

Out of Reach

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Chapter One

It wasn't hard to love Caydence Walters. Everyone did. She was one of those people whose smile was contagious and personality was infectious. She was just a genuinely sweet, funny, good person, and people like that are hard to find. That was exactly why the whole Hanson family loved her so much and considered her part of the family. The long lost oldest daughter.

"Mommy, I want Caydence to take me shopping," 7 year old Zoe Hanson said to her mother when she summoned her to put her shoes on. Up until that point, Caydence had been sitting in the living room with Zac and Zoe playing Barbies with her.

"Zoe, I think Caydence and Zac have plans. Just go shopping with me today honey," Diana Hanson said poking her head into the living room.

"But..." Zoe started.

"I'll take you shopping next time, I promise," Caydence piped in.

"Okay then!" Zoe said in a more cheerful mood and skipped off to get her shoes on. Zac watched his little sister leave and laughed.

"What?" Caydence asked.

"She idolizes you... you're the big sister she never had," Zac said.

"What are you talking about? She has Jessie and Avery," Caydence said picking herself up off the floor.

"They don't play with her much. It's usually me."

"Aww, Zacy playing Barbies, how cute!" she teased.

"Shut up," he said standing up, "You ready to go?"

“Yup.” The two of them headed for the front door and it opened as they entered into the entry way. Isaac and Taylor strolled in.

“Hey babe,” Taylor said walking over to Caydence and leaning down to give her a quick kiss.

“Hey, you guys are done early,” she said hugging her boyfriend.

“Yeah, surprisingly... I thought you two were going to a movie,” Taylor said shrugging off his jacket and hanging it on the stair banister.

“We were just on our way out,” Zac explained holding up his keys in his hand.

“Oh, well have fun,” Taylor said.

“Thanks, I’ll see you in a bit,” Caydence kissed Taylor again.

“Love you,” he said smiling down at her.

“Love you too.” Zac ushered Caydence out of the house.

About 2 years earlier Taylor and Caydence started dating much to Zac’s dismay. Up to that point, he and Caydence had been practically inseparable. They were never officially a couple, but any passerby might think differently. Seeing the two holding hands or being close was not an uncommon occurrence, but somehow along the way it was Taylor who moved into the boyfriend spot and Zac was left in the friend zone. Caydence and Zac however, stayed as close as ever and it seemed to all work out. Their families would often tease them because it seemed that Zac and Caydence spent more time together than her and Taylor did.

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After a family dinner at the Hanson house later that night, Isaac, Taylor, and Zac headed home to the house they owned together, accompanied by Caydence of course. She never officially moved in, but she practically lived at that house. Her boyfriend and her best friend lived there so naturally she was there as much as possible. She had two sets of everything (toothbrush, blow-dryer, shampoo, makeup, clothes, etc.) one for her parents house where she still technically lived and one for the guys’ house.

Taylor and Caydence laid on his bed watching a movie in peace. A lot of the time, they felt like they didn't get to spend that much time together alone and truly enjoyed the moments of just being together, cuddling in silence. Caydence laid with her head on Taylor's chest and Taylor lightly ran his fingers up and down her arm.

"I was thinking," Taylor broke the silence, "that I might get a place of my own." Caydence propped herself up to look at him.

"Why? You don't like living with your brothers?" she asked.

"No, I do... I just figure maybe it's time to be on my own. I'll be over here all the time... our studio is here, but maybe it would be nice to have my own place to go home to at night," he explained.

"Well, it's up to you. I'll support whatever you decide to do," she smiled.

"I was also thinking that maybe... you'd like to officially move in with me when I do that," he suggested.

"Cay! I need you!" Zac called walking into Taylor's room without knocking.

"Dude, don't you know how to knock? What if we were doing something private in here," Taylor said a little angry at his younger brother.

"Well...you're not, so it's okay. Caydence I need you," Zac said.

"Okay," she said then turned to Taylor, "We'll talk about this later, okay? I would love to do it though, just so you know." Taylor smiled and Caydence hopped off the bed and followed Zac.

It was hard for Taylor to be dating his brother's best friend because he knew how important their friendship was and didn't want to interfere with it, but at the same time he felt that after 2 years of being together that he should have more priority in Caydence's life. It's not like she always ran off with Zac, her and Taylor did spend a lot of time together, but there were just certain situations where the timing was just bad. That was part of his drive to get his own place with Caydence, that way when they laid down at night it would be uninterrupted quality time for the two of them.

Chapter Two

The next afternoon, Taylor ended up falling asleep on his bed and taking quite a long nap. As he woke up and looked at the clock, he realized that he had been asleep for quite a few hours.

Taylor groaned to himself and climbed out of bed. He wished Caydence would have woken him up sooner. After sleeping for so long, he felt like the day was wasted. He walked down the stairs and immediately heard Caydence laughing and screaming playfully.

As he emerged from the top of the stairs and entered the living room, he found Zac with Caydence tossed over his shoulder and spinning her around playfully.

“Zac, put me down!” Caydence screeched as she playfully hit his back.

As soon as they both spotted Taylor, Zac put Caydence down instantly.

“Looks like you two are having fun,” Taylor said sarcastically as he sat down on the couch. He was tired of his own brother and girlfriend constantly flirting and then trying to pass it off as nothing.

“We were just bored and playing around, Tay...” Caydence replied.

“Well, if you were bored you could have woken me up,” Taylor replied not even looking her in the eyes.

Caydence looked up at Zac worriedly.

“Don’t worry, Cady. He’s just being grumpy. He should have stayed in bed longer,” Zac joked.

Taylor glared at him angrily, “I don’t remember asking for your opinion. And stop calling her Cady. That isn’t her name and it’s getting really annoying!” he responded.

Zac rolled his eyes, “I’ve always called her Cady, you know that,” he said.

Taylor just ignored him and stood up, “Whatever. I’m starving. I’m going out to get something to eat,” he replied.

“Mind if I come with you?” Caydence asked.

Taylor nodded, “Yeah, sure...” he mumbled. He was actually surprised she had elected to go with him and not insist on Zac coming along.

“Bye, Zac...” Caydence said as she followed Taylor to the front door.

“See you guys later. Bring me back something good!” he replied as he gave Caydence one of his famous smiles.

Zac was very aware of the fact that his relationship with Caydence was starting to bother Taylor. He was starting to feel a bit guilty, but at the same time, he was the one who met Caydence first. They had become best friends before she and Taylor started dating.

Zac had never mentioned it to Taylor or Caydence, but he knew he had feelings for her that went beyond their friendship. Of course, he loved them both, so he would never say anything to either of them about this.

Isaac was very good at picking up on people’s emotions. He would often ask Zac if he had feelings for Caydence or if her relationship with Taylor bothered him at all, but Zac would just laugh it off and pretend not to care.

Zac sighed as he heard Taylor’s truck starting from outside, and turned on the television. He was just going to have to get used to the fact that Caydence was only his friend. It would never be anything more than that. She belonged to his older brother.

Once they were in the truck, Caydence turned to Taylor and gave him a glare, “Why were you being so rude to Zac back there?” she asked.

“Please, Caydence. Don’t act like you’re dumb, because you aren’t. Zac was blatantly flirting with you like he always does. You can’t tell me that you don’t realize this!” Taylor replied. He was so tired of Caydence taking Zac’s side all of the time.

“Tay... You know damn well that Zac is my best friend. He’s like a brother to me. You’re the one that I love, not him. You don’t have to worry about me ever being that way with Zac!” Caydence exclaimed exasperatedly.

Taylor sighed, “It’s not you I’m worried about... It’s him. I can tell he’s in love with you, Cay. Everyone can see that,” he replied.

Caydence shook her head deniably, “That isn’t true, Taylor. Zac feels the same way toward me as I feel toward him which is nothing other than friends.”

“If that’s what you think, then by all means keep telling yourself that,” Taylor replied stubbornly.

“You know what, Taylor? I was really into the idea of moving in with you, but now I’m not so sure. Not if I am going to have to listen to this bullshit all of the time. You never use to act this jealous, and it’s very unattractive.”

Taylor thought for a second and realized that maybe he was being a bit overprotective.

“Listen, Cay... I’m sorry. I know you love me and I love you too. I guess it just bothers me that you and Zac spend so much time together. I know you’re best friends though, so I need to respect it,” he replied sincerely.

Caydence nodded, “Zac is always going to be one of my best friends Taylor. You can’t let it affect our relationship,” she responded.

“I’m sorry, sweetie. I promise I’ll make my best effort in trying to be more reasonable about it,” he said as he squeezed her hand with his own and kept the other hand on the steering wheel.

“Good. Now, are you really thinking of getting your own place?” she asked curiously.

“Yeah, and I really would love it if you moved in with me,” he replied.

She nodded, “I think it sounds great. I’m definitely up for it.”

Taylor stopped at a redlight and leaned over and gave her a kiss, “I love you,” he said.

“I love you too, Tay...” she replied feeling quite thrilled. The thought of moving in with Taylor had come rather unexpectedly, but she couldn’t help but to feel very excited about the growth in their relationship.

Chapter Three

“Tay and I are going to move in together,” Caydence told Zac later that evening. She and Taylor were supposed to be watching a movie up in his room and she went down to get something to drink. Zac was in the kitchen, so naturally she got distracted.

“Really? Since when?” he asked shocked. He knew that Taylor and Caydence had been together for a long time, but he didn’t really think it would turn into them living together. Living together in Zac’s mind lead to engagement, and engagement lead to marriage and he really didn’t want them to get married.

“He just brought it up last night. We think its about time we take our relationship to the next stage,” she said pouring herself some Mt. Dew.

“But if you move out then you won’t be around all the time. What about me? I’ll be lonely!” Zac pouted. She laughed.

“Aww, Zachary... I’ll still come visit you,” she said putting the soda back in the fridge and walking over to where Zac was sitting on the counter.

“You better. I’m more important anyway,” he said with one of his killer smiles.

Taylor appeared in the kitchen doorway, “Cay? What’s taking you so long?” he asked walking over to where Caydence was and putting an arm around her waist protectively.

“Sorry Tay. I got distracted,” she explained smiling over at Zac.

Taylor eyed his brother, “Obviously.”

“She was telling me that you guys are moving in together,” Zac said trying to save the situation from him getting blamed for jeopardizing Caydence’s time yet again.

“And you were trying to talk her out of it, weren’t you?” Taylor asked.

“No, not at all. I was just saying that I would be lonely without her around all the time.”

“Whatever,” Taylor said, “You ready to go back upstairs Cay?”

“Yup,” she said, “Night Zacy. I love you!” she smiled as they turned to walk out.

“Night Cady... love you too,” he said as she disappeared around the corner in his brother’s arms. Zac sighed and hopped off the counter, this was not good news.

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The following day while Caydence was out shopping with some friends, Taylor decided to clear the air with Zac. He invited him out to lunch so they could talk.

“So what’s on your mind?” Zac asked after they sat down in the café, and placed their orders.

“Why do you ask that?” Taylor asked innocently taking a sip of his water.

“Um... when was the last time you invited me out to lunch?” Zac laughed.

“Fine... I wanted to talk to you about Caydence.”

Zac sighed, “What did I do now?”

“Nothing... guilty conscience?” Taylor laughed.

“No, but you’ve been mad at me lately for spending time with her.” Taylor truly felt bad for making his brother feel guilty for hanging out with his best friend.

“It’s not that I mind that you spend time with her... it’s more the amount of time. I feel like you always interrupt the little private time we do have together and that’s important for us,” Taylor explained.

“I’m sorry... I don’t mean too,” Zac said playing with the straw in his cup.

“I’m scared...” Taylor took a deep breath, he didn’t know if he should bring this up, “I’m scared that you have feelings for her Zac and if you do... I really need to know about it.” Zac scoffed like he always did when confronted about his feelings for Caydence.

“Zac, I’m being completely serious with you. Don’t just laugh it off like you always do. Before I make this next move with Cay... I need to know where you stand. As your brother, please tell me honestly,” Taylor said looking his brother straight in the eyes. Zac knew he wouldn’t be able to get away with his usual lame answers.

“I love Caydence very much, she is the most wonderful girl in the whole world. You know that. She’s my best friend and I can’t imagine not having her in my life. She’s your girlfriend though and I would never go there. You’re my brother, that’s just something you don’t do. I love having her around all the time, but I understand you’re guys’ decision to move out and I support it,” Zac said. It was the truth. Just not ALL the truth. He left the ‘I’m IN love with Caydence’ part out.

