

Won
by
Love

NORMA MCCORVEY,
JANE ROE OF *ROE V. WADE*,
SPEAKS OUT FOR THE UNBORN AS SHE
SHARES HER NEW CONVICTION FOR LIFE

NORMA MCCORVEY
WITH GARY THOMAS



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This book is dedicated to all the children
who have been torn apart by abortion—
I'm sorry you are no longer here,
but now you are in heaven
with our Father—
And to all the women who through abortion
have had their lives changed—
Amazing Grace can heal your heart,
and you, too, can be won
by love.

I thank Randall Terry—his tireless efforts on behalf of the unborn will not go unrecognized. I thank you especially for forgiving me when I blew that whistle in your face before I knew Christ!

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In His Service,
Norma McCorvey

CHAPTER

1

My Neighbor, the Terrorist

■ *If I had* known March 31, 1995, was going to be such a bad day, I probably would have checked out of life right then and there. But I was oblivious to all that lay ahead as I answered my phone and heard the news that exploded my comfortable world.

“You’ll never guess who’s moving in next door,” I heard a woman from the abortion clinic say.

“John Travolta,” I offered.

“No.”

“Humphrey Bogart?”

“No.”

“Then who?” I was not in a mood to play games.

“Try Operation Rescue.”

I immediately fumbled around and lit up a second cigarette, even though I already had one burning. They don’t make nicotine strong enough for situations like this one.

“You’ve got to be kidding, of course,” I said, feigning laughter. “This is a joke, right?”

“I’m afraid not. You ought to come down and see for yourself.”

The clinic worker's tone overcame my doubts, and I hung up the phone in shock. For me, Norma McCorvey, also known as Jane Roe of the infamous *Roe v. Wade* abortion decision, to have Operation Rescue for a next-door neighbor was like having the Hatfields move in next door to the McCoys. My most bitter enemies and I would be sharing a common wall. I could feel a headache coming on.

For forty-some years I had played it tough. I was Jane Roe, I could handle anything. But the truth is, I felt so weak that I knew I needed help, yet there was no spiritual strength for me to draw upon. My hands were shaking too much to consult the Ouija board, so I considered my two standbys: drugs and constant activity.

Since the nicotine wasn't working, I called the press. Channel 4 in Dallas was always one of my favorites. As an abortion advocate, my views were consistently well represented on that network, and I knew I would get a sympathetic (if not an overtly biased) hearing. I got hold of a producer and announced, "Have I got a story for you guys."

"What is it, Norma?" he asked.

"Seems like Operation Rescue is moving next door to the abortion clinic where I work."

"You're kidding. O.R. is moving next door to Jane Roe's abortion clinic?"

"That's right."

"This is too much!"

"Well, let me get down there and see what's going on. I'll fill you in."

The circus had begun.

A Mad Dash

It took me seven minutes to complete what was normally a fifteen-minute trip. The last thing I could do was sit still, so I drove as fast as I could, inhaling on my cigarettes with a greedy passion. I couldn't get the nicotine into my system fast enough.

On the drive over, I became convinced that somebody must be playing a cruel joke on me. The landlord had promised that our abortion clinic could have the space into which O.R. was reputed to be moving. We were planning to expand. We even had a key to the front door! How in the world could the landlord turn around and rent the space to O.R.?

It was impossible.

I pulled off the LBJ Highway and onto Markville Drive, the side street housing our clinic in the Lake Highlands area of north Dallas. A Choice for Women was located in an aging one-story office building that is U-shaped with a huge parking lot in the center. The abortion clinic was at the bottom of the U, set back about a hundred yards from any public walkway. That was not by accident. We had to have sufficient private property so that the "O.R. Terrorists" (as we thought of them) could not legally set up camp outside our front door or even demonstrate in a place where they could reach our clients.

Which reminded me: *If we thought we had to protect ourselves from O.R. with a distant sidewalk, how in the world could we survive if we shared a common wall?*

As I pulled into the parking lot, I breathed a sigh of relief. There wasn't an O.R. person to be found. The call *must* have been a joke. Somebody was trying to catch me on April Fools' Day, one day early. Well, I would have some explaining to do to Channel 4, but that was better than having to live next door to Flip Benham (in private, we liked to call him Flip Venom), O.R.'s fiery director.

