

SCREAMING
QUIETLY

evan jacobs



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Gravel Road

Bi-Normal

Edge of Ready

Expecting (*rural*)

Falling Out of Place

FatherSonFather

Finding Apeman (*rural*)

A Heart Like Ringo Starr (*verse*)

I'm Just Me

Keys to Freedom

Otherwise (*verse*)

Roadside Attraction (*rural*)

Rodeo Princess (*rural*)

Screaming Quietly

Self. Destructed.

Skinhead Birdy

Sticks and Stones (*rural*)

Teeny Little Grief Machines
(*verse*)

That Selfie Girl (*verse*)

The Space Between

2 Days

Unchained

Varsity 170



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Practice

Ian didn't think it was possible to sweat more that afternoon. Football practice had worn him out. He was just happy it was Friday. The end of hell week. Then school started the following Thursday.

This would be Ian's first year playing as a wide receiver for Davis High School. He had been at the school since last fall but arrived too late to play.

At his old school when he was a freshman, Ian had a reputation as one of the best frosh-soph football players. Of course Coach Banks and Coach Geary, the varsity and junior varsity coaches, didn't let Ian know they knew this. They just threw him in with the JV team. Ian could see they were impressed. Especially when he met all of their challenges. Whether it was testing his speed, endurance, or ability to pick the right moves to make, Ian never seemed phased. He never seemed rattled.

For Ian Taylor the grueling activity of the football field was a welcome change from the chaos of his life.

Practice was winding down.

As much as Ian had sweat, as much as he had run, as much energy as he'd used up, he still felt pretty good. All the other players had their mouths open. They looked exhausted. Something about this always inspired Ian. It made him try harder. He was still sweating a lot, but none of that seemed to matter. He was in a zone. Everybody was waiting for practice to be over. Ian was waiting for the next play. He didn't care that this was just his team playing against itself in a scrimmage.

"You play how you practice," Ian told himself.

Everybody wearily took their spots in the formation. Ian was already at his. He stood at the ready, his muscles tensing, ready to take off across the field.

"Hike," the quarterback called. The ball was in play.

Ian moved across the field as if practice had just started. He could almost feel Coach Geary, the JV cheerleaders, and some of the people in the bleachers watching him. He moved to the area of the field where the least amount of players were. Ian quickly whipped around. The pass traveled through the air. It was as if the quarterback had been waiting for Ian to catch it.

Ian had always been a good judge of where the ball was going to land. He saw the other players on the team moving

toward him. Ian began moving again. The ball glided into his hands. It was so effortlessly done that Ian didn't really even feel it land. Before he knew it, he had run under the goal post, leaving the other players who sought to tackle him behind by many yards.

It may as well have been miles.

“Good scrimmage, Taylor. Great field instincts. Great hustle,” Coach Geary said as Ian walked with some of his teammates toward the showers. Everyone seemed to be hobbling along. Ian had a lot of spring in his step.

When he got to his locker, he checked his cell phone.

His mom had called. He'd call her later.

Jessica Barnes had texted him. “What r u doing tonight?” she asked.

He'd have to think about that and text her back. As was usually the case with Ian Taylor, he had to think before making his next move.

Even the small ones.

Evasion Tactics

Come on, Ian ..." Shawn went on. "You never hang out."

"I do to," Ian said. Ian, Shawn, and Ryan were walking across the school's practice field. "I just can't today."

"We barely saw you at all this summer," Ryan offered.

Ian was used to hearing this. He never hung out. He never went to parties. He rarely did anything with his friends.

Then Ian remembered that he still needed to call his mom and return Jessica's text.

"I'm doing something with Jessica," he said. The guys couldn't give him any grief about that. Jessica was a girl. What high school boy wouldn't ditch his friends to hang out with a girl? Especially Jessica Barnes. She had flowing blonde hair and a perfect complexion. Jessica had eyes that seemed to scoop you up, willingly or otherwise, whenever you looked into them.

