

Written by Madeline Ungvary

Unnatural Selection

Although I can barely see through my translucent eyelids, I can still hear everything around me. I can hear her. She's distraught. Whenever she becomes distressed, her heart violently knocks against its surroundings, prying its way out of her ribcage. This is when I become unsettled. I need her to know she needs to breathe and slow down, for both of us. After all, I am inside her.

"Mum? Oh my god! What happened?!", she exclaimed, her heartbeat accelerating ten-fold.

"Oh! Sienna, my baby!". I heard her footsteps approach us, and then an immense pressure.

"Mum! Careful, my stomach? The baby?"

"Right! Sorry. Its just—" she trailed off. "Honey, you're here because of your panic attack. Do you

"Sure. That's fine. I'll go get some coffee from the cafeteria", she said as she closed the door. As the door clicked in place, an immediate tension filled the room I could feel Sierra's blood get hot with frustration and she took a long shaky breath.

"Dustin. You know what I want to do.", she began.

"No", he cut in. "You can't."

"Yes I can. It's my body and my choice. You have no right to tell me what I should do.", I felt her reposition herself so she could presumably look at him face to face. "I'm not ready. I love you, but I'm not ready. We are 16. This is not the time to start a family."

"S", there was a change in his voice. Softer, less demanding. "I'm the father. That baby has two

"What about my mum? She works full-time trying to support just me and her and we barely get by. It's the same with both of your parents", her heart was now working overtime. She needs to know I need her to breathe. I start moving in hopes that she'll feel it. Kick. Kick.

"The baby's moving Dustin.", she took a long deep breath. "You know, I'm pretty sure it can tell when I'm distressed because it was doing the same thing when I was having the panic attack"

"I don't want you to feel distressed."

"I know you don't."

"This baby is making you distressed. I'm making you distressed."

"Look, you're not making me- ",

"You're right."

"What?"

"You're right.", Dustin stood up from the bed and began pacing "I want this baby. It's my view I don't want to kill something that we made, it has a soul. That's what my parents taught me from the bible and you know how much they believe everything that's in it. But it affects you more than me and you're right. I can walk into school and not have everybody immediately judge me. And I might not have to deal with the physical pains. There is one thing you are wrong about though. You will not- not be alone."

There was a knock at the door, three distinct thumps I could feel they seemingly mirrored Sienna's heartbeat. Dustin opened the door. "Thanks for letting us talk some of this out, Mrs Baker.", he began.

"Well, it's pre-e-ety important and - ", She stopped, her footsteps rapidly approaching the bed. "Hey, Sienna, honey, why are you crying?"

She sniffled softly. "Just, everything", she scooted back under into the bed. "And I'm really tired, even though I just woke up. Hey, Dustin, can I talk to my mum for a few minutes?"

"Sure. Yeah, I'll just get something to eat. See you in a bit.", he said as he closed the door.

Sienna's Mum's voice was so distinctive to me. Too many cigarettes, a raspy, wheezy voice.

"Mum, I know what I want. But I'm not sure either way I'd be doing the right thing I will never find someone who would support me like he does right now. But I'm not sure how long it'll last."

"Hon, you know I was in a similar situation when I was about your age. Your dad chose not to stick around and support me and I still got by. I chose to have you and I don't regret it at all."

"But I know I'll regret choosing to have a baby."

"Well, that's your choice."

"You know mum, in biology class we learnt about natural selection. The survival of the fittest. Did you know that even animals abort their young when the conditions are not ideal for the baby to survive? Dustin and I wouldn't be bringing this baby into world under ideal conditions. So, really, all I'd be doing is following the laws of nature."

Kick. My arm moves up to my face. I suck my thumb. Comfort.

"No, Sienna, you're not. It's an UNNATURAL