I walked into the clinic, finally feeling calm enough to put out my cigarette, and said, "All right, who came in with the hangover? What's all this about O.R. moving in next door?"

My lifelong friend, Connie Gonzales—the person whom I trusted most in this world—walked up to me and said, "Norma, it's true."

Connie would not lie. Not about this. She had been there the night I was targeted for "execution" by antichoice terrorists. Violence against abortion clinic doctors and personnel had been

increasing for the past several years, making me a prime target, so Connie knew this was nothing to joke about.

Connie saw my stunned expression. "If you don't believe me," she said, "look outside now."

I turned around and my mouth dropped open as I saw Flip Venom and his two cohorts driving up in a large Ryder truck.

"I need another cigarette," I said.

"You just finished one," someone said.

"Then give me two."

The Headache Next Door

Watching O.R. move in next door was like going to a horror movie only to find out when you returned home that Freddy Krueger had bought the house across the street. I saw anti-choicers (or antis for short) as vicious, mean-spirited, fire-breathing, sanctimonious, self-righteous, bigoted hypocrites who wanted nothing more than to see Jane Roe, the woman responsible for legalized abortion, dead.

In fact, some pro-lifers, who didn't know I was Jane Roe at the time, told me as much to my face. "I'd like to get hold of that Jane Roe and kill her myself," one of them had told me.

From the look on her face, I believed her (and kept my identity to myself!).

I walked outside the clinic and dropped into a catatonic stare as Flip parked his rental truck and started waving at me. The last time I had seen Flip was when he crowded into a book signing and shouted at me that I should be ashamed of myself for causing the deaths of thirty-five million children. This time, he smiled, jumped out of his truck, and yelled, "Hellooo, Miss Norma!"

My first instinct was to call the police. Flip couldn't be on our property; it was trespassing. Unless—unless he really was a legal tenant!

Well, I don't know who called them (it wasn't me), but the police did show up rather quickly. The officers were visibly upset

and impatient and immediately informed Flip that he was under arrest. He had been arrested on this site several times before, and this time, as far as they were concerned, was no different.

I smiled. *That problem's solved*, I thought, my headache already beginning to go away. We could always count on the Dallas police.

"You can't arrest me," Flip protested. "I'm leasing the office suite right next door. I have every right to use this parking lot."

"Don't play games with us," the officer growled.

"I'm telling you, this is my office, I'm gonna stay here, and you're not going to arrest anybody."

The police officers knew Flip could be bold and even brash, but he wasn't stupid. They checked out his story and found out it was true, so Flip was free to roam.

The police officers looked over at me and shrugged their shoulders. There was nothing they could do.

My headache came rushing back.

"Want to Join Us?"

A little later in the day, Flip called out, "Hey, Miss Norma! We're about to have a pizza. Want to join us?"

"I can't eat cheese," I said. "I'm lactose intolerant."

Pizza, my eye! Who did he think he was, driving up to my clinic and inviting me to lunch? As if I'd accept anything from him without having it tested by a lab first!

I went back into the clinic and saw Lynn, a worker in our abortion clinic, kicking the wall.

"What in the world are you doing, Lynn? Have you lost your mind?" I asked.

"If we make enough noise, maybe they'll go away."

"Look," I shouted, losing my temper. "I've got enough on my hands trying to deal with the crazy people moving in. If you all go crazy on me, I might just lose my own mind, too, so knock it off! It's gonna take a lot more than a bit of noise to make these people go away."

The abortion doctor, “Arnie,” ran up the hall. “Norma, what do we do?”

“How should I know, Arnie?” I asked. “You think they make instruction manuals for this?”

One of the reasons Arnie was so scared was that, quite recently, a well-known abortion clinic in the Dallas area—the A to Z Clinic—had been subjected to O.R. protests and had subsequently closed down. O.R. called a press conference, claiming credit, but I knew the real story because I had worked there while I was also working at A Choice for Women. The truth is, the A to Z Clinic was a sorry mess.

A Sorry Mess

I started working at the A to Z Clinic in January 1995, and it was a health disaster waiting to happen. If the owner had not closed it down, eventually even the government would have been forced to do it. Light fixtures hung out of the ceiling; falling plaster dusted everyone who walked by. Next door to the clinic was an abandoned warehouse full of boxes and newspapers, so we fought an ongoing, and losing, battle with the rat population that resided there. Every morning we found rat droppings all over the clinic. Sinks were backed up—in a reputed medical clinic, no less—and blood splatters stained the walls.

