

# Autumn's story

I'm sitting in the lobby of the clinic trembling as The Real plays on the TV behind me entirely way too loud. I know I should be feeling something that feels like sadness but I am numb from everything that has happened in the last week. Just within the last 15 minutes I have been yelled at by a stranger with a microphone and a sign calling me a murderer and comparing me to ISIS, I've been asked to leave my phone in the car, I had myself and personal belongings searched by security, and I have felt shame as I handed over my ID and insurance card.

I am one of the first to sit down. As I am filling out my paperwork the lobby begins to fill up. Each woman coming in with the same piece of paper depicting how far along she is. I hear each person say their birthdate because I am too close to the front desk. I hear 2000, 97, 99, and so on. No one even in the same decade as me. I am 31 and I am ashamed. And I am the only one who has come in alone.

I also want to feel anger because I am alone but I am too numb and too busy trying to fight off the nausea. I'm trying to fill out my paperwork and as I get to the emergency contact I realize without my phone, I don't know anyone's number by heart except for my parents. I cannot put my parents down as an emergency contact because they don't know I'm here and I would

never want them to. I make up a number for my friend Ashley and hope that they don't actually need to call her. I finish up my paperwork, turn it in and return to my seat. I think about leaving because I don't even want to be here.

I'm waiting for quite awhile before I'm finally called back. The phrase "I can't and I won't be a father right now. And you can't do it by yourself because you travel for work." is the only thing I can hear in my head. I'm suddenly questioning everything. Why am I in this position in the first place? Why was I with someone who can't even support himself and now in turn, won't support our child? I feel like I'm going to throw up but I manage to hold it down.

I am called back to a second waiting room. I am one of three girls in there. The very nature of me wants to talk to these women but we are all too ashamed to even make eye contact. I am called into the Ultrasound Room. The nurse instructs me to get on the table and just unbutton and zip far enough so that she can get a reading. She asks me about my pregnancy. Is this my first? (Yes) Am I experiencing morning sickness? (Yes) She asks me to repeat my birthdate then looks at me puzzled. I'm assuming because I am 31 and pregnant for the first time and that I am not keeping it. She does my ultrasound and tells me I am 6 weeks and 2 days along according to the chart. She tells me to zip up and go back to the waiting room and someone will come get me for blood work.

Another nurse comes to get me a few minutes later, she takes my vitals and begins to draw blood. She looks at me and asks, "Do you normally get queasy from having your blood drawn?"

I tell her no then immediately feel like I'm going to get sick. She points to the restroom to my left and I run in there as fast as I can and begin to throw up. She knocks on the door to ask me if I'm ok or if I need a cold towel for my neck. I tell her no because I don't want anyone to see me like this. I'm in there for a while and I feel guilty for holding up the line to the lab. She greets me at the door with water and walks me back to the waiting room.

The next person is from education. They have to tell you exactly what is going to happen to your body over the next couple of days to try to prepare you. She asks me about the father and if he knows. I say yes, he's the only reason I'm here. She asks me if I'm ok with the decision and if I'm making it for myself. I tell her no, I'm too old for this shit. She asks me if I'm sure I want to go through with it and I tell her I have to because I don't want to raise a child alone with no support from him. She understands. She takes me back to the Dr. He tells me all about the pills I am about to take and that if I need any support at all, the staff is here for me. He is an old man. Probably in his 70's. He probably doesn't have to do this work but he understands how important it is. He tells me "You can have a baby whenever you are ready. You have plenty of time." He gives me my papers to sign to acknowledge I know what I am doing. I sign them and head back out to the first waiting room. The waiting room is now filled. I recognize my grief on the face of nearly every woman there. The TV is still loud but now the room is also filled with the silence of shame.

After I sit for the state required time, I am called back to be given my pills. Another nurse gives me my instructions and my first pill. There is no backing out now. She gives me a code

for the helpline if I am in an emergency situation because many Dr's offices and ER's won't help me if I go in in an emergency. I take my pills and my directions and shove them down into my purse. I walk as fast as I can to my car so as to not hear the protestors outside.

I check my phone. Several friends who knew what was happening have texted me to see if I'm ok and he has once again sent his bullshit excuses as to why he couldn't be there for me. I drive home even more numb than I was driving there.

The following day after work, I came home, changed into comfy clothes, laid a towel down over my couch and put the four pills into my cheek for them to dissolve. I have already taken my 4 ibuprofen and 2 Tylenol 3's as instructed and I wait. Within the hour I am doubled over in pain. By far the worst pain of my life. Another text comes in from him explaining how he can't spend his day with me just sitting around. "He has too much to do." He tells me he will be over later as we leave for NYC the next morning on a trip that was planned long before all this happens. I am tempted to cancel his flight. (Yes, I booked and bought his flight) I tell him I don't want him to go with me. And he lashes out like he always does when things don't go his way. He finally shows up at 1 am, hours after he says he's going to be there. He tells me I look awful. And I want to kill him.

The next morning we leave for NYC for 5 days. I am there to take a class and he has booked some photo shoot work. When we get there I tell him I need to lay down because I don't feel good and he has the audacity to ask me if I'm going to be like this the whole trip. I scream at

him "I AM BLEEDING AND CURRENTLY GOING THROUGH THE WORST EXPERIENCE OF MY LIFE BECAUSE OF YOU! YOU DON'T GET TO TELL ME HOW I SHOULD FEEL!"

He backs off and turns on the TV and we don't speak to each other for a while. I hate him with every fiber of my being. I look to him for comfort, empathy and support. None of which he is capable of giving. I am thankful I have class over the next 4 days to distract me. The last night he stays out till 3 am and shows up wasted after not answering his phone for hours and doesn't understand why I am so mad. I can't wait to be away from him.

The day after we get home I have a check up at the clinic to make sure I'm not pregnant anymore. I'm not. I leave there and immediately go to see my therapist. I tell her everything. She gives me the support and empathy I've been looking for. She tells me I did the right thing. I cannot raise a baby with someone who openly says and has shown they will not be there for me. She tells me to immediately cut off all contact with him and to protect myself from anyone who will take advantage of my vulnerability at this time. I leave there and tell him to not contact me anymore. He asks me why we can't just go back to the way things were before. I tell him because my life will never be the same as it was before.