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Abbey and George

A Play

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This play is a conversation between two fetuses who were aborted; Abbey was delivered by induced abortion, and George was delivered by spontaneous abortion to a sick mother. The setting is a place of waiting after death. The fetuses discuss abortion, ethical views, religious views, vaccines, and the use of their own body parts. The idea is to provide information in a light play for the reader's examination of personal views and for discussion. The play is not meant to convince, but to encourage personal research of the topics.

There are four important terms used in the play. Embryo is an organism "in the earliest stage of development. In humans this is defined as the developing organism from the fourth day after fertilization to the end of the eighth week" (Embryo, 2020). Fetus is "the developing young in the uterus, specifically the unborn offspring in the postembryonic period, which in humans is from the third month after fertilization until birth" (Fetus, 2020). Induced abortion is commonly called abortion and is a "deliberate interruption of pregnancy" (Induced abortion, 2020). Spontaneous abortion is often called a miscarriage, "which connotes a spontaneous or natural loss of the fetus" (Spontaneous abortion, 2020).

Abbey: [Smiles and claps tiny hands.] I am so glad to see someone like me! My name is Abbey. What's your name?

George: I'm George.

Abbey: Nice to meet you. I was just wondering how I got here. Do you have any idea? Last thing I remember, I was inside my mother, and the next instant, I was here.

George: Where is here? [George looks around.]

Abbey: I think we are in the afterlife, somewhere, maybe heaven?

George: That's what happened to me. One minute, I was warm and cozy, and the next minute bam! And, just so you know, Abbey, I don't believe in the afterlife or heaven, so this can't be that.

Abbey: I believe that this is heaven.

George: It all depends on what you believe. Some people are brought up to believe and others not so much. I was not. My mother did not.

Abbey: Well, wherever we are, we are here together regardless of what we believe.

George: [Laughs.] Yes, we are. I guess something happened that we didn't come out screaming like we were supposed to. I think my mother got sick, then everything got dark, and there was a lot of noise.

Abbey: I'm sorry your mother was sick. My mother didn't want me. I heard her talking; she wasn't ready for me. But I'm puzzled as to how she believed in God and still aborted me.

George: Probably, a lot of people believe in God and abort babies.

Abbey: But the Bible says we shall not kill. Jesus loved the little children, and he said whatever you do the least of these, you do unto me. This was done unto me. [Tears fall down her face.]

George: My Mother didn't have a choice. I heard the doctor say my body would be put to good use. She said she was glad I would live on inside someone else. My kidneys were taken for research, and my eyes were removed.

Abbey: One of my eyes is being used for a virus vaccine. I'm not sure why an eye, but I don't need them anyway here. I can see better than ever.

George: So, you were taken out and used for research. And I came out on my own way too soon.

Abbey: I guess so. I was supposed to be a doctor, but that didn't work out, did it? [Abbey smiles.]

George: I was supposed to run for president in 2057, but I came out early. I couldn't breathe well, and it was cold on the table when they laid me down. Someone was pressing on me [George rubs his chest], and then, I was here with you. [Both smile.]

Abbey: Well, you are what they call a spontaneous abortion; that's natural. I was an induced abortion baby. This year, there have already been over 32,000,000 of us aborted by induction (Worldometer, 2020).

George: How do you know it was induction, as you call it?

Abbey: I heard the woman at the abortion clinic talking. She explained to my mother that I was an induced abortion and

not a miscarriage; she never mentioned that I was a baby.

I thought my heart would stop when she said that. The U.S. Abortion clock says 1,590,319,611 babies have been aborted since 1980 worldwide as of October 3, 2020 (US Abortion Clock.org). That means, in the whole world, there are between 40-50 million abortions a year (Worldometer, 2020). People have their reasons, I suppose. There are what they call pro-choice and pro-life people. We are fetuses. Not a very pretty name, so I call myself Abbey, you know, short for abortion.

George: They use tissue for research from us. Tissue, in other words, is us.

Abbey: The big thing seems to be virus research for that pandemic, as they call it. But that's not why I was taken; it was because my mother was 15 years old.

George: My mother was sick, and I think she died for a while. People are funny about abortion; they get all worked up. Even our conversation will upset some people. Some believe we are not humans yet, and others believe we are humans. I do not believe we were humans yet, not until we took our first breath, and we didn't. I'm a negative three months old. [Both giggle.]