“Oh, that’s right,” Shawn said, his tone softening. “You guys have been hanging out.”

“Yeah,” Ian said. They hadn’t been hanging out that much, but he wasn’t going to tell Shawn or Ryan that. “Maybe we can go to the movies tomorrow?”

Shawn shrugged.

“With Jessica?” Ryan asked. He was unable to hide his excitement.

“No,” Ian said. “Just us.”

“Ahhh ... I was hoping she could bring some friends.”

Ian walked with them for a little while longer, then cut out.

The master of evasion had struck again.

Ian was going to text Jessica. But first he had to call his mom. She probably wanted to make sure he was going to be home to take care of his brother, Davey. The brother that nobody knew he had. At this school anyway.

It hadn’t been that bad when Davey was younger. All of Ian’s friends seemed to accept that his brother was “different.” And they mostly ignored him. But as Davey got older, he became harder for everybody to ignore. That’s when Ian started keeping secrets.

Davey’s autism was all that Ian’s mom talked about back then. Ian had heard his mom talk about it so many times that he couldn’t even pinpoint when he knew his brother had autism.

By the time Davey was in kindergarten, he was known for being a tough kid. He wasn't tough in a talk back, disrespectful kind of way. He just got frustrated by the simplest things. When this happened, it didn't matter where he was, it didn't matter who was around him. Davey would go off.

He'd bite others or himself, kick, scream, cry, pull hair, and scratch. A lot of the time Ian, his mom, and his dad (before his parents got divorced) would have no idea what the problem was or how to calm him down.

This was stuff Ian had heard about or witnessed. He could only imagine the stuff Davey had done that his parents hadn't told him about. When his dad lived at home, his parents would argue about Davey and what he had done on a particular day. It seemed like they were constantly arguing.

Back then Ian always knew when Davey had a problem in school because one of his parents' cars would be in the driveway when he got home. A lot of times, if he was having a tantrum about something, Ian would hear Davey screaming as he approached the house. A few times Ian had friends with him. As soon as he'd hear those all-too-familiar shrieks, Ian knew he had to act quickly. He'd tell a potential guest he had chores to do. He'd forgotten about them. He couldn't hang out any longer. Or he'd say they

had to go somewhere else because he just remembered his parents didn't want anybody over that day.

Anything.

Anything he could think of to get out of that situation and keep Davey a secret. The neighbors knew about him. A lot of people knew at the first house they lived in. But after the divorce, Ian, his mom, and Davey moved. The only people who knew about him now—about his brother with autism—were family and the neighbors. After the move, Ian stopped having friends come over.

Davey needed to be in a special class: an autism-specific class with people like him. Ian's schools had never had a class like that. Ian was safe. Safe in his world. As long as he didn't let anybody in, how would anybody find out that there was a kid like Davey in the Taylor house?

Ian called his mom. She worked as a sales rep at a medical supply company. He usually got her voicemail when he called. When her familiar message came on, Ian hung up the phone. If she wanted him for anything, it was probably for Davey. And Ian was on his way home anyway.

CHAPTER 3

Davey

Ian walked into the house to the sounds of Davey bouncing on a big plastic sensory ball in the living room. The whole house, except for Ian's bedroom, seemed to be set up for Davey. There were three bedrooms, but the living room was the center of all activity. Due to autism, Davey was constantly “seeking sensory input” as Ian's mom said.

The living room was littered with squeeze toys that Davey loved to use. Ian noticed how hard Davey grabbed them. It looked like he was going to crush them into oblivion. There was also a small trampoline, which Davey liked to jump on. Ian went on it a little bit when he was younger, but when he realized it was for Davey—and why it was for him—Ian wanted nothing to do with it. The last thing he wanted was for anybody to think that he was “like” his brother.

The living room also had weighted blankets Davey loved to lie under. They weren't big. They reminded Ian

of the kind of vest you wore when you were having an x-ray at the dentist. There was something about the pressure of them that calmed Davey down. On the table in the living room was a slant board. It looked like a large, three-ring binder, only it was sturdier. Paper could be clipped at the top of the slope so Davey could write on it. The board helped because it meant he didn't have to put so much pressure on the paper to write. Davey may have been able to squeeze hard, but he had trouble holding small objects.

