

## The Choice is Yours

*It's a hot summer day in Montgomery, Alabama. The year is 1918 and racial tensions are still high in the state. Ms. Jones, a 22 year old black woman, is walking down the street to the little blue building at the end of the block. The psychiatry building, only one in the state, owned by Doctor Peter Anderson III, a kind well mannered man in the community. Despite his time, Doctor Anderson was raised in a non racist family which is the only reason Jones is allowed to see him. She begrudgingly makes her way into the office and sits down in the waiting room. At the age of 22, she's here against her will but by the force of her grandmother.*

*The blonde secretary eyes her with a look of hate and disgust, which Jones cannot help but reciprocate. The doctor steps out of his office.*

**Doctor** : Miss Jones? Im ready to see you now.

\*Jones gets up and with a final glare at the secretary enters the doctor's white office. She looks around uncomfortably at the long couch she already hates. The sun gleams brightly from the window onto her face, causing her to squint and cover her eyes.\*

**Doctor** : Please, Ms. Jones. Sit down.

\*Jones silently makes her way over to the couch and sits down in Doctor's seat and purses her lips\*

**Doctor** [with a smile] : Well Ms. Jones! Quite a few of your friends tell me you've been an agitated lady these past few weeks. Is there anything you'd like to talk about?

**Jones** : Do I look like I want to discuss anything with you?

\*Doctor squirms nervously, thrown by her straightforward attitude\*

**Doctor** : Then let's not talk about anything that upsets you. Let's try something positive! Tell me something that has made you laugh in the past 24 hours.

**Jones** : Those disgusting glasses and that terrible haircut.

\*Doctor reaches and hesitantly touches the top of his toupee\*.

**Doctor** [nervous] : I was thinking something that wasn't so brusque.

**Jones** [contemplative] : Hmmm. Things that make me laugh...Bad knock knock jokes. Puns. \*Begins to laugh about something to herself\*

**Doctor** : Is there something else?

**Jones** : Wanna hear a real classic?

**Doctor** [hopeful because Jones seems to be opening up] : Sure!

**Jones** : How about the fact that no woman in this day and age can make any decision when it has nothing to do with anyone else besides that woman?

**Doctor** [in a slightly frustrated but confused tone] : Ms. Jones. I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about.

**Jones** [frustrated tone] : Abortion. I'm talking about abortion.

\*Doctor sits stunned in silence.\*

**Jones** [sarcastically] : I hope you can see why I've been such an "agitated lady".

**Doctor** : You're pregnant! You're bound to be upset due to your hormones! It's perfectly natural! Congratulations!

\*Doctor reaches out to shake her hand but Jones doesn't take it. He awkwardly sits back into his chair.\*

**Jones** : Don't congratulate me.

**Doctor** : Why not? Pregnancy is always something to celebrate.

**Jones** : I don't want it.

\*Pause for short silence.\*

**Doctor** : Pardon?

**Jones** : What? You ain't hear me?

**Doctor** : I heard you. But I'm not quite sure what you mean.

**Jones** : I said *I don't want it*. What I *want* is an abortion.

**Doctor** : Oh God! bless your ignorant soul! How could you say such a thing about a child? Your own baby! I ought to put you in chains!

\*Jones laughs sarcastically\*

**Jones** : You've been doing that for centuries already, haven't you Doc?

**Doctor** : My family has never been racist--

**Jones** : No! You! You men! You treat all of us women like we're a damn play toy.

**Doctor** : Hardly! I grew up with three older sisters, a mother and a grandmother.

I respect all women.

**Jones** [rolling her eyes] : You don't respect them. You condone them.

**Doctor** : Don't you dare --

**Jones** : Dare what? Speak the truth? Oh, how I feel sorry for your three sisters and your mama and your poor old grandmother. Had to wipe the dribble of your chin cause you ain't learn to do it yourself. When you hungry, they cook. When you bored, they entertain you. When you cry, they hold you in their arms and sing you to sleep. But you a grown man now. So think you can tell another grown woman who has done all the same things as your sisters, your mama and your grandmother, what she can and can't do with her own body?!

**Doctor** : Don't you dare make assumptions about my family! Alright ? It was their job--

**Jones** : Their job? Their *job*? You think anyone paid your mama a nickel to shut you up when you were crying at 2 AM? You think people would give your grandmother a quarter when she had to wipe your nasty behind every time you had to use the bathroom? Nope. Not a damn thing. It ain't a job. It's a responsibility they took upon themselves.

**Doctor** [exasperated] : Let me speak!

**Jones** : And there you go! The big man got something to say so I guess as my *job*, I'm supposed to shrivel into a corner now and let you have your say.

