

Summers, our ritual was to make an annual trip south and stay with my mother in her little home in the woods of North Carolina. My mother was easygoing and loved my husband and my company. She felt very comfortable around him, so it was not uncommon for us to share stories of all kinds together sitting at her round kitchen table. On one occasion, I brought up the subject of my mother's miscarriages. I knew the baby boy before me had died almost immediately at birth, but I was unsure of the other two and in what time frame they had happened in the mix of the five children she raised. Mind you, my mother was in her late eighties when this conversation took place. Her memory was sketchy, but as she hesitated with a funny look, I did not expect to hear her say, "Robin, those were not miscarriages"...I didn't understand. She looked at me and said, "I aborted them". What do you mean, I asked? How? Then she told me she had aborted the two fetuses with a coat hanger. I was shocked and speechless. I asked if my father knew. She said he never knew, even though after one of the abortions she bled so much I remember standing in the long hallway, watching from my bedroom without understanding what I was seeing. My mother as well as my father both loved children, but his alcoholic disease was the reason for my mother's actions. I could not take in this story for a very long time. Even as I write these words, it is hard to believe my mother did this, had the courage to take this in her own hands and keep it a secret for all those years. My mother has been gone for three years now. I miss her, she was my best friend...and very brave, but I will always wish I could have been there for her in this terrible deed she had to do alone.

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