

SCREAMING
QUIETLY

evan jacobs



CHAPTER 1

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.