

# Chapter One

Jordan Jacobi sat across the table from his long-time girlfriend, Abbi Young. He took her hand and in a shaking voice said, “Abbi, I’m sure you’ve noticed I’ve not been myself lately. I’d like to explain.”

“You’re right; you have seemed a little off recently. What’s going on?” Abbi asked as she looked at his handsome face nervously.

“I don’t know where to start,” he replied as his fingers caressed her hand.

“Why not start at the beginning?” she urged.

“You know that football has always been my life. I was headed toward a pro career and then suddenly, after the accident, that was no longer an option.”

“Yes,” Abbi said.

“Jackson convinced me to follow in the family footsteps and go into medicine. I went along with it, because I saw no other option at the time. Now I’m in my residency and I’m just not sure medicine is where I belong.”

“Are you considering something else? Have you talked to your family about this?” Abbi asked in concern.

“Not yet, I felt I needed to speak with you first. A job has come open at our old high school. They’re looking for a health and phys-ed teacher, who can also coach the football team. I’m seriously considering applying for the position. I know the money will be substantially less than if I were to go on and join Jackson in his orthopedic practice, but this is looking more and more appealing to me. I’ve given it a lot of thought.”

“I see. You know I’m okay with whatever you decide, but you need to be absolutely sure.”

“Abbi, honey, there’s more. I’m so confused about my future right now. I just don’t feel it’s fair to you for me to be this confused. I love you with all my heart, but I think, at least for now, we should take a break.”

Abbi took a deep breath, not sure she’d heard him correctly. “Jordan, you can’t keep doing this. How many times are you going to want to take a break before you decide

it's over for good? You're right; it isn't fair, to either of us. If you're certain this is what you want, then so be it, but don't expect me to wait around like I have all the other times. Maybe we just aren't meant to be, after all."

"Abbi, I'm sorry. I don't mean to hurt you."

"Jordan, I love you, too. Maybe it's time we go our separate ways. If we're meant to make a life together, we'll find our way back to each other, in time. I can't put my life on hold yet again. We may be fighting for something that just isn't in the cards for us. I'll always love you, but if you aren't sure, I have to question our commitment to each other."

"I guess this is it," Jordan replied sadly. "I'll always love you, too."

"Talk to your family, do what you have to do. Know that I wish you all the happiness in the world and I'll always be in your corner, but I think it's time for you to take me home now."

Jordan paid the tab and drove Abbi to her apartment. He walked her to the door and gently kissed her on the cheek. "We'll stay in touch," he said as he turned to go.

He sighed when she didn't answer him, unlocked her door and went inside.

As he drove to his parents' house in McKinney, Texas, he rehearsed what he would say to them.

"Jordan, we weren't expecting you tonight. Is Abbi with you?" his mother, Mari, said as she opened the door.

"No, I just dropped her off at her apartment. I really need to talk to you and Dad. Is he here?"

"Yes, honey, he's here. Is something wrong?" his mother asked as she led him into the great room, where his dad was reading the newspaper.

"That depends on how you look at it," he said as he sat down.

"Son, what's going on, you look like you've just lost your best friend," Jon Jacobi said to his youngest son as he put his newspaper down and turned his full attention to Jordan.

"I may have," Jordan replied. "I broke up with Abbi tonight, but that's not the whole story."

“You and Abbi have broken up again?” his mother asked. “What on earth happened? We were all expecting the two of you to make an announcement soon, but this certainly wasn’t it.”

“Just hear me out before you say anything. This is going to be very difficult for me to say.”

“We’re listening,” Jon said with concern evident in his deep voice.

“You both know how much football has always meant to me. When I was paralyzed after the accident and was told I would never play again, my world was shattered. I was going to play pro ball. That’s all I ever wanted to do.”

“Yes, I know, sweetie,” Mari said as she touched his hand. “What does that have to do with Abbi? You’ve gotten past that and you’re on your way to becoming a fine, young doctor.”

“That’s just it, Mom. I’m not so sure that’s what I want. At the time, when Jackson suggested it, it seemed to be my only option. Now that I’m in my residency, I’m just not convinced that’s where I belong.”

“Where do you think you belong, Jordan?” Jon asked.

“The high school is advertising for a football coach. There is also a teaching position that comes with the job and I’m seriously considering sending my resume. There, I’ve said it.” He waited for the reaction from his parents.

Mari looked at Jon before speaking. Finally she said, “Now, honey, if that’s what you think will make you happy, it’s your decision. Have you given it a lot of thought?”

“I have. I told Abbi tonight that it isn’t fair to her for me to be so confused. That’s why I told her I thought we should take a break.”

