

I lived a total of almost four months on earth. Less than most people, but there are about 88 of us who die every minute. Every one of those 120 days was lived out in my mother's womb. Her name was Melissa. She was twenty-five years old, fresh out of medical school and living high. She had recently been employed at a medical research laboratory, investigating the causes of cancer and some tentative cures. Also working there was a young man named Richard, who had been appointed at work there for some time.

They didn't really encounter each other much at first but inevitably, their vocation engaged them in conversation and it was - mutual attraction at first conversation. Her natural charm caused faltering in his usually solid, steady, and composed person. Through one tragic choice, my mother got pregnant and found out the "good news" two and a half months into my life. She was devastated. Not only was I going to ruin her budding career in medical research, but she also wasn't married and had no plans for entering into that union in the near future. Telling her parents was out of the question-because like any parent in this situation, they would be extremely disappointed. Oh, and then there was Richard. He'd be distraught also. She couldn't convince herself to tell him and reasoned that the struggle was her own. She would involve as few persons as possible because she didn't want to go hurting anyone unnecessarily.

Unsure of what to do, she sat down at her computer to find the nearest Planned Parenthood center. She had heard that they provided advice on the "unplanned"

aspect of pregnancy. Weeks on end passed before she could bring herself to go to the nearest clinic, excruciatingly confusing and lonely weeks. Weeks so filled with anxiety and isolation that she became physically sick. She figured that she had the time before her pregnancy started to show to make the final decision.

Finally, about a month later, she brought herself to visit the clinic, a mere fifteen minutes away. Inside the impeccably clean office, she nervously waited for an opportunity to talk with someone. Then, a pleasant looking woman stepped out from behind an office door and asked if she could help her. My mother feebly nodded her head and then realizing that it was her turn to say something, was able to blurt out, "I'm pregnant."

"Ok," said the woman, "How can I help you?"

"I need some advice on what to do..."

My mother went on to tell her everything, how she couldn't have a child because her job wouldn't allow her the time to take care of it. How she hadn't told anyone, how she was at a road block and had no idea how to proceed. The woman listened patiently, nodding here and there. Finally when there came a break in the steady speaking, she gently put a hand on my mother's arm.

"Honey," she said, "The best thing for any person to do in your situation would be to have an abortion performed as soon as they possibly could. You won't be able to raise a child in your situation. You'll be able to go on with life afterward without the perpetual racking of your brain to figure out how you are going to keep your job and how you are going to tell the people you know about the pregnancy. It will be a simple,

painless procedure, where the pregnancy will be removed, and you will be able to leave the clinic freer and in higher spirits than when you arrived. I can give you a phone number for a clinic near your home and then you can make an appointment in the next week to have it done. Really there is nothing to worry about. Just calm down and think about my advice to you. If you have any more questions, I'd be more than happy if you would give me a call."

Feeling much better, with some things to think about, and the clinic numbers in her pocket, my mother left the Planned Parenthood office much more confident in what she was about to do. As she stepped into her car, she looked over into the passengers seat. There was a picture of her younger sister minutes after her birth. Wondering how it had gotten there, she picked it up and shoved it into her purse. Even as she did, there formed a peculiar feeling of trepidation in the pit of her stomach, but most of it was diluted by the new confidence she had.

Back at home, she called the number right away and made an appointment for ten days later. The day came with surprising speed. As she drove her car leaving for her 10:15 appointment, she sensed that odd feeling but quickly pushed it away with thought of having the load that was currently breaking her back, lifted off in a couple of hours. Her life would resume its normal pace. She would be able to concentrate on her job, feel unabashed in the presence of her parents, and possibly continue her relationship with Richard.

At the hospital, she hurriedly parked and walked to the adjacent abortion clinic...

Before I go on any more with the story, I will tell you a little bit about myself. At almost a full four months of life, I had evolved into an amazingly recognizable human being, largely different from the bundle of cells I had began life as. More than a month and a half before my mother even knew I was inside of her, my miniscule heart was beating. I was thinking, a spectacle revealed through detectable brain wave patterns at forty days old and I could squint, swallow, or make a fist at eleven weeks old. At nine weeks, I was swimming and having fun doing back flips. My definitive uniqueness ad already been fashioned in the form of my very own feet and fingerprints. Every system in my body was functioning well. My ears picked up the slightest noise, my eyes any difference in light, and my skin any change in temperature or other stimuli. I had chestnut colored hair and hazel eyes. It was already planned that I would love music and animals, especially birds. I remember at one point when my mother played a CD of her classical favorites, I enjoyed it also. I was of course, smaller than a newborn by at least fourteen inches. I was also extremely dependent on my mother for provisions. Even for all my dependability and undeveloped body, my personality was formed and growing, as was my physical body.

