



Abby JOHNSON

## Thank you for reading this!

My mission - and my team's mission is simple: We're in the fight for life because we love. We see that every life, from the child in the womb, to natural death - and in between, including the abortion clinic worker's life, has incredible value and worth. We believe that abortion strips women of their dignity. We believe that motherhood is empowering. We believe that not giving into societal pressures to degrade oneself is empowering. We believe that that justice applies to every single human being on this earth. We believe in redefining the pro-life movement.

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# Unplanned

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# Cheryl poked her head into my office...

*"Abby, they need an extra person back in the exam room. Are you free?"* I looked up from my paperwork, surprised. "Sure." Though I'd been with Planned Parenthood for eight years, I had never been called into the exam room to help the medical team during an abortion, and I had no idea why I was needed now. Nurse-practitioners were the ones who assisted in abortions, not the other clinic staff.

Today's visiting abortionist had been here at the Bryan clinic only two or three times before. He had a private abortion practice about 100 miles away. When I'd talked with him about the job several weeks before, he had explained that at his own facility he did only ultrasound-guided abortions—the abortion procedure with the least risk of complications for the woman. Because this method allows the doctor to see exactly what is going on inside the uterus, there is less chance of perforating the uterine wall, one of the risks of abortion. I respected that about him. The more that could be done to keep women safe and healthy, the better, as far as I was concerned. However, I'd explained to him that this practice wasn't the protocol at our clinic. He understood and said he'd follow our typical procedures, though we agreed he'd be free to use ultrasound if he felt a particular situation warranted it. To my knowledge, we'd never done ultrasound-guided abortions at our facility.

I felt a moment's reluctance outside the exam room. I never liked entering this room during an abortion procedure—never welcomed what happened behind this door. But since we all had to be ready at any time to pitch in and get the job done, I pushed the door open and stepped in. The patient was already sedated, still conscious but groggy, the doctor's brilliant light beaming down on her. She was in position, the instruments were laid out neatly on the tray next to the doctor, and the nurse-practitioner was positioning the ultrasound machine next to the operating table.

"I'm going to perform an ultrasound-guided abortion on this patient. I need you to hold the ultrasound probe," the doctor explained. I applied the lubricant to the patient's belly, then maneuvered the ultrasound probe until her uterus was displayed on the screen and adjusted the probe's position to capture the image of the fetus. I was expecting to see what I had seen in past ultrasounds. Usually, depending on how far along the pregnancy was and how the fetus was turned, I'd first see a leg, or the head, or some partial image of the torso, and would need to maneuver a bit to get the best possible image. But this time, the image was complete. I could see the entire, perfect profile of a baby. The detail startled me. I could clearly see the profile of the head, both arms, legs, and even tiny fingers and toes. Perfect.

"Thirteen weeks," I heard the nurse say after taking measurements to determine the fetus's age. "Okay," the doctor said, looking at me, "just hold the probe in place during the procedure so I can see what I'm doing." The cool air of the exam room left me feeling chilled. My eyes still glued to the image of this perfectly formed baby, I watched as a new image entered the video screen. The cannula—a strawshaped instrument attached to the end of the suction tube—had been inserted into the uterus and was nearing the baby's side. It looked like an invader on the screen, out of place.

My heart sped up. Time slowed. I didn't want to look, but I didn't want to stop looking either. I couldn't not watch. I was horrified, but fascinated at the same time, like a gawker slowing as he drives past some horrific automobile wreck—not wanting to see a mangled body, but looking all the same. My eyes flew to the patient's face; tears flowed from the corners of her eyes. I could see she was in pain. The nurse dabbed the woman's face with a tissue. "Just breathe," the nurse gently coached her. "Breathe."

"It's almost over," I whispered. I wanted to stay focused on her, but my eyes shot back to the image on the screen. At first, the baby didn't seem aware of the cannula. It gently probed the baby's side, and for a quick second I felt relief. Of course, I thought. The fetus doesn't feel pain. I had reassured countless women of this as I'd been taught by Planned Parenthood. The next movement was the sudden jerk of a tiny foot as the baby started kicking, as if trying to move away from the probing invader. As the cannula pressed in, the baby began struggling to turn and twist away. It seemed clear to me that the fetus could feel the cannula and did not like the feeling. And then the doctor's voice broke through, startling me. "Beam me up, Scotty," he said lightheartedly to the nurse. He was telling her to turn on the suction—in an abortion the suction isn't turned on until the doctor feels he has the cannula in exactly the right place. I had a sudden urge to yell, "Stop!" My eyes shot back to the screen again. The cannula was already being rotated by the doctor, and now I could see the tiny body violently twisting with it. For the briefest moment it looked as if the baby were being wrung like a dishcloth, twirled and squeezed. And then the little body crumpled and began disappearing into the cannula before my eyes. The last thing I saw was the tiny, perfectly formed backbone sucked into the tube, and then everything was gone. And the uterus was empty. Totally empty.

*That was a human baby—fighting for life! A battle that was lost in the blink of an eye.* What I have told people for years, what I've believed and taught and defended, is a lie. What if I'd known the truth, and what if I'd told all those women? What if? I had believed a lie! I had blindly promoted the "company line" for so long. Why? Why hadn't I searched out the truth for myself? Why had I closed my ears to the arguments I'd heard? My hand was still on the patient's belly, and I had the sense that I had just taken something away from her with that hand. I'd robbed her. And right there, standing beside the table, my hand on the weeping woman's belly, this thought came from deep within me: Never again! Never again.