Abbey: So, your mom was pro-life, and my mom was pro-choice? It's really confusing. Can you be pro-choice and believe in God? I guess my mother was. That makes me a negative six months. I think I was a human as soon as the two parts met. My mother didn't see it that way; she aborted me. I like that I can still like you, and we can still talk, even if you think differently from me. Maybe our purpose is to talk about this.

George: Others seem to yell at each other more than talk.

Abbey: People care more about dogs sometimes; I bet if the doctor were aborting puppies, people would be angry.

George: Maybe. A lot to think about: human, non-human, alive, dead, pro-life, and pro-choice. It all gives me a headache.

Abbey: I think this whole thing is about ethics and morals. Either way, people get upset. Why do we always have to argue about things? Why can't we just talk it out?

George: It is because we are all different and have an opinion and a choice. And people act out.

Abbey: But George, not all women wind up happy with their choice. Sometimes after an induced abortion, mothers feel loss and even their quality of life gets worse (Coleman et al., 2017).

George: Well, at least it was her decision.

Abbey: I wonder if my father knew. I wonder if my mother felt those things that other women reported, like "regret, shame, guilt, depression, anxiety, compromised self-appraisals, and self-destructive behaviors" (Coleman et al., 2017, p. 113). That makes me sad to think she feels any of those things.

George: And she could be one of those who was happy and relieved.

Abbey: I hope you are right, but around 32% of those who had abortions say there are no positives. Life is worse, a

child is lost, and pain is there. Some mothers become more spiritual and closer to God. Believe it or not, 13.3% of those who had an abortion began to volunteer to help those considering abortion to rethink it. Some go back to school to find a way to help, some work with women in the spiritual arena, some got close to Christ, and others (6.4%) join the pro-life movement (Coleman et al., 2017).

George: And I bet there are other feelings.

Abbey: Yes, some mothers suffer the death of the child, feel depression, experience guilt and sadness about the decision, have self-loathing, shame, addiction, and regret. About 7.7% of the women have self-destructive behaviors, while others have suicidal thoughts or even attempt to harm themselves (Coleman et al., 2017).

George: But relief is the most common emotion after an abortion (Rocca, Samari, Foster, Gould, Kimport, 2020). And the emotions, both good and bad, seemed to decline over the five years after the abortion. Most thought it was the right thing to do for them. I'm sure it was a tough decision, but there have to be some women who are happy it is done.

Abbey: I guess. So, where do the fetal tissues come from? I mean, how do they get us?

George: There are two ways to get fetal tissues, or us. You know, like I said, from induced or caused abortions, like you, and from naturally occurring spontaneous abortions of loss of the fetus, like me. Something about the cells not having markers and being better for research makes us good for research. The polio vaccine was from a fetal line in the 1950s (Conference on Fetal Research and Applications by the Institute of Medicine National Academy of Sciences, 1994).

Abbey: I've heard about research where the people were not told they were in a study and were misused. Like the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. And then there are HeLa, or Henrietta Lacks, cells. How do I know all this? [Abbey laughs.] Was the popular HEK293 cell line from an aborted baby?

George: Aborted human embryonic cells; they are much younger than a fetus.

Abbey: The HEK293 came from a kidney. These cells are bought, just like the HeLa cells. They have been used many times (Roberts, 2020).

George: You know what's so great about these cells? They are hardy and can double in a day in a half. They are the most used cells second to the HeLa cells. They are used for "cancer research, vaccine development, protein production, signal transduction, protein interaction studies, drug testing, and receptor de-orphanization" (Roberts, 2020, What's so Great about HEK Cells?, para. 2).

Abbey: I don't know about you, but I could hear everything they said. I could even hear the television! Roe v. Wade legalized the abortion of me and brought this conversation and situation to light. [George looks at Abbey, and they laugh again.] Well, I mean to the red. That's all I could see, a red light until I felt this terrible suction! That's how I broke my arm and leg.

George: Abortions have been done in back alleys for a long time; Roe v. Wade just made it legal and put it out in the open. Girls were using coat hangers and street people before this.

Abbey: Pregnancy can be prevented. Why do so many women need abortions? They say it is their right to control their bodies, but what about us? I hope they considered the four principles of justice, respect for autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence (Gillon, 1994). No one aborted them; it seems unfair that a person can decide to get rid of me, but she lives on happily.

George: They don't consider us people. Don't you get it? These principles were placed within the scope of the situation. They were designed to help "health care workers to make decisions when reflecting on moral issues that arise at work" (Gillon, 1994, 184).

George: Yes, people still question the morality of *Roe v. Wade* while others fight to keep it. The Catholic Church and other religions condemn it. Still, the conflict goes on, ethical questions remain, but the most troubling question is whether fetuses who were aborted by induction should be used in research and in the creation of vaccines and medicine.

