

radiation spills from my heart

stacey marie

Silence is death.

In *phases of the moon #1* I kept writing the word “choice.” Adoption was my choice, our decision. I chose to give my child away. Women should not be denied the choice between parenting, abortion, and adoption.

While I was still between homes this summer, Lux sent me a care package full of information: anarcha-feminist zines, comics from the dregs of the angsty working class, recipes for herbal abortifacients xeroxed from woman to woman and rendered nearly unreadable. (*It is illegal to talk about these things. It is illegal to label an herb with a description of what it does. It is illegal to treat a yeast infection with yogurt.*) Writing the last chapters of my zine, I started reading these words, ideas I’d only hinted upon due to my own lack of information.

I thought I was being more than a little bit revolutionary, writing a zine about how awesome it was that I could deal with an unplanned pregnancy by choosing adoption.

The phrase “the right to choose” was actually a step backwards, a compromise with the growing right-wing who used the better-sounding slogan “the right to life.” The right to choose ignores the essential feminist truth that in a male supremacist society no choice a woman makes is entirely free or entirely in her interest. Many women have had abortions they didn’t want or wouldn’t have wanted if they had plausible means of caring for a child.

—*Meeting Ground*, Dec 1979, July/Aug 1980, Nov 1989, as quoted by Rosalyn Baxandall in *Women & Abortion: the Body as Battleground*

For nine months, I said “my choice,” “my decision.” For nine months, I thought I was privileged to consider abortion *vs.* adoption *vs.* parenting in poverty and perpetual struggle. *Four months after* I gave

my daughter to another couple, I learned that I was missing an option. I was not able, not *allowed* to choose parenting with the support of a loving community of family and friends, in a society that does not base one's self-worth on how much money one makes.

For the rest of my life, I will say “this is the best I could do.” I cannot live in regret—this was the best I could do, in this time, in this country, right now. But it's killing me—I know that this way lies madness... and still I wonder: if I read those words last October, would I have had the confidence to rise up? If I had these convictions last spring, could I have found or built the community I desired? If I told the bill collectors to fuck off because I had something far more important to do, would I have found the strength necessary to *stop fucking worrying* about money and get my priorities straight and raise my daughter fearlessly and with love?

(hiding in a hole, my body lost control of its soul)

I stopped writing and I walked. I paced my small, too-expensive apartment and when the walls closed in I went outside and would've walked forever, thoughts racing—you can feel when an idea is changing your life. You can feel your preconceptions disintegrating, your dreams shattering when you fully understand that *you have been lied to*.

I am filled with a rage that burns my eyes.

Abortion, adoption, or parenting in a culture that looks down on impoverished families even as it convinces women that their sole purpose in life is motherhood, that they are nothing but a vessel for a thing that might not even be a person until it takes its first breath of air. This is not a real choice—this is like choosing between Pepsi and Coke: you know they're made of the same thing but you pick the one that tastes sweeter and think you have some kind of control over your life. *When freedom is limited, there are no choices.*

That night I slept fitfully, and the next day (and the day after that, and the day after that...) I went to work wondering if I should quit. I couldn't finish the zine—I didn't know where I stood anymore, couldn't leave it hanging in the middle of a revelation like that.

The next day I checked the mail and found a letter from Little Star's

adoptive family. Rushed up the stairs, excited and breathless, as it had been two months since I'd heard from them and the mother in me had started fearing disaster, sickness, death. A typed letter, no photos. I'd fucked up—in my post-pregnancy excitement had left a birth announcement at the Co-Op in Athens for all to see and H. and S. are very concerned with privacy. *I don't remember* if they told me this before I left Athens. I *know* they told me not to use real names once I'd gotten to Chicago and wanted to blog the photos they'd sent in May, but I cannot for the life of me remember if they said no real names on the birth announcement. They said they did. But coming down off pregnancy hormones does weird things to your memory—and Zan doesn't remember either. So I guess I fucked up.

More words, cold and detached, about how Little Star won't even remember who I am, about how she's likely to get freaked out about having “too much contact” with her birthmother, about how if she has to she'll go to child therapy if I make her too uncomfortable. *Child therapy?! with a disgusting taste as I regurgitate my own therapy experiences.* I've read these things. Nine months ago, I read these things, prepared for these things—didn't prepare to be confronted with them in a tone that read like they *expected* her to feel uncomfortable around me, to never want to see me again.

I don't understand what's happening. Little Star is five months old, and I don't know what she looks like now. I knew what she looked like at one day, and one month, but after that—nothing... and we'd agreed on lots of photos...

(you can't put your arms around a memory)

I wanted to call my mom, but I was terrified she'd say I Told You So. I should probably still call her.

This is not what I expected. I did the best I could. They'll do the best they can. It's not what I'd do, but I can't do anything about that now. We all have love for her, and that's all that matters.

In a place I don't want to look, I'm thinking, *what if I don't see her again until she's 18?* She'll ask me, “mom, what the hell?” and I'll just cry and give her the zine and the mix-cd.

At work, yesterday (*should I quit? should I leave? should I go find a collective farm in Oregon and do something more meaningful?*) there was a woman holding her five-month-old boy. I'm sure he was five months old—looked big enough, stronger, head still a little wobbly. Trying to superimpose Little Star's face on his awkward still-new body, choking up while I rang up comics; now is not the time to hide in the bathroom and cry.

This isn't very fair. (My dad: "no one said life was fair.")

I cannot live in sorrow and regret. I cannot let my anger consume me, but it will always be there, burning at the back of my throat, threatening to come thunder-rolling out, deep rage fueling every direct action I commit, channelling itself into something beautiful and productive. The revolution runs on a steady stream of anger and an unwavering hope that we can make this all better, somehow. *Keep Loving, Keep Fighting.*

I continue reading, keep writing. *phases of the moon #1* sells out within a week of the first printing. I still don't know if I should go to work anymore. I'm pretty sure I want to finish school this time—just an associate's degree, but one that will land me a good job at a library whenever I need and want to work a dayjob. Debt-collectors have their scare-tactics and I don't know why I continue paying them... am I really going to be better off once my name is cleared, or am I just afraid of them? I am so close to being completely untethered to any obligations, though... and I truly want to start over with a completely blank slate, next year, when this is all over—this city, this job, this loan, this degree. *I need this struggle to grow. I need time to learn, to collect myself. I cannot run away anymore.*

Outside, a storm rolls in from the lake, thunder making my heart jump. In the next room, a woman laughs at me turning up the volume over her gasp of pleasure. Straight-faced, I cannot find it in myself to experience such release anymore; I am too serious, too distracted, too determined.

(i envy the night for its absence of light)

<http://os-lunatum.livejournal.com/5472.html>