Back to my mother, she was assessed, walked through a description of the whole procedure and told that it would take about four hours for the dilation, fifteen minutes for the removal of the products of conception and an ultrasound to see that all the tissue had been removed. The final stage would be the recovery, which would last about an hour. As the dilation procedure began, she was told that she had the option of being put under an anesthetic for the latter part of the induced termination. Thinking that it

would be the wisest thing to do, she requested the anesthesia but a lesser quantity than normal because she disliked being under sedatives for any length of time and since it would be painless, it didn't really matter. She was then warned that any crying she might do would reduce the effects of the anesthetic. "Why would I cry?" she wondered.

The first sign that it would be a bad experience came when the abortion doctor grabbed a pair of large forceps and placed them on her workbench. "These are going into me?" she thought. "I hope the doctor knows what she is doing." As my mother fell in and out of consciousness, she tried to take order of her jumbled thoughts. Painless procedure? The pain was awful, but awful wasn't even the right word. She saw vague images of tiny human limbs cut into pieces and sucked into a bottle. Not knowing if it was only a dream or if it was what was happening in the room, she began to panic and awoke with a start. Upon seeing black container and hearing the terrible sound of the vacuum, she let out a scream of mixed anger, despair, hurt, guilt, shame, grief, and pain. But it was too late. The realization of what she had just done came upon her like a torrent of rain. She understood that the product of conception that had been removed from her uterus, had been alive and with a human form. But I was dead and the deed was complete.

It was an unimaginably painful experience, one that I would wish on no living person. Try and imagine each of your limbs being grabbed by giant forceps and then severed from your body. Having tendons and ligaments torn apart and bones being ripped off of your person. With violent movements I struggled to move away from the

lethal instruments. My heart rate had increased by 60 beats per second in exertion. The pain was beyond words, indescribable, not to be conceived. My silent scream was penetrating. Ear splitting if it had been audible. The last thing I felt was my free-floating head being squeezed between the atrocious forceps. Then all went black.

Through all the pain, my mother could still think relatively clearly and decided to request to see me. She was told that I would only look like a blood clot and then she was ushered into the recovery room. Recognizing that she had been deceived on multiple levels, my mother had a difficult time restraining herself from trying to break loose and run out of the cursed place. The nurses held her down, but the cramps were the chief restrainer. The pain was so unbearable, she felt like passing out. Yet she still had an aching desire to leave, one only quenched by mustering all her strength. After the necessary recovery time, with tears gushing down her cheeks, and sobs racking her body, she drove home, lingering in a state of shock and extreme pain all the way. Miraculously she reached her home safely and immediately ran to the bathroom and vomited over and over. Then throwing herself onto her bed, she cried her heart out. The tears wouldn't stop. Visions flashed before her eyes of the baby whose life she had just ended. Her child. She wanted to die and be with her. No one had warned her of the heartbreaking pain, physical and emotional, the guilt, the longing, and the depression. With a mind tormented by nightmares, she fell into a restless and exhausted sleep

My mother was never the same again. The secret told to no one, and the guilt of killing a growing life inside of her, held her hostage in its gripping powers. Every day

she carried me in her thoughts and heart, ever reminded by simple advertisements here or there. Her parents didn't understand the change in her and neither did her boyfriend. The tragic relationship ended a mere two days later. My mother was not destined to remain long in her pain and misery though. Two weeks after getting the abortion done, a worried co-worker, after missing her in work for three days and not hearing any answers to her messages, stopped by her apartment. My mother was found dead. The apparent cause looked like it was suicide, but later autopsies found that she had died from an infection caused by the abortion. It would probably have been preventable if she had gone to the hospital at first signs of bleeding and extreme pain, but my mother had instead chose to remain secluded with her pain. To some degree it might have been an indirect suicide, if she had known that she needed help and then did not take any measures to receive it. To this day she has not told me what really happened.