

WOVEN: I'd Like to Order an Abortion, Please

written by Guest Contributor | July 10, 2019



WOVEN is an Entropy series and dedicated safe space for essays by persons who engage with #MeToo, sexual assault and harassment, and #DomesticViolence, as well as their intersections with mental illness, substance addiction, and legal failures and remedies. We believe you. If selected for the series, we want to provide the editorial and human support such that our conversation continues long after the stories and names have changed. You can view submission guidelines for WOVEN [here](#).

Reread the [archives](#), always.

Image Credit: Antonia Juric

"I'd like to order an abortion, please," I say it into the telephone.

"You've called the right place," I hear my boyfriend's voice. It's clunky and robotic in my ear.

"We offer the day-after-pill, the stairway technique (we make a house call for that) or there's the manual vacuum abortion

procedure, which we do in-house," he tells me.

"I'll have the vacuum please."

"Would you like the boyfriend experience with that or would you prefer to do it alone?"

I stammer.

"If you choose the boyfriend package, an additional charge will be applied."

"Sure—will it hurt?" I blurt it out.

"Yeah. But you already knew that. Someone's got to pay for what happened, don't they?"

I wake up. I see his face smushed into the faded pillowcase, his lips slightly parted. The two sharp points of his top lip rest over the pouty swell of the bottom one. His apartment smells like musk and cat litter. I bury my head into his t-shirt. I think about telling him about the dream.

He doesn't move. I stare up and into him for a while. I try not to think and wait for the alarm to go off. When he wakes up we get dressed in silence.

A half-hour later we walk out of Jane station. The world is grey made up of drab, aging block-like buildings from the '80s. I know the clinic is hidden somewhere in the brown-ish office building across the street. When we arrive, I push the small, white button beside the door and wait for it to unlock mechanically. In the moment, my cousin is the little voice in my head. I hear her recommending the abortion clinic as if it were a nail salon. Sitting behind a wall of glass, the receptionist speaks into the small hole carved out at the bottom. She wants my health card, my phone number and my address.

We sit for a while. The waiting area is filled with women. I wonder if some can even qualify as being women yet. Some of them sit alone distracted by lifestyle magazines while others have company to lean their heads on. There's a woman sitting to our right, I wonder if she's had it done before. An air of

calm fills the space around her. I envy her.

He rubs my back. He's quiet. I want to know what he's thinking. I hear him say to me that I'll be fine and I tell him I know. I can't tell if it's a lie or a kind of half-truth when I say it.

They hand me a bag to put my belongings in. I change out of my clothes into a cotton nightgown and blue synthetic booties. I wait some more in a different room until a nurse comes for me.

And I remember being twenty-three, inside another gynecologist's office. I lay down for another pelvic exam. On another exam table. Sanitary paper beneath me crackles. It murmurs across exposed skin at the back of my legs.

Her hand is unfamiliar and cold and latexed in between my legs, moving and rummaging inside me, "If you're this rigid now, you must have terrible sex." She reminds me.

Sex can be terrible. I scrunch my eyes trying to wriggle out from the old memory-pins and needles. Her latexed hand still inside me.

His fifteen-year-old hands grabbing and grabbing. My unrelenting baby fat gathered in his hands. I am hot milk pouring out from the cracks between his fingers. His chin is hard on my face. His lips are wet and clumsy. No one else is home.

My knees spread apart. His arms shaking, scrawny and long in plank position. But his face is firm. Resolved, hovering. I wonder how he knows what to do before he is rigid, surging, pushing against me. Trying to find the way in. Skin breaks, stinging. For a while—I pretend to enjoy it. I wonder if he can tell.

I ask him to stop.

He reminds me, "You said we could." Past tense.

"I don't think it's working. I'm too nervous."

"You said it was fine."

I did. I feel badly for renegeing. I don't push him off me when he rams into me again and again. I know how long he's wanted it. This is what people do.

I want to give him this. I so badly want to want to give it to him. So I lie there beneath him. I wait. He crashes into me. The metal bed frame, a slaughterhouse, whining. I count the missing tiles in the ceiling. I think about the creases tearing through my breasts in the folded, naked photo of myself hidden, taped to the bottom of his stereo. Another thing he wanted.

After two hours of pushing and forcing and stopping and starting—in the bathroom, floral wallpaper is greedy, swallowing the small closet-like room. He is downstairs exhausted and frustrated. He could never find the way in. My body—a small, clenched fist—would not let him. I peer between my legs at

angry and inflamed and pink flesh. I stand over the gaping mouth of the sink. I lean against porcelain, cool against my skin. It's difficult to sit for a week after.

I think about the first time I knew he wanted it, maybe about a year before, his body on mine after a fight. His mouth all over me. His name, a sliver in the air. I said it over and over before I could finally feel space between us again. Don't think about that, I tell myself. It happens sometimes, I tell myself.

Before the anesthesia I remember fifteen and twenty-three. I remember them every time I am flayed-out across an exam table. The doctor turns the screen in my direction and points to the ultrasound: black and white pixelated evidence.

"We caught it early." Sounds like cancer.

I'm thinking about the marrow being sucked out of a chicken bone, their hands pressing down on my legs with polite force, spreading them wide. There are two nurses. No. Maybe three? I am resisting. Relax, I think it. My brain is soggy.

I'm thinking about sitting around the kitchen table as a child. One sister beside me, two across from me. My mother and father at the ends, facing one another. Bare chicken bones, left-over saliva and grease shining beneath the kitchen lights. Bones clatter and litter across plates. My father leans back in his chair and takes one, browning at the ends from the plate in front of him. Side-to-side, I trace the backs of my front teeth. Small splinters slither along bone when he brings it to his mouth. I clutch the sides of my chair. Watch him suck the marrow. When there's nothing left to extract he tosses it back onto the plate. From where I'm sitting, it appears unchanged.

I'm interrupted when I vaguely hear one of the nurses warn me about potential "discomfort."

"Thank you." I hear myself speak, silly putty stretching out of my mouth and across the room. I begin to dissolve into the thick warmth of sedation, my mind is slippery. I struggle, reaching and reaching for my thoughts. The pain is diluted as it washes over my abdomen. In between my thighs. Eventually, I stop resisting.

I am unspooled thread sprawled out against the wooden landscape of some gleaming, polished kitchen table. I have no idea how far before I meet its sloping edge. Before the fall—before I find my wounds hovering above me, a devastating halo.

When I arrive back to the waiting room I wonder how much of him has remained the same. I am rearranged somehow. There he is, his hand at the small of my back, his breath in my ear, I focus in on it. I rely on it to tether me.

I hear him, "I took care of it. Don't worry—you can pay me your half later."



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