Taylor tried to read Zac’s face, but it was totally serious, “Are you sure?”

“I’m positive. I couldn’t be happier for you guys. I’ll just miss having her around.”

With Zac’s feelings sorted out, Taylor decided that there was nothing stopping him and Caydence now. He wasn’t 100% positive that Zac was totally telling him the truth, but he knew that Zac was sincere in saying that he supported their decision to move out. So whether or not Zac had feelings for Caydence, he was being the bigger man and respecting his brother’s space.

Chapter Four

After lunch with Taylor, Zac began to think long and hard about his conversation with his older brother. As much as he had wanted to tell Taylor that he was in love with Caydence, he simply couldn’t do it. He wanted to tell both Caydence and Taylor that the day he found they were dating had broken his heart, but that was something he’d never let them know.

He decided that since Caydence and Taylor were happy and their relationship was becoming more serious, that it would be selfish of him to bring this news upon them. It was better off if neither of them ever found out that he had feelings for Caydence.

It was becoming more and more realistic to Zac that Caydence and Taylor would be moving out

together. This meant he would see each of them a lot less than he currently did, and his friendship with Caydence would most likely not be as strong as what it was at the moment.

With all of this in mind, Zac decided it was time for him to make some changes of his own.

He pulled out his cell phone and dialed a number that had been showing up on his missed calls list for weeks.

The phone began to ring on the other line, and when she answered, Zac immediately recognized her voice.

“Hey,” Zac replied after she answered.

“Zac?” she responded sounding somewhat surprised.

“Yeah, it’s me... Um, I was wondering... What are you doing tonight?” he asked.

“I don’t have any plans yet. Why do you ask?” she said curiously.

“I was wondering if you wanted to go out tonight, maybe get a bite to eat and catch a movie?” he asked feeling a bit nervous. It had been quite awhile since he had asked a girl out on a date.

“Really? I’d love too!” she responded excitedly.

“Great. I’ll pick you up around seven o’clock. Is that okay?” he asked.

“Sounds awesome! See you then,” she replied.

“Okay, see you later.” Zac said as he hung up the phone.

He knew it was time for him to get over the fact that Caydence wasn’t his and would never be his. He figured the best way to get over her would be to start seeing other girls and get back into the dating scene.

That night, Taylor and Caydence were spending the evening watching movies.

“So where is everyone?” Caydence asked. It was unusual for her and Taylor to get a moment alone in that house.

“I’m not really sure where Isaac went. Zac actually is out on a date though,” Taylor responded. He couldn’t help but to be curious to see what Caydence’s reaction would be to the idea of Zac being out on a date.

Caydence sat up and looked at Taylor, “Zac is out on a date?” she asked sounding somewhat surprised.

Taylor nodded, “Yeah, shocking isn’t it?” he replied.

“Yeah, definitely,” Caydence replied. She couldn’t even remember the last time that Zac had gone out on a date.

“I’m glad he did though. It’s nice to have a night without him interrupting us,” Taylor stated.

Ignoring Taylor’s comment about the fact that they were alone, Caydence continued to question Zac’s date.

“Who did he take out?” she asked.

Taylor shrugged. He was starting to become annoyed that Caydence was so concerned about who Zac was with.

“Her name is Ella, I think. Zac met her a few months ago at a party and she’s been calling him ever since. He usually just ignores her calls, so I’m not sure what changed his mind,” Taylor explained.

Caydence nodded, “Hmm, that’s weird.”

For the rest of the night, Caydence couldn’t concentrate on the movie that she and Taylor were watching. She didn’t know why, but she couldn’t get the idea of Zac being on a date with another girl out of her mind.

Zac was her best friend, and she was normally the only girl that he spent his time with. She was beginning to realize how Zac felt when she started dating Taylor. He had to learn to share her with his brother. Caydence was beginning to realize that if Zac started dating, he would probably be spending a lot less time with her.

At about eleven o'clock, Taylor and Caydence had almost finished the first movie. Suddenly, the front door swung open and Zac strolled in.

"Hey," Taylor greeted, "How was your date?" he asked.

Zac smiled, "Actually it wasn't too bad," he admitted.

"You didn't mention to me that you were going on a date. I thought as your best friend I was supposed to know these kind of things," Caydence joked.

Zac laughed, "I would have told you, but it was sort of a last minute thing," he explained.

Taylor nodded, "Well, I'm glad you had a good time," he replied honestly. Maybe if Zac found a girlfriend, he would stop trying to flirt with Caydence all the time.

"Thanks, Tay. Anyway, I was going to see if maybe you guys wanted to go on a double date sometime?" he asked.

Taylor looked at Caydence for a reaction.

"That sounds like fun," she replied. The truth was, she dreaded going on a double date with Zac and another girl. This situation was bothering her more than she thought it would, and she was starting to become very confused as to why she felt this way.

Chapter Five

"Zachary Hanson," Caydence said the next morning walking into Zac's room without knocking. Zac had apparently just recently woken up because he was still clad only in his pajama pants and his hair was all crazy.

“Caydence Walters,” he repeated her tone. Caydence shut the door behind her and walked over to his bed.

“What is up with this date last night? How come I didn’t know? I don’t like that. I should know these things,” Caydence said very intensely as she sat down on his bed. Zac laughed.

“Sorry,” he said, “When I made the plans you were out somewhere, I don’t know where and then I left before you got back.” Zac turned his chair to face her and leaned back in it.

“There is a thing called a phone!”

“Sorry,” he laughed.

“Now, I need details!”

Zac went into his night with Ella. He told her how they had gone to dinner and then to a movie, followed by ice cream. Caydence inquired about what Ella looked like and what her personality was like. She pretty much gave him the third degree.

She was happy that Zac had fun, but didn’t really like him saying that he thought that Ella was beautiful. For some reason that bugged her. It also bugged her that he was considering another date with her. She didn’t know what was wrong.

“Why the sudden urge to date?” she questioned.

“No sudden urge, just something I figured I should do eventually,” Zac shrugged.

“Well, you know as your best friend I have to meet her and approve of her before anything can happen.”

“That’s why I suggested a double date.”

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Taylor took Caydence house shopping that afternoon. He wanted to get a move on this moving out

thing. Taylor was the kind of person that once he put his mind to something he went for it 100%, which was probably why his and Caydence's relationship was going so well. He finally set his mind on it.

"Taylor, I LOVE this one!" Caydence said as they toured a two-story 3500 sq. foot, almost cabin-esque looking house. It wasn't too far from the Hanson house now and it was nestled on an acre lot covered in trees.

"I think it's one of my favorites too," Taylor said as they walked back downstairs after checking out the oversized bedrooms upstairs.

"It's so beautiful! Just look at all the hard wood floors!" Caydence was getting incredibly excited about this whole moving thing. Taylor smiled at how cute she was. Does she really honestly care that much about the floors?

"Is this the one you want?" he asked.

"Yes! This is my dream house!" she said dramatically.

"Then this is the one we'll get," he said simply. Anything to make her happy.

Her mouth hung open in disbelief, "Are you serious?"

"Of course."

"Oh my God!" she freaked and practically jumped into Taylor's arms. He laughed and hugged her tightly. In a few days this would all be theirs.

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The night for the double date that Zac wanted came too quickly for Caydence. She wasn't really ready to face seeing Zac with another girl, but she put a smile on her face and held onto Taylor's hand tightly as they walked up to the restaurant that they were meeting at.

Zac and Ella were already seated at a booth and the hostess escorted Taylor and Caydence over to them. The second Caydence saw Ella she disliked her. She seemed fake. Fake blonde hair, fake tan, and probably fake boobs. She was not impressed and didn't like the fact that Zac would like somebody that

looked like that.

“Hey!” Zac greeted with a smile standing up when Taylor and Caydence came to the table. He hugged Caydence while Taylor slid into the booth first.

“Hey Zacy,” Caydence said accepting the hug.

“Taylor, Caydence, this is Ella... Ella this is my brother Taylor and best friend Caydence,” Zac introduced.

“Hi! It’s so nice to meet you guys!” Ella said sweetly. Too sweetly. She smiled at them. Probably fake teeth too Caydence thought.

The night, despite Caydence’s immediate dislike of Ella, went rather smoothly. The conversation kept up and Caydence got to know Ella some. She was an only child, from a rather wealthy family there is Tulsa. She was 20 and was going to the University of Tulsa studying secondary education. She wanted to be a teacher. Caydence thought she might gag because of Ella’s goody-two-shoes attitude. She was like a cheerleader on Prozac.

“Ella is so fake... I can’t believe Zac likes her,” Caydence complained on the car ride home.

Taylor laughed, “She’s not fake. I thought she was nice.”

“She’s fake.. Fake hair, fake teeth, fake tan, fake god knows what else,” Caydence said bitterly.

“What’s your problem?” Taylor asked confused at Caydence’s reaction. She was normally a optimistic person.

“I don’t like her,” Caydence shrugged, “She’s not good for Zac.”

“Isn’t that his decision to make? Why isn’t she good for him?”

“Yes it is his decision, but I get a say too... and she’s not good for him because she’s just not. Why are you questioning me?”

“Because you’re acting weird. I thought she was great.”

“Whatever,” Caydence said crossing her arms over her chest. They rode the rest of the way in silence. She couldn’t get the thought of Ella and Zac out of her head. She truly despised Ella, but the problem was Taylor was right in a way. She didn’t really have any real reason to dislike her. She just did.

Chapter Six

Over the next few days, Taylor and Caydence spent most of their time packing and getting ready to move into their new house.

Caydence felt like she hadn’t spent much time with Zac lately, so she went downstairs to find him.

When she found him, he was in the kitchen getting ready to make some lunch.

“Hey,” Caydence said as she took a seat at the kitchen table.

“Hey Cady. How’s the packing going?” he asked as he pulled a can of pop from the refrigerator.

“I think we’re just about finished. So, what’s going on?” Caydence asked.

“Actually, I’ve been meaning to talk to you. I was wondering what you thought of Ella. Taylor told me he really liked her, but since you’re my best friend I wanted to get your approval,” Zac said as he gave her another one of those adorable smiles.

“Oh... yeah, I like her too,” Caydence lied as she looked down at the table.

“Cady, are you lying? I know you better than that!” Zac said as he took a seat across from her at the table.

Caydence sighed, “I don’t know, Zac. You’re my best friend so I guess I’m just being protective of you. Maybe I am just a little leery about her because I think you deserve the best. But if you like her then that is all that matters,” she replied. As much as she wanted to tell Zac that she disliked everything

about Ella, she decided that Taylor was right. It wasn't her decision to make.

"Thanks for looking out for me, Cay. I really do like her. She's definitely a fun person. I'll make sure I take things slow, though, I promise," he replied.

Caydence nodded but didn't say anything.

"Is anything else wrong?" Zac asked, "You're acting a little strange."

Caydence sighed, "I don't know. I guess I'm just a little bit... jealous," she admitted as she fiddled with the napkin holder and avoided eye contact.

"Cady, look at me. Why in the world would you be jealous of Ella?" he asked as she finally looked up into his brown eyes.

"I don't know. It's really selfish, I guess. I'm just used to seeing you all of the time, and I realized that when you start to date someone, we probably won't get to talk and hang out as often," she replied with a shrug.

"Cay, even if I start dating Ella or anyone else, you're always going to be my best friend. I'm not just going to stop talking to you because I am dating someone," he responded.

"I know that, Zac. I guess I was just being silly," she replied.

Taylor, who was on his way downstairs, heard Zac and Caydence talking. He stopped short of the last step and stood and listened. He knew he shouldn't be eavesdropping, but something inside of him couldn't help but to listen.

"You weren't being silly. I felt the same way when you and Taylor started dating. It sucked to see you with him all the time when it used to only be just the two of us. But after you guys started dating awhile, I realized that you and I were still best friends. The fact that you and Tay were together didn't change anything," Zac said softly.

Taylor was shocked by what Zac had just said. Never once when he and Caydence started dating did Zac mention to him that it bothered him.

Caydence nodded, "Thanks for the talk, Zac. I really do hope things work out with you and Ella," she replied.

Zac came over to the other side of the table, “Now come here!” he said as he extended his hand toward her.

