

INSIDE THE ABORTION CLINIC

Today is Tuesday. One week and five days ago, I found myself in an examination room in a Woman's Clinic with my feet frozen and teeth chattering - out of nerves? ...more than likely out of sheer terror. I had been told by my personal ob-gyn that I could not carry a child to full term - that the risk was too great. Upon her recommendation, she referred me to a clinic and assured me that a surgical abortion was the only responsible choice for me to make, as far as the baby's safety and mine as well. I was told that the chances of having a late still birth were almost certain and that if that were to happen that the baby would feel far more pain than at the early stage I was at upon entering the clinic's door.

I was left there under the fluorescent lights for almost a half an hour without being offered a blanket or consolation, or even a nurse to answer the billions of questions I had swimming around in my head. I did not have a pillow under my head, no socks on my feet. there was a radio built into the examination room wall that was loudly chattering static and ads, mixed with early 90's hip hop that I thought absolutely absurd given the situation.

Finally, after waiting and regretting and crying and setting myself into a near delirious panic, a nurse came in through the door. Without introducing herself or checking to make sure I was okay (although to any normal person I would have looked like I had just been through a small war. and I had... between right and wrong, fighting inside of myself), she began to rifle through drawers and finally produced a wrapped set of metal instruments... the kinds of things that looked like they belonged in a field tent during an early battle. they looked like the kind of things one would use to torture someone. They clanked together, and I flinched everytime I heard that sound. I will NEVER, EVER forget that sound. It is the most painful sound I have ever heard in my life. It made my jaw shake and my teeth ache with the metal ringing. I was crying. I was crying so hard I couldn't make myself stay quiet even though I was holding my hands over my mouth. And this woman turned around and looked at me like I wasn't even there, turned back, continued her arrangement of the tools, still in plain line of my sight. When she finished she said, "the doctor will be right in," and quickly left. No words of encouragement, no words of sympathy, not one personal sentiment came out of her mouth, and that, in that moment, was what I needed the most. Had she said one word to me, even just a simple "are you okay, honey?," I would have been so thankful. I just needed someone, and I couldn't even get that. A touch on the shoulder or a squeeze of the hand, just a meeting of eyes to show that you ARE still a human being during your most humiliating moment. You aren't allowed to bring anyone back into these rooms, so once you pass a certain point, you are on your own. You will go through the worst experience of your entire life COMPLETELY alone.

The doctor came in the room, mumbled his name and strapped the laughing gas over my nose and told me to breathe. I was given no sedative, no pain medicine, no warning. He rolled an ultrasound tool over my belly and said "alright so you're eight weeks pregnant... well, the problem is you don't wanna be pregnant, huh? Well, I'll take care of that." Before I could answer in a collected manner, to say that NO, that was not the case... and PLEASE could I ask him some questions, he was pushing my legs open and there appeared a nurse helping him. I couldn't get any words in my mouth but I was panicking. I was shaking my head and sobbing and everything was so fuzzy because of the gas and I couldn't focus on anything except that I didn't want it anymore. I tried to close my legs and keep them shut and I shook my head "no" as violently as I could, and they just pushed my legs apart and he said, "now stay still or you could hurt yourself." And it was all so blurry, I just remember hearing the metal clank and shaking and crying. No, I wasn't crying, I was losing my mind. I was sobbing the way you hear a woman who has lost her husband sob, the way you hear a woman who has lost her child sob. And, oh, it hurt so bad. It was

