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Brandin Estes
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A Visit to the Doctor

Brandin Estes

I can't even imagine how hard the choice had to have been. Of course, it wasn't my choice to make and I was happy for that. I feel horrible, but I don't know if I would have had the strength to do what she did, to make this choice. She couldn't drive herself. Even if she had her license, she would have needed a ride home afterwards. My mother agreed to take her. I could not say no to going. She needed all the help she could get. I forget whether we had to take off school or not, but I remember it was very early in the morning, maybe seven or six. I was already sitting in the back when we pulled up to her house. The innocent girl stepped out of the front door, her head down, no one watching her leave. She carried only her purse with a few hundred dollars in it. It was going to be an expensive procedure. Of course, the money was not in anyway what made this so hard.

When we got there, there were only a few cars in the lot. I had expected more, but there was only one lone protestor. She was an old, gray woman in a knit cap and a windbreaker. She would have looked insane to be standing out there in that weather if it weren't for the sign she held up. My mother and I left the car first. I helped the girl out of the back seat as my mother approached the old woman. This both intrigued and frightened me because my mother is, to say the least, an aggressive debater.

"You could die you know! Did they tell you that? You could die committing this sin!" The old woman shrieked it even though we were only feet from her spot on the sidewalk. The girl turned away. My mother interrupted the old woman's next sentence.

"What the *hell* is wrong with you? You have no idea how hard this already is for these girls," we were the only ones standing in the parking lot. Normally, I would have restrained my mother, or at least have been embarrassed at her outburst, but this old woman deserved to be told off.

"It's not easy to do this! It's not easy to-to *choose* this! What gives you the *right* to decide what is sinful and what isn't?! What gives you the *right* to judge these girls for their decision?! Tell me!" She was on the verge of tears, but not crying. She needed to be strong too, we all did.

"Oh she will be judged," the old woman said stepping back, "God will punish her." She raised her head to acknowledge the girl.

"She's been punished enough," my mother responded in an oddly restrained tone. She turned away from the woman, away from the conflict, and helped me lead the innocent girl into The Clinic.

We walked through the first door. There was a sign and a second door. The sign said to buzz the desk with the speaker by the door and to show ID before we were allowed to enter. We did so and walked in. The receptionist apologized for what she called an overly complicated entrance. She said it helped keep the fanatics out. She asked if the woman outside had bothered us. My mother told her that the woman said something, but that she handled it.

We signed in and sat down. There were other people in the waiting room, but no one looked up. No one made any eye contact or even acknowledged that we were there. It was better that way. None of us wanted to be there. It would have been embarrassing if it were not so traumatic. The innocent girl's name was called. She stood and crossed the room to follow the doctor. She came back not too long after. I gave her a look of puzzlement. She told me she had been asked to pee in a cup and that they had done some preliminary examination. I did not want to know what that entailed.

Again, the same doctor opened a different door on the other side of the room. With a smile, she asked the innocent girl to follow her. She stood and, with one last glance back towards us, she followed the doctor. I don't know how long we waited, but I do know that it was the longest time of my life. My mother had brought a book, but I don't think I once saw her turn the page. I read the closest magazine, or at least tried to. I thought of everything I could to avoid thinking about where I was and what was going on in that other room. It was futile.

Groggily, the innocent girl staggered back into the room. We forced smiles and hugged her. She seemed exhausted. I forget if we paid at the beginning, or at the end. Either way, we left silently. She laid her head on my lap on the ride back. She told me that, when she had awakened, there were three other girls already conscious in the same room. They were eating a small cup of ice cream. They each asked her how she felt. She said she was tired. They agreed. A nurse came in with her ice cream. All the girls talked with smiles as though they were not sitting on hospital beds in hospital gowns, still woozy from their shared procedure. None of them introduced themselves and none of them asked the other's their name. The innocent girl was the last to finish her ice cream and the last to get dressed and leave the room.

She fell asleep on my lap. She had told me that the doctor said she was to lie in bed all day and do nothing. She would be too weak from the procedure. I didn't think the word weak would ever accurately describe her, not after this. We took her home. I gently woke her and walked her to the door. There was no one home to receive her. I watched her drop down on her couch and turn on her television before I turned to leave. I felt better because when I got to the car I could finally, finally cry for her.