

# Decisions

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In the hospital down highway 6 with the aroma of freshly baked, salted pretzels floating through the slightly opened window. My moms pale face and light brown hair laying limply on the pillow. Her hand in mine for what felt like entirety. Then, out of nowhere, the equipment beeps, the doctors and nurses rush in and quickly usher me out. I remember sitting in the cough-drop smelling waiting room for what felt like months but was really only hours. Finally, the head doctor called my name, took me into a private room, and broke the news. That was the last time I saw my mom, Courtney Nicole Reid, before Pancreatic Cancer took her 3 years ago. Dad kinda broke down after that, drinking, having parties, stuff like that. A year later he was arrested. So there I was, little 12 year old Maddie, taking care of both myself, and my younger brother, Jacob. Not to long after that, CPS came and took us to our first foster home. Ever sense, me and Jacob have been in and out of foster homes all over New Jersey. Take my word for it, being in foster care sucks. But the worst part, by far is leaving with the thought that you would never see the people you have grown to love again. They, like many other families before them, made the decision to leave you to the fate of the next family. They had rejected you. They were.... gone

“Maddison!” my current foster mom , Karen Reynolds, yells up to me. “Wake up honey, its time for school!” I roll out of bed.. or more like fall out of bed, without thinking and stumble to the door. “Im up!” I scream down before she could damage my eardrums any more than she already had. My brain finally caught up with my body and I groan realizing its.....drumroll please.....Monday! I find a pair of ripped, faded jeans hanging up in my closet and a tie-die shirt sprawled on my floor for whatever reason. I close the door to the closet and struggle to put on both. As I'm getting out of the closet I randomly find a pair of socks I never knew I had and slip those on too. After a full 30 minutes of wrestling into my outfit I head down the hall to the bathroom. I quickly wash my face, put on a thin layer of my new favorite mascara, and put my light brown hair in a messy bun. I walk down the stairs and nearly trip halfway down. Once I'm finally down I'm greeted my the warm smell of bacon. “Good morning Maddie!” Karen says as soon as she sees me slouched against the wall in a tiered lump. “Mornin” I reply on instinct. “Were’s Jacob” I ask as I look around for my brother wondering if I somehow missed him upstairs. “At school” I glance at the clock “Already? Its only 7:30!” Karen continues to cook bacon as she replies. “He had to re-take a test that he failed..again.” Jacob has been flunking school ever sense we moved in with the Reynolds. Ive tried helping him study and do homework, but both of us know that he never really pays attention. After things got really bad we hired a touter but that didn't work either. Its now gotten to the point were if he doesn't get his grades up soon he'll have to do 7th grade over again. The sound and smell of bacon sizzling snap me out of my thoughts. I grab a piece of bacon and get to work on packing my lunch. While spreading mustard on my sandwich I get lost in my thoughts again. I think about the other day when my caseworker, Jenna , called and told me my dad had gotten out of jail. The next day I saw him in the bar next to Kmart on my way home from the mall. Things just got weirder from there. The same day I saw my dad I got a phone call from an unknown number saying he, whoever HE was, had found my dog, Winston. I told him he must have the wrong number, considering the fact that Karen is allergic, and was about to hang up when I heard a scream and the sound of breaking glass from the other side of the line. The screaming stopped and my worry was greeted by silence until out of nowhere, I hear my name over the phone. “Maddie?” a

low, husky voice said. "Yes this is Maddie....who is this?" I wait for an answer, and after 15 minutes of straight up nothingness, I get one. "Has it really been that long?" the voice asks. "That long? I know you" I think of all the people I know and try to connect the voice to my memory. "Meet me at the Buck-ees on the corner tomorrow at 3:00 ....alone" he adds. I start to freak out a little at the thought of meeting this guy by myself. "Wait but I don't even know you!" I answer my anxiety filled voice rising by the minute. "Hello?" By this point I'm practically yelling. I lower the phone down and realize whoever was calling had hung up. My senses suddenly rush back to me and I feel a stinging pain in my finger. I look down and abruptly become aware of the fact that there is a long gash along the side of my finger were I accidentally cut myself while thinking about the mystery guys phone call. I washed the cut, found a band-aid and stuck it on. I told Karen I was leaving and started walking to Buck-ees. A few hours after the mystery call I decided that, no matter how dangerous it might be, I needed to met this guy and find out why he called me. I asked my friend, Zoey, to cover for me and she agreed. After a 15 minute walk and 20 minutes of waiting i heard someone call my name. "Maddie!" whoever it was yelled. i recognized the voice immediately as the speaker from the call. "Over here!" he yelled. Once I found were the voice was coming from I froze, unable to do anything. I HAD met him! And the reason I didn't recognize his voice was because I hadn't heard it clearly in 3 years. He looked almost exactly how I remembered him to. "Nice to see you again." he said. except now "he" had a name, Daniel Jonathan Reid. Better known as.....dad.