Caydence grabbed his hand and he pulled her up into a giant hug as he lifted her off of the ground.

Taylor sighed and walked back upstairs. He figured if he walked in at that moment that Zac and Caydence would realize that he had been listening in on their conversation.

As Taylor went upstairs he plopped down on his bed and stared at the ceiling. He knew that Zac and Caydence had a close relationship, but the more he observed them, the more he felt like Zac had been lying to him at lunch that day. He decided it was time to get someone else’s opinion.

He sighed as he sat up and picked up the cell phone laying on the night stand.

He dialed a familiar number and waited for an answer.

“What’s up?” came the voice from the other line.

“Hey Ike. What are you doing right now?” Taylor asked.

“Not a lot. Why?” asked Isaac.

“I was going to see if you wanted to go out and grab lunch or something? I need to get your opinion on something,” Taylor replied.

“Yeah, sure. Want me to just swing by and pick you up in about fifteen minutes?” he asked.

Taylor nodded, “Yeah, that’s fine. See ya,” he said as he snapped his cell phone shut.

As Taylor was putting on his shoes, Caydence came back up into his room.

“Where you going, sweetie?” she asked as she sat down on the bed next to him.

"I'm going out with Isaac for a little while," he replied as he tried to play it off like nothing was bothering him.

"Oh, okay. Is anything wrong?" she asked. Usually when Taylor and Isaac went out, they would ask her and Zac to come along.

"Nah, I just haven't seen him in awhile. Plus I thought if I treated him to lunch that maybe he'll help us get everything moved into the house," Taylor joked.

Caydence smiled, "Okay. Well I guess I'll just hang out here with Zac until you get home." That didn't shock Taylor at all.

"Okay, well I think I just heard Isaac pull into the driveway, so I'll see you later," he said as he gave her a quick kiss.

"Bye," Caydence responded as she watched Taylor leave the room.

Chapter Seven

Isaac and Taylor went to a little hole-in-the-wall café that they loved just around the corner from their house.

"So what's on your mind little brother?" Isaac asked as he sat down. Taylor laughed. He was far from a "little" brother anymore.

"I need to talk to you about Zac and Caydence," Taylor said, "Particularly Zac."

Isaac nodded his head almost saying that he knew exactly what Taylor was going to ask, "What about him?"

"He has a thing for Caydence, doesn't he?" Taylor blurted.

Isaac shrugged, "Ya know, I'm not really 100% sure."

“I took him to lunch awhile back to kind of discuss it with him because I felt that with everything that is going on with her and I and moving out and stuff, I needed his honest opinion on the situation because they are close. I know that.”

“And what did he say?”

“He said that he just loves Cay as a best friend and he supports us, but then I just overheard him talking to her and telling her that he was jealous and stuff when her and I first started going out, forever ago, and that it’s bugged him and stuff. And I mean you see how he acts around her...”

“He can’t keep his hands off of her,” Isaac added.

“Exactly! So was he just bullshitting me? I can’t really go into this all if I know my brother is in love with my girlfriend.”

“That’s a tough one Tay. I’ve never understood their relationship personally. I’ve never known how two people of the opposite sex could be as emotionally and physically close as those two are and it never be anything. It’s totally incomprehensible to me. I think Caydence sees it as a friendship for sure, but I sometimes wonder about Zac myself. I mean he just started dating that new girl right? That’s like his first dating experience... like ever. He’s been totally content with just having Caydence around. Isn’t that weird?”

“I know, I completely agree. But then he goes to me and says that he’s fine with it all. So should I just take his word for it? Maybe he’s not fine, but knows how much I love her so he’s going to step back and just let us be happy?”

“Probably. He’s a good guy. He wouldn’t want to get in the way of his brother’s happiness, or his best friend’s. That’s just the kind of guy he is. We all know that yours and Caydence’s relationship is genuine and so maybe Zac just wants to see you two be as happy as you can.”

* * * * *

“Stop it!! You can’t do that!!” Caydence shrieked while trying to catch her breath from laughing so much.

“What? I’m not doing anything!” Zac said innocently laughing as well. The two of them were in an intense game of Dance Dance Revolution and Zac was losing. So he had decided that it would be smart to start randomly stepping on Caydence’s dance pad to make her mess up.

“Zac! If you do that again I’m going to kick you ass!” she threatened after his foot landed on one of her arrows again.

“What? This?” he said sticking his foot out once more. Caydence was going for the same arrow he was causing their feet to get tangled up together. Caydence lost her balance and fell over onto Zac who toppled to the floor. They landed in a tangled mess of limbs with tears in their eyes from laughing so hard.

Zac looked over at Caydence lying next to him. Her hair was a mess from the fall, her face was red from laughing so hard, and she had a little bit of sweat along her hairline from the dancing. She was beautiful. Her smile was so intense that it was impossible for him to not smile when he saw it. She looked over at him and noticed him looking back.

“What?” she asked he laughter subduing.

“Nothin’.” he smiled. He untangled himself from her and stood up offering his hands to help pull her up. She accepted and he yanked her up with a little too much force causing her to basically crash right into him.

Their faces were painfully close, but neither of them broke away. Instead they just looked into each other’s eyes. Their faces moved even closer together...

“Hey! We’re back!” Taylor’s voice came as the front door opened. Caydence and Zac just smiled at each other and backed away before Taylor could see them.

“Whoa, what happened to you two?” Ike asked as he and Taylor walked into the living room to see the disheveled Zac and Caydence.

“Zac is a cheater at DDR!” Caydence said dramatically, “That’s what happened. He tripped me!”

“I did not! It’s not my fault you have big feet!” he claimed and they both started laughing again. Ike and Taylor were lost. They just looked at each other and shrugged. They weren’t going to ask.

* * * * *

The following day was moving day for Taylor and Caydence. All of their friends and family got together to help them move which wasn’t hard. They had ordered all new furniture that had been

delivered early that morning so most of what was left to move was just clothes and personal belongings. Before long Taylor and Caydence were officially moved in to their new house.

“This is amazing Taylor!” Caydence said that night as the two of them sat on their new couch in their new house. It was quiet and private, something Taylor never thought he would have with her.

“I’m glad you like it!” Taylor said with his arm slung around her shoulders.

“It’s so exciting! I love you so much!” she said excitedly and placed a sweet kiss on his lips

“I love you too,” he smiled. He leaned in and kissed her again. The kissing got heated up and they were starting to fall into a horizontal position on the couch when Caydence’s phone rang.

“No, don’t answer it,” Taylor said pulling her back down on top of him when she pulled away. His lips met her again, but the phone kept going.

“I need to,” she said pushing herself off of him. She grabbed her phone that was on the coffee table, “Hello? Hey Zacy....”

Taylor groaned. Zac didn’t even live in the same house and he still managed to jeopardize Taylor’s private time with Caydence. Taylor sat up. He wasn’t going to let this happen. He wrapped his arms around Caydence’s waist and began placing kisses on her neck. Something he knew she could resist. She smiled as he kissed her, but didn’t get off the phone.

After a few minutes of trying to get Caydence’s attention back on him unsuccessfully Taylor gave up. He sighed and got up off the couch and went upstairs slamming the bedroom door behind him.

Chapter Eight

Zac didn’t seem to want anything important on the phone, so Caydence quickly looked for an excuse to hang up. After Taylor had stormed off, she realized she probably should have gotten off the phone or not answered it at all. It was the first night in their new house, and Taylor deserved to spend time with her.

Caydence turned her cell phone completely off after ending the conversation with Zac, and walked upstairs to the bedroom that Taylor had enclosed himself in.

“Taylor, can I please come in?” she asked as she knocked on the door.

Taylor who was laying on the bed sighed, “Yeah, I guess,” he responded.

Caydence opened the door and walked inside. She took a seat on the bed next to Taylor.

“Look... I’m sorry for answering the phone when Zac called. I know this is our first night in the house, and we should be spending this time together,” she said.

Taylor nodded, “Caydence, when I bought this house, I thought it meant that we would be able to spend more time as a couple. Now, it seems like things are going to be just the same as before,” he replied.

“What do you mean, Taylor?” she asked.

“I mean when we lived with Zac he was always around, and now that we’re in our own place, I still come second to Zac,” he replied as he finally looked at her.

“Taylor, you’ll never be second to Zac. I never meant to make you feel that way. I shouldn’t have answered my phone and I’m sorry. I want our first night in this house to be perfect, and I only want to spend it with you,” Caydence said as she grabbed his hand.

“Do you mean that?” Taylor asked.

“Of course I do. I turned off my cell phone and it’s going to just be me and you tonight,” she replied.

Taylor nodded, “Listen Caydence, I’m not trying to be an asshole, but if things continue to be they are between you and Zac, I don’t think this is going to work out. I don’t care that Zac is your best friend, but our time together needs to be separate,” he said seriously.

“I promise things will change, Tay. Our time together will be just between us from now on,” she replied. She was starting to finally understand how he felt.

“Okay... I love you, Caydence...” he said as he leaned forward and gave her a kiss.

“I love you too, Taylor.”

The rest of the night ended up being perfect. Taylor had Caydence all to himself and they were able to spend a nice evening together in their new home. It felt nice for Caydence to fall asleep in Taylor’s arms in their new bedroom.

The next morning, Caydence realized that she had left a few of her personal belongings back at their old house. Instead of going alone and being blamed for just trying to spend time with Zac, she asked Taylor to come along.

As they pulled into the driveway, they passed another car that was just leaving the house.

“Who was that?” Caydence asked as she tried to see who was in the car that she didn’t recognize.

“I could be wrong... but it looked like Ella,” Taylor replied.

Caydence frowned, “Why in the world would Ella be over here this early in the morning?” she asked.

Taylor shrugged, “The only thing I can think of is that she spent the night with Zac,” he replied sounding a little surprised himself.

The thought of that fake blonde spending the night with Zac made Caydence almost sick.

“Don’t you think he’s moving a little fast with this girl?” Caydence asked disgustedly.

“I don’t know... I’m glad to see that he’s starting to like this girl. He hasn’t dated anyone forever,” he replied.

Caydence didn’t say anything as Taylor parked the car.

When they walked into the house, Zac was on the couch wearing a white t-shirt and sweatpants. It was obvious that he had just woken up.

Caydence walked right past him and went upstairs to get her stuff. She could hear Taylor asking him about Ella and if she had stayed the night or not. She didn't even want to hear Zac's answer to that question.

She quickly grabbed her belongings and made her way back downstairs

"Okay, Tay. I think I have everything now," she said.

"Aren't you even going to say hi to me?" Zac asked from the couch.

"Hi," Caydence said bluntly without even looking at him.

Zac looked at Taylor curiously and Taylor just shrugged.

"Are you ready to go, Tay?" she asked. The whole situation was just completely awkward. The idea of Ella spending the night with Zac was really beginning to bother Caydence.

"Yeah, sure..." Taylor replied, "Bye Zac."

"See ya," Zac replied as they walked out the door.

Zac made a mental note to call Caydence later and figure out what her deal was. He thought that when they had talked the other day that Caydence knew that she was going to be his best friend no matter who he dated. She had told him that she hoped things would work out between them, yet she still seemed angry.

"What was up with that?" Taylor asked when they got into the car.

"What do you mean?" Caydence replied.

"You just seemed like you were in a rush to get out of there and you barely spoke a word to Zac," Taylor said.

Caydence smiled, "Nothing is wrong, Tay. I just wanted to spend the day with you," she replied. That part was the truth. After last night and being threatened with the idea of almost losing Taylor, she

wanted to spend as much time as she could with him.

“Okay, just as long as you’re sure nothing is bothering you,” Taylor responded.

“Everything’s fine, Taylor...” she said. She was going to forget about Zac and Ella and enjoy the day with Taylor.

Later that evening, Caydence was on the couch watching television while Taylor was in the shower.

Suddenly her cell phone rang and she saw it was Zac calling. She sighed and reluctantly answered.

“Hello?” she said.

“Cady, it’s me. Are you mad at me or something?” he said immediately.

“No, Zac... Why?” she responded.

“You didn’t even talk to me while you were at the house today. Is this about Ella spending the night?” Zac asked.

“Oh, so she did spend the night with you,” Caydence said disgustedly.

“This is what it’s about, isn’t it? I thought you said you wanted things to work out between us,” he replied.