so cold down there and so warm at the same time, and I was biting my lip so hard I tasted blood, and finally a different nurse opened the door and took my hand. and I looked at her and I just kept shaking my head “no” over and over and over and over and she didn’t get it either... I just don’t understand... how can you just pretend like you don’t see how hurt I was? And they were talking about paper towels. They were talking about buying paper towels and what a deal you could get at Sam’s Club or something and I just couldn’t understand WHY or HOW? And I was so humiliated, I was so scared for my child my poor child that I couldn’t save because I was too scared and too confused to open my mouth. And then I felt a suction and the worst pain I have ever felt in my life came with it and I swear I felt a tear in my body, a rip and I was emptied and there was so much blood. I felt it running down the table and I screamed. I finally opened my mouth when it was too late and I screamed “NO” like it would make a difference. I kept screaming it over and over and over while they ignored me. They forced me off the table as quickly as possible and told me to “keep quiet, you’re scaring the other patients.” And I will NEVER ever mean something so much in my life as when I looked at the nurse straight in the face with tears rolling down and said through my teeth, “They should be scared!”

I sat in a cold room in a chair that was completely upright and more uncomfortable than I thought lying on the tile floor would be. I threw up several times and just kept crying and the nurses kept saying things like, “What’s wrong with you? Everything is over. You’re okay. it can’t hurt that bad.”

But it did. It hurt my heart so bad. My heart and my body and my spirit were broken in a matter of minutes. I regret what I did so much. I have not smiled truthfully since then. I cry at night. I wake up and swear that I’m bleeding to death. I had a dream last night that my husband woke me up from, he touched me because he said I was writhing and twitching and saying “no, no, no, no,” and when he touched me, I jumped up screaming as loudly as I could. In my dream, I was pregnant and someone was in our house, and they came and cut into my stomach with a knife while we were asleep. I have been back to the same clinic twice since a week and five days ago - once the doctor said I was depressed and that I should see a psychiatrist and gave me an anti-depressant to take. From there, I told him the reason why I had to have the abortion, and that I wished I had had time to talk to him about it before I felt like I was forced to open my legs. To this he replied, “Well, your ultrasound looked fine. perhaps your OB-GYN was mistaken. I think there’s a chance you could have carried to full term, or at least induced an early labor. But as far as the development until then, you were great. I could have referred you to a specialist that would have worked with you.”

I... am still in shock. You mean to tell me that I was fine? You mean to tell me that you didn’t bother reading my chart to read the part where it asked me WHY I was having the abortion. He had the power to say something, he had the power to stop it and say, “Wait a minute, your baby could be okay. why are you here?” He had the power to pay attention when I was violently shaking my head, “no”. My heart... as of right now... I honestly don’t know how I will be able to deal with all of this. They say that you can get over things like this if you are strong enough... but I don’t know that I am. I don’t know if anyone in their right mind would be.

The second time back to the office, I was seen by a nurse because the doctor did not have time for me. I was treated rudely both times. In fact, while I was writing this testimonial, I had to stop because I started panicking. While I was staring at what I had written on the computer screen, I was on the phone with the doctor... well here is our exact conversation.

Doctor: hello?

Me: (crying) Please help me, I don’t know what to do. I’m so sad. I just can’t stop.

Doctor: Stop what?

Me: Crying. I can't stop crying. I can't breathe. What did I do?

Doctor: (sighs) Well, I told you, you're depressed. I can't do anything for you. You have to go to the hospital or something.

Me: Why should I have to go to the hospital? YOU are a doctor. YOU are the one that's the closest to the root of my problem, you and me. Please, what do I do?

Doctor: Go to the hospital. They have mental health people there. They'll sedate you at least. Come back and see me in three weeks for your check up. (hangs up phone)

When I finish typing this, I'm going to go to the hospital. I don't know what else to do. Is it possible to die of a broken heart?

Girls, women... PLEASE, just think a little harder before you lay down on the bed in that examination room. Think about the power that YOU have to choose, just like the power the doctor had to choose for me. PLEASE. The way I feel right now is not something that I would EVER wish on someone, and I only hope that you can find it in your hearts to make the choice to NOT feel this way, to NOT end a life, a life that could be so beautiful, like my child's should have been. My child's tiny hands that I will never get to touch. But instead, maybe my story can be my way of reaching out to touch your hands. That will have to be enough to get me by for now.

You have a choice, just know that you have a choice.