# Part Three:\_\_ Couch Potato\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I can imagine that, by this point, you’re not gonna be shocked when I tell you that motherhood didn’t suit Taylor well.

Like, after Maverick was born, I think Taylor’s bitch switch just wasn’t gonna come undone. Don’t get me wrong, Taylor wasn’t exactly pleasant to be around all the time anyway, but with how exhausted she could get just trying to keep up with *one* kid you would have thought that she was running marathons every day. And Jesus did she let everyone know about it—like, I understand that parenting is hard *now* a lot better than I did back when Maverick was born, but Taylor didn’t actually *parent.*

She’d sit on her ass watching Disney+ with the baby, get up a few times to refill her snacks, and she’d spend the whole day grazing her way through the grocery bill. Then, when Justin got home and the house was a wreck, she’d pull out the whole “being a stay-at-home-mom is hard too!” argument (despite only really mastering the “stay at home” part of that title) and send him back out to the truck and through a McDonald’s or Zaxby’s for dinner that night.

And this went on for… gosh… like *two years,* at least.

Maverick was for sure old enough to walk over and draw on the walls at some point. So definitely he was definitely old enough to get into some serious trouble if he was left unattended—which he all but really *was* since Taylor literally never puts her phone down *and* was too big to actually like get up and chase after him.

And I’m *not* exaggerating, Taylor blew up like a tick during her first pregnancy and didn’t lose any of the baby weight either. She was getting so big that she couldn’t get up off of their couch without help—if Maverick ever did something and she wasn’t in that rocker recliner, there was no way her fat ass was gonna be able to get up and stop him. This is *about* the time that her neck disappeared—when she started to look more like a marshmallow than a momma. She was getting so heavy that just the struggle of gaining enough momentum to get her up and moving would leave her sweating bullets and cursing under her breath. So most of the time, Taylor would just shut the living room door so that her son couldn’t get too far away from her while she watched TV or idled on Facebook.

Yeah, Taylor’s was not… shit, I guess she’s *still* not a good mom but… y’know, at least her kids are older.

Thank *God* for her parents being able to pick up the slack.

But that’s getting ahead of myself.

So okay, by this point, I hadn’t seen Taylor in *forever*. And, y’know, I was kinda going through it. Chris and I were in a fight for one reason or another and Hadley had started to see her (eventually ex-) girlfriend, so she hadn’t mastered that “friend : significant other” balance yet, and I got pinged for an invite to Kinsleigh’s Baby Shower on August 14th.

Yeah, no, that’s how she meant to spell it.

I know—look, *I* didn’t name the poor thing. And if I did I would have at least spelled it right.

I even thought it was stupid back then, but like I said, I didn’t exactly have any weekend plans and it’d been forever since Taylor and I had seen each other. I feel like I always say that about Taylor; but that’s because it always *feels* like forever whenever I talk about her. We literally used to hang out every day after school and spent a whole Summer together acting like hoodlums, but now that we’re both old and fat…

Okay, well, one of us *significantly* fatter than the other, but still.

Point is, I didn’t have a reason to stay home.

And, uh… while we’re talking about being significantly fatter…

“Haaaahhh… ughh… haaaay Hannaaa~!!”

Let’s talk about Taylor’s second pregnancy.

By the time of the baby shower, Taylor was a bloated, sputtering mess of a mother-to-be and it was almost entirely due to her weight. I don’t know how much of it was Kinsleigh making her crave milkshakes day and night throughout all three trimesters or Taylor’s continued trajectory for her downward slope, but the woman was fucking spherical. Like, when you gain a weight—a *bunch* of weight, like Taylor has—your face starts to *look* different. Like, her features looked softer and broader now. Her stomach was so heavy that she had to spread her feet apart like a damn foot and a half—

We’re *getting there*, relax.

—and she just looked so *miserable*. Not to be pregnant, not just to be up on her feet, but to be pregnant, on her feet, and in the middle of August lugging an extra three hundred pounds plus the other ten that would wind up being Kinsleigh. Her long dark hair was up underneath a sweaty mesh trucker cap, her neck buried underneath the fuckin’ roll of her double chin, literally looking like she was going to pop out of that poor t-shirt as she labored around in cutoff scrubs that let every pound of her swaddled, meaty thighs hang out in display.

I had caught her in-transit as she waddled swayback from her daddy’s truck, and I honestly didn’t think it was her. But when she saw my car (good ol’ Trusty Rusty—I miss that thing) she knew it was me, so she waved one of her fat little arms at me and started to lumber over in my direction. It’d been a long time since we’d seen each other in person, and just…

It sounds kinda mean to say, but even up close like this, I still didn’t believe that this was *actually* Taylor.

