

The Chosen Ones: How Three People Changed My Life

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“The Chosen Ones” Ryan, Cody, Sara, and myself on a trip to Asheville in January, 2013

My sophomore year at East Tennessee State University began as regularly as expected. I arrived early on a Friday morning to move into my dorm, Davis Apartments, with my roommate Sara, whom I have been friends with since Kindergarten. The day was filled with the anticipated hustle and bustle, but our sophomore year got off to a slow start. Not having many friends nearby, Sara and I spent much of our time alone in our room. We had no idea that in a short amount of time, we would meet two boys named Ryan and Cody, and we would have the most exciting year of our lives so far.

How “The Chosen Ones” Began...

One night towards the end of January, Sara and I met some new friends, two guys named Cody and James, who lived around the corner. As they walked in the door to our apartment, I judged them immediately. James was wearing nothing but a furry, blue housecoat and slippers, and his roommate Cody looked like he was about to go for a hike in his outdoorsy attire. My first impression was questionable. Cody and I immediately hit it off. James and I, not so much. I bonded with Cody over video games and music, and Sara and Cody likewise became instant best friends.

A few weeks later, we all decided to have a movie night. It was this night that I met Ryan, another Davis resident. At first, I did not know what to think of him either, as he stayed off to the corner reading his book. He had his long hair in a ponytail and was dressed reminiscent of a surfer in his shorts, sandals, and beach sweatshirt. But every now and then his phone would ring, playing the theme song to Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, which I was immediately drawn to. We talked about how we both watched that show growing up, which led to many other topics of conversation, and a friendship was formed.

And then there were four. We eventually added a girl named Chellie, another freshman who lived across campus in Carter Hall, an all-girls dorm. She and Ryan flirted with each other at every opportunity, so she was around a lot of the time. As the weeks went by, the five of us spent more and more time

together, breaking off from everyone else and forming our own little group, which we dubbed “The Chosen Ones” because of a stupid comment I made one day. We spent so much time together that we had the



Cody, Ryan, Chellie, and Sara in the big bed; one of our first group pictures; Spring of 2012

genius idea to make a giant bed in my dorm. We took the beds

apart, moving the frames completely out of the way, and Ryan brought his mattress from his room down the hall. We then made a huge bed in the floor of the three mattresses which the five of us slept in every night until the end of the semester. To say that we were obsessed with each other is a little of an understatement.

By the end of the semester and the beginning of summer, Ryan and Chellie had inevitably began a relationship. It didn't last long, with them breaking it off sometime over the summer. Chellie decided that she wanted to join a sorority once the fall semester began, and the times that we saw her were very limited. We rarely, if ever, talk to her anymore.

For the duration of the next two semesters, Sara and I basically took up residence in Ryan's new apartment in Buc Ridge, the on-campus housing apartments up the hill from main campus. Ryan and our friend Brett lived at one end of the apartment, each having a bedroom and sharing a bathroom, with two other boys living at the other end, with the living room and kitchen in the center. This common area was

frequently inhabited by Sara and me, sleeping on the couches most nights. We were there so much that we could almost pass for really living there, using their in-apartment washer and dryer, spending nights on the couch doing homework, and making dinner for everyone in the apartment. Cody floated somewhere between his same dorm room at Davis and Ryan's apartment, but we all still made time for each other. We took many "adventures" together, such as ghost hunting in Kingsport, haunted corn mazes in the fall, hiking and jumping off waterfalls, and random road trips to Knoxville just because we liked driving and listening to music (Cody always protested against the random drives. He never saw the fun in them, but he went along anyway if we made him.).

Who We Are...

Even almost two years later, things are basically the same. Cody lives off campus, so we see him less than we would like. Sara and I live together again, this year in Buc Ridge, with Ryan and his roommate Brett living about four rooms down the hall. We are all a little busier now, all of us having time consuming jobs and class schedules, but we still find ways to make time for each other. How I met the three of them is one story, but how they have impacted my life is another.

I met Sara in elementary school. We were best friends up until middle school when she moved to Ohio for a few years. Once she came back during high school, things were different between us. We weren't as close as we used to be. But once we discovered that we both wanted to live on campus at ETSU, we decided to live together, and I haven't regretted it one day since.