The “Parts Room,” where we kept the aborted babies, was particularly heinous. No one liked to be in there to do their business, much less to clean the place, and since no patients were allowed back there, it was pretty much left to ruin. If a baby didn’t make it into a bucket, that was too bad; it was left to lay there. Other babies were stacked like cordwood once every body part had been accounted for (after abortions, doctors have to account for major body parts—arms, legs, torso, and head—to make sure nothing is left inside the mother).

The room smelled awful. We used Pine-Sol because of its strong antiseptic smell, but within hours the cleaning mixture

was overpowered by the smell of medical waste and rot—which explains why the rats were so eager to visit us every night.

The floor of the clinic invited contamination. It was covered by an old, gold-and-brown shag rug. At least I think it was gold and brown—no one really knew for sure, since the rug had not been cleaned for a long time.

When the out-of-town owner realized he had a tremendous financial liability just waiting to happen, he shut the clinic doors. He really didn’t have any choice.

O.R. had taken credit for the closure, saying that their protests had resulted in the owner’s decision. At the time, I never gave any thought to how God might sovereignly work in response to prayer, so I thought O.R. was nothing but a bunch of grandstanding liars.

Now Arnie was afraid; I could see it in his face. And, with O.R. moving next door, he had reason to be.

Arnie is a small man of foreign descent. It’s a closely guarded fact that a disproportionate number of abortion doctors are actually from other countries—foreigners who perceive that our lax abortion laws create a tremendous moneymaking opportunity. Because of the politics surrounding abortion and the unparalleled success of the abortion lobby, veterinary clinics have stricter regulations than abortion clinics.

Foreign-born abortionists don’t have to worry about acquiring bedside manners. They don’t even have to talk to the patients if they don’t want to, so it’s a practice ready-made for someone who simply wants to show up, do his dirty work, and go home with a fistful of cash.

Arnie is five feet three inches tall, with a good paunch. He always goes barefoot, even when he’s operating. He has green eyes and carefully cropped hair, and he speaks with a strong accent.

Whenever I would walk back into the clinic during my forays with O.R.’s moving-in crew, Arnie would ask me, “Norma, what is going on now?”

“They’re still moving in, Doctor.”

“This is not good, Norma, this is not good. What are we going to do?”

The thing that worried Arnie most was that Flip Benham, the man who had taken on and defeated A to Z, was now next door to *his* clinic, threatening his livelihood and his six-figure income.

Flipper

The man of Arnie’s nightmares, Flip Benham, reminds me of a beach guy. Whereas I could have picked up Arnie with one hand, I’d need a truck to move Flip, who is built like a stocky surfer and is over six feet tall. He has a thick head of hair, even in his late forties.

Flip has a Bat Masterson kind of arrogance and walks with the swagger of a riverboat gambler. But even back then, when he was my worst enemy, I could see a gentleness to his toughness, and something drew me to him.

Since I had already said I couldn’t eat a pizza, when I went back outside Flip asked if I wanted a sandwich. “Oh no, don’t bother,” I said. “I don’t think I could eat today at all. I’ll just drink my lunch and dinner.”

I didn’t know this at the time, but Flip had been a saloon-owning alcoholic. I intentionally tried to shock him by talking about drinking my meals, but Flip was intimately familiar with an alcoholic’s favorite method of “medicating” stress.

The press was eating this up. It was a circus outside, with flashbulbs popping and video cameras rolling and interviews taking place on a constant basis. One reporter would talk to Flip, then come over and get my reaction; this type of thing went on all afternoon, until I began to lose what little patience I had.

I kept looking at Flip, thinking, *Why here? There are ten thousand different offices in Dallas, Texas; why did you have to move next door to my clinic?* We were standing side by side, less than ten feet apart, when Flip started egging me on.

“Are you still killing babies, Miss Norma?” Flip asked me.

“Oh come on, Flip,” I said. “Lighten up. What you need is to go to a good Beach Boys concert.”

“Miss Norma,” Flip said, completely taking me by surprise, “I haven’t been to a Beach Boys concert since 1976.”

