Indecisive

News of the situation hadn’t spread yet; this was the time before it all got mixed-up, before people started wildly speculating about them. They were in love, this is true, but this was a difficult time for their type of love. There was still time for them to say that they were just kids, which these things happen. It was a new age in sexuality, after all. Students still hung on to the old, strict rules regarding relationships, but there was a spark in their minds, as if they could see a new day ahead. They were cracking down on dancing and smoking and promiscuity, but only because they could see that the new generation had a rebellious streak in them. They were born with a sense that the forbidden fruit wasn’t so forbidden anymore, and natural curiosity propelled them into this new age.

Sal and Fish were straddling the edge of the old age, still keeping their situation a secret. But Sal was a flapper at heart, born to break molds. At the moment, however, she felt like anything but a rebel. Her world had become divided; the gabby campus girl who was the life of the party was gone. She had transitioned into a new part of her life—one with Fish. For better or for worse, they were together.

“I wonder what old Lucia’s doing right now,” Sal said, staring out the window of the country home.

“That girl will be fine, we need to talk about this, Sal,” replied Fish, nervously pacing about the room. He would walk in silence for a minute or two, then wander over to the bookcase and grab something, opening to a random passage. He was reading Shakespeare now.
“Remember when all we had to worry about was Hamlet’s soliloquy? Read for me, Fish, sing, do something; I can’t bear to sit in silence like this. It’s not me.”

“We have to talk about this; we can’t keep putting it off.” He looked hurt, as if she was pushing it aside. Sal just looked away, avoiding the stony stare coming from Fish. She felt as if she were trapped in a corner. It was time to face the issue.

“I know lately I haven’t been myself. Throwing up every morning is not my thing. I can’t handle it!” Sal slowly told Fish. “We’re pregnant, doll,” she said, as if to no one. They already knew, though it was the first time that word had been uttered in conversation to one another. He didn’t embrace her, but his stony gaze had melted into a soft, reassuring gaze, eyes locked onto hers.

Fish loved Sal and knew that he had to be honest with her. “This is a big step. Frankly I’m not sure we’re ready, dear.” This was met with a frustrated sigh from Sal. To try and smooth the impact of this, he added, “But you need to think long and hard about this. Don’t make any rash decisions.”

Sal just wanted to break out into tears. Bringing a child into this world should be a happy occasion, not something that could tear your world apart. Fish sensed that she should be left alone, as she had taken to staring at the book shelf and sobbing, ignoring his attempts to take her hand in his. He stepped out of the room onto the porch, just in time to watch the sun set.

In the living room, Sal just sat there, in complete silence, thinking about what she should do. How can she possibly have a child and still attend college? She knew no one who could possibly help her. If she told Lucia, Lucia might go off and tell everyone. Sal could just hear the gossip, “Did you hear about the girl who got pregnant? What a floozy! I feel so bad for her.” The thoughts were getting to her; she had become paranoid. Even Fish seemed like an enemy to her at the time. So she grabbed a sweater and slipped out the door, heading for her dorm room.
The next day Sal went to the hospital. Knowing all the options before she talked to Fish was a good idea it seemed. As she walked in, there was a lady in a wheel chair passing her holding a beautiful newborn baby. That picture was imprinted in her mind. Why would anyone not want to bring a beautiful creature like that into the world? She finally got to the information desk and casually initiated a conversation with the clerk.

“Hello! I’m doing research for my research paper. My topic is pregnancy and…” she hesitated, not wanting to use the actual word, “…and all the options that come with pregnancy.” She tried to sound cheery and upbeat, but her face was still wet with tears and it was easy to see that the clerk was a bit suspicious.

“Well, young lady, there are a number of fine facilities here. I can give you some pamphlets on the subject and the name of some fine nurses that are on call. They could help you. Of course there are also adoption agencies, and, as of lately, more and more women are getting illegal abortions, which is an unsanitary practice that should not be attempted by any respectful woman.” The clerk added this last piece of information in a hushed whisper, careful not to be heard by passing nurses. Sal nodded a silent thanks and left, feeling very vulnerable.

It would be too obvious if she carried the child to term. She would hate to drag Fish down with her and ruin his chances at a bright future by having the child. Who could she look to for advice? Sal asked herself, “How about if we just rely on our parents and tell them the whole truth? That Fish and I love each other to death, but that we do not know how to handle this difficult situation.”

