

Sociology 1305 – Social Movement Project

“Be the First to Say No”

My heart pounds rapidly as the tall woman with a white lab coat hanging from her slim shoulders reenters the room. My stomach itches from the slime that has been wiped away and my feet feel cold as they dangle from the bed. The stale white walls around me suddenly become speckled with black dots as my vision becomes blurry. My head is spinning, and I cannot pull one thought away from the others quickly enough to comprehend what is occurring. This is not real. This panging in my chest cannot be my reality because I am not ready to face this. I am not ready to be a mom yet. I cannot raise a daughter on my own. I cannot do this.

My brain slows down enough for me to grasp that the smart woman has pulled up a chair beside me and has begun to speak, "Now I understand that this is a serious life-altering situation, and I just want you to understand that you have options. I have witnessed women leave this room ready to brace the world of motherhood and I have seen women decide that they aren't ready for this. I am not telling you to take one route over the other, but I want you to feel comforted knowing that both options are okay." Her aged hand snakes its way into my shaking one as her eyes search my face to see how I am engaging with her words. "Lacie, I know that you haven't told anyone about the pregnancy, and I know that you've been showing signs of uncertainty about going through to full term. The procedure is painless and quick as a snap. This is not my first time. I have seen countless patients before you make this decision, all leaving grateful that they knew their limits. You just have to say yes." Her calming voice vibrates through my ears as my mind wraps itself around what she is offering.

I just have to say yes. It is as simple as that. With one check in the box, this is all over. Mom and Dad will never have to know. I can continue at University without a second thought. One messed up night at a party completely erased. A seamlessly perfect escape to my biggest fear. I just have to say yes. It all sounds so easy, but I can't help but imagine what life would be like if I said no.

This is it. This is her big day. A radiant glow surrounds her as she slips into the pure white dress. Her laughter fills the room with an echo of joy. As her brunette curls fall down her back, a tear falls from my eye. My baby girl is no longer a baby, but a beautiful bride. My first love is about to walk down the aisle to say "I do" to her finale love. Oh, how beautiful her firsts haven fallen into place. I can still see them so vividly, all of her first lined up in a row.

Her first breath. How sweet that first cry was. Her tears swelled up her red face as her cries bounced across the walls. The shouts of congratulations and joy could not be heard over her

wailing protest. The immense sound of her first moments will forever be etched into my memory. She had a voice from the very start.

Her first night home, now that was an adventure. My parents came in every hour to check on the pair of us, but her cries would not halt for a moment. She was so exhausted and restless I do not understand how she had anything left in her. She screamed and screamed through that first night. Panic and fear flooded my mind as I watched this precious child wail. Was I ready for this? Was I able to care for this tiny human that was deemed mine? But she stopped all of those questioning thoughts when her tiny hand wrapped around my finger. She was worth it.

Her first day of kindergarten. Her light up shoes and the sparkly pink backpack was her crowning glory. She strutted across the living room floor with such confidence. She couldn't stop babbling about how excited she was to go to the playground with all of her soon to be friends. Not an ounce of fear could be seen from her until we reached the bus stop. When that big yellow bus pulled up to the stop sign, she grasped my hand a little tighter. I could sense the nerves slowly creep up her spine as she stared up at the giant school bus, but she was so brave. Pushing all of her little troubles away she looked up at me to say, "you'll come to get me after school right here? Just look for my shoes." With a little click from her heels and a hug for her mom, she climbed up those steep steps and headed off to her first day of school. She didn't need those shoes to light up that bus.

Her first soccer game. Her growing legs ran up and down that field with such stride. My parents were the loudest supporters on the field. She beamed with such ambition as she made it her mission to touch that ball with every chance she could get. You could tell how accomplished she felt with every tap of the ball. Her team didn't win that game, but you wouldn't have known it with how she gushed about the match. She was passionate. We all knew that this kid was trading in her fairy wings for a pair of pink shin guards pretty quickly.

Her first failed test. Fifth-grade math was not a friend of ours. Fractions and long division were just too hard for us to understand. The yelling that ensued after receiving that report card was intense. She hated struggling with something. Confidence and skill always came so easily for her, that when she was faced with her first big obstacle, she didn't know how to handle it. I remember how the yelling molded into frustrated tears as she settled down. Her breathing calmed and her tear-streaked face paled to a dim red. We sat for an hour that night going over the things she struggled with. The math never got easier, and several more meltdowns followed that first failed test, but she got better at not giving up. She became more resilient if that was even possible. She wasn't going to give up, even if that meant her mistakes wouldn't be erased.

Her first school dance. She wore a pale blue dress and asked me to do her makeup. She wanted to wear blue because Conner liked blue, the eighth-grade boy she wouldn't admit to liking. I tried to have the boy talk with her countless times before, but she would become so skirmish that she would sprint away from the conversation. That pale blue dress suited her. I picked her up from the dance at ten and I knew as soon as she got in the car. That little stinker Conner had just given my daughter her first kiss. We had the boy talk the next morning. That would be the first of many boy talks.

Her first car. Now that beat-up Volkswagen Bug was the best surprise she'd ever received. The look on her face when she opened that garage and the yellow bug's frame came into view was one for the scrapbooks. Luckily, she had just passed her driver's test the day before, or else Dad would've had to hide her surprise at his place for a while. On that first drive, we cruised with windows down, playing whatever she wanted to listen to. Her hands gripped the aged steering wheel so tightly that her knuckles turned white, but she never made a wrong turn. You couldn't wipe the smile off of her face for the next few days and all the praise she received from her soccer team was enough to last a year.

Her first heartbreak. Yeah, Conner lasted a little longer than I had expected. It was the beginning of her senior year and Conner had gone off to college. She was devastated to see it end. It hurt to see her hurt. Every ounce of pain she felt, I felt. Her broken heart was my broken heart. My girl felt the tremendous weight of being alone and all I wanted to do was carry that weight for her. What I would have done to put that heart back together, but she was a smart girl. She grew and blossomed more in that heartbreak than I had seen her ever do before. My baby wasn't a baby anymore, but a brave strong woman.

Her first acceptance letter. The long-awaited letter that arrived that winter of her senior year. She got in. She did it. All of her dreams and goals and passions were all right in front of her. It was all up for the taking. She would go on to study physical therapy and play soccer for the next four years. She was smarter than I was at that age. I remember moving her into her dorm and sobbing. I was her age when this all started. A young 19-year-old girl living freely, thinking nothing wrong could ever happen. I told her to stay out of trouble, but I knew she was more mature than I ever could have been at that age.

Now we are here. She is standing in front of me fully grown, fully matured. This day will be one of our last firsts together. We have come a long way since that appointment in the white room. How different our lives would have been if I had said yes. All of her firsts, so beautifully experienced, would have never come. She never would have taken her first breath or experienced the first day of school. She would have never discovered her love for soccer and detest for math. She would have never had her first kiss or experienced her first heartbreak. We would have never made it here if I had said yes. If I would have said yes to terminating this precious life standing in front of me, I would have made the biggest mistake of my life. From her first first, to the last first, and all the firsts in between, it was always her and me. I was the first to say no. Her very first first, was my choice of saying no. Her life started when I thought mine was ending. But it wasn't the end, it was just the beginning.