\*The Doctor and Jones glare at each other for a few moments.\*

**Doctor** : Can I speak?

**Jones** : I don't know. Can you say something that ain't selfish?

**Doctor** : All I am trying to say is that just because I don't think women should have abortions, doesn't mean I don't respect them.

**Jones** : But don't it? Can't have one without the other. You think you got a right to have an opinion on something you don't got no experience in? You don't gotta hold that thing in your belly for 9 months as it feeds off of you like a blood sucking leech. You don't gotta force an 8 pound thing out of a place that ain't meant to be pushing no 8 pounds. And you certainly don't gotta take good care of it because I've seen how child support works in this country. You don't got no respect for the women that go through that struggle.

**Doctor** : Abortion is just wrong! It's an innocent life!

**Jones** : And what? Mine ain't? My life ain't innocent? I'm 22 years old, living in my grandmothers house and pregnant! You think I woke up some weeks ago and said "Hey, I can't wait to kill this baby inside of me"? Because I didn't. I agonize over it each and every day.

**Doctor** : Then don't do it!

**Jones** [standing up in frustration] : Then don't tell me what to do! It is *my* body!

**Doctor** : I don't think an abortion is the right thing to do.

\*Jones looks at him with sympathy.\*

**Jones** : You don't get it. It's not about you. [sighs] You'll never get it. And to be honest, I don't expect you to.

**Doctor** [pleading] : But I'm trying. I'm trying so hard to understand. I just don't see how killing that baby will fix things.

**Jones** [staring blankly out of the window] : You know, for so many years, all people been fighting about is black and white. But there's a whole other battle going on right in our own backyards that we don't ever wanna talk about. Us. Women. We people too you know. We like a race that don't exist.

**Doctor** : Please. Just think of your own childhood. How much your parents loved

you.

**Jones** : I was a product of a rape. A white man raped my black mama and here I am.

**Doctor** [pauses before saying] : I'm sorry....But she loved you all the same didn't she?

**Jones** : She did. But I know what I did to her. I reminded her of that rape everyday. She couldn't handle it. Drowned herself when I turned eight.

**Doctor** [looking down and shaking his head] : I'm so sorry.

**Jones** : You keep saying "sorry". I bet she was real sorry too. Sorry that she was forced to give birth to a thing that she couldn't never love with all her heart. Sorry that she had to be reminded of what that man did to her every single day. Sorry that she couldn't live with herself because according to the state "She ain't had no right". Well guess what? State was wrong. She had the right to kill me if she had wanted to because it was her pain and suffering. And guess what? The State ain't help her with any of that pain.

\*They sit in silence. A few tears leave Jones's eye\*.

**Jones** : You said think of my childhood. As a child, I went through what every little girl has been going through for centuries. I was chasing.

**Doctor** [puzzled] : Chasing? After what?

**Jones** : After y'all, of course. You damn boys. From the time we little, girls have this urge to chase boys across schoolyards. And all you boys do in response is laugh. All that changes is we grow up chasing your love. Your approval. Your respect. But it's a chase I'm done running. I'm over it.

\*A sad silence.\*

**Doctor** : I'm just...I'm sorry.

**Jones** [small laugh] : What you keep apologizing to me for? I done told you to stop.

**Doctor** : I don't know. I'm sorry that you feel this way. And that maybe billions of other women in the past have felt this way. And there are billions more to come that will feel this way. That it could've been my mama or grandmother that felt that way. And that if it were them, even if it meant that I might not be here today, that I wouldn't want them to feel that way.

\*Jones gives a small smile.\*

**Jones** : Glad I can change your mind.

**Doctor** : Now my mind hasn't changed a bit. I don't like abortions. But I don't have a right to tell you what to do with your body. It's yours.

\*Jones nods appreciatively\*.

**Doctor** : You know, the state don't give the right to abortions.

**Jones** : I know. They don't got the right to decide my life either.

**Doctor** : So what are you gonna do?

Jones [makes direct eye contact] : What I have to.

**Doctor** [nodding] : It's your body. It's a sad thing to do, but you're right. I can't tell you how to birth a baby no better than you can tell me how to pee standing up.

\*They both laugh\*.

**Jones** : Thank you, Doctor.

**Doctor** : For what? Listening? That's my job. It's what I'm paid to do.

**Jones** : No. For understanding.

\*Jones picks up her purse and begins to make her way to the officer door.\*

**Doctor** : Ms. Jones.

\*Jones turns around.\*

**Jones** : Yes?

**Doctor** : I'm sure your mama never regretted having you.

**Jones** : Well, we'll never get to ask her.

\*Jones turns and walks out the door and back into the Alabama heat. \*

End Scene.