“Son, what you do with your life is up to you. I won’t stand in your way or try to convince you to stay the course. One word of advice, though, that young lady isn’t going to wait around for you forever. No matter how strong her love is, she’ll reach a point where it just isn’t worth it. As far as career choices, I know your love of football, and I’ll support you in whatever you decide to do,” was Jon’s reply to his son’s news.

“Have you told your brother?” Mari asked quietly. “He’s the one who will most likely be upset by this news.”

“I haven’t yet, but I intend to. I realize he’ll be disappointed, but he never wanted anything other than to become a doctor. He’s always wanted to follow in Dad’s footsteps, but I didn’t. I don’t know if I can make him understand that or not.”

“You have our support and we’ll help you in any way we can. I do think you might want to reconsider your decision regarding Abbi, though,” his mother advised.

“I can’t, Mom. What’s done is done. She pointed out that if we’re meant to be, we’ll find our way back to each other.”

“She’s a smart girl, always has been,” Jon said. “Maybe you’re right. Maybe you need to focus all your attention on making your career dreams come true right now, before you take the walk down the aisle. In time, I hope you and Abbi can find your way back to each other. Now, I suggest if you’re really serious about this, you tell your brother before you send in that resume.”

“I know. I am really dreading that conversation. I’ll head over to their place when I leave here. Thanks for understanding,” he said as he stood up to go.

Mari hugged her son. “Sweetheart, we just want you to be happy. I’ve always known how hurt you were about not being able to play pro ball. If coaching can make up for some of that hurt, then I’m all for it.”

“She’s right, son, follow your heart,” Jon said as he shook Jordan’s hand. “Now, go see your brother.”

Jordan drove to his brother’s house, dreading the visit. He knew his parents were right about one thing; Jackson would be upset with him. The plan was for him to join Jackson’s practice when he’d finished his residency at Baylor.

Jordan parked his car and walked up to the front door. Jackson’s wife, Stacey, answered the door. “Hey, Jordan, come on in. We’re just finishing dinner.”

“Sorry to intrude,” he said as he picked up his niece, Jacie.

“Uncle Jordie!” the little girl screamed.

“Hey, sweet girl, how are you?” Jordan asked as he planted a kiss on her forehead.

Jackson walked into the room. “Hey, little bro, what’s up?”

“I need to talk to you about something. Can we talk in private?” he asked.

Stacey took the hint. "Come on, Jacie girl, you can help Mama with the dishes." She took her daughter from Jordan and carried her into the kitchen, leaving the two brothers to talk.

"What's going on?" Jackson asked as he led his brother into the living room.

"I have something to tell you. I've made some decisions about my future and I wanted you to know before I act on them."

"Why do I get the feeling I'm not going to like this?" Jackson asked as he sat down.

"Probably because you won't," Jordan told him. "For starters, Abbi and I have decided to take a break."

"Again?" his brother asked. "How many times does this make?"

"This may be the final break. Sometimes, things just aren't meant to be. But that's not the only decision I've made." Taking a deep breath before he went on, he told Jackson of his other decision.

"Wow, I didn't see that one coming. Jordan, are you sure you know what you're giving up? How can you be certain this is the right thing for you? I know your love of football, but really?"

"I can only try it. I may not get the job. If I do and I don't like it, I can always return to medicine. Please try and understand. You're different than me. All you ever wanted to do was practice medicine. I never wanted that. When I had the accident, it seemed like the logical alternative, but now I'm not convinced that it is. I have to do this. It's the only way I'll ever know for sure."

"I'm not happy about it, but do what you have to do. I can't help but feel you're making a huge mistake and you're going to be sorely disappointed."

"I'm sorry if I've disappointed you, but it's my life. I'll leave now. I have a lot to do."

"Jordan, I may not agree with your choices, but you'll always be my brother. Good luck. If it doesn't work out, I'm here."

"Thanks, I'll catch you later." Jordan said as he went into the kitchen to tell his sister-in-law goodbye.

"Is everything okay?" Stacey asked.

“It will be. I’ll let Jackson explain. Jacie, come give your old uncle a hug.”

After a sloppy kiss and a bear hug, Jordan drove to his apartment and began working on his resume. The decision had been made and the people most important to him had been told. The next step would be to wait and see if he got the job. He hit the send button on the email that could change his life forever, shut down the computer and got ready for bed. He had the early shift at the hospital and he knew the days would drag until he heard back from the school. Just before drifting off to sleep, he sent a text to Abbi.

“Never doubt my feelings for you. I told my family tonight and I’ve sent the resume.”

There was no reply.