

Greenwich, Connecticut. April 1973. "I can't believe it," Claire began. "I simply can't believe it, is all. . . that you are considering this. I thought, when you told me about this the other day, you were merely telling me a story about someone who you met who was thinking about ending her pregnancy," she said.

"You don't understand," said Robert.

"You're right. I don't understand," Claire countered.

"These women, they have a medical need," Robert said, trying to convince his sister.

"What is it, the money? Do these patients pay you more money? Is that what it is?" Claire asked, searching for a reason for why her brother would, now, all of a sudden seriously consider performing abortions.

"No, it's not the money. You know it's not the money," Robert answered. "Why are you getting so emotional?" he asked.

"Emotional? How could you be so unfeeling?" she answered.

Claire had already mixed herself a drink and was sitting on the couch. Her brother fixed one and started to sit down on his sofa chair. At the sight of him sitting down near her, she jumped up abruptly from the couch.

"No, no, don't get up. I'll go," he said, rising from the sofa, starting for the next room.

"I wanted to find out what you thought about this and now I know," he said. "You're my sister. I thought I could talk to you about this. We've always been able to talk things over, but this is different I guess, well from your reaction I can see this is different," he said, exiting the room.

He was right, this was different, Claire thought. But it was also true that she had always been able to talk to her brother about anything. This was the first time she hadn't been willing to hear her brother, listen to him as he explained his reasoning. She couldn't. She simply

wouldn't listen. Her brother was actually considering performing this procedure for this woman. It wasn't only the procedure she hated; it was this new word substitution she abhorred. The word abortion was out. That word had become sanitized, scrubbed clean. Her brother simply called it a 'procedure' and everyone knew exactly what he was talking about. The word, procedure sounded so much better than what Claire knew it to be, the taking of an innocent life.

Claire felt absolutely awful. She felt a mixture of confusion, sadness, anger and disappointment. After all, she loved her brother so much and, as corny as it sounded, she always looked up to him as her protector, her knight in shining armor. She admired him. He was an obstetrician for heaven's sake. . . he brought life into this world. How could he ever think of taking that life away? She was struck wondering whether she really knew her brother at all.

There was the sound of the garage door opening, then the trunk of a car slamming shut. Arlene appeared at the door near the kitchen, her arms filled with shopping bags from Bonwits, Gimbels and Saks Fifth Avenue. She saw Claire in the living room as she walked toward her bedroom.

"I'll be right with you Claire. You can't believe the sale I found at Gimbels. Have you been here long?" Arlene asked, shouting from her bedroom, putting down her purse and shopping bags at the foot of her bed.

"Robert, get Claire something to drink," she continued.

"I have something already," Claire hollered back.

Arlene entered the living room. "So, I drove down to the city to meet a girlfriend from college. I don't know if you remember her, she was at our wedding. We had planned to meet

for just for lunch but Nora said Gimbels was having this great sale and one thing led to another.
..”

Sensing something was wrong Arlene stopped talking. “What’s the matter? What happened? Where’s Robert?” she asked.

At that moment Robert emerged from the study and stood, leaning against the doorway.

“Robert what happened? What’s wrong?” she pressed, this time more urgently.

“I told Claire,” he said simply.

“Told Claire what?” she asked, confused.

“I told Claire what I’ve decided,” he explained.

“Oh, so now you’ve decided, a moment ago you were only thinking about it, last week you were only talking about

it. . .” Claire said, agitated.

“Robert what did you do? You said you were going to be nice. You don’t understand, women are affected much differently than men on this subject. You’ve never had the experience of going through labor or giving birth. Claire and I both have,” she said, taking a seat next to her sister-in-law putting her arm around her.

“What do you mean I’ve never experienced giving birth? I’m an obstetrician for crissakes. I was nice, I was good. I mean, I told her as gently as I could,” Robert stammered.

“Exactly,” Claire said, coldly. “You told me as gently as you could, but there really is no way to make this sound any better than what it is,” she said, glaring back at her brother.

“And how do you feel about this?” Claire asked, turning her attention to Arlene.

“I don’t know Claire,” she said, removing her arm. “Of course it’s troubling and I reacted strongly at first too, but think of those poor women. Do you know what they go through in order to have this, this, this procedure? And they sure as shooting will have it done,

somehow, no matter what. Isn't it better that they do it safely, in a clean, medical facility where they won't die as a result of some botched complication? Robert says, I'd be appalled if I knew what went on, what these women go through to take care of this problem," Arlene said, sounding reasonable.

There was that word again 'procedure'. In that moment Claire could tell her sister-in-law would be no help. Her mind turned to the letter she mailed days ago. Now she was sorry she'd sent it. In the letter, she began writing about the conversation with her brother, where he asked about Robert joining his practice after he'd finished medical school and completed his residency. Then, she went on to tell him about the incident last week involving a woman who came into his office asking for help. Now that she'd sent the letter, Claire was upset, never thinking for a minute her brother would ever contemplate doing such a thing and sorry she'd told him anything about it. Then, the other shoe dropped. She imagined at some point in the future, her son working side by side with her brother. The idea of young Robert, working with his uncle, toiling in the business of, of, ending lives! My God! Of all things! This thought gave her a chill, startled her back to the present.

"Arlene, I've decided, I'd rather not stay for dinner," Claire said.

"Oh, why not? Robert's going to barbeque; make some of his rare, juicy steaks on the grill outside. Don't let this whole thing upset you," her sister-in-law said, trying to reassure her. The thought of food right now, the idea of red blood dripping off of a rare steak made her sick to her stomach.