

Taylor Barnes

Backstory

Species: Cape fox

Sex: ♂

Age: 11

Height: 4ft 8in

Weight: light build

Siblings: Lucas, 2 years older

Taylor is a story character and is the younger of two brothers. He is easy-going with a tendency to day-dream and looks up to his brother, although he has recently begun to learn how to manage independently of him after a period of time when the two lived homeless.

Trust & Confidence

(newborn)

Taylor was the second (and last) of his parents' children. His parents had once both had very successful careers, but the birth of Taylor's older brother, Lucas, two years prior had put the brakes on that. As a result they had been grudging about raising Lucas. By the time Lucas was a little over one year old his parents had decided to have a second child to act as a companion for Lucas.

This was the reason that Taylor was born.

His mother had had enough practice at looking after a baby by the time Taylor came along, that she didn't feel under quite as much pressure as she had with Lucas. Although she did not enjoy looking after Taylor per se, she saw him in a more positive light than she had Lucas; in a sense he represented the 'light at the end of the tunnel'. Therefore she performed the act of caring for him with an almost clinical precision, as if looking after him was a task to be completed. Her actions may also have suggested that the faster she cared for him, the sooner he would grow up.

Of course, this was not true, but the impact of this on Taylor was to leave him feeling as if he had to cause as little fuss as possible. He was not a fussy baby and developed an intuitive understanding that there was a time and place for him in the family.

Freedom & Self-Determination

(toddlerhood)

As Taylor became more aware of the separation between himself and his mother, he started to take notice of the world around him and to explore his place within it. This was where he hit something of a block. His parents didn't want to interact with him too much; he was Lucas' companion, after all. Lucas spent time close to Taylor, but didn't seem that interested in playing. He did however indulge Taylor sometimes.

As a result, Taylor sometimes played with Lucas, and learned to put a smile on his face. That seemed to make Lucas seem a little less strained and keep his parents happy. This worked on them because they were used to having an angry Lucas around. A quieter tot who seemed generally happier appeased them. However it didn't make them feel more inclined to spend time with Taylor. Instead, they assumed that everything was okay with Taylor and let him spend time on his own with books, creative materials, or toys, or seek out Lucas' company.

Taylor developed a taste for quiet pursuits such as drawing, looking at the pictures in books, and reading as soon as he was capable of it. His parents' rules about how to treat the house were strict and he didn't want to fall foul of them; being quiet and immersing himself in books and art instead of calling attention to himself was an effective way of staying easily within the rules, to the point that, once he developed a preference for these quiet past-times, he didn't even have to think about the rules any more. For him, this was indistinguishable from being able to ignore the rules.

He also enjoyed Lucas' company. His brother was around 3 years old at this point. In return, Lucas seemed to feel something other than complete sourness about him. This was not to say that Lucas actively seemed happy to have him around; to see Lucas smile and enjoy himself was rare. However, Lucas spent a lot of time close to Taylor as if watching over him, so as such Taylor learned to find Lucas' presence comforting even if he wasn't interacting with him.

One of the benefits with imagination is that it's impossible to get wrong. If asked, Taylor would not report having been beset with self-doubt as a small child, but the truth was that he avoided testing himself too much. Perhaps his parents would have been more demanding of him, if not for his older brother's stronger tendency to be willful and to be their main focus.

Overall, Taylor moved on from toddlerhood feeling watched over by his older brother. His parents provided for him and would be there for him if he asked, but something wasn't quite right with his relationship with his parents. Between the issues with his parents that he found hard to pin down (he was too young to understand their problems as a couple) and his older brother's dogged effort to get their parents' attention, Taylor grew out of this stage feeling that life was quite easy.

Ambition

(young childhood)

Taylor was a relatively low-energy child, and continued to prefer the gentler pursuits of imagination-based games, making crafts, and reading. His brother continued to take the brunt of their parents' demands and/or disapproval, and by this point that was simply normal for Taylor.

To him, his brother was the older brother who was cool for being more energetic and outgoing, even if he was on edge a lot of the time.