She thought, “Perhaps they will show some affection toward this situation and assist us with raising our baby?” Deep inside of her, she knew that her parents would be very disappointed about this and that they would feel betrayed.
Sal then consulted with Fish about whether or not they should go ahead and tell his parents. Fish panicked and responded aggressively “Are you crazy Sal? Of course we are not telling my parents about this!”

“They will never accept me again in their house. My parents had always dreamed of me going to college, obtain my undergraduate degree, and continue to pursue my studies in graduate school. They had always dreamed to see me become a successful attorney, doctor or business man before I even thought of marrying a girl. Can you just imagine, Sal, how will they react if I tell them that you are pregnant and we are thinking of forming a family in the midst of our college careers? This will never happen Sal!” exclaimed Fish.

Then, they both stared at each other. Thinking as the minutes went by, their faces showed expressions of deep sadness and confusion. Finally, after several minutes of reflection and arguments, Fish said, “Sal, we are in college, we do not have the faintest idea of how to raise a child, and we do not have anybody who can support us if we decide to raise this child. Therefore, I think the best decision, Sal, is for you to not have this child. Sal seemed extremely sad, but after much reflection she realized that this would be the best decision given their situation. So, Sal replied, “Okay, I will do it then.” They both knew what “it” was; they didn’t need to make the already emotional moment any worse by bringing that silly little word into the equation. It was better that it went unsaid.

Even though Sal agreed to have the abortion, the only thing she could think about was that she was killing a living thing. She was overcome with emotions and couldn’t decide how to deal with it. The only person she had to talk to about it was Fish. Sal thought about running away, but she knew that wasn’t the right way to handle the situation.

Sal wanted to know exactly what was going to happen to her during the operation, but didn’t have many resources, since it was illegal. She couldn’t gather the information by herself.
“Fish, where can we get information about an abortion? I can’t have this operation without knowing what’s going to happen to me!”

“Sal, calm down everything will be fine. We’ll go to the library and find all the information we can on the procedure. Trust me you have nothing to worry about!” Fish exclaimed, trying to sound confident, even though his voice still quavered.

After Fish had calmed Sal down, they both took a trip to the library. They couldn’t find much information on their own, so they asked the librarian.

“Since an abortion is illegal, there aren’t any references of places to get the procedure,” the librarian explained. “But I can dig up some literature on the methods and history of the procedure. Just do me a favor and don’t let anyone know where you got this. It’s not labeled and when you want to return it, bring it back to me personally.” She had a wild look about her and she was staring at Sal, mesmerized. Sal nodded and slipped the books into her bag, feeling very thankful for the help yet glad to be leaving the presence of the librarian.

It was a long walk back, but finally they arrived back home. As Sal walked up the steps to the front door, she picked up the newspaper lying half-unrolled on the porch. The front page headline read, “U. of I. Co-Ed Bride Dies”. The effect of the words almost sent her to her knees, but Fish was there to catch her. Their eyes met and they both suddenly felt secure. She went inside and skimmed the article, gathering that the young girl had died from an “emergency medical procedure.” Like the two lovers, the reporter never used the word, but it was lurking in the backs of every reader’s mind, like a sinister presence—“abortion.”

As she continued reading it, she found that it listed the place where they suspect the procedure took place. There had been complications and the bride had died overnight. The husband had declared that she was “full of life, even in her last hours.” The place was on the far
end of town, a seedy neighborhood. Despite the feeling that she could end up being a “dead co-ed bride,” another headline, she knew that she would be making a trip to that place soon.

The wedding was a small affair. It was never as happy and ornate as Sal had imagined it would be, but it was necessary and perhaps after all this was over they could get back to being happy. Fish and Sal drove down the country roads for countless hours. To Fish it seemed never-ending, but to Sal it was as though time had stopped. She couldn’t think of anything but what was about to happen to her and what would happen to her if her friends and family found out.

Finally they arrived. Sal slowly got out of the car to take in what she was about to do. From the sidewalk the building looked as if it were to collapse at any second. Even the door squeaked as they walked through, falling off of its hinges. Sal just looked at the walls in disgust. The color of puce yellow gave her the image of an insane asylum. You can just tell that it wasn’t a happy place. Sal gave out a yell as a bug crawled beneath her feet. There were no pictures on the wall to help calm their nerves. A nurse behind a rickety old desk asked them to sit and wait for the doctor to see them. Fish and Sal avoided meeting eyes, for neither wanted the other to see the tears welling up, but their hands were locked together in a loving knot. Fish even put on a little smile as the sun shone in through the window, reminding him of those happy summer days.