“I didn’t mean I thought it was a good idea to have sex with her after only dating her for a week!” Caydence said sounding annoyed.

“For your information, I didn’t have sex with her! She fell asleep on the couch watching movies last night. I slept in my own bed!” Zac exclaimed.

“You know what, Zac? I really could care less. If you want to be around that fake blonde, then that’s your choice,” she said.

“Fake? You don’t even know her, Cady! If you gave her a chance you would probably like her,” he said.

“Zac, I really don’t feel like talking about this right now. I’ll call you tomorrow, okay?” Caydence said.

“Promise you’ll call?” Zac responded. He hated knowing that Caydence was upset about something.

“I promise. Bye Zac,” she replied as she hung up the phone.

Chapter Nine

Caydence didn’t call Zac the next day, she didn’t call him the day after that either. Every time she closed her eyes all she could see were images of Zac and Ella together and it freaked her out. She thought the best thing to do would be to distance herself from it all.

She couldn’t distance herself for long though. After 2 days of unreturned calls Zac couldn’t stand it anymore and he just showed up at Taylor’s and Caydence’s door.

“Hey dude,” Taylor greeted his brother at the door.

“Hey,” Zac said glumly.

“What’s wrong?” Taylor asked noticing his brother was not okay.

“Is Caydence here?” Zac asked. Taylor nodded and stepped aside to let Zac in the house.

“Taylor, who is it?” Caydence asked peering into the entry way. Zac turned to see Caydence, “Oh, hi Zac.”

“Hey, can we talk?” he asked. Caydence looked at Taylor for approval, they had been watching a movie and didn’t want him to get upset with her. He nodded knowing that something was up.

“Okay,” she said, “Let’s go out on the porch.”

Zac and Caydence headed out the front door and onto the porch. They took a seat on the swinging porch swing that was out there.

“What’s going on with you?” Zac asked without hesitation.

“Nothing,” Caydence said simply.

“No, don’t give me that. What’s going on? Why are you avoiding me? What did I do?” Zac pushed.

Caydence sighed and stared off across the street, “You didn’t do anything,” she said not looking at him.

“Then what’s wrong?” Zac asked.

“Do you want me to be completely honest with you?” she asked. She knew that was a dumb question, but it was in a way warning Zac that something was coming.

“Of course!”

Caydence took a deep breath, “Okay...I know that you want me to like her, but I can’t even give Ella a chance, I’m sorry. There is just something about her that disgusts me actually. And the image of you and her together is just... disturbing beyond belief. I get incredibly pissed off every time I think of her being close to you and it just sucks. I want to be supportive, I really do, but I just can’t... and I don’t want to argue about it like we have because I hate fighting with you.”

“How can you hate her so much when you don’t even know her? She’s incredibly sweet and you guys actually have a lot in common,” Zac said. He just didn’t understand Caydence’s feelings.

“I honestly don’t really care... I’m not going to get to know her and I’m sorry if that makes me a bitch, but I just can’t. I would be going against everything I think is right and I can’t do that.”

“Okay.... So....” Zac sighed, “Where does that leave us? I don’t want to break up with her, I really like her, but there’s no way in hell I can live without you.”

“I don’t know... I just know that I can’t be around her.”

“Well can we still be friends if I just never have you two in the same place at the same time?” Zac asked hopefully. It wasn’t an ideal situation, but it was better than losing one of them.

“I guess so,” she shrugged, “If you don’t want to break up with her then that’s the only possible solution. I can’t live without you either.”

So that was how it was going to be. Caydence and Zac would still be friends, but Zac could never have Caydence and Ella in the same place at the same time. In reality the situation tore both of them apart because they had never had limits on their friendship, but now a girl stood between them. Something they always swore would never happen.

On the bright side Taylor’s and Caydence’s relationship got better because Zac’s interruptions were fewer between. They had more time to concentrate on them. Taylor knew though, that Caydence was not happy and it sucked that he couldn’t fill the void she had. He wished that he could fill Zac’s spot, but it would never happen.

* * * * *

“Hey Cady, whatcha doing?” Zac asked when Caydence answered her phone a little later that week.

“Nothing, what are you doing?” she asked.

“Nada... why is Taylor here at the house and you aren’t?”

“Are you at the house?”

“Yeah, I just got home.”

“That’s exactly why I’m not there... you were out with Ella.”

“Well I’m done with her...sooo, can I come over?”

“If you want.”

“Okay, I’ll be there in like 2 minutes.”

It actually took Zac 5 minutes to get there, but who was counting. Caydence hadn’t done anything that day and so she still had no makeup on, her hair was in a messy bun type thing on the top of her head, and she was wearing pajama pants and a tank top.

“Thanks for getting done up for me,” Zac teased when she answered the door.

“What are you trying to say? That I don’t look good?” she joked as he walked passed her through the door. She closed the door behind him.

“No, you always look good,” he said. Caydence wasn’t really sure how to take that.

“Whatever... have fun with that girl?” she asked without any enthusiasm.

“Yes I did, actually.” Caydence made a gagging face. “Oh stop,” he said grabbing her and putting her in a head lock. She laughed and he pulled her into the living room.

“Zac I feel like I haven’t seen you in forever!” Caydence said once they were seated on the couch.

“That’s cuz you never want to hang out with me anymore,” he said.

“Well you’re always with Ella.”

“You could hang out with us.”

Caydence scoffed, “Heck no!”

* * * * *

Caydence and Zac ended up going out and spending the rest of the evening together. They grabbed dinner and a movie. It slipped Caydence’s mind to call Taylor and let him know where she was and during the movie her phone was on silent so she didn’t hear when he called her.

Chapter Ten

Taylor sighed as he dialed Caydence's number and once again got sent straight to her voicemail.

"Why isn't she answering her phone?" he said out loud to himself as he closed his cell phone in annoyance.

"What are you talking about?" Isaac replied as he entered the room.

"I've been trying to call Caydence forever now to see if she wanted me to stop and grab some dinner, but she isn't answering her phone. It's going on eleven o'clock and I haven't heard from her," Taylor replied.

"Well why don't you try Zac's phone then?" Isaac suggested.

Taylor looked at him curiously, "Why would I call Zac's phone?" he asked.

Isaac sighed, "I'm guessing he didn't tell you that when he left here a few hours ago, he had planned on going to your place to visit Caydence," he replied. He should have known Zac hadn't told Taylor that little piece of information.

Isaac could have sworn he had never seen anger flash through Taylor's eyes the way he did at that moment.

"So, Zac was planning on going to my house to hang out with my girlfriend while I was here?" he asked angrily as he stood up and grabbed his car keys.

"Tay, you need to calm down!" Isaac replied and tried to block his brother from leaving the house.

"No. That's it... I'm not dealing with them anymore!" Taylor practically shouted as he went around Isaac opened the front door.

Don't do anything you regret..." Isaac replied.

Taylor ignored him and stormed off to his car.

When he arrived home, Caydence's car was in the driveway, but she was nowhere to be found. He figured that Zac had taken her out somewhere which angered him even more.

He paced around the house waiting for her to arrive.

Suddenly at around eleven o'clock, he saw Zac's truck pull up in their driveway. Caydence got out of the car and came inside. Taylor was glad Zac made the decision to drop her off and not come inside, he was liable to punch him if he had.

"Hey Tay!" Caydence said as she walked through the front door.

"Hey Tay? Is that really all you have to say to me?" Taylor exclaimed. Caydence had honestly never seen him so angry.

"Taylor, what are you talking about?" she asked as she looked at him seriously.

"Are you being serious right now? What the hell, Caydence! I've been trying to get ahold of you for nearly three hours because I wanted to bring you dinner! I didn't know you weren't answering the phone because you were too busy with Zac!" he yelled.

"We went to a movie, Taylor! I had to have my phone on silent!" she said as she defended herself.

"Oh, you two even went to a movie! How sweet!" he responded sarcastically.

"Taylor, stop it. You're being really immature. You were spending time with your family, so I hung out with Zac. Big deal," she responded.

"You know what? Call me immature all you want, but I'm sick of being second place to Zac all of the time. I thought you said things were going to change, but apparently you're pretty good at lying!" he shouted.

"Don't you dare call me a liar, Taylor Hanson," she said as she crossed her arms over her chest.

Taylor sat down on the couch and ran his fingers through his hair.

"I can't do this anymore, Caydence. Not until you choose between me and Zac," he replied.

“That’s not fair, Tay...” she replied as tears began to fill her eyes.

“No, what’s not fair is that my younger brother spends more time with you than I do. Either make your choice, or I think we need to take a break,” he said in a serious tone.

“I’m not choosing between you!” she replied as the tears began to spill over her cheeks.

“Fine, then maybe you should stay someplace else for awhile. We need time apart,” he said bluntly.

“You want me to leave?” she asked.

“Either you go or I go,” he replied.

“Fine! I’ll pack a bag and get out of your precious house!” she cried as she began to run up the stairs.

“Where are you going to go?” Taylor asked from the bottom of the staircase.

“Why do you care? You’re the one who says we need a break!” she yelled.

Taylor laughed out loud, “Yeah, just avoid the question. Run over to Zac like you always do!” he shouted as she disappeared into their bedroom.

Taylor sat down on the couch and sighed. He hoped he was making the right decision.

A few minutes later, Caydence came storming back down the stairs with a bag on her shoulder. She grabbed her car keys and walked out the door. Without saying a word, she slammed the door shut behind her.

Taylor stared at the closed door and his chest began to tighten knowing that she was probably on her way to Zac.

It took everything he had not to chase her out the front door and apologize, but he knew what he had to do.

As Caydence got into her car, she opened her cell phone and quickly pushed the speed dial button to call Zac.

“Hey Cady!” he said as he answered the phone.

Caydence couldn’t even respond, all she could do was sob.

“What’s wrong, Cady?” Zac asked in a very concerned voice.

“Can... Can I come over?” she sobbed.

“Of course you can, sweetie. I’ll be right here,” he replied. He didn’t know what was wrong, but it broke his heart to hear the pain in her voice. If Taylor had done something to hurt her, he didn’t know if he could forgive him.

A few moments later, Caydence knocked on the door.

As Zac opened the door, Caydence practically leaped into his arms.

Zac embraced her as she sobbed into his shoulder.

“Shhh...” he whispered as he stroked her hair, “Calm down so you can tell me what’s wrong.” His shirt was becoming soaked with her tears.

“I lost him, Zac...” she sobbed, “I’ve lost him for good.”

Chapter Eleven

Zac eventually got Caydence to calm down and had her take a cool shower to help cool her nerves. It was then that he was able to get the whole story out of her. The whole fight and Taylor basically breaking up with her. Zac felt responsible in a way because it was because of him that the fight even happened, but he also felt furious with Taylor for holding his friendship with her against her. After all they were friends first.

“Here,” Zac said walking back into his living room with a mug of hot tea in his hands for Caydence. She was curled up on the couch in her pajamas.

“Thanks Zac... thanks for everything. Thanks for letting me stay here, I know it’s going to cause issues between you and Taylor,” Caydence said graciously accepting the mug.

“I don’t care,” Zac said sitting down next to her, “He’s being an ass. He’s insecure and jealous and I don’t know why.... But I know he’s an idiot for kicking you out.”

“He’s not an idiot... he’s just... I don’t know...” Caydence said feeling like she might cry again.

“No Cady, he’s an idiot. I mean you’re the best thing that can ever happen to any guy... you’re beautiful and smart and funny and basically just amazing... and if he doesn’t realize that, or wants to throw it away because he’s insecure then he’s an idiot. Simple as that.”

A few tears spilled out over Caydence’s eyes and Zac quickly scooted closer to her wrapping her arms around her protectively, “Don’t be sad, it’ll be okay,” Zac comforted.

“It’s not that I’m sad,” she said wiping her tears off of her cheeks, “It just means a lot to me to hear you say those things.”

“Well they are all true... I mean it. You’re absolutely amazing Cady. I mean I was jealous when you started dating Taylor, I think a part of me knew how great you were and wanted that for myself.”

Caydence looked up at Zac. The love and warmth in his eyes touched her deep inside. She had never really had a close intimate moment like that with him before, where she was in his arms and he was saying wonderful things to her. It felt right and it felt wonderful and Caydence wondered why she hadn’t ever seen this side of Zac before.