Taylor's brother started going to school sooner than Taylor himself did, so for the first time in his life he found himself alone with his parents. By this time he had established his own behaviours - again, reading and imagination - and his parents had begun to believe that that was simply the way he naturally was. They didn't encourage him to do anything else as his introversion suited them.

The time came for his parents to take him to pre-school. By this time Taylor was entrenched enough in his habit to keep to himself that he took a lukewarm attitude towards the other children. The pre-school environment felt roughly familiar: the caretakers watched over him from a distance (much like Lucas did at home), and the number of other children around (some of which were far more energetic than he was) meant that the caretakers appreciated his tendency to amuse himself quietly.

As a result, Taylor didn't make close friends with any other children. His reading and retreat into his imagination had started to get in the way of forming potential relationships. He had some ambitious dreams but these were very fanciful - to be the knight adventuring out to slay a dragon, or to be the dragon itself, or anything else that prompted a narrative about a character who had lots of space from others, time to think and be alone, and who was 'good' in some way, or at the very least, free.

Productivity

(older childhood)

When Taylor turned 7, he began more serious schooling - as did every child of his age. Now, his schooling had more direction and he was expected to demonstrate an understanding of the things he was taught.

He had adored Lucas for a long time, but sometimes he felt that he was too intense and that his big brother over-protected him. Occasionally Taylor would be bullied by a hot-headed child in their school and Lucas would step in. Whenever this happened Taylor felt grateful, but guilty, and as time went by, became irritated that he was so ineffectual. One day he started fighting back. This surprised Lucas - in truth, it surprised Taylor too, as he had never butted horns with anybody in that way - and from then on he found himself much more capable of defending his quiet, creative way of life.

With that said, he still had some difficulties getting along with other children. These difficulties weren't as explosive as his older brother's problems, which may be why they were missed, but Taylor did not particularly desire relationships with the other kids, so when he found himself in group projects, he just did what he had always done: kept his head down and followed any instructions given to him. The trouble was, some of those groups were more benign than others. He made an easy target if any other child wanted to complain that he wasn't contributing enough; it was easy for a group member with an agenda to fail to ask him to do anything and then complain at his lack of contribution. Again, he stood up for himself and that would often be the end of that.

However, this prompted a rift between Taylor and Lucas. Whenever Taylor stood up for himself Lucas would become frustrated and sullen, but never explained why. While Taylor loved Lucas he didn't reach out to him about this and assumed that whatever the problem was, Lucas would be able to sort it out or get over it himself.

Taylor's modus operandi had long been to keep his head down and to be sweet, so that translated quite well to make him seem compliant in the classroom. He was happy to fit in, and most of the time, fitting in meant reading what was given to him and repeating the book's contents when required. His brother's difficulties with fitting in defined him even more as 'the good kid', as he was sometimes compared favourably to his brother.

Taylor's creativity helped. Being able to think up responses or ways around a problem helped him to comply, and also shifted the focus of the problem of compliance with teachers, at least as far as Taylor was concerned, from 'whether or not to comply' to 'how to comply'.

However, Lucas was not content to keep his head down, and he began playing truant. When he did he would encourage Taylor to go with him. Taylor didn't take too much persuading. He was not terribly interested in school or interested in what he was being taught. He preferred to do whatever was easy. They spent the days away from school, and increasingly spent time away from home at the end of the school day too. The situation quickly escalated until they were taking so many days off that their parents and teachers called a meeting to discuss this - with the boys brought in for part of the meeting. The end result was that the parents were to keep a closer eye on the two of them to make sure that they did their homework and went to school.

As a result, the family started spending much more time together. For a family that was far from harmonious, this led to a rapid escalation of bad feelings between Taylor's parents and between the parents and Lucas.

Taylor had been aware for a long time that his parents were angry, and that they did not get along with Lucas, but he had always considered that normal. As far as he understood it, every child's parents stalked around at home, either not speaking very much or talking in clipped or exaggeratedly patient tones. When the family spent time together their parents got angrier, and after a while, their mother started spending time away from home. She had described it as an evening class, but before long their father uncovered the truth: that their mother had been cheating with a work colleague.