Don’t like, tell her that I told you this or anything, but Kelsey’s not a small girl. Not anymore. None of us are, but she’s gotten kinda big. But it still feels like I’m talking to my friend Kelsey, whom I have known for many years and am still very close with. No one stays the exact same from high school and that’s fine, you’re not supposed to, but whoever this four-hundred-pound heifer huggin’ up on me was, it took my brain a good little bit to go:

*Oh shit that’s Taylor.*

“Let’s… hhaaahhhhhh… gimme inside…” she wheezed at me while me and her daddy braced her out of concern, “M’exhawsted…”

From doing what, I didn’t know at the time. Literally anything could have exhausted Taylor at that point. She got winded just from sitting up. Her whole body was like a waterbed; thick and sloshing as heavy waves rippled with every impact. And watching her plop down on her parents couch, I was pretty confident that it’d take me and her daddy to get her back up. Taylor’s momma, who was pretty much the exact same since we’d graduated, was dwarfed by her own daughter—there could have been *four* Mrs. Mabrys sitting on that thing if Taylor hadn’t grown out to be such a cow, and the damn thing’s hydraulics would still work too.

“Aww, you didn’t have to get me anything, Hanna!”

The *way* that she spoke now didn’t even sound the same. It was almost like everything was harder to get out. Her voice was heavier, almost *huskier* underneath the tinny drawl that she’d picked up from living in Redneck Paradise. It was almost like there was half another ‘h’ between the ‘a’ and the ‘n’ in my name, and her obnoxious little giggle that we used to make fun of her for in high school had filled out to be just as full and round of a chuckle as she was. Surrounded by a bunch of her parents friends and distant family on their side, who were all pretty well-to-do if not outright wealthy, Taylor looked like a bushel of white trash that had washed up on, like, Hilton Head Island.

“Maverick, this is Aunt Hanna! She and mommy used to go to school together!”

“She’s pretty.”

“Ugh.” Taylor playfully scoffed to her child as he toddled around his grandparents’ living room unattended, “Is mommy *not* pretty?”

“Mommy’s fat.”

*Phew.* I have never been so worried about the life of a toddler in my *life.* That mild crack about her weight from a literal two-year-old made Taylor flip from mommy speak to a *stern* maternal tone. He spent the rest of the party in what would become his bedroom a little down the line, secretly armed with his tablet courtesy of his Gramma. But, like, if his mommy weren’t so fat she would have been able to beat his butt like I’m sure she wanted to.

“I *told* him not to talk bad ‘bout me in front of our son—”

“—ever since he started seein’ that *Mexican* girl that works with him…”

“Like that’s just not how you talk about the mother of your *child* right?”

I. Have. *Never.* Been as uncomfortable as I was at Taylor’s baby shower. Like, to this day. I had just intended to, y’know, *pop by.* Just a “hi, how ya doin’, happy baby bump, gotta go!” and a drive back home later. Forty-five minutes, tops. But Taylor kept *unloading* on me about how awful Justin was and how he was ruining their son and how he’d started cheating on her and blah blah blah blah *blah*!

And y’know that thing that she does? Where when she’s angry she sounds like a hundred percent more country? Well she’s stuffin’ her face with party favors the whole time, literally sounding like banjo strings every other word, and I’m just over here trying to figure out when in *h-ay-ell* she started talking like that.

I was there for, like, three hours. And I was the only one of Taylor’s *friends* that had shown up. Everyone else were either people from her momma’s work, her aunts, or her girl cousins. So I was being introduced to all of them as a “friend from high school”, and then *they* looked at *me* like *I* was responsible for the fact that Taylor had put on all that weight and turned into such a freeloader. Like, they didn’t know that I hadn’t seen Taylor in person in like two years. The way that Taylor and her parents made it sound, we were still just as close as we were back when we’d graduated!

Like *damn, I’m just as shocked that Taylor’s all but rolling from room to room y’all, chill.*

Ugh, and then there’s the after party.

I wound up being the last guest at the party because I’d had a glass of wine or two to help me make it through the Season Recap of the Taylor show, and by *that* point her parents were talking to her about when the divorce was gonna happen. I guess they’d talked about it enough beforehand that it was just kind of an open secret, but I had literally no preparation for that conversation to get *that* personal so quickly.

Blah blah. Justin had started cheating on her with a *Mexican* Girl (which, *can*not stress this enough, is *her* emphasis, not mine) and all that “we can work it out” mess fell through. Which, y’know, not shocking considering that I’m still not sure Maverick is Justin’s. But apparently Kinsleigh *is* and Taylor just can’t live in a world where she’s the one getting cheated on. I wasn’t about to bring up the very valid point about her old “roommate” in front of her parents, but I kinda wish that I had.