Sara is a person who won't judge you. Or if she does, she doesn't let it show. I can tell her the most meaningless stories from my day and she will still find some way to be interested in what I am saying. Sometimes it amazes me how she knows what I am thinking. I can give her a certain look or



With Sara in March, 2013

say the vaguest comment, and she will know exactly what I am talking about. I guess after living in a small room with someone for so long, that's what happens. I don't think I've ever really gotten mad at her, which is not something I can say about most people; she is very easygoing and genuinely just a nice person. She tries to help me in any way she can. We motivate each other to try harder in school and our jobs, which I always appreciate when I start feeling a little lazy. I couldn't imagine going through college without her or living with anyone else.

Cody and Sara are very similar people, which is why I think they are so close. They are both very "chill" and like to just hang out around the house and drink a lot of beer. At one point, Cody's only pair of shoes got stolen so he walked around barefoot everywhere, even in the snow. He has been thrown out of Walmart more than once for having no shoes.



With Cody in September, 2013

Cody is one of those people that is just naturally funny and doesn't have to try. He is very caring and gives great advice; for some reason I always feel more comfortable telling him my problems than anyone else. He always knows what to say, even if he knows that it will hurt my feelings, and that is one of the main things I appreciate about him. He is very stingy and won't spend a dollar unless it's on beer, but I know that if I needed a dollar and he had one that he would give it to me. He is also very even-tempered, which I admire. Even in the hardest situations, I have never seen him get mad. I don't think he knows how to be mad. When Cody gives a hug or says "I love you," it always brightens my day. He is not one to display affection, so when he does, it means the most to me out of anyone.

Ryan, however, is my other half. I never knew what a real friend could be like until I met him. He is a lot like Cody in the way that he tells me like it is 100% of the time. He is extremely caring yet hard-

headed. He is one of the most stubborn people I have ever met, a lot like myself. I could spend every day with him, and I have, and never get tired of having him around. He knows how to push my buttons more than anyone, but he also knows when to stop. When other people keep annoying me until I explode, Ryan knows what my limit is. He can read me like I'm an open book. He criticizes my boyfriends or possible boyfriends when he thinks that I need to hear it. And the most important thing: he taught me how to not burn the house down when I cook.

He has been called the “dad” of the group by many different people. He takes care of us when we're sick or going through a difficult time, and he always knows what to say for any situation. He knows



With Ryan in November, 2013

how to calm me down when my awful temper gets the best of me. But he is also a very fun person. Some of the best times of my life have been experienced with Ryan. Last Christmas Day, after celebrating with my mom's family and my dad's family, I left around 9:00am for a 3 hour drive to Chattanooga to celebrate with Ryan and his family and stayed for a whole week. It was one of the most exciting Christmases I have ever had.

What Keeps Us Together...

Weirdly enough, besides the Chellie and Ryan fling, none of us have ever had a fling with anyone else in the group. You would think that as much time as the four of us spend together, some kind of romantic interest would pop up, but it never has. Either we just are not interested in each other, or no one is willing to admit any interest in anyone else.

The four of us are very content with the relationships we share together. Even if someone did become romantically interested in someone else in the group, I really don't think any of us would pursue it. We are too much like a family. There's nothing wrong with any of our own families, but we provide each other with a home away from home. Ryan and Cody live over three hours away, and even though Sara and I don't live that far from home, we choose to stay on campus most of the time. We are all in this college experience, so we might as well spend it together with the people we love.

Everyone knows what it's like to have a friend. Some people might think that it's weird for four people to basically live in a one room apartment together for months at a time, and they're probably right. It is kind of weird. But maybe they've never experienced what it's like to have some incredible friends. We never get tired of each other or mad at each other, and if we do, it's never for long.

I have faced some pretty dark times in my life the past few years, and they have been there through it all. At times when I felt like giving up, they were there to pick me up, kick me in the butt (sometimes literally), and make me go on. Who knows what will happen after we graduate. We may never talk to each other again. I might not even see them again. However, I know that I have made some of the most important memories of my life in the past two years. Some people are lucky to find just one great friend in their lives. Somehow, I got lucky and found three.



The Chosen Ones at the Acoustic Coffeehouse on November 8, 2013

