

Lucas Barnes

Backstory

Species: Cape fox

Sex: ♂

Age: 13

Height: 4ft 11in

Weight: light build

Siblings: Taylor, 2 years younger

Lucas is a story character and the older of two brothers. His parents were more interested in their careers and eventually gave him and his brother up for adoption. He can be sullen but is devoted to his younger brother, Taylor. In the current day he has recently been taken in by a foster-carer who is working on undoing the damage that his initial parents did.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Lucas was the first child born to his parents. They did not want children and were somewhat tense about having an infant to look after.

His mother was eager to return to her career and felt that having a baby had robbed her of this. It was considered culturally contentious for her to have her pregnancy aborted so she had felt forced to see the pregnancy through to its conclusion. Although it was the culture that had been the main factor in her decision to keep Lucas and not Lucas himself, she instinctively directed her blame towards him.

She didn't hurt him physically. She ensured that he was fed, kept clean, and even comforted when he cried. However, her care of him had a grudging, sullenly angry quality that he picked up on.

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

Lucas' toddlerhood was a tough time of life for him - and for his parents. He felt the need to provide for himself as a result of his mother still clearly resenting her duty to care for him, and this made him possessive and wilful.

His parents did their best to get on with their lives. However, all was not well between them. Lucas' mother continued to resent the care Lucas needed, and as he became a more active toddler (as opposed to a less active infant) she felt that he became even more of a handful. He felt a very natural need to express his will, to clarify and explore his understanding that he was a separate person from his mother so could choose to do things that she did not choose. She experienced this not as his natural exploration but his insistence on defying her, and she responded to this as if it was a vindictive act against herself. Sometimes she asked Lucas' father for back up (in the sense of "wait until your father gets home!") and felt a failure for having to do this.

Lucas' father felt that his career too had been damaged. He no longer had a perfectly quiet and orderly home to retreat to in the evenings. Instead it was the home to a noisy toddler who regularly irritated his wife, who herself had less time for him than she used to have. He ignored Lucas as much as he could to discourage Lucas from seeking attention from him.

All of this led to tension between Lucas and his parents, as his parents tried to discipline him while he continued to look after himself. The fact that he needed reassurance and affection, not discipline, was lost on his parents, who were grieving too much over the loss or diminishing of their respective careers to see Lucas as anything other than a broken-hearted and angry child.

As part of the parents' efforts to learn how to cope with having a 'difficult' child, they learned that having a second child could potentially help matters. If they had two children then the pair would entertain each other. As a result when Lucas was a little over 1 year old they decided to have a second child.

As a result, when Lucas reached two years of age, his mother gave birth to another boy, who was named Taylor.

Many toddlers feel that their position has been usurped by a smaller sibling, and that they will no longer get the undivided love and attention they have so far gotten from their parents. Lucas however, had an ambivalent-to-hostile relationship with his parents,

especially in terms of their provision of care for him. As much as he resented it, he needed them.

Now he had a baby brother, and he sympathized with the little one. He did not want Taylor to go through what he had gone through, so he resolved to watch over him.

Being a toddler, Lucas had a limited repertoire of tactics to get his own way. Without the ability to articulate himself particularly well (he was only 2, after all), he resorted to fighting.

Ambition

(young childhood)

As a small child, Lucas' parents started taking him to pre-school, which introduced him to other small children. He didn't like having to be around other children. So far in life, Lucas had only learned two ways of dealing with other people: to keep a distrustful distance from them and only take what he needed, or to grudgingly protect them. He needed nothing from these other children so he kept his distance from them as much as he could. He felt something similar about the carers and as a result, did everything he could to protect himself from them.

Taylor had grown into a toddler, and was quite day-dreamy by nature at that. Taylor seemed to like Lucas' company and followed him around a lot.

Lucas felt a subtle hint of something other than hostility in this relationship too. With Lucas' "us and them" view of the world, Taylor was his "us".

That's not to say that Lucas felt confident in his ability to protect Taylor. Lucas' life had become a mess of demands that he didn't feel ready to meet: his parents' desire for an independent child, the pre-school leader's need for a compliant member of the group, Taylor's need to be protected from everyone (even though Taylor remained at least partly oblivious to this), and even the other small children's demand for a friendly playmate.