Zac was going through similar feelings himself as he held Caydence in his arms. It felt so good to be holding her and telling her how wonderful he truly thought she was. No thoughts of Taylor and how he may react were anywhere in his head, all he could see and think about was Caydence.

Before they both realized it, they were leaning in closer together. Their lips touched, lightly at first, then slightly more intense. Caydence’s stomach went nuts with butterflies and Zac’s pulse raced. This was uncharted territory for the both of them.

“Sorry,” Zac said clearing his throat when they separated. Caydence smiled and looked down, suddenly shy.

“No, it’s totally fine,” she said, “I liked it.”

Zac smiled. He had wanted to do that for a long time, but never even realized it until then. Suddenly something he never knew he had been missing was fulfilled and he wanted it fulfilled again.

Zac and Caydence ended up making out for a good chunk of the night. All thought of Taylor hurting her were long gone out of Caydence’s mind, and all she could think about was how attracted she was to Zac at that time. Their kissing got a little out of hand and they made their way to Zac’s bedroom.

Once inside there was no reason to stop. Emotions were high and neither of them were thinking straight. Clothes shamelessly got discarded on the floor and the two of them indulged themselves in the most intense pleasure they had ever had.

* * * * *

When Zac woke up the next morning he rolled over to see Caydence still fast asleep next to him. He smiled to himself remembering the night before and how amazing it was. The thought of him and Caydence was making more sense to him. The reality of the situation was they were perfect for each other. They had everything in common, they got along perfectly, and now he knew they were incredibly physically compatible as well. There was Ella though, and there was also Taylor....

Then it hit him. Taylor. He had just slept with his brother’s very recently made ex-girlfriend. That was not something brothers should do and he knew that if Taylor ever found out he would murder him. Taylor was family and he should come first no matter what, but Caydence was way more than just a friend. She was practically family as well. The Hanson family had practically adopted her as part of them. So who was Zac supposed to be loyal to?

Zac crawled out of bed being sure not to wake up Caydence and went downstairs. He was in the process of doing some cleaning when Caydence’s finally did wake up. She strolled down the stairs and into the living room where Zac was doing some dusting.

“Morning,” he said as she walked in.

“Morning... you left me alone in bed,” she pouted. Zac laughed.

“Sorry... I had some cleaning to do.”

“Cleaning? You? What’s on your mind? You only clean when you have something to think about,” Caydence said knowing her best friend so well. Zac stopped dusting and played with the rag in his hands.

“What about Taylor, Cady?” he asked looking up at her for the first time, “I mean don’t get me wrong, last night was absolutely amazing, but what about Taylor?”

Caydence shrugged, “I don’t know,” she said, “I’m not quite sure what I think about anything anymore. I never really pictured you and I having a night like that, but now that we have, I really liked it. I loved it in fact and it felt really comfortable, surprisingly.”

“I completely agree... but Taylor is my brother and you two just broke up last night. I kind of feel like a total douche, but then again I feel like I should be able to do what I want. So I’m stuck.”

“I’m stuck too,” she admitted.

“I mean, you know that Taylor is going to call you eventually wanting to talk... he would never be able to end things like that. He’ll either want you back or want closure eventually. What do we say? He’s going to hate us both. Especially since I think this is his worst fear realized.”

That hit Caydence hard. This is what Taylor’s worst fear was. That’s why he always had such an issue with her and Zac being so close. He was afraid that he’d lose her to him. Now her and Zac had stepped over that boundary line of ‘just friends’ and she didn’t think that would be something Taylor could ever forgive her for.

Chapter Twelve

Zac had promised to go with Isaac to run some errands throughout the day, so that left Caydence at the house alone.

It gave her time to do a lot of thinking, yet she was still just as confused as ever. She knew that under the circumstances, she would somehow have to make a choice between Zac and Taylor, especially after what happened between her and Zac the night before.

Caydence was well aware that a boyfriend like Taylor was one in a million. He was without a doubt the most caring, sensitive individual she had ever met. Even though she was unsure if Taylor would ever forgive her, she knew she and Zac had to eventually tell him what had happened between them. Even if it meant she lost him for good, he deserved to know the truth.

On the other hand, Zac was the one who had always been there for her. She felt a different type of connection with him. She knew that if she and Taylor somehow managed to work things out, Zac would most likely have to be out of her life for good. The connection she felt with Zac was something she had never felt before, which confused her even more.

Caydence knew that the only thing she could do was stay away from both of them for awhile. She needed time to clear her head and try to figure things out on her own. She decided the best thing to do was pack up her things and go stay with her cousin in her apartment.

She went upstairs to Zac's room and collected her things. After she had packed her bag, she went over to Zac's desk and grabbed a pen and a piece of paper. She explained in a note to Zac that she needed to be alone for awhile and she would get ahold of him when she was ready to talk about things.

She sighed as she sat the note down on Zac's nightstand and left the room. She knew that walking away would tear Zac apart, but she couldn't think of anything else to do at that point.

"What's going on with you, man?" Isaac asked as he drove his truck on the way back home.

Zac had hardly spoken a word the entire day, which was totally unlike his normal self. Isaac always knew when something was bothering Zac, and this time was no exception.

Zac shook his head, "More than you can imagine," he replied almost in a groan.

"Care to share?" Isaac asked.

Zac paused for a second. He was unsure whether or not he should tell Isaac what had happened between himself and Caydence. He had explained to Isaac earlier in the day about the situation with Caydence and Taylor and had informed him as to why Caydence had stayed at their place the night before, but he didn't dare mention what else had happened. He knew that no matter how much he cared for Caydence, he had totally crossed the line. Taylor was his brother, and he had basically committed the ultimate act of betrayal against him by sleeping with Caydence.

"I did something terrible, Ike... Before I tell you, you have to swear that you won't tell Taylor," Zac

replied looking at the road straight ahead.

Isaac felt a sense of worry wash over him as he realized what his younger brother was about to tell him.

“I swear I won’t tell Taylor...” Isaac replied reluctantly.

Zac bit his lip, “I... I slept with Caydence last night,” he admitted as his voice cracked with emotion.

Isaac nodded slowly, “Somehow I knew that was what you were going to say,” he replied quietly. He honestly didn’t know how to react at this point. If he comforted Zac, he felt like he would be betraying Taylor.

“What should I do?” Zac asked. Isaac had always been the one he had turned to for advice, and he hoped Isaac could help him make sense of everything.

“You have to tell him, Zac...” Isaac drifted.

Zac nodded, “I know... but what if he doesn’t forgive me?” he responded.

Isaac sighed, “He’ll forgive you, Zac... It may take some time, but you’re his brother. He’s going to forgive you eventually,” he replied.

“But... that’s not all,” Zac said so quietly that Isaac could barely hear him over the wind blowing into the rolled down windows.

“You mean there’s more?” Isaac asked sounding surprised.

Zac took a deep breath, “I love her, Ike... I’m in love with Caydence. I’ve always been in love with her,” he admitted.

Isaac shook his head almost at a complete loss for words, “Zac... I honestly don’t know what to tell you, except that I’ve known all along that you’ve had feelings for her. I think you need to sit down and talk with Caydence and decide where you two stand... Once you’ve done that, you need to tell Taylor everything that you just told me. He needs to know, Zac,” he responded honestly.

“You’re right... As soon as we get home I’ll sit down with Caydence and talk to her about everything,” Zac said. He felt guilty for everything he had done, but at the same time, he couldn’t help what he felt toward her.

When they finally arrived home, Zac expected to find Caydence in the living room where she was when they’d left. When he realized she wasn’t there, he began checking the kitchen and other rooms.

As he checked his own bedroom, he noticed that Caydence’s belongings were gone. It was after that when he saw the note on his nightstand. Before even reading the note, he felt his heart begin to sink.

Zac shakily picked up the piece of paper and felt his face grow pale as he read the words Caydence had written.

He walked downstairs to find Isaac putting away groceries.

“She’s gone...” he stated in quiet tone.

“What do you mean she’s gone?” Isaac replied sounding somewhat surprised.

Zac just handed Isaac the note and went back upstairs to his room.

He wasn’t sure whether he should try to call Caydence or not. He lied down on his bed and took a deep breath. It was then that he realized exactly how big of a mess he’d gotten himself into.

Chapter Thirteen

Caydence looked at her phone that she had hidden under the pillows at her cousins apartment. She was afraid that if she heard it ring, she’d answer it. There were 4 missed calls from Taylor and 5 from Zac in the last 2 hours. No voicemails though.

“Why don’t you just call them?” her cousin, Capri, said standing in the doorway of the guest bedroom.

“I can’t. I don’t know what to say to them,” Caydence said tucking the phone back in its safe spot.

“Tell Zac you love him and tell Taylor that you care about him, but you’re just not IN love with him,” Capri said simply.

“I am in love with Taylor though, and up until last night I hadn’t thought about Zac in that way.”

“You’ve always loved him, everyone knows it but you. Even Taylor knew something was up. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been so jealous.”

“I don’t see why people say that. I was never in love with Zac.”

“Whatever, Cayd.”

“I just need time to think.”

* * * * *

Taylor had regretted Caydence leaving soon after she was gone. He wanted her back, but clearly she was still mad at him since she wasn’t answering his calls.

He had had enough, he needed her back and he knew where she would be. So he jumped in his car and headed over to his brothers’ house.

“Taylor, wh... what are you doing here?” Zac asked answering the door unable to read his brother’s expression. Did he know? Was he there to beat the crap out of him?

“Where’s Caydenc? I need to talk to her,” Taylor said walking inside.

“She’s not here,” Zac said carefully.

“What do you mean she’s not here? Didn’t she come here last night?”

“Yeah she did, but she left earlier today... I don’t know where.”

“Why did she leave? She’s always with you...” Taylor asked. It didn’t make sense. Zac was her best friend and she ALWAYS ran to him.

“Um... I don’t know,” Zac lied, “She just said she needed to get away to think.” Zac held his breath hoping his brother wouldn’t pursue the topic further.

“Well... when you talk to her can you please tell her to call me? I really need to talk to her,” Taylor said. The pain of losing Caydence was written all over his face and that made Zac feel like the worst person on the face of the earth. There his brother was all torn up about losing his girlfriend, and then there he was sleeping with his brother’s girlfriend.

“Okay, I will,” Zac said letting his breath out. He was off the hook for now.

“Thanks,” Taylor turned to leave, but then paused, “Zac I’m sorry for getting in the way of your friendship. If I wasn’t so jealous none of this would’ve happened. I know it must have put a strain on you guys as well... so I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay Taylor... I got in the way of your relationship too.”

* * * * *

The following day Zac thought long and hard about where Caydence might have gone. Then it came to him. Capri’s. He should’ve known that right off the bat. Zac quickly jumped into his car and headed across town to Capri’s apartment where he had been a few times before.

“Hey Zac,” Capri said surprised when she answered her front door.

“I need to talk to Cady. I know she’s here,” Zac said a bit urgently.

“I’m supposed to tell you she’s not and that she doesn’t want to talk to you... but... she’s in the guest room,” Capri said stepping aside.

Zac quickly walked in and down the hall, but paused before knocking on the bedroom door. What was he going to say? He hadn’t really thought this plan through.

Before he could knock, the door opened and Caydence jumped, not expecting to have someone

standing outside her door, especially Zac.

“Zac! What are you doing here?” she asked startled.

“We need to talk,” he said.

“How did you find me?” she asked.

“Come on... I know you better than anyone. I just had to think. I’m surprised it took me this long.”

Caydence loved that Zac knew her so well, but at this moment also hated it because she wasn’t ready to confront him yet.

“Zac... I’m not...I just...” she stuttered.

“Shh, it’s okay,” he said holding his hand up to stop her, “let’s just go in there and talk.” He motioned back into the room. Caydence nodded and they went in shutting the door behind them.

Chapter Fourteen

As Zac walked Caydence back into the bedroom to talk to her, he couldn’t help but to notice how worried she looked. He knew that he would have to lead the conversation or else he probably wouldn’t get much out of her.

He sat down on the bed and motioned for her to sit down next to him.

Caydence slowly took a seat next to him, and to Zac’s surprise, she was the one to speak first.

“Zac... I’m so sorry for leaving, but I needed to get away to do some thinking and just clear my mind...” she began.