All at once—and I mean that; it was a sudden realization—Flip became more human to me. Before, I had thought of him as a man who did nothing but yell at abortion clinics and read his Bible. In fact, I even pictured him sleeping with his hands crossed over his chest, Dracula-style, with a big Bible tucked under one arm. The thought that he was a real person—a guy who had once gone to a Beach Boys concert—never occurred to me. Now that it had, I saw him in a new light.

This sudden realization did not comfort me, however. On the contrary, it made me more nervous. The real person scared me even more than the imagined terrorist. When he had screamed at me, he looked like a mountain rolling my way. *That man is big*, I thought. *That man could hurt me. I need to get away.*

But now I thought he might be fun to get to know. And that thought really scared me. I tried to pierce through this by teasing him. “Come on, Flip, I didn’t know you were ever a sinner.”

“Miss Norma,” Flip said, “I’m a great big sinner saved by a great big God.” And he smiled.

Of all the things I expected Flip to say, this wasn’t one of them. Flip, a sinner? Flip, a human being?

Again, I was shaken. I wanted to think of Flip as the man I had watched on the television screen as he laid his body in front of an abortion clinic in Wichita. The whole thing seemed unreal to me. I kept asking myself, *What would drive so many people to give up four to six weeks of their lives to travel to Wichita, knowing that they would be thrown into jail?* I mean, I gave up a lot of my time to push for legal abortion, but these people were willing to go to jail to stop it. I never met a pro-choice group with that kind of commitment.

I remembered watching another rescue and seeing the police roughly drag rescuers away from the clinic doors. Some of them

had even chained themselves to stair railings; they were willing to do whatever it took to keep the clinics closed.

In my mind, that bordered on fanaticism. These weren't real people, not like my friends and I were real. These antichoiceers were otherworldly; they didn't feel the same things I felt.

And yet now Flip was telling me that he was a sinner. A chill worked its way up to my heart. What if the same thing that happened to Flip happened to me?

Nah. Couldn't happen. Not to Norma McCorvey. Not to Jane Roe. God wouldn't have her.

Still, there was something that bothered me greatly. Flip had a certain undeniable charisma. Something inside me made me want to tell him my whole life story. *Maybe then he would understand*, I thought. *Maybe then he wouldn't hate me so much.*

It was a strange feeling, wanting my archenemy to hear my life story, so I coped with it the way I always did. I left the clinic, went to a restaurant, and began lushing beer, not quite finishing a six-pack.

A couple of hours later, I called Connie. "Can you pick me up?" I asked. "I'm not in any shape to drive."

Some years ago, Connie and I had been lovers, but our relationship had been completely platonic since 1992, though we still shared a home. To be honest, I had grown weary of the homosexual lifestyle. Connie and I had been friends before we ever became lovers, and now that I was "grown up" and no longer worried about getting pregnant by another man, I simply had no desire to continue a sexual relationship.

When Connie drove up, she was still wearing her scrubs from work. Connie served as the clinic supervisor and office manager. Technically, that made her my boss. She is dark complexioned, of Spanish and Italian descent, and her naturally black hair was just beginning to frost into white as she approached her sixty-fifth birthday.

The day's events had taken their toll on Connie as much as they had on me. She looked every bit her age that night. I quietly

climbed into the truck, and then, after a silent drive, stumbled into the house. I went straight for the shower, letting the hot water burn my skin. When the water started to grow cold, I stepped out of the shower, dressed, and fell into bed, crying myself to sleep.

I just didn't want to believe that this day had actually happened.

But it had. It really had.

as forceful as necessary without worrying about the patient's reaction.

I will always remember one second-trimester abortion. The young woman was very attractive, with fair skin, blue eyes, and slightly reddish hair; I'd guess she was around eighteen years old. She was so sweet and pleasant, not at all demanding, and a first-year student at a local college.

"I've heard I'll have to miss classes for two weeks," she told me. "I don't know how I'll ever make up the homework."

I laughed reassuringly. "Oh, no, honey; you can go back to school tomorrow. You just can't be sexually active for two weeks, and you'll need to take showers instead of baths during that time. Other than that, you'll be fine."

She smiled prettily and said, "Okay, how do we start?"

It was weird because she seemed so naive to be in this situation. When she first came in, she said she wasn't sure if she was pregnant, even though she had just entered her second trimester.

