

Choice of a lifetime

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Staff Writer

She is eighteen years old and a freshman in college. She has a smooth-featured face with full pouty lips; the face of a girl, or a very young woman at most. She is a good student, the product of a middle-class family. She is sitting on her bed in her half-lit dorm room, biting her nails, and telling me what it is like to have an abortion.

"It was the worst sustained pain I have ever felt in my life," she whispers with her chin on her chest. "Six to ten minutes of unyielding pain."

This girl sitting across from me, this girl only three months my senior, lifts her head back and sighs. She shakes her head slowly and closes her eyes. "The doctor walked away and she had blood, like, all over her gloves." She pauses staring down at her hands. "All I could think was that was my baby... smeared all over her hands."

She had been five weeks pregnant when she told me. By then the

hysteria and the insanity had worn away, at least repressed, and she told me of the abortion with a cold detachment that at the time chilled me. I had no idea.

"I wanted to have it if there was any way possible," she says, now cradling a cup of coffee to her chest. "I couldn't get an abortion. I had no right—I was careless and had made my decision by being so."

"I had conceived a baby in a union of love, not some late-night, one-time fling. I love my boyfriend and what we had done together was better than what you always assume causes abortions."

Her boyfriend and she have been together for some time now, and sex had been a part of the relationship since almost the beginning. Before, she tells me, they had always used "withdrawal" as their one and only preventive measure for an unfeasible and unwanted pregnancy. "I guess I felt I was so in love that nothing could go wrong. I was mistaken."

This girl's parents went through the same when they were in their early twenties; they decided on

abortion and the girl has always known that. Still, through accident or mischance, carelessness or miscalculation, a baby was conceived inside of her, too, as in her mother before her, when it was the last thing either needed or wanted.

"My first reaction was, of course, to have the baby if there was any way possible. That would soon be seen as financially and practically impossible." I ask her about adoption. She shakes her head and stares into her coffee mug. "Adoption was never an option in my mind. My child, for what it was worth, was created out of love. I had heard too many horror stories of child-abuse in adoptive homes to ever consider or even fathom giving my baby away." She pulls a strand of hair out of her face and coughs gently, holding the fist in front of her face. "I knew there would be guilt and I knew it would be hard, but it was the only way I had."

She finished her coffee and crosses her thin, fair legs. Her hips are very narrow; any birthing would obviously have been hard and painful, but one cannot help but won-

der which would be more painful, which ending more severe. The honest and best question, though, is the why. Why this at all? Somewhere, she tells me, for a short time there was a blueprint inside of her, a design for a human being that would never, could never be repeated. Now that is gone. She tells me that five girls on her hall alone have been pregnant and had abortions in the last two years. Including herself that makes six girls in her hall, in their late teens who have had or are planning abortions. Why?...I ask softly. Why on earth, why?

"I was stupid because I never saw it happen. I was in love, I was invincible. Reality did not matter at the time. I'm sure that's how it usually happens. I never knew how much it hurts, how often it happens, anything. No one ever knows."

She has nightmares now and sleep is a rare commodity. The guilt still holds her fast and stays with her almost every moment. She says that she has taken a life but she hopes (her large blue eyes

lift towards me heavily as she tells me this) that perhaps if she can tell others of what has happened to her and, if only once, prevents this from happening to someone else, then she feels her baby's life was not wasted, "I felt a presence inside me. Every minute of every day I knew it was there. I feel empty now...I feel something is missing."

This girl with the large, sad, blue eyes fidgets with her empty coffee mug and stares out the window at the fallen leaves that are scattered across the lawn outside. One asks cautiously and as tenderly as possible how she feels, now that it is over.

A shadow of something, of reflection crosses her face and she shakes her head. "I'm not sure yet if I'm in shock, denial, or if I'm okay. It's not over yet." There are still the nightmares, and the lasting physical pain still echoes daily inside her. Somehow, someday, she is sure it will be at least a little easier. She has no idea how long it will take. And there is no one in sight who can tell her.

WEED blossoms

Jonathan White
Staff Writer

Have you seen any W.E.E.D. around lately?

Do not be disturbed by this question, for it is an abbreviated title for a publication written by Michael Strickland's 110 English class.

Strickland planted the seed which was later transformed by the cultivating powers of his two classes into a field of green writing.

The 110 English course is designed for students who have had problems with their writing skills. Strickland intertwined the pains and pleasures of writing with press-

work they have had to do. But they had some tough times putting it all together.

As in any other class, people brought radically different views. Most of the students said that they were aware of the environmental issues. Others did not know or care about the destruction of the environment. On both ends of the rope, each student feels they have increased their awareness about the issues and put a steady hand to their work with words.

The students of W.E.E.D hope to put out another issue, but they are not quite sure whether they will proceed with the task. I think it is a grand

achievement for both of the 110 English classes and a smooth show of writing on issues that need to be seen by our campus and the community beyond. So if you see some W.E.E.D, pick it up, don't smoke it, read it, and put the ideas to work.

ing environmental issues.

The class required each student to be a part of the project, and on top of that, write eight papers, keep a journal, and write a case study on their progress in the writing process. When I attended both classes last Friday, I was amazed at the students' ease concerning all of the



Michael Strickland with students from his 110 English classes, the authors of the WEED newsletter

W.E.E.D (Writer's Educating about Environmental Destruction) is a "real-world project," says Strickland, the idea being, to get away from the traditional teacher/student paper connection. A "real world project" is about getting involved in the community, and letting the paper do its own work.

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