Abbey: Pretty much, I would say no, based on my moral beliefs and my religious beliefs. I guess my mother didn't share those beliefs, but my grandmother did. They argued about this; I heard them. I realize that one should consider all of these things before making a decision, but I am stuck when I get to some of these. I did not have autonomy; I did not get to make my own decision.

George: You are not a human yet.

Abbey: I think I am. God made me. I was harmed for the benefit of others. What about me?

George: Did the benefit outweigh your harm?

Abbey: It depends on who is being sucked out and crushed. It hurt me.

George: Well, what if your grandmother was in danger of getting a horrible virus? With the new pandemic, many of the vaccines that will save people may be made from fetuses. Did you know that? If you thought you could take a shot and not get that Covid-19 virus they are talking about, would you? I mean, if you knew an aborted fetus had to lose an eye to make it?

Abbey: I don't know the answer to that question. I'm not even sure about the use of my eye in that research, but I don't think so. I don't think taking a baby for any reason is a good reason unless the mother is sick and might die, like yours. And if we followed God, this would never have started.

George: The use of fetal tissue should not be an item of controversy but should be cheered as a way to help others. I think "it should not be controversial but, instead, viewed as a professionally responsible success story" (Gelber, McCullough, and Chervenak, 2015, p. 819.) So, perhaps we should look to the benefit of using our body parts to help others.

Abbey: I don't know, George, I wanted to have a body, to be a person and a doctor. It seems we lose something about the sanctity of human life. Like we are messing with God's work. And what would prevent women from getting pregnant to sell the embryos and fetuses if people would buy them? There is good research and bad research.

Even though the government has limited funding for this type of research, that doesn't affect others like pharmaceutical companies. I believe in God, and I cannot consent to an abortion; of course, I'll never have that choice. And now, some want late-term abortions right up until birth. Have you seen those babies? They are perfectly created babies someone would want! I can just see them!

George: Abbey, not everyone believes in God, not everyone who believes is for or against abortion, and not everyone who doesn't believe is for or against abortion. Many would rather have a cure for their ailment. Remember polio was harming children, but then they discovered that brain tissue from humans really worked and "advances in human embryo-derived viral culture advanced the field and led to the ability to cultivate varicella, measles, and numerous other viruses" (Gelber et al., 2015, p. 819). Those who are bothered by this should be respected but should not stand in the way.

Abbey: So, to save others, we take babies from the womb - like me? In order to make lives better and to cure illness, we take babies from the womb - like me? What about the baby's life? It's so confusing. If it were my child who might get polio, I would be tempted to use those vaccines, but I don't know if I could. I would be saving my child with someone else's. And, they could create a vaccine without using baby parts! [Begins to cry.] Who put us in this situation? Who thought of killing us for research? Because someone thought of it, now we are that option. Should we even use your body?

George: Sometimes, an induced abortion can save others from being aborted. Think about this. Parents allowed their baby to be aborted because the mom had rubella. Those aborted babies helped to create a pure virus and the reaction that the virus caused. After that, not so many babies had to be aborted (Gelber et al., 2015).

Abbey: Who said they had to be aborted? Was it because they had a health issue? Are we playing God? And what about babies with Down Syndrome? I think science can argue the use of babies in the name of research, but do we have the right to take what God has created?

George: You mean ... man.

Abbey: I mean God. Look in the Bible. God created man. I'm sure some days he is disappointed with his creation. [Looks sad.] And people do not know which drugs or vaccines are developed using fetal tissues electively aborted.

George: Bet your grandmother has even used some unknowingly.

Abbey: It's just too much ethically and morally to consider. So complicated. My church says abortion is wrong. I was inside my mom playing with the umbilical cord when I heard the priest say, "abortion is wrong!" That would make research using those babies who were aborted immoral.

George: [Smiles and places his hand on Abbey's invisible shoulder.] Abbey, you were aborted, you are being used to grow that Covid-19 vaccine.

Abbey: Does my mother know, or is she like Henrietta Lacks, who never knew her cells were being used for cancer research, or like those men in the Tuskegee study, who didn't know they were being studied and not cured?

George: She probably signed some type of form to release your tissues.

Abbey: Keown (1993) was right; differences in opinion about this exist. It is scary, and I don't think this will ever be resolved.