After we discussed prices, she decided to save the extra \$250 we charged for general anesthesia, so she was awake at the start of the abortion. Unfortunately, she looked down during the procedure and saw the baby's hand as the doctor took it out.

I heard her gasp, saw what she saw, and quickly covered her eyes, but I was too late. She had already passed out.

When she came to, the doctor was finished. The young woman looked up at me with horror in her eyes and asked me about what she had seen.

"I don't know what you're talking about," I lied.

"But I saw a part of my baby! I know I did!"

"Honey, I was there the whole time, and I didn't see a thing. You must have imagined it."

If you think it was hard maintaining my composure in such situations, you're right. Believe me, it takes a lot of beers to make yourself forget what you're doing.

Two weeks later, when this young woman returned for her follow-up exam, she looked at me accusingly. The first thing she

said was, "You know what I saw. You *know*." The sweetness in her spirit had died; there was now a hard edge to her voice.

I avoided her eyes for fear I'd give it all away.

A Hundred-Dollar Lie

That was not the only lie I was expected to tell. More than once I had a conversation with Arnie that went something like this.

"She's ten weeks, Arnie."

"Norma, tell her she's twelve."

I tried looking him in the eye, but he avoided my stare. The difference between an abortion at ten weeks and twelve weeks was a hundred dollars. Abortionists routinely jack up the estimate of a baby's age because most women simply won't argue about it—and even fewer would dare to solicit a second, more informed opinion.

In this arena, the abortionist is freer than any other physician. He controls both the sonogram and the sonogram machine, and rarely has to confer with another doctor or share his records. Since he is talking to women who are almost universally uninformed about the mechanics of what he does, it is child's play to cash in by inflating an unborn baby's age.

"You tell her," I said. "I'm not gonna lie."

I was not always cooperative. For example, both Connie and I refused to reassemble the body parts after a late-term abortion. It was bad enough having to seal the bags that held them, but there was no way I was going to treat those bodies like grotesque jigsaw puzzles.

"Norma, Norma," Arnie once told me, "I will show you where to put the tissue."

Tissue was the code word for *bodies* in our clinic. We stored them in plastic bags, which were kept in a freezer until they were picked up weekly.

I was not a newcomer to abortion clinics at that time, but I was not about to handle the bodies. "Sorry, Arnie," I said, "I

don't do that. I'll scrub the floors. I'll make appointments. But don't ask me to handle the tissue."

"Is okay," he argued. "I show you how to put in freezer."

I walked in the back, more to shut up Arnie than to commit to handling the bodies in the future. Besides, I was feeling a little ashamed of myself.

You're hard-core, I told myself. You're Jane Roe. You can handle a couple of plastic bags full of tissue.

The Parts Room, as we called it, was narrow, with wash-basins on one side and medical supplies on the other. Against one wall was a white freezer with the lock broken off.

Arnie lifted up a large plastic bag. The contents looked similar to a cut-up chicken, with all the parts swimming in blood, and I felt myself grow nauseous. Then I saw the back of a head float by and I immediately vomited all over Arnie, the sink, and the counter.

"Oh, Norma," Arnie complained, "I will have to go and clean myself again." He looked at me and sighed.

"You cannot do this?" he asked.

I was white. I thought I might throw up again. And he was asking me if I was sure I couldn't do this?

I shook my head. "No."

"This is okay," he answered. "I will have Connie do it."

Connie also refused, so Arnie ended up piecing the bodies together himself. At the beginning of each week, a service truck would come by and pick up the body parts, which were taken to a lab.

All through the week, the Parts Room became creepier and creepier. I never wanted to go back there, especially at night. Sometimes I had to go back there to fix the phone lines or get some supplies, and every time I would be afraid that the freezer was going to open, reach out and grab me, and pull me into its cold world, slamming shut.

No, I was not losing my mind; but when you work at an abortion clinic, you're guilty and you know it. For all the millions spent on public relations, the abortion movement has yet

to invent rhetoric powerful enough to blind abortion clinic workers from the truth. You see the body parts, you hear the women's cries, and you can't keep lying to yourself—at least not without artificial stimulation.