As a result of this, Lucas never became curious enough about the world to think about what he might do as one of its inhabitants. He didn't develop any ambitions because he felt that his current life was already too hard and that he was already failing.

Taylor started pre-school when Lucas started going to primary school. He did not know for sure how to protect Taylor from the risk (as he perceived it) of Taylor being exploited and teased, but he watched over him as much as he could. Taylor didn't quite know what to make of Lucas' surly attitude to his own days at pre-school, which seemed more pleasant to him than Lucas seemed to suggest, and avoided making a conflict of it by keeping to himself.

Productivity

(older childhood)

'Serious' school started, and this quietened Lucas for a while.

The stronger discipline of school took Lucas aback at first. However, he quickly came to realise that school was an even more demanding environment than the ones he had experienced before. He couldn't understand why he should have to read Shakespeare or learn to speak Spanish; the lessons he was taught seemed to be difficult for the sake of being needlessly difficult.

And yet, he also recognised that being able to speak other languages, quote Shakespeare, or do long multiplication was preferable to not being able to do these things, so he began to feel inferior for his inability to concentrate on the subjects at hand, to apply himself, and to commit the effort needed to learn them. It didn't help that several of this schoolmates seemed to find it all much easier than he did.

Occasionally he would notice that another child was being bullied. He hated the unfairness of this and when he saw it, would step in to fight on behalf of the bullied child. At times he did this for Taylor, too, until one day when Taylor stood up for himself. This threw Lucas, and left him feeling hurt, confused and angry, as he had always used his ability to rescue others (especially including Taylor) as his way of feeling needed, capable, and valued.

Lucas had difficulty putting his feelings about this into words and simply felt that it had rubbed him up the wrong way. At first he sulked, and later when a situation came up again where Taylor needed defending he tried defending him again, but Taylor had become good at standing up for himself so Lucas found that he truly didn't need to fulfil this role for him any more.

He fumed at the unfairness of the perceived difficulty of lessons. He refused to do some of the work. Most of all, he did his best to cope with school life passively enough that, with any luck, it would not be noticed. When he worked in groups, the other kids in the group could do the work and he (or at least, he hoped) would be lost in the crowd. That did not happen: his classmates called him out on his lack of contribution or team spirit, his teachers noticed his inconsistent output and talked to him, and called his parents in for meetings specifically to discuss it.

For their part, his parents felt more and more that he was the cause of all of their problems, as the years went by. If asked directly about this they may have recognised the logical fallacy behind it and denied it, but their frustration had strengthened and become more entrenched over the years until as far as they were concerned, Lucas was practically the anti-Christ.

Lucas noticed this hostility and spent less and less time at home. Often he would drag Taylor with him for company, and Taylor was happy enough to join him.

Lucas felt more and more as if the world was against him, and this feeling only entrenched his position. By this time, Taylor had begun to notice all of this too, and the pair began to bond more deeply. Taylor's approach continued to be less confrontational than Lucas', but behind his sweeter temperament he nonetheless had a short supply of patience for others and preferred either his own, or Lucas' company.

At around the age of 9 Lucas' defiance started to become more active, with him occasionally lashing out at classmates and trying to argue back at teachers. It didn't get him expelled, but it did earn him a reputation among the teachers for being combative. Some of his teachers were more savvy about this than others. While some were annoyed by his attitude, others spotted that his behaviour was an attempt to protect himself and did their best to offer him the chance at a trusting relationship.

Both of the boys, with their preference for 'getting away from it all', skipped school more and more often. This put them, and their parents, in trouble with the authorities, and for a while the boys' parents tried to get them to stay at home so that they could keep an eye on them and send them to school every day. However, Lucas hated the idea and rebelled against it, and his parents couldn't really stir themselves to feel enthusiastic about having him around. Nevertheless, they tried.

This enforced proximity with one another prompted an intensification of the problems that the whole family were experiencing. Lucas became even more angry than usual; Taylor withdrew until he sometimes seemed away with the fairies, and the boys' mother cheated. News of this did not take long to reach the boys' father and the couple almost split up. As part of their re-negotiation they decided to give the boys up for adoption.