George: Some health issues cannot be solved without fetal tissue use (Reardon, 2019). The current administration is against all induced abortion derived tissue research. Some say this has set back research. Fetal tissues act like human cells in research, whereas animals do not always produce the same results. So, now, it's all political. And research may well depend on who is in office. When research is stopped, the progress to cure diseases is slowed.

Abbey: George, we should never have gone there. A society that will kill their babies is doomed to fall. Next, it will be old people because they take up resources. Then, the sick will be allowed to commit suicide. Did you know that the baby feels pain during the abortion procedure? One abortionist said that the baby thrashes about and kicks their legs. I felt pain. The pain may be worse than what older children feel when harmed (Human Life International, 2020). And that pain starts at a very early stage. How do scientists get the tissues?

George: I know. I felt pain, too. Companies like Advanced Bio-science Resources (ABR) collect the tissues and supply most of the tissues (Wadman & Kaiser, 2018).

Abbey: You mean dead baby parts. My grandmother found a place on the internet called The Center for Medical Progress. There is a special report on there about this company. They make money off of us. Certain age hearts and kidneys bring in more money. Just go read this website and see if you change your mind. There is even talk of fetal harvest trafficking (The Center for Medical Progress, 2020). Will mankind ever learn there are limits?

George: But it's like McCune and Weissman (2019) said, how will banning this tissue use advance science and help the population? They disagreed with President Trump, who has tried to ban research on fetal tissue. Basically, they said that if you believe like you do, Abbey, you are impeding science and hurting others. They also say it is ethical.

Abbey: I disagree.

George: Using fetal tissue does cause some concern, especially when women might sell babies or when others make money off the sale. Because of this, The American Medical Association Code of Medical Ethics Opinion 7.3.5 says that physicians who use fetal tissue from humans should not pay for the tissue; they must get consent, and then use the tissue for research only (n.d.). And remember, those four principles help us to think about ethical issues like this one: "respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice" (Gillon, 1994, 184). The reader should remember, as a health care worker or doctor, as you were to be, it is not their personal decision that decides if a woman has an abortion.

Abbey: But how can a nurse who believes it is against her religion participate? Would the nurse be forced to assist with the abortion or made to carry the baby to the room where they keep dead babies, or put it in that vat of solution? There are other ways to create a vaccine or to progress in finding cures (Hadro, 2020). Pharmaceutical companies that are not

seeking funding from NIH or other places can do the research they wish. Hadro wrote that we should not allow our ethics to slide, that the deaths of people from Covid-19 does not make a wrong right.

George: So, simply, if you view induced abortion as being wrong, is the use of a vaccine made with the fetus parts as wrong?

Abbey: [Looks sad.] To me, yes. No one tells us which vaccines are derived from aborted fetus research. Shouldn't there be a warning on the bottle?

George: Perhaps. And I'm aware there are other ways to create these things that may not be as good, like rat cells. Now, I wonder if in the face of future pandemics, we will just stop questioning the use of fetal tissue that was aborted by choice or on demand. I can see the disclaimer now on the bottle: Created from a rat, aborted baby tissues, cord blood ... should I go on?

Abbey: [Looks down.] I see abortion as a sin.

George: But that is your opinion, based on your beliefs; others have different beliefs. The Freedom from Religion Foundation site posted an opinion that said there is nothing in the Bible about abortion except where caused by harm from an altercation. They say that life begins at first breath - citing Genesis 2:7, when God breathed life (Gaylor, nd.).

Abbey: Perhaps the Bible doesn't use the name abortion because there was no word like that. But Scripture is clear. Jeremiah 1:5 reminds us that God knows us before he creates us. Psalm 139:13-16 says that he formed us in the womb, and Exodus 21:22-25 said the penalty is to be fined for a person who causes a baby in the womb to miscarry, and death if the mother dies. It is not a matter of choice. We are made in God's likeness (Got questions, 2020)! The Catholic Church and other religious groups stand strong against abortion. Billy Graham said we are God's, life is sacred, every human deserves to be protected, and that we can be forgiven (Billy Graham, n.d.).

George: Yes, Abbey, but this is only if you believe that. Each person has the right to believe what they want to believe. I do not believe. I would not seek forgiveness.

Abbey: And I have the duty to protect those who cannot help themselves and to try to bring you to God. [Abbey smiles at George.] You can still be forgiven if you commit an abortion, convince someone to have one, or even perform one yourself. Even if you don't believe in God, you can change; all sins can be forgiven (John 3:16; Romans 8:1; Colossians 1:14; Got Questions Ministries, 2020. para.6).

George: And this argument will go on. What about abortions done because of rape or because the mother is going to die if she goes on with the pregnancy?

Abbey: In rape, murder isn't the answer. If the mother goes immediately for care, something can be done before a life is formed. What about adoption? The baby is innocent. And if the mom's life is at risk, which is less than 10% today, the baby can be born early with a C-section or induced birth. And that argument about the mother or the baby, if the mother is going to die, the decision is between her and the doctor and the father of the child, if present. Even though people use that argument, remember that "over 98% of the abortions performed today involve women who simply do

not want to have the baby. Less than two percent of abortions are for the reasons of rape, incest, or the mother's life is at risk" (Got Questions Ministries, 2020, para. 5).

George: I wouldn't blink an eye if I were a mother and could not care for the child.

Abbey: George, you don't have an eye. [Both giggle.]

George: What is better: poverty, starvation, abuse, or abortion? What if the baby is malformed? Mercy, please, if it is me! My poor mother tried, and my birth saved her even though I died. My cells live on, though.

Abbey: I'm sorry, George.

George: It is what it is.

Abbey: I know.

George: Some of the vaccines for Covid-19 are being made without the use of fetal cells.

Abbey: These are called ethically derived cells...that is a hint right there (Abbamonte, 2020).

George: Abbey, people are dying from Covid-19. There is a big rush to end this pandemic.

Abbey: Yes, but Novavax, Sanofi Pasteur, and GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) use alternative methods. Sinovac, of China, is using kidney cells from a monkey (Abbamonte, 2020). The important thing to me is that we know where the vaccines come from and how they were produced.

George: Abbey, there are so many questions, and there is so much information. I think we have to make up our minds about all these issues. We have to commit to read and study the issues and not to blindly take what one person says and run with it.

Abbey: What about tissue from surgery, donated organs, the stillborn baby, neonatal deaths, umbilical cords and blood, placenta tissue ...what is wrong with science? Why aren't they looking more at those? [Looks down.] I just hope my grandmother and mother wait for an ethically derived Covid-19 vaccine.

George: [Smiles.] Don't worry, they won't know if it isn't on the bottle.

Abbey: I wish my mother would have wanted me and could have taken care of me. It was a hard decision for her to remove me.

George: My mother was sick and died for a little bit, and this the only way for her to live, for me to come out naturally.

Abbey: I'm sorry, George.

George: Thank you.

Abbey: So, you don't believe abortion is wrong, or that vaccines should not be developed from induced aborted fetuses, or that there is a God?

George: I do not. We should not allow beliefs that we may or may not have to affect fetal tissue research ethics.

Abbey: I think we must look at how this use of babies changes the number of women getting an abortion, how the mother gives consent for this, and the morality of it all (Shorr, 1994). If you believe it is wrong, to do it makes you complicit, and even if you think it is right, you are complicit in the act. George, "58.3% of the women reported aborting to make others happy, 73.8% disagreed that their decision to abort was entirely free from even subtle pressure from others to abort, 28.4% aborted out of fear of losing their partner if they did not abort, 49.2% reported believing the fetus was a human being at the time of the abortion, 66% said they knew in their hearts that they were making a mistake when they underwent the abortion, 67.5% revealed that the abortion decision was one of the hardest decisions of their lives, and 33.2% felt emotionally connected to the fetus before the abortion" (Coleman, Boswell, Etkorn & Turnwald, 2017, p. 115). How can you argue with them?

George: Abbey, transplanting fetal tissue like ours into the brain of a person with Parkinson's disease can stop the symptoms (Shorr, 1994). Can you deny a person suffering from this? Our tissue may be used for "DiGeorge's syndrome, diabetes mellitus, Huntington's disease, and Alzheimer's disease. No cure exists for any of these and none, other than fetal tissue therapy, appear on the horizon" (Shorr 1994, p. 196).

Abbey: We could consider those babies who came out on their own. I pray babies are not grown for research.

George: Many of those spontaneous fetuses have pathology or issues (Shorr, 1994).

Abbey: It just cannot be right to get pregnant and then decide you don't want the baby. And the women suffer afterward.

George: It's all for the good. And since I don't believe there is a God, I think it is okay.

Abbey: [Gasps.] I know we all believe differently; I understand. I am sorry you don't believe in God. (Abbey turns around and George is gone; she frantically looks for him.) George! George! [She calls and calls and begins to cry. But he is not there. She then remembers that George did not believe in God, and he could not be in this place. Suddenly, Abbey sees a bright light moving and glittering, and it draws her inside. George was gone. She turns around and whispers, "George, is it too late to say you are sorry? I love you ...".]

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