“Well, when *the time comes*…” whether her dad meant Kinsleigh being born or the impending un-nuptialing, I still don’t really know, “We want you to know that if you need it, you’ll always have a room upstairs.”

And that’s bullshit, because Taylor’s fat ass wasn’t going to haul herself up a flight of stairs every day to go to bed; she moved into their den.

Taylor and Justin had a pretty nasty break-up, from what I was around for. Getting roped back into all of this mess was my fault, really—I should have known that Taylor would be looking for someone else to lean on once the baby was born, and I probably enabled it a little more than I should have. But once the divorce was done, she took both the kids and more than enough child support for anyone else, and moved back in with her parents.

And there’s no *shame* in that—it happens to a lot of people, just…

How. Fucking. Stupid. Are her parents?

The reason that Taylor is… *Taylor* is because of the way that they enabled her in the first place. Like, she wasn’t a bad kid or anything, but that girl was spoiled rotten from the root! Y’know, when I was over for the baby shower, her mama told me that Taylor had never even *cleaned her own room* before she moved out with Justin? What in the hell was she doing thinking that she could play homemaker in that trailer? And more importantly, what in the hell did they think would change if they *still* didn’t make Taylor *do* anything?

Like, okay, they’re her parents, they’re happy to have her home again, I *get that*.

But aside from the occasional grocery run or getting guilted into picking up after her kids, Taylor’s mama and daddy didn’t make her do any more than when she was a stupid spoiled teenager who got married straight out of high school.

That first year with Kinsleigh, living with two parents who were overcompensating for finally having their little girl back after she’d been corrupted by that mean ol’ nasty husband of hers, Taylor probably barely had to lift a finger unless it was to scratch her ass. They were just so overjoyed to have Taylor and her precious angels back with them that Taylor just didn’t have to get a job. She didn’t need to work, at least not for an undisclosed “little while”. And for all of the inches that her parents took, trying to reel their daughter back onto the straight and narrow in the best way that they knew how, all Taylor could do was take every mile those little allowances could stretch out to.

And what do you expect me to say?

I’m really not shocked that Taylor started getting fat—it’s really just how fat she *got* that always gets me.

Like, y’know, you’ll know people who are kinda chubby and then they get kinda big, and you think *that makes sense*. Even if Taylor hadn’t ever had a weight problem before all this started, I just sort of stopped expecting it to plateau when literally every time I saw her in person or on social media she was *visibly* heavier. But never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that she would wind up to be this big.

She’s like… *reality tv* big…

And like I told you, none of us are as thin as we were back when we were all cheerleaders in high school. I’m fat, *Kelsey’s* fat, Laura’s… okay not *all* of us are fat, but Taylor Mabry was *not* supposed to wind up to weigh over five hundred pounds.

Five Hundred Pounds.

*More* than that.

And even if I hadn’t *just* run into her the other day, I would have known it. She regularly posts pictures of her kids when she and her momma are taking care of them throughout the day, and *sometimes* she gets caught in a frame off-guard; so you can see just how chunky her face is getting, or how she’s far, *far* more belly-heavy than her selfies might suggest. Just seein’ it in photos ain’t enough. You’ve gotta see it out and about—which is mighty hard since Taylor’s apparently gotten too fat to fuckin’ drive herself anywhere anymore.

And as much as I hate to say it, it wasn’t the worst thing in the world for Taylor to not be able to go out and do shit for a while.

That first year that Taylor was at home was spent mostly trying to rope people into babysitting her kids so that she could go out for a good time. But as the weight kept piling on, I’d imagine that it got harder and harder for her to justify to her parents why she was driving her over to her redneck friends’ house. And especially since, at that size, it was probably such an ordeal for her to get around that it just wasn’t worth it.

Everything that Taylor wanted to do was at home with her parents—sleep, drink (soda, and lots of it, instead of beer), and whine between meals.

Well… *almost* everything.

Like…

She still *dates*.

Wild, right?

I’m not sure what kind of loneliness drives a man to hook up with that amount of woman, but she’s had a few boyfriends over the years. Or at least, guys in her Instagram photos with her, I don’t know. At over five hundred pounds, Taylor’s no job having, two kids-barely-raising, living-with-her-parents ass was hooking up with enough chubby chasers for it to be *noticeable*.

Meanwhile cute little lipstick lesbian Hadley with her fancy job at the library’s *still* single.

What a world, right?

# Part Four:\_\_ Epilogue\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Back in the day, Taylor had been…

God, it’s hard to describe it without sounding like a total creep.

Like, now that I’m an adult, it just feels weird to talk about how much I loved this girl that I had barely even talked to when I was a kid.