Zac nodded, "It's okay, Cady... But I need to know where we stand. I can't keep pretending like nothing happened between us. It's hurting our relationship, and it's also hurting our relationships with Taylor," he explained.

Cady sighed, "See, Zac... that's the problem. I think how I'm feeling is only going to make things worse," she replied.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Zac... You're the one I'm in love with. I should have known this all along, but it took me way too long to realize that you are the one I'm supposed to be with," she confessed.

Zac wasn't expecting her to admit to what she had just told him. He honestly thought she was going to say that it was all a mistake and that she was still in love with his older brother. Zac was too in shock to even reply.

"Aren't you going to say anything?" Caydence asked as she broke Zac from his state of surprise.

Zac simply cupped her face in his hand and brushed his lips against hers, "I love you, too..." he finally responded.

Caydence looked into his eyes and smiled softly, "This just seems too perfect."

Zac nodded, "So why did you say this will make things worse?"

"Even though I love you, we both know this will never work," Caydence replied as she came back to reality.

"Why wouldn't it? We can make this work..." Zac replied as he took her hand in his. His heart began to break at the thought of her just giving up on their relationship.

"Zac... I can't live with myself knowing I'm the one responsible for ruining the relationship between you and Taylor," Caydence said as she stood up and began to pace the room.

"Cady... Taylor is my brother... I don't want to hurt him either, but if you stay with him you'll be hurting him worse," Zac replied.

When Caydence didn't respond, Zac stood up and gently touched her arm, "Look at me, Cady... It's not fair to lead Taylor on if you aren't in love with him... I mean as much as I want to be with you, I'd rather us have to wait to be together than continue to hurt Taylor," he replied.

Caydence nodded, "You're right... I need to break things off with Taylor. Let's just keep our relationship a secret until we can see how Taylor reacts to the break up," she replied.

Zac nodded. He didn't like the idea of hiding his feelings for Caydence from Taylor, but he knew she was right. It would be too much for Caydence to break up with Taylor and then tell him that she was in love with his own brother. It would be best just to keep things a secret until Taylor got used to the idea of he and Caydence being broken up.

"I need to tell him tonight..." Caydence sighed sadly. She still cared about Taylor and didn't want to break his heart.

"He has already been over to my place looking for you," Zac responded.

"Okay... I'm going to go to the house and talk to him. I'll call you later, okay?" Caydence asked.

Zac nodded and pulled her close to him as he embraced her in a hug. Having Caydence in his arms just felt so right. He only wished that they had realized their feelings for each other before she had gotten so involved with his brother.

Caydence drove to the house Taylor had bought for them and took a deep breath when she saw that his vehicle was in the driveway. She knew he was in there, probably worried sick about her. That only made it harder for her to build the courage to walk up to the doorstep.

Even though she was currently living in the home with Taylor, she still felt like she should ring the doorbell.

She slowly pushed the button and heard the bell ring.

Seconds later, Taylor appeared at the door.

"Caydence! I've been so worried about you. I'm so sorry about everything!" he exclaimed as he pulled her close to him.

When Taylor finally let her go, Caydence looked up at him sadly.

“Taylor, we need to talk...” she said.

Chapter Fifteen

Taylor cautiously closed the door behind Caydence when she walked in. He didn't really like the look in her face, but deep down he felt like everything would be okay.

“Come on, let's sit down and talk,” Taylor said grabbing Caydence's hand. He lead her into the living room and pulled her down on the couch next to him.

“Taylor... I have something to tell you,” Caydence said feeling the tears already stinging her eyes. She couldn't even look up at him.

“I have something to tell you too Cay... I want you to know that I am sooo sorry about everything. Just the thought of losing you makes me crazy, I love you so much that I can't stand it sometimes. I want you to know that I will no longer get in the way of yours and Zac's friendship. I realize now the consequences of that and I never want you to leave me again. I love you so much,” Taylor said holding onto Caydence's hand still.

The tears spilled out of Caydence's eyes. She felt like getting up and just running out of the house. She didn't want to be there. She didn't want to tell him what she had to tell him. She felt like the worst human being in the world.

“Don't say that stuff to me Tay,” Caydence said quietly. Her eyes were glued on her lap.

“Why? It's the truth,” he said.

“Because... in about 5 seconds you won't feel that way,” she sniffled and pulled back all the tears and looked him straight in the eye.

Taylor looked confused, “Why?” he asked slowly and cautiously.

“Because... I... um... I... can’t be with you anymore Taylor,” she choked out.

“Yes you can... I promise everything will get better. I’m not letting you go this easily,” he said defiantly.

“No Taylor... something... happened, and you’ll never forgive me for it.”

“What did you do?” He was so confused and had no idea what she was talking about. He could always forgive her. What could she have possibly done that was so awful?

“I um... I don’t know how to say this...” she trailed off.

“Just tell me the truth.”

“I... I slept with Zac,” she admitted.

Taylor immediately pulled his hand away from hers and stood up as if she was a contagious disease.

“You what?!” he asked. The hurt and the anger filled his face and his voice.

“Please don’t make me say it again,” Caydence said quietly looking back down again.

“You... how...when?” Taylor stuttered not really believing his ears.

“When you kicked me out,” she admitted.

Taylor was quiet for a minute trying to process the image of his girlfriend with his brother. This is exactly what he was afraid of happening all along. This was his worst fear staring him right in his face. Suddenly the hurt was overpowered with pure anger and hatred.

“How could you fucking do this to me Caydence?!” he practically yelled staring her down with a look in his eyes that she had never seen before, “What the fuck were you thinking?!”

“I wasn’t. I was hurt and angry and I wasn’t thinking,” she tried to explain.

“That’s the lamest fucking excuse you could use... has this ever happened before? Have you and Zac secretly been sleeping together this whole time and you just felt the need to tell me now?”

“God no! It was just that one time... I’m sorry.”

“You’re obviously not that sorry since you apparently came here to break up with me. If you were sorry you would be begging me to forgive you right now. So was this just your way of getting out of this relationship?... it would’ve been a lot nicer if you just would’ve told me you wanted out. Why did you have to go sleep with my fucking brother? Since when are you a slut?” Taylor shot at her with such disdain in his voice. It tore Caydence up to hear him talk to her like that and call her a slut. She knew he would be mad and knew that she had this coming, but she didn’t realize just how badly it would hurt.

“Taylor listen to me... I really am sorry, but I know that you won’t forgive me for this and I feel like even if I wanted to stay with you nothing could ever be the same between us and it would hurt too much for both of us. I would rather just walk away and maybe somewhere down the road we can be friends. I do care about you a lot and I can never forgive myself for hurting you. I’m so sorry,” the tears trickled down her face again, but Taylor’s expression didn’t soften in the slightest bit.

“Get the fuck out... I don’t ever want to see you... I’ll send your stuff to Zac’s if you want, but I don’t ever want you to come back into this house....this house that I fucking bought for you. What a fucking waste.”

Caydence didn’t feel like he would listen to anything else she said, so she slowly stood up. Taylor just eyed her.

“I’m really sorry,” she said one last time as she paused before leaving the living room.

“Get out.”

Caydence nodded and walked out of the house for the last time.

She didn’t even bother to try and stop the tears as she drove back to Capri’s apartment. Taylor’s hatred toward her was more than she could stand. She never wanted to hurt him ever. She truly did love him and care about him, she just wasn’t in love with him anymore. She also knew that he wouldn’t drop the idea of them staying together unless she told him about Zac. No matter what she would say, she knew that he loved her enough to want to work it out. The Zac situation would be the only way of ending it.

* * * * *

Zac looked out the peep hole of his front door to see his brother standing there. He hadn't talked to Caydence yet, so he didn't know what she had said to Taylor. Zac debated whether or not to open the door.

Taylor rang the doorbell again and Zac slowly opened the door.

"Hey Tay what's up?" Zac asked carefully.

"Don't fucking give me that shit!" Taylor shot pushing his way through the front door, "How could you do that to me Zac?! You're my fucking brother! How could you do that to me?"

Zac knew exactly what Caydence had told him.

"I'm sorry Tay... we just weren't thinking. It started out as comforting her because she was so upset that you kicked her out and then I don't know what happened," Zac explained.

"You knew how much I loved her! And you knew how worried I was about your relationship with her for this very reason!"

"I know," Zac said looking down the same way Caydence had.

"But you still fucking slept with her. You are an asshole Zac, you know that? A fucking asshole and she is a fucking slut!" Taylor said moving in closer to his brother.

"Taylor, say whatever you want about me, but don't say that about her. She's not a slut," Zac felt a huge desire to defend Caydence.

"Why shouldn't I? She's a fucking slut. What girl sleeps with her boyfriend's brother? A fucking slut."

"Stop being an asshole Taylor."

"Don't fucking call me an asshole Zac, I didn't do anything. You and that slut did."

“Stop fucking calling her a slut!” Zac warned shoving his brother back. The anger was boiling inside of him. He could not stand hearing Taylor call her a slut.

“Or what? What are you going to do? I fucking hate you Zac. You are not my brother. I hate you and I hate her. She’s a fucking skanky ass slut.”

“Fuck you Taylor... Stop blaming her for everything... Maybe I’m just better in bed than you are,” Zac challenged. He immediately regretted the words as soon as they left his mouth.

Taylor eyes narrowed in on his brother and his fist collided with Zac’s face knocking him back into the wall. Zac quickly recovered and threw a fist colliding with Taylor’s temple. This was the beginning of a rather brutal fight between the two brothers.

The anger in Zac eventually faded and he stopped fighting back causing Taylor to stop as well.

“Don’t ever fucking talk to me again,” Taylor said and left the house.

Zac left the house as soon as Taylor was gone and drove to Capri’s apartment. The only person who could make him feel better was there. Not even worrying to care for the blood dripping out of his lip or the intense pain in his hand or the swelling of his eye, Zac drove across town to be with Caydence.

Chapter Sixteen

When Zac arrived at Capri’s apartment, Capri was the one who answered the door.

“Jesus, Zac! What happened to you?” she asked as she let him inside.

Zac shook his head, “No offense, Cap... But I really don’t feel like talking right now,” he said.

He didn’t mean to be rude, but all he wanted to do was find Caydence and make sure she was okay.

“It’s okay, Zac... I understand,” she replied.

“Where’s Cady?” Zac asked concernedly.

“She’s been up in her room since she’s been home. She hasn’t spoken a word to me and she seemed really upset,” Capri replied.

Zac nodded, “I’m going to go talk to her,” he replied as he quickly made his way up the stairway.

At that point, he could care less about what his brother thought of him. He was only concerned about Caydence. Taylor had said some terrible things about Caydence, and he could only hope that Taylor hadn’t spoken those hurtful words to her face.

As Zac knocked on Caydence’s door he could hear her crying. After hearing her muffled cries, he opened the door before she could even answer it.

Caydence was sitting at the edge of the bed with her head in her hands, sobbing.

Zac immediately embraced her, “Shh. Cady, calm down and tell me what happened,” he said softly.

Caydence didn’t respond, but continued to cry on his shoulder.

“Cady, please look at me and tell me what happened,” he repeated.

Caydence finally wiped her eyes and looked up at Zac. Instead of answering his question, she immediately noticed the blood on his face.

“Zac! What happened?” she asked even though she knew that the worst possible outcome between Zac and Taylor had occurred.

“Cady, don’t worry about me. I want to know what Taylor said to you. If he said anything to hurt you I swear to God I’ll go back and kick his ass some more,” Zac replied as his fists balled up.

“Zac... Please calm down,” Caydence said. This was turning into a bigger nightmare than she ever thought it would.

“Tell me what he said to you!” Zac said again.

Caydence sighed. She didn't want to remember the hurtful words Taylor had spoken to her, but she knew Zac would keep asking until she told him.

"He asked when I became a slut. Basically told me that he never wants to see me again," she replied. Taylor had definitely made her feel like she was worth nothing. She couldn't remember ever feeling so down on herself.

Zac's jaw clenched, "That asshole! He has no fucking right to talk to you like that!" he practically yelled.

Caydence grabbed his hand, "Zac, calm down... Come on. We need to get you cleaned up," she said as she led him to the bathroom.

She finally managed to get Zac to sit down and clean the blood off his face and change into a clean t-shirt that she had found for him.

Once Zac had calmed down, they went back into her bedroom and lied down in her bed.