The family almost fell apart over this and for a while, both Lucas and Taylor could only keep out of the way while their parents dealt with this. Their parents spent time talking alone where neither boy knew what was being said (although Lucas tried spying on them a couple of times).

Then Taylor and Lucas' parents told them that they were going to give them up for adoption. It was a shock to both of them, and despite his disdain of them, Lucas tried to argue with them over this, but the decision was made, and they were taken to a care home.

Lucas responded to this with sullen anger and declared to Taylor that he would live on the streets - and that he'd look after Taylor. Taylor admired Lucas' strength of stance on this and the boys spent as much time on the streets as possible.

The carers at the home were too overly stretched to make sure they stayed at home for most of the time and tried, often in vain, to encourage them back to the safety and comfort of the home. However, this rarely happened. Taylor could tell that Lucas was furious and devastated by the rejection of his parents and felt that he had to keep him company. Taylor would have spent time at the home if it hadn't been for this.

The staff at the home found it very difficult to find a placement for the boys so eventually asked for a serial foster-carer with training in Therapeutic Parenting if she was willing to take them in. She looked at the case and accepted without having met Lucas or Taylor.

They were adopted together. However, at first Lucas would not hear of it and refused to visit. The foster-carer kept track of where the boys were however, and went to see them occasionally. This was not a sign of neglect but of a very gentle touch towards two boys who were very reluctant indeed to come in from the cold.

She correctly guessed that Taylor was the less-angry of the two, and directed open-house invitations to the house mainly to him. Occasionally he accepted, ate a little, sometimes watched some TV, and then returned to his brother.

As he did this, Taylor slowly learned that there were no demands in that household and less stress than he might have expected. His parents had been deeply stressed; his teachers and the childrens' home carers harried, but the foster-carer behaved with a combination of detachment and the provision of time and attention that felt good. Plus the food she provided was tasty and the TV was usually set to something fun.

The more Taylor came, the more he enjoyed it, and the more he enjoyed it, the more he came, until he really considered himself a resident there. He continued to visit Lucas often.

When Taylor was better-settled at the house, the carer offered to teach him how to play the guitar. Taylor accepted this. Taylor had become quite competent with the guitar when Lucas came to the house to see him. Lucas reacted to Taylor's new skill in a way that Taylor thought was quite strange: he had a tantrum, but wouldn't explain what was wrong. When Lucas retreated the carer spoke with him about what had happened, to check that Taylor was all right. Taylor had found Lucas' rage confusing and painful but was content to convince himself that Lucas would come around and all he had to do was wait for that.

Taylor was right, and Lucas did indeed visit the house soon after. He continued to be bad-tempered, especially when he saw the guitar, but over time those rages subsided and Lucas became sullen, and then went on to ignore the guitar.

While Taylor and Lucas were working through this, they also taught Taylor how to swim. They chose swimming as an activity to teach him because he wasn't a very physically-orientated child and swimming was a style of exercise that didn't rely on competition and would appeal to his peaceful approach to life.

Lucas responded quite strangely to Taylor's new-found ability to swim too. At first he was dismissive - not so much of Taylor's ability but of the usefulness of the skill in and of itself, as if Taylor was wasting his time. Occasionally he went so far as to mock Taylor when he saw him swimming.. Taylor put this down to Lucas just being Lucas and left him to it.

These bumps in their relationship aside, Lucas started visiting him at the foster-carer's home more often. Lucas was often sullen during these times and blanked the carer, leaving Taylor as go-between. Eventually however, he started to acknowledge her and spend more time at the house, until he spent so much time there that he practically lived there. He also became more accepting of Taylor's swimming and one day, gingerly began to learn himself. Taylor encouraged him and began to teach him. After a few sessions Lucas felt confident enough about swimming that the friction between himself and Taylor was forgotten.

Child to Adult Transition (*adolescence*)

Taylor has not reached adolescence yet.

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](#)