

## With Time and Patience

*The time each morning I had to get up for chores:*

5:30 a.m.

*Ms. Hilton said, "Your last day of chores, how exciting is that?"*

I just shrugged.

*Something I taught myself how to do:*

Gardening. I had found the garden by the side of the barn on my second day in the home. It was a rectangular patch of dirt with an assortment of weeds mutilating its appearance like a bad haircut. I asked Ms. Hilton if I could tend to it. She replied, "I'll add it to your list of chores, Andi. Taking care of a garden is a lot of work, you know?" I nodded and went to find tools in the shed.

*The first time I ever saw the Parsons:*

I was rushing up the stairs with a handful of baby chicks for Mia to see.

*And the second time:*

When I heard the knock, I immediately thought that I was going to be punished for bringing animals inside. Mia hadn't stopped gushing since I brought them in, though she mostly made loud, excited noises, but I could tell she was happy all the same. So when Joe walked in, I let out a relieved sigh. He didn't spare a second glance at the small, yellow creatures, he only said, "Ms. Hilton wants to see you in her office."

Getting Mia's attention, I signed to her I would be back soon and to watch the chicks for me. She nodded with a toothless grin. Brushing passed Joe, I began recalling events from the past week, or even month. Though as I stood at her door, I wasn't sure what it was I needed to defend myself for. Unprepared, I knocked and she called for me to enter. As I opened the door, I

was met by two sets of earthly brown eyes belonging to the couple I had bumped into on my way up the stairs.

*What I liked about my new room at the Parson's:*

The yellow walls.

*What I didn't like about my new room at the Parson's:*

I had to share it. With my new sister.

*2:53 p.m. June 15, statement made by Ms. Hilton resulting in my immediate exit from the room:*

“Andi, I'd like you to meet Jon and Andrew Parson, we were just discussing a date for you to be put under their permanent care.”

*The phrase Ms. Hilton liked to use instead of 'adoption':*

“Permanent care.”

*Where the Parsons lived:*

Washington

*Where the home was:*

New Mexico

*Why they came that far for me:*

I don't know.

*Where I went after I left her office:*

I hid in the upstairs closet, Jaime's room, because she had the most clothes and I could count them while I waited.

*How long it took for them to find me:*

31 minutes and 26 seconds

*At 32:47:*

“Andi, please behave, this could mean the beginning of a new life for you. Think about what Zack wanted.”

*At 35:16, an apology/introduction Ms. Hilton prompted me to say:*

“I’m sorry for my rude behavior, my name is Andi. It’s nice to meet you.”

*How many shirts Jaime had in her closet:*

23

*How many times I cried after the papers were signed:*

More than that.

*The last thing my best friend ever gave me:*

Dear Andi,

For a little shit, you’re kinda cool. Do me a favor. Prove those bastards wrong. I was lost the moment I was born, not you though. You’ve got the whole world ahead of you. Don’t forget that.

Sincerely,

Zack

*Emotion that overwhelmed me:*

Loneliness.

*Occasion for the loneliness that has left me feeling exposed:*

After I signed the line under Andrew Parson’s signature, I sat the pen on the desk and stared at it. My signature could barely be called cursive, they stopped teaching it at the local school the year before I got there, so I just connected my letters at the bottom, making it look like sloppy print. I could feel them smiling at me, obviously excited by what had just occurred. But I just stared at the paper, my eyes following it as Ms. Hilton picked it up and placed it with the rest of the stack.

The signed paper disappeared into the pile with the others, now indistinguishable, and I felt like my fate had been sealed. I realized, which drowned out Ms. Hilton's excessive gushing, that I had no one to tell this to. Of course the other kids would hear, we all knew when someone was leaving. But I had been in the home the longest, I had lost so many people. And now I didn't have anyone. Because truthfully, who were the Parsons to me?

*A funny question:*

Nothing, really.

*Overstatement to Jon Parson made by me:*

"Just leave me alone already! I hate you both. What can you even do about it? What right did you have to take me away from everything I ever knew?"

*Situation that led up to said overstatement:*

It was the first time I had ever been on a plane, and I didn't enjoy a single second of it. Without the ground beneath my feet I felt vulnerable and weak. The airport had been crowded, both the Parsons made attempts to comfort me, which in turn only made me more anxious. Once on the plane, my nerves settled slightly, but my skin had a thin layer of cold sweat covering it, making me feel sticky. I had to hold my head once the turbulence began.

Later on, I would try to blame it on my horrible experience during the plane ride, but in reality it was my lack of self-control that undoubtedly did me in. As I climbed into their car after exiting the airport my stomach rolled in waves.

"Are you alright, Andi?"

"I'm fine."

"You sure, we can wait a second? Are you carsick?"

"I said I'm fine."

"Well just tell us if want us to stop. We don't want you getting sick if-."

*The one thing I knew for sure:*

I didn't mean it.

*5 things I would do if I could turn back time:*

1. Take my animals with when I left the home.
2. Ask my birth parents why they abandoned me.
3. Never use pesticides on my garden, I lost a whole harvest that year.
4. Put myself in Zack's place.
5. Take back what I said to the Parsons.

*Question to ponder:*

Which type of pepper tastes the best? (Most would say red, but I'm a green person myself.)

*Fact that also needs to be pondered:*

The reason why everyone abandons me.

*10:08 a.m. June 21, snippet of a telephone conversation between Andrew Parson and Ms. Hilton that I "overheard":*

Andrew: I think she's adjusting well, everyone moves at their own pace.

Ms. H: Yes, but Andi can be a rather...tenacious young girl.

I rolled my eyes at that.

Andrew: Nothing wrong with a bit of confidence. Now, about the farm?

Ms. H: Oh yes, yes, here let me see.

I couldn't stop my heart from fluttering.

*Helpful hint from me to you:*

An easy way to keep your garden healthy is Epsom salt. An elderly lady from my old farmer's market told me this after tasting one of my tomatoes.

“Hmm mmm. This won’t do. Did you put Epsom salt in your soil?”

“Uh, no.”

“A tablespoon when planting and then another after the soil has matured will do you wonders, young lady.”

“Oh, uh, thanks.”

It was truly an inspiring moment for me.

*8:36 a.m. June 23, what I saw when I looked out the kitchen window:*

A goat. My goat. The one Zack helped me buy after a good month at the market.

*8:42 a.m. June 23, what Lyssa, my new sister, did when she looked out the window:*

Screamed. Loudly.

*The color of my new barn:*

Yellow. To match my new room.

*Snippet of conversation between Jon and me, after he was awoken by Lyssa’s scream:*

“So, you had them brought all the way up here.”

“Well, yes we did. Andrew and I thought it would be good for you.”

“4 chickens, 2 pigs, one goat, and a cow.”

“Yes, I believe so.”

“Okay...thank you”

“You’re welcome, Andi.”

*Obvious thing that suddenly occurs to me as I watched Andrew try and lead my cow, Jess, from the trailer:*

I have parents, who care about me.

*A funny question, repeated one more time:*

Who are the Parsons to me?

Everything, really.