"How did you and Taylor end up in a fist fight? I knew Taylor was angry, but I never thought he would throw a punch," Caydence said.

Zac looked at her sheepishly, "Actually, it's mostly my fault... I think I finally pushed him to his limit," he admitted.

Caydence looked at him curiously, "What do you mean?" she asked.

Zac sighed, "He was saying terrible things about you so I told him I was probably better than bed than he is," he replied looking embarrassed.

Even though Caydence was still extremely upset about the whole situation, she couldn't help but to laugh.

"That was pretty stupid... I know," Zac said.

"Actually, do you wanna know the truth? You definitely are better in bed than Taylor," she replied.

Zac grinned, “Okay, that just made my night,” he joked. He was actually glad that they could lighten the mood after everything that had been happening.

“I’m glad... It’s been a long night. Do you want to just crash here tonight?” Caydence asked.

Zac nodded, “Yeah... Let’s just hope Taylor doesn’t show up.”

Caydence sighed. She was actually worried about that, too.

“We’ll deal with it if it happens. I just want you to be here with me tonight,” she replied.

Being in Zac’s arms helped her escape the events that had occurred that evening.

Zac held her tightly as she slept in his arms. He wasn’t able to get much sleep that night, but he was glad he could be there for Caydence.

Zac eventually drifted off to sleep, and luckily they didn’t hear from Taylor the rest of the night.

Zac returned home the next morning to find Isaac in the kitchen eating breakfast.

“Hey,” Zac said as he entered the room.

Isaac nodded but didn’t respond.

“So, I’m sure you’ve already heard what has happened?” Zac asked as he opened the refrigerator and grabbed a bottle of juice.

Isaac finally looked up at him, “Yeah, I did. And I can’t believe you had the balls to spend the night with her after everything you’ve done to Taylor,” he said.

“But you were the one who said we needed to tell him the truth!” Zac exclaimed feeling confused.

“Zac, I said to tell him the truth... But I thought you and Caydence would give him some time before

you started staying over and fucking her,” Isaac replied hastily.

Zac looked at him in surprise. Isaac had never shown this side of himself before.

“You know what, Isaac? This is none of your fucking business. And don’t you ever talk about her like that again!” Zac threatened.

“Or, what? Are you gonna fuck me over like you did, Taylor?” Isaac asked.

Zac just shook his head and went upstairs before his anger escalated. Now it was going to be awkward to even be in his own home.

Chapter Seventeen

“Apparently Ike has taken Tay’s side in this whole thing, even though he was the one who was always telling me to tell Tay the truth,” Zac said to Caydence on the phone the next day.

“Aww Zac, I’m so sorry... I never wanted this to escalate to something like this,” Caydence said, “I don’t want to be the reason for your relationships with your brothers to end.”

Zac could sense the hurt in Caydence’s voice, “It’s okay Cady. You don’t really even have to worry about it. They’re my brothers and it’ll all blow over. Everything always does. We’re family.” As the words left Zac’s mouth he desperately wanted to believe them, but he wasn’t so sure. He knew it would comfort Caydence though and she was the main focus in his life at that moment.

“If you say so,” Caydence said, “Well what are you going to do then? Since Ike is mad at you too.”

“I don’t know, but it’s not a comfortable situation in this house right now. He just glares at me whenever I walk past him. He won’t even talk to me.”

Caydence felt so guilty, “I’m so sorry.”

“It’s okay Cady... I’ll figure it out.”

Zac spent the next few days walking on eggshells around his house. He and Caydence were trying to keep their distance so that it didn't look quite as bad. They still talked on the phone all the time though. However it was getting all getting really too hard. Zac had no relationship with his brothers and he wasn't seeing the one person who seemed to care in his life.

After about 4 days of living a lonely life Zac got fed up and packed a bag. He just didn't care anymore. He didn't care what people thought. He wanted to be with Caydence and nothing was going to stop him from doing that.

"Where are you going?" Isaac asked noticing his brother coming downstairs with a suitcase in hand.

"Why do you care?" Zac asked spitefully.

"Because I'm your big brother and I don't want you to do something stupid," Ike said. Zac laughed.

"So suddenly you're going to start caring about me?" he asked as he pushed past Ike and headed for the door.

"I've always cared Zac... don't go to her. Don't do that to Taylor," Isaac warned.

"Why is it all about Taylor? What about me? Don't my feelings matter? Yes it was a shitty thing for me to do originally, but Taylor and Caydence are over. She wants to be with me and I want to be with her, so why can't I?" Zac asked spinning around to face Ike. His face was a mixture of anger and hurt.

"Because her and Taylor haven't been apart for a week yet! Why can't you just wait?"

"Because she's the only person in the world right now besides mom and dad who loves me... and even they are questionable because I know Taylor told them. She's the only person who doesn't think I'm an awful person. I love her."

"I know you do, but Zac you can't do this to your brother."

"Watch me," Zac said. Then he spun back around and headed out the front door. He drove across town to Capri's apartment to be with Caydence.

"So is it that bad?" Caydence asked. She and Zac were lounging on her bed talking soon after he

arrived.

“Yeah... it’s all about Taylor. How can you do this to Taylor? How do you think Taylor feels? How can you hurt Taylor like that? What I want doesn’t even matter. I just couldn’t take it anymore,” Zac explained.

“Oh Zac, I’m so sorry. I never wanted this to turn into this. I hate that you are fighting with your brothers because of me,” Caydence said with a worried town.

“Don’t worry about it Cady, it’s not your fault. It’s mine, but I can’t take it back, so they just have to forgive me,” Zac said kissing her forehead reassuringly.

Caydence sighed, “Well, I guess you’re right.”

“At least you don’t hate me... that would be the worst,” Zac smiled.

Caydence laughed, “I could never hate you Zacy... I love you too much.”

“Well I love you too much too... I think that’s what got us into this situation,” he joked and they laughed. They knew it was wrong, but couldn’t help it.

Zac was dazzled by Caydence’s smile. It was the reason for so many daydreams about her. Her smile was contagious. Zac couldn’t help himself but lean down and kiss her. Part way through the kiss Caydence started laughing.

“What?” Zac asked.

“I’m sorry,” she said trying suppress her giggles, “It’s just still kind of weird that you and I are kissing.”

“Need I remind you that we’ve done a lot more than kiss... I mean I have seen you naked ya know.” Caydence blushed slightly.

“Shut up,” she said hitting him playfully, “It’s not weird to you at all?”

“Nope... it’s something I’ve always wanted,” he said in all seriousness.

“Why didn’t I ever know this?” she asked, “Why didn’t you ever tell me?”

“Because of Taylor, duh! I didn’t want to steal his girlfriend away.”

“Which is exactly what you ended up doing,” she laughed.

“Yeah, but that was an accident.”

“Yeah, having sex is a big accident,” she said sarcastically.

Zac eyed her, “Why don’t we make that accident happen again?” he said raising his eyebrows. Caydence just laughed as he brought his lips down to hers. And that’s exactly what they did... had another “accident”.

Chapter Eighteen

Zac had stayed with Caydence at Capri’s apartment for about three days. The entire time he was there, he hadn’t heard from a single family member except for his mother. She tried to call him a few times, but he wasn’t in any kind of mood to hear that he was doing something wrong.

Throughout his entire life, everything seemed to revolve around Taylor. Taylor had always gotten everything that Zac wanted. Now that Zac had finally found happiness, everyone expected him to give it up just because Taylor had dated her first. Zac didn’t understand why everyone wouldn’t consider his feelings for once and just be happy for him and Caydence.

He sighed and turned the ringer off on his cell phone as his mom called him again.

“Zac, I really think you should call your mom back. She’s probably really worried about you,” Caydence said.

“She’s not worried... She’s just going to do exactly what everyone else has said and tell me I shouldn’t

do this to Taylor,” Zac replied.

“You don’t know that, Zac...” Caydence said looking him in the eyes.

“Yes I do. Taylor has always been special to mom and she always takes his side,” Zac replied crossing his arms immaturely.

Caydence couldn’t help but to start laughing.

“Why are you laughing?” Zac asked looking offended.

“Sorry, Zac... But I mean, you’re seriously acting like a child. Your mom doesn’t love Taylor any more than she loves you. Get on the phone and call her back!” Caydence exclaimed.

Zac thought for a moment, “I guess you’re right. I’ll call her back here in a little while. But first, I wanted to talk to you about something,” he said.

“What is it?” Caydence asked.

“Well... since things aren’t exactly going smoothly at home, I was thinking about going apartment searching... I mean, I can’t keep staying here at Capri’s,” Zac stated.

“That’s great, Zac. I think it will be a new change of pace for you to have your own place,” Caydence answered.

Zac nodded, “Yeah, I do too. I was also going to give you the option of moving in with me. I mean, don’t feel obligated, but just know that the offer stands...” he replied.

“Zac, are you sure about that? I mean Isaac and Taylor already hate us... Don’t you think that will make things worse?” she asked.

“Yeah, it probably will. I really don’t care anymore, Cady. All my life I’ve done things to please everyone else... I’m just ready to start doing things that make me happy for once,” he said with a certain emotion in his voice that Caydence hadn’t heard before.

Caydence gave him a kiss on the cheek, “It means a lot to me, Zac. I think it sounds like a great idea, but could you give me a few days to think things over? Everything seems to be moving so quickly,” she replied.

“Of course, I will...” Zac replied as he pulled his phone back out of his pocket, “Well, I guess I should call my mom back and see what she has to say.”

Caydence nodded, “I’ll be upstairs,” she responded and left the room to leave Zac alone to talk to his mother.

“Zac, honey! Where have you been?” Diana said worriedly as she answered the phone.

Zac sighed, “I’m surprised Isaac didn’t tell you already,” he said.

“Isaac hasn’t told me much of what’s going on at all... He’s been spending a lot of time with Taylor,” Diana responded.

“I see... Well, I’ve been staying with Caydence at her cousin’s apartment,” Zac explained.

“Oh, well thank goodness you’re someplace safe. It worries me to death when I don’t hear from you!” she replied.

“You mean you aren’t going to tell me how horrible of a person I am and how I shouldn’t be doing this to Taylor?” Zac asked surprised.

“No honey, not at all. I was going to see if you wanted to go to dinner... Just you and I?” she asked.

“Yeah, sure... That would be great, mom...” Zac replied.

They agreed on a place to meet and Zac immediately ran upstairs to find Caydence.

“I told you she wouldn’t be upset with you,” Caydence said after Zac had relayed to her the entire conversation that he had just had with his mother.

Zac shrugged, “Yeah, I guess you were right.”

* * * *

Taylor had been completely miserable since he had found out about Caydence and Zac. He really wanted to go find both of them and give them a piece of his mind, but luckily Isaac had been there to keep him at a certain level of sanity.

“Ike, I want to know the truth... Why hasn’t Zac been around? He isn’t really staying at Ben’s place, is he?” Taylor asked. He had a feeling Zac was with Caydence and Isaac was trying to hide it from him.

Isaac sighed, “No, Tay... he’s with Caydence,” he admitted. He had been trying to keep this information from Taylor, but he knew he’d find out eventually.

He expected Taylor to become enraged as he had when he had first found out about the situation, but instead Taylor put his head in his hands and ran his fingers through his hair distraughtly.

“Are you alright?” Isaac asked.

Taylor looked up at him, “I just can’t believe this is happening. I would never have done this to Zac... or you. I just can’t believe he thinks this is okay,” he answered dryly.

Isaac nodded, “I know... I think it’s only a matter of time before Zac realizes he is wrong,” Isaac responded, sounding a bit unsure of his words.

* * * *

Meanwhile at dinner, Zac reluctantly spoke to his mother about all that had happened between himself and Caydence. As embarrassing as it was, Taylor had already filled her in on absolutely every detail, so there wasn’t really much Zac could hide from her.

“Mom, I didn’t mean to purposefully hurt Taylor... I’ve always loved Caydence, and I just never said anything because she was with him! I just wish you guys could understand that we’re happy together,” Zac stated.

“Zac, I know you love Caydence. I’ve known it all along,” Diana said as she put her napkin on her lap.

“Really?” Zac asked sounding surprised.

Diana laughed, “Really, Zachary. A mom always knows these things. And do you want to know the truth?” she asked.

Zac nodded and waited for a response.