You know how it is with small towns—everyone else went to the same schools growing up, but me having moved into this little slice of nowhere was just awkward all around. Everyone knew everybody else, and I knew absolutely no one. Yes, I eventually found a group of friends that would help me make it through the trials and tribulations of high school, but…

God, I would have killed to have been one of the popular kids. Literally just so I could talk to Taylor. I was so hung up on this girl, and…

Well, I feel kind of stupid about it now.

I mean, okay, you know how small towns are. No one ever leaves. Nothing ever changes. So coming back here, seeing her like this, it’s just…

“Now I know that ain’t li’l Arty Farty!”

So, so awkward.

Like, I know that it’s Summer. It gets hot around here. But wearing a cut-off at her size is just kind of... fuck, I don’t want to say trashy, but isn’t it?

All that belly hanging out was definitely by design—paled stretch marks that radiated out of a finger-deep navel told the tale of a rapid expansion, and the two kids clinging to her tree-trunk legs helped me to fill in the blanks from there. Her denim cutoffs were buttoned over the zenith of her gut as it bobbed from side to side with her awkward lumbering gait, her big arms held out in excitement over seeing the prodigal dork who had stuttered and fawned over her like she was God’s gift to Man.

“I ain’t seen you in years!” she announced happily, wheeling her cart full of junk food and prepackaged snacks forward with a squeaky wheel and a screaming two-year-old, “When did you get back in town?”

A fishing cap and a twist-tie held her dark hair back into a messy pony, letting me get a good look at just how much her face had broadened as it had become beset in chubby cheeks and a thick double chin. Her smile dimpled twice over as I obliged her hug, sinking deep into her tummy and ample chest.

“Oh things’re goin’ good, I guess… I don’t know if yer on Facebook, but me’n Justin broke up a li’l while back…”

There was a noticeable pause there as she shifted on her fat little feet, struggling against the urge to lean against the buggy and keep up appearances. She put her hands on her hips after I didn’t respond, belly bouncing slightly at the sudden motion of her hammy arms.

“I never did see why he picked on you so much.”

Taylor said it to me with a curious cocked eyebrow, a sultry look that I almost remembered from high school, just pointed at other guys.

“I mean personally, I always thought you were kinda cute…”

I shook my head and chuckled politely, looking away as I fumbled for words.

Like seriously, what in the actual fuck was I supposed to do with that now?

Now as in, “now that she weighed more than twice what I did.” Now as in, “now that she’d had two kids and had split up with the guy who beat me up in the bathroom twice.” And now as in, “now that I’m ready to settle, you’re lookin’ like a snack.”

Eventually, after my face turned bright pink, I settled on an answer.

“Awww, li’l Arty ~” Taylor’s voice could still hit that high note when she sang that godawful nickname as she clucked and crooned over my response, “You ain’t changed a bit.”

In good consciousness, I couldn’t say the same—I couldn’t even bring myself to try.

Taylor's figure was voluminous and imposing, making her a head-turner in more ways than one. Her enormous belly hung out beneath her stretched tank top that could barely contain it, sloping off into stretchy denim shorts that had probably been maternity wear once upon a time. Dimpled fat bulged around her hips as she inched closer to me incrementally as we talked. Her arms were similarly swollen with excess flesh; they squabbled with her breasts for space along her chest with her telegraphed and tubby movements. Her hammy biceps lead down to pillowy forearms and chunky little wrists before tapering off at sausage fingers capped by short nails painted pinkish red.

I took a step back, trying to gather my thoughts as Taylor continued her onslaught of flirtatious banter.

“C’mon now, don’t be a wallflower!” the bridge of Taylor’s nose wrinkled slightly as she smiled, “I ain’t gonna bite… much.”

She let out a husky little laugh that rolled right up from her belly and shook the cereal aisle around us.

"Just thought you'd appreciate bein' appreciated is all." She half-smiled again as if challenging me not to look away this time, casually tugging on a strand of hair hanging below the brim of her cap, “I seem to remember you appreciated me back in high school… ‘member?”

Before I could respond—thank *God*—the kid in the children's seat of Taylor's shopping cart burst back into the conversation with important news.

"Mama, daddy's callin'!"

"Shit." Taylor sighed and rolled her eyes, looking up at the ceiling in exasperation. “That man will *not* leave me alone!”

I tried to play it cool, but I could hardly mask my relief—as Taylor snatched the phone out of her toddler’s hands, I could practically *feel* my ticket out of this conversation getting closer and closer with every labored breath that my high school crush took.

“Look, I got business to tend to, but… if you’re gonna be back around…”

Taylor grabbed my hand and, with a pen, wrote her phone number down on the palm of my hand. I tried to pull away, but Taylor held my hand a bit longer than was comfortable.

"See ya ‘round." she said softly, finally letting me go and stepping back with a smile on her face. "Arty."