The children's home they lived in for a while was fine enough, if a little over-stretched in terms of its resources. This did not do further damage to Lucas per se, but it did confirm to him that adults could not be trusted. Just as he had with school and home, he spent a lot of time out of the building; as much as he possibly could, to the point of sleeping rough at times. He found this to be deeply unpleasant and the staff, in turn, were concerned enough about him to labour the point to him that he should sleep within the safety of the home, but this became his point of rebellion. For Lucas, living entirely independently (this was how he saw homelessness) was his way of showing his anger.

Taylor often followed him out to the streets just to be with his brother and became quite street-smart himself.

The carers had difficulty finding a home for the brothers, not least because they seldom if ever turned up to initial or follow-up meetings with interested adopters.

The boys were eventually both adopted as a pair, and taken care of by a serial foster-carer who used Therapeutic Parenting techniques. As is standard for Therapeutic Parenting this did not work quickly and Lucas still has a long way to go, but he is finally in an environment where he can begin to heal.

At first Lucas remained on the streets. His official home was that of the foster-carer but as far as he was concerned, his real home was the streets. Taylor complied with this at first out of habit, but he was not angry in the same way as Lucas was, and isolation and tolerating the extreme discomfort of homelessness was enough to make the house look tempting. As time went on Taylor dropped in on the new foster-carer more and more, until he began to spend most of his time there.

The foster-carer put out food for both of the boys to eat (ostensibly for Taylor but there was enough for Lucas to have too). Lucas usually ate some before going on his way again. Lucas took a while to follow Taylor in settling into the house beyond these short visits, but when he did he found that Taylor had learned how to play the guitar, at least semi-

competently, and both he and the carers seemed to enjoy Taylor's ability to make music. Lucas felt angry and afraid about this and raged about it on several occasions..

As far as Lucas was concerned he was only considering living in the home because Taylor was there. He felt threatened by the fact that Taylor had grown, developed a skill, and become more confident. It seemed to Lucas as if Taylor could walk away from him at any time and not be the worse for it, because he didn't need Lucas any more.

And yet, Taylor seemed just as happy to see Lucas more often, in his own easy-going, daydreamy way.

Lucas wasn't sure what to make of this. It irritated him and at the same time, felt ludicrous for a reason he couldn't put his finger on. All he knew was that he didn't really want Taylor to have changed but felt powerless to stop him as it was a harmless activity and Taylor seemed to enjoy it.

What was happening with Lucas was that he was seeing Taylor develop himself independently of his big brother. Taylor now had the ability to entertain people with music, and that was a level of social ability that Lucas didn't have. He could barely converse with others without the discussion devolving into an argument, but here was his younger brother making music to entertain, delight, excite, and soothe other people (and himself). Lucas felt as if Taylor had overtaken him in being able to handle himself around others and that Lucas himself had only two options: look like he was enjoying the music too or risk being left behind. He convinced himself that Taylor's skill with the guitar was useless for defending himself, that if somebody tried to pick on him then playing guitar wouldn't help.

This put Lucas in a difficult situation. On the one hand he wanted to be with Taylor, and on the other, he wanted to have things stay the way they had always been: the two of them against the world, depending on nobody, and stealing what they needed for survival.

The more time he spent with Taylor however, the more time he spent at the foster-carer's home. In this way he began to settle in despite his reservations about living there, and being under the roof became more normal for him. On particularly rainy or cold nights he accepted the carer's invitation to sleep in one of their spare rooms or on the floor next to Taylor's bed. In time, he came to live there permanently.

The carer also taught Taylor how to swim. Lucas didn't like this either for similar reasons to his dislike about the guitar-playing, but found it harder to mock. While, to his eyes, Taylor looked ridiculous swimming, the skill was undoubtedly a good one to have. It was Taylor who first softened Lucas up to the idea, and for a while Lucas maintained a position of "I want to but I don't want to". In time Taylor's spontaneous enjoyment of swimming won Lucas over just enough for him to start tentatively learning how to swim. Over time he started to enjoy it and have fun with it.

Child to Adult Transition

(adolescence)

Lucas has only just reached the age of 13 so there is nothing substantial to say yet about his time as an adolescent.

Closeness in Relationships

(young adulthood)

Ditto.

Passing on Responsibilities

(older adulthood)

Ditto.

End of Life

(old age)

Ditto.

Credits

Based on theory by:

Erikson, E., (1951) 'Childhood and Society', W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. chapter 7.

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~Hayley, The Character Consultancy