“I think Taylor has known this all a long too... I don’t believe Taylor will hold this against you. I honestly feel he was with Caydence even though he knew deep down that you two were in love,” she said softly.

Zac wasn’t sure what to think. If his mother was right, then that meant Taylor had betrayed him as well.

They didn’t speak about the situation any longer, but Zac felt relieved to have a family member on his side. It felt good to know that his mother understood how he was feeling and wanted him to be happy too.

Chapter Nineteen

Zac started looking for an apartment the next day. He still didn’t know if Caydence was going to move in with him or not, but he knew that he needed to get a place of his own. He was lucky enough to find one that he loved that was large enough to satisfy him and immediately jumped on it.

“I got an apartment today,” Zac said later that afternoon when he got back to Capri’s place. He and Caydence were standing in the kitchen while she did dishes.

“Really? That’s so exciting!” Caydence said cheerfully. She was really happy that he was moving on with his own life despite all the drama. It seemed as if his talk with his mom had given him an extra boost of confidence.

“Yeah, so I think I’m gonna move in this weekend,” he said.

“That’s awesome. I’ll help!” Caydence offered. Zac smiled.

“Hey,” he said, “Come here...” he pulled her over to him and she smiled up at him as he slid his arms around her waste and she slid hers around his neck, “I love you so much.”

“I love you too Zac,” she said.

“Do you think I should go try and talk to Taylor?” he asked.

“Why?”

“I don’t know... maybe try to clear the air. Tell him exactly how I feel. Maybe he’s cooled down enough by now that he won’t punch me again. We can’t not talk forever. We kind of are in a band together, ya know?”

Caydence laughed, “Yeah, that kinda does cause a problem in avoiding each other doesn’t it? I don’t know Zac, if you’re ready to face him then go for it. Would you like me to come with you?”

“Naa, I don’t think that would be good. I don’t think he should see us together yet.”

The following day Zac drove over to Taylor’s house hoping that he’d be home. He tried to have a plan about what he was going to say to him, but Taylor was so unpredictable when he was upset that Zac didn’t know where the conversation would go. He just had to talk to Taylor though, it really hurt to have his brother so mad at him. He would never give up the thing that caused Taylor to be so mad, so he wanted to do what he could to have Caydence and Taylor in his life.

As Zac turned the corner onto Taylor’s street he saw Isaac’s car in the driveway also. He wasn’t too excited to confront both brothers at the same time, but really had no choice at this point in time. He pulled up in front of the house and went up and rang the doorbell.

Isaac appeared in the doorway, “Zac... what are you doing here?” he asked.

“I need to talk to Taylor,” he said taking off his sunglasses.

“I don’t really think he wants to see you yet,” Isaac advised.

Zac walked through the door, “I don’t care, I need to talk to him.”

Zac walked into the living room to find Taylor on the couch watching something on TV.

“Who was it?” Taylor asked, probably thinking that the presence in the doorway was Isaac.

“It’s me,” Zac said. Taylor quickly turned at the sound of his brother’s voice. His eyes narrowed in.

“What are you doing here?” he asked hatefully.

“I need to talk to you,” Zac said walking farther into the room.

“Well, I don’t want to talk to you.”

“Taylor, please just listen to what I have to say. Can we just have an adult conversation about this?” Zac asked taking a seat on an easy chair in the room. Taylor was just quiet, so Zac took that as his cue to talk.

“I want you to know that I’m sorry,” Zac began. Taylor rolled his eyes letting Zac know that was a bad way to start, “I would never intentionally hurt you Tay, you know that. You know that the only way that I would ever do something like that was if I really truly cared about the girl. I wouldn’t just do it for fun. I tried for sooo long to suppress my feelings for Caydence and I was doing really good until you kicked her out. Then the pain on her face just made me realize how much I needed to fix that pain. I couldn’t stand her looking like that, so I started to tell her how amazing she was. We all know she is. I was saying how stupid you were for letting her go because she was the best thing that ever happened to you. I tried really hard to defend your relationship, but it turned more into me spilling my feelings to her. I would never have opened my mouth if things were all happy between you to, but she seriously thought that you two were basically broken up and it just happened. I love her Taylor. I always have. She’s the only girl who has ever meant anything to me. I could never really date anyone else because I always felt like I was lying because I was in love with Caydence, and I think you’ve always known that. I respected you too much though to ever voice that to anyone. I didn’t want to interfere. I figured it was better to have her as a friend than to not have her at all. But now I can have her and I finally feel whole. I really feel she’s the one I’m supposed to be with. I love her so much.”

There was a long pause when Zac finished. Taylor just looked at the TV blankly, clearly not watching what was on it. Eventually he sighed and looked over at Zac.

“I’ve always known that you had feelings for her, that’s why I asked you about them that one time. I did trust you though, and thought that you would never react on them, but you did. It doesn’t matter if her and I were broken up or not, the fact that you slept with her as soon as she left here is what kills me. You didn’t even give me time to try and work things out. You jumped on her vulnerability and that’s really shady of you Zac. I think that if you would’ve given it time and her and I did break up and time passed then you wanted to be with her that maybe I would’ve been okay with it. I was... and still am... in love with her though and no matter what you say I’m going to continue to feel like you stole her

from me. I can't forgive you for that Zac. I especially can't forgive you because you're my brother... any other guy could do this and it would suck, but it wouldn't be quite as bad, but you're my brother. My brother. Every time I think about it I just want to hurt you because it hurts me so bad. I don't want to see you and her together... it's going to be hard enough to just see you when we go back to work."

Zac hung his head. He understood what Taylor was saying and again felt like an awful person for doing that to his bother, but he wouldn't take it back. He figured that someday Taylor would forgive him. Especially when they had to start seeing each other every day again.

"Well," Zac said standing up, "I guess there's nothing else I can really say then... just I'm sorry and know that I'm here and waiting if you ever want a relationship with me again. I'm still your brother and still love you like one." Zac turned to walk out of the room.

"Hey," Taylor said right before Zac left. He turned around, "Do me a favor..."

"What?"

"At least take care of her. I would hate you forever if you hurt her. I still love her and don't want to see her unhappy."

"I would never make her unhappy," Zac said with a little smile.

"I know you wouldn't," Taylor said and Zac turned to leave.

Chapter Twenty

"What was that all about?" Isaac asked Taylor once Zac had left. He still couldn't believe that Zac had the nerve to come over and try to mend things with Taylor after all that had happened.

Taylor shrugged, "I don't really know if he was looking for forgiveness or just trying to get me to see his side of things," he explained.

Isaac nodded, "How do you feel about everything now that you've had time to think things over?" Isaac asked.

Taylor sighed, "I'm not ready to forgive him... In fact, I don't know if I ever will," he drifted.

"But?" Isaac inquired. He knew there was more Taylor wanted to say.

"But I still love Caydence... As crazy as it sounds, at least I know she'll be taken care of," he replied. It hurt him deeply that he wasn't going to be the one to be there for Caydence, and it made him angry that his brother was the one she loved. The only thing that would hurt worse would be if something bad happened to Caydence, and with Zac, she would be in good hands.

Isaac looked at him thoughtfully, "You're definitely right about that... Zac would never let anything happen to her."

After having the conversation with Taylor, Isaac began to think more and more about what they had said. Zac would give his own life for Caydence, and Isaac knew Zac truly did love her. Even though he had betrayed Taylor, he did have feelings too. Isaac was beginning to feel guilty for immediately taking Taylor's side.

"So, what are your plans for the day?" Zac asked as he and Caydence at breakfast at the kitchen table the next morning.

"Capri wants to go visit our aunt for awhile, and then do some shopping. What about you? Are you still going to Isaac's?" Caydence responded curiously.

Zac nodded, "Yeah, I guess so. I don't know why all the sudden he wants to hang out with me. He pretty much wanted nothing to do with me a few days ago," he replied.

Caydence nodded, "Well, I think it's great that you two will be talking again. I'm glad you decided to at least go over and hear what he has to say," she said.

When Isaac had called the night before and asked him to come over, Zac was hesitant at first. Isaac didn't give him any idea as to whether or not he was still angry. Zac was just hoping he wasn't going to have to listen to another lecture.

"Yeah, hopefully it goes well..." he replied as he looked at the clock.

“Is it about time for you to go?” Caydence asked when she saw him checking the time.

“Yeah, I’ll give you a call later,” he said as he stood up.

“Okay... I hope everything goes well,” Caydence said with a reassuring smile.

“Thanks Cady,” Zac replied as he leaned down and gave her a kiss.

As Zac drove to Isaac’s house, his mind wondered the whole way. He was hoping Isaac was ready to forgive him, but he wasn’t sure what to expect.

When he arrived at the house, it seemed odd to ring the doorbell since it used to be his own home.

“Zac, you didn’t have to ring the doorbell. This is your house, too...” Isaac said as he answered the door.

Zac shrugged, “It sure hasn’t felt like it,” he said as he made his way into the living room and took a seat on the couch.

Isaac sighed and sat down at the armchair across from him, “Listen... I’m sorry for getting so angry the other day. “

Zac looked at him curiously, “So, what changed your mind?” he asked.

“I was talking to Taylor yesterday and he said something that made me realize how much you do love Caydence... He said that even though he couldn’t forgive you, he knew you would take care of her. He was exactly right... In fact, I believe that you are the person who would give up anything for her...” Isaac replied.

Zac nodded, “I do love her. I’d do anything for her,” he replied honestly.

Isaac sighed, “I understand you love her, Zac... I just wish it wasn’t such an awkward situation. I apologize for taking Taylor’s side at first. The more I’ve thought about it, I’ve been able to see both sides of the situation.”

“I appreciate that,” Zac replied. He was glad that at least one of his brothers no longer hated him.

“I want you to know that it’s okay for you to move back in... I don’t hold anything against you...” Isaac said.

“Thanks, Ike... But I think I’m ready to get out of here and get a place of my own. I like it here, but I need something new...” he replied.

“So, are you going to stay at Capri’s then?” Isaac asked.

“No... I think I’ve found an apartment I like,” he said.

“Well, that’s cool. It will be a lot different living on your own, I’m sure!” Isaac joked. Growing up in such a large family, it was unusual for them to have much time alone.

Zac sighed, “Actually, I have asked Caydence to move in with me...”

Isaac was surprised, but decided this time not to give his input. “So what did she say?” he asked.

“She isn’t sure yet, but the option is always open if she decides to. I know it will hurt Taylor, but I think we need to make ourselves happy this time,” Zac replied.

Isaac nodded, “Whatever you want to do, Zac. I just wanted you to know that I’m not taking sides anymore.”

Zac nodded, “Well, thanks... That means a lot.”

When Zac left Isaac’s house, he felt better about the situation than ever before. His parents and eldest brother were finally accepting the idea of him and Caydence being together. He truly felt that perhaps eventually Taylor would as well.

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“So have you given anymore thought about moving in with me?” Zac asked as he lay in bed with Caydence with his arm wrapped around her.

Caydence sighed, “I want it more than anything, Zac... I just don’t want to cause anymore problems

between you and Taylor.”

“Cady, this has nothing to do with him. Taylor is my brother. The rest of my family has accepted this situation... Taylor is still hurt right now, but I really believe he’ll be okay with this over time,” Zac responded.

Caydence sighed, “What makes you so sure?” she asked.

“Because Taylor knows I’ll take care of you. I promised him I would,” Zac replied as he looked into her eyes thoughtfully.

“What?” Caydence responded curiously.

Zac nodded, “I promised him I would,” he said.

Caydence felt tears spring to her eyes. Realizing that Taylor knew how much Zac loved her, made her somehow felt like everything would be okay.

“Taylor is angry and upset right now... but over time I think he will be okay. Right now, we need to worry about us. We can’t put our feelings for each other aside just because Taylor is still upset by the situation,” Zac replied as he held her closer to him.

Caydence nodded as the tears she tried to hold back finally began to roll down her cheeks, “You’re right, Zac... We need to do what is best for us right now. I would love to move in with you,” she replied as she smiled through her tears.

Zac wiped her tears away with his thumb, “I love you Caydence... I always have,” he said. Caydence didn’t respond, but pressed her lips against his and kissed him passionately.

“I love you too, Zac...” she whispered as they parted.

Caydence knew not everything could be perfect. All that mattered was that everything was perfect between her and Zac. At that moment, as Zac held her in his arms, nothing had ever seemed to feel so right.