There were also a lot of DVDs. Davey really loved movies. Many of them were for much younger kids, but Davey didn't care. He would just as soon watch *Thomas & Friends* and *Finding Nemo* as he would *The Suite Life of Zach & Cody*. Davey played a lot with dolls and stuffed animals. He didn't care that he was fourteen years old and was supposed to be into cooler stuff.

Ian heard Greg Bowers, Davey's aide at school and at home, working with him in the living room. They did this thing called ABA. It stood for Applied Behavior Analysis. Ian didn't understand it. To him it was just Greg asking Davey a lot of the same questions, then Greg would write down Davey's responses or actions in a binder. One thing it did do was help Davey communicate. When he was younger, he didn't talk. So he got mad. A lot. Once he started doing ABA, he didn't get mad as much because he

could finally say what he wanted or describe how he was feeling.

Ian liked Greg. He was a big guy. Strong. He could handle Davey with one hand. He was cool too. He wore cool clothes, and he had cool short hair and a goatee. Davey listened to him. Greg saw to it that Davey stayed in line at school. Davey still might throw a tantrum with Greg. But Greg was always calm, and there was never any fear that Davey would overpower him.

When Greg wasn't there—when it was just Ian and his mom—that's when Ian had to be the man of the house. He could usually handle things, but if Davey was really upset—if he was screaming, crying, and trying to destroy everything in his path—both of them had to work together to calm Davey down. Ian hated seeing his mother attacked. He loved his brother, but sometimes he wished Davey wasn't around.

“How was practice?” Greg asked, giving Ian a high five. Greg had played football in high school. He was twenty-eight now.

“It was good. Hot,” Ian said.

“Hell week.” Greg nodded.

“It sucked,” Ian said.

“You start school next week?”

“Yeah, Thursday.”

“Enjoy it, Ian. You're playing for a good school.”

Davey came over and wrapped his arms around Greg. This was his way of showing Greg that he was happy to have him over that day. To anybody else this would have looked weird. Davey was fourteen, but he was actually bigger than Ian. Since he didn't exercise, he was out of shape. Even though Greg was much bigger than Davey, Davey still had the element of surprise going for him.

"What do you want, Davey?" Greg asked playfully. He started giving him squeezes all over his arms. He tickled his belly. Davey's eyes were wide, and his mouth hung open in a smile.

"Ian," Davey said as he turned and put his arms around him now. Ian gave Davey a hug.

"Hey, Davey," Ian said.

Greg's cell phone rang. He looked at it.

"I gotta get this. Be right back." Greg walked out of the room.

Ian squeezed and tickled Davey for a while. Davey loved it and laughed. Then his demeanor changed slightly.

"Video. Movie," Davey said.

He used his size and pushed Ian to the ground. Davey took the TV remote and turned on a SpongeBob SquarePants DVD.

The minute it started, Davey squeezed his hands into fists and gritted his teeth.

"Breathe, Davey," Ian reminded him. Their mom had

pointed out that when Davey got excited like this, he sometimes held his breath. “Or we’ll have to turn the video off.”

“No video off,” Davey said. He looked at Ian very seriously. He wasn’t angry. Not yet. Davey was scared he was going to lose his video.

“Then breathe,” Ian said.

Davey watched the video. Then he started to laugh. He hit the floor with his hands. He squeezed Ian. Davey kicked out his legs. He slapped them with his hands and pulled on his shorts. All of this showed how much he was enjoying watching the DVD. Everything he liked, he seemed to like more than everybody else. He would stare at the TV, as if in a trance, and lose himself in whatever he was watching. Ian had never seen anybody enjoy cartoons or movies the way Davey enjoyed them.

Even if he had seen it a million times, Davey’s reactions never changed. Davey never changed.