

"Choice"

The word still hung in the room like sagging rain clouds.
It fell like fog and settled on their skin, and in the air between them.
They could no longer see each other through the overwhelming density.
Each was lost in their own world of chilled thoughts and meanings.

The periodic crinkle and swoosh of a turning newspaper
and the persistent, rhythmic sipping of now cold, decaffeinated coffee
serenaded the otherwise silent standoff.
Seconds turned into minutes and moments uncountable.

She sensed the barely present life within her,
the quick, hyperactive thumping of a heart she knew had not yet developed.
Fast forward, now, to the infectious, ringing laughter of a child
who never even knew its existence had been called into question.

But the image died as he braced himself to speak.
"You know it's legal now, and you supported it, so don't be a hypocrite.
We can't afford this thing and we had a plan.
You know it's not an option right now."

The cold metal leg of the chair screeched along the kitchen's sterile tile floor
as she escaped the suffocation that had encapsulated their conversation.
Hypocrite. It was like a papercut slit into her skin, shallow and painful.
It burned with the salt of seawater—relentless, pitiless.

But, outside, the warm moisture of morning grass brought life to her numbed, bare feet.
She breathed in the crisp, cool air, leaden with oxygen that was no longer drowned in the weight
of their exchange.
And nature nourished the possibilities that sprang forth from the womb of her mind

She knew, with him or without him, she always had a choice.