd and faced his enemy. Cordova let a small smirk escape while cracking his knuckles.

"Are you ready?" he asked. He had no fucking idea what was coming. Neither did I.

"I'm not going to fight you, because I'm better than this." Ron took a step back, hands behind his back.

This was the kind of plot twist one would expect from a Marvel movie or some Lord of the Rings character development mid-point. Ron had been watching too many of those. Don't get me wrong, it's good to be the good guy in the movie, but Ron was about to find out it wasn't good to go full-Aragorn in the courtyard.

"You're better than this? Well, I'm not," said Cordova. And it's not suckerpunching if you're a sucker. Lights out for Ron. Cordova landed one hit after the other. Ron's face was taking a meteor shower. And the crowd went wild.

Our physics teacher was heading home when he spotted all the commotion and jumped out of his moving car to stop the fight. He pushed them away from each other and helped a stumbling Ron recover his feet just before going full saian. Everyone else was either booing or laughing.

Ron roared in anger, his face swollen, this time from the fight; one eye black and closed. "Lapdogs, all of you!" His fist in the air. Someone had been playing too much Warcraft.

And just like that the fight was over. No karate lessons, no moral to the story and our unsung hero was left limping his way to the principal's office alongside the Chimera he was meant to slain. *How good is too good?* Obviously you're never going to be good enough to skip an ass whooping if you ask for it.

I decided to see how everything was going to end. So I passed by the principal's office, they had them doing the same stupid ritual of standing in front of each other until they shook hands. Which every kid in the world knows doesn't mean anything because you fought each other and you'll shake hands just for the sake of resuming your lives. But not Ron, tho.

"Come on, man. How long are you going to keep this up?" asked Cordova, hand extended.

"As long as I have to." Ron was buying none of it.

"What are you talking about? Are we going to be here all afternoon?"

"So be it."

"Dude, just shake my hand so we can go home."

"I don't shake hands with my enemies." He smacked Cordova's hand away.

"What did you want me to do? You were pretty much asking for it."

"I gave you options," answered Ron in contempt.

"Ok, look. I'm sorry. I just want to go home. We don't have to be enemies. You got it.

Let's be friends."

"I'll think about it."

"We have to shake hands if we want to go home."

"I know, and I'll shake your hand when I want to be your friend again. Right now I'm a little pissed. You'll have to wait."

"Whatever."

I don't know how long it took for Ron to change his mind. All I know is that the next day they were friends. Cordova was no longer picking on Ron and the rest of the class figured out that Ron had earned his respect.

The story running around was that Ron decided not to use his karate skills on Cordova out of mercy, and that when Cordova realized Ron wasn't going to defend himself he stopped. At least that's what I told everyone. Because we didn't need a hero, nor a villain. We had enough of those.