That's why drugs, alcohol, and coarse jokes are so popular inside the clinics. If we had stayed sober and not laughed at ourselves, we would have begun to think of ourselves as hideous monsters preying on little babies.

side, and the woman from the Choice Foundation standing on top of his desk. She was not a small woman, by any means, and it was not a pretty sight.

Though it sounds comical now, it didn't seem so funny at the time, and I thought, *The entire world has gone crazy on me.* I had enough on my hands without receiving help like this!

"Come down from there," I said. "I'm going to go mad. It's going to kill me to put up with this mess."

I escorted the woman out the door and thought, *Maybe we're better off without any help.*

As soon as the woman had left, I locked the front door and realized to my horror that I was losing it. Two beautiful children were right outside, both of whom loved me dearly; we played together Monday through Wednesday, exchanged kisses and hugs, gave each other gifts, but then were on "opposite sides" Thursday through Saturday. I hated it.

This is not worth six bucks an hour, I said to myself. Though Arnie made a very good living, the money was not passed down, believe me. The women at the clinic worked more out of a sense of duty than financial gain.

I got into my truck and drove home, downed a few beers, and then started weeping uncontrollably. *I can't continue to do this,* I kept moaning. *I've got to stop.* I began sweating profusely and trembling.

Then, virtually out of nowhere, I caught myself whispering, "God, help me, please. Tell me what to do, and I'll do it. I can't continue to fight this battle."

I thought it extremely bizarre that I should even mention God's name. I usually referred to the goddess. But something strange was happening inside me.

I closed my eyes to shut everything out, but all I could see was Emily's face, with her crinkled nose, and all I could hear was her singsong voice, "I love you, Miss Norma." It was killing me. Ronda and I had become such good friends, but she was supposed to be the enemy.

In truth, though at the time I didn't know it, I was being won by love. I could handle the hatred. When people yelled at me and called me a murderer and a wicked witch and things that shouldn't be printed—that didn't affect me. I could handle that. But the love in Ronda's face, and the love pouring out of Emily's voice—well, that love just about ripped me apart.

When Connie came home later in the day I told her, "Look, I can't go back. I'll come in on Monday and Tuesday, but not during procedure days." Connie nodded, and I kept drinking, but I couldn't get Emily's and Chelsey's faces out of my mind.

The weekend was an amalgam of drinking, passing out, crying myself back to sleep, then waking up to the sound of Emily's "I love you, Miss Norma," followed by a drinking binge to make the pain stop. I purposefully avoided drugs, for fear that I would almost certainly overdose, but the drinking was bad, even for me. I'd sort of wake up, find myself in the middle of the dining room, and think, *Okay, I remember coming in here,* then pass out again and wake up somewhere else.

It was horrible, but I was fighting against a powerful new foe, and I felt helpless. I didn't know how to cope, how to overcome the strange draw this child's love represented. And how could a child love *me*, anyway? What kind of irony was this? I was Jane Roe, the national enemy of children, the one responsible for the deaths of over thirty-five million of them before they were born.

Didn't Emily know that? Didn't she realize who I was? Of course she did. So why did she still love me? Why did she still paint me pictures and sing me songs and look so happy to see me?

I couldn't figure it out. The truth is, I was defeated, and I knew it. But I was not about to let go. Not yet, anyway.

■ WON BY LOVE

A few days later, after the clinic had closed Connie and I left to run some errands. Another worker, Lynn, stayed behind, though everybody else was gone. Lynn is a pretty solid girl with a strong personality and a confident sense of assurance. She's certainly not an alarmist, but when we returned from our errands, Lynn stumbled toward us with a ghastly look of fear on her face.

"What's wrong with you, kid?" I asked.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you."

Connie and I looked at each other.

"Try me," I said.

"I heard children's feet, little children's feet, running up and down the hall, but I couldn't see anything."

"How about that?" I said, looking at Connie.

"See, I knew you wouldn't believe me," Lynn said defiantly.

"What makes you think we don't?" I asked her.

"Well, I don't know, I'm probably just going crazy."

That's all Connie and I needed. Lynn's experience validated our own. "I don't think so," I said.

Strange as it may seem, we didn't talk about it much after that, even with Lynn. We didn't even tell Lynn that we had heard the same thing. It was just too weird, and the easiest way to deal with it was by denying that any of it had happened.

But something inside me had changed.

CHAPTER

22

Falling Toward Life

■ *When do you all kill little babies?*

How would *you* like to handle that call on a Monday morning? Certain I was speaking to a pro-lifer or somebody from Rescue, I let the southern-sounding woman on the other end of the line have it.

"We normally kill little boys on Thursdays," I answered, "little girls on Fridays, and we mix 'em up on Saturdays."

"Well, I want to ask you a question." Her tone of voice surprised me. This was not a crank call after all. The woman was serious.

"Sure. Go ahead."

"Is it really a baby?" She went on to explain to me that her daughter was eighteen weeks pregnant and was considering having an abortion.

This is where the story gets confusing, even for me. Remember, I'm supposed to be acting as a marketing director for an abortion clinic. I'm being paid to sell abortions. But something inside me was breaking, and this is what I said.

"Ma'am, how many children have you had?"

"Three."

"What came out of your body? Were they fish, or were they little human babies?"

"That's preposterous. I had human babies, of course."

"Well, I think you answered your own question," I said.

Then I got really crazy. "Besides, we don't see patients over eighteen weeks here," I added. That was a complete lie. Arnie aborted them all the time. He loved it because the profit was so high.

"Then can you give me the name of a clinic that does?"

"I don't know of any clinic that does abortions that far along." This was another lie—I knew of several clinics that performed late-term abortions.

I hung up the phone and thought, *What am I doing?* It was as if I was watching myself as an objective observer rather than as an active participant. We made a lot of money on late-term abortions, and I had just let one go!

Connie charged into my office. "Man, I've had it!"

"What?"

"This witch just called me and asked me when we were killing little baby boys and girls, and you know what I said?"

"What?"

"I said Thursday, Friday, and Saturday!"

I was startled that her call was so similar to mine. "Well, you know what I just said?"

"What?"

"I just told a woman that it was a real baby."

"Well, good for you," Connie said. She walked out, then rushed right back in. "You said *what?*"

"A woman's daughter was eighteen weeks pregnant, and I told her it was a real baby and that we didn't perform abortions that far along."

"Norma," Connie said, looking me in the face, "we're losing it."

I laughed.

"Maybe so, Connie, but you know what? I don't even feel bad about it. Let's see how far we can take this thing."

We were going to have a little fun.

In the next weeks, Connie and I began sabotaging our own clinic's business. Our frustration with Arnie had reached a fevered pitch. A frequent phone conversation would go like this:

"A Choice for Women, this is Norma, may I help you?"

"I need to come in and see your doctor."

"What for, honey? Do you want a pap smear?"

"No."

"Do you want a breast exam?"

"No."

I'd make them go through every option until they finally said, "I want one of those abortions."

"Oh, okay, let me order you one right here." I then took my mouth away from the phone as if I was shouting out an order for a burger and fries and yelled, "Give me one abortion going!"

The women on the other end would usually remain unperturbed. The conversation was so odd, they just ignored it. "Well, how much is it gonna cost me?"

"That depends," I'd say. "How much do you want to pay to kill your baby?"

"They said it wasn't a baby."

"Who is 'they'? What do you think is inside you, a fish?"

We were cruel, very cruel. It was our way of waking up to the truth of what we had been doing for so many years; the emotional and spiritual upheaval were so great, we did things I'm not at all proud of. By this time, I think Connie and I both knew that what we were doing was wrong, but we didn't know how to make things right—so we indirectly attacked abortion by running off business.

Almost immediately, business at A Choice for Women took a nosedive. Before O.R. moved in, we averaged about thirty-five abortion patients a weekend. By the time I left, we were down to nine or fewer.

Arnie became furious. "Norma," he asked me, "how come we no have patients?"

I didn't hide a thing. In fact, I flaunted it. "Because," I told him, "I tell the women we aren't killing little babies on Wednesday; they have to come in Thursday through Saturday to do it."

Arnie was too afraid of confrontation to stand up even to this with anything more than words. "Norma," he said, "you must not say that!"

"Yeah, well, what are you going to do about it?"

I had some very antagonistic feelings by this time. For starters, I knew exactly what we charged for each abortion: starting at \$295 for abortions performed around 6–11 weeks; \$395 for 12–13 weeks; \$495 for 14–15 weeks; \$695 for 16–17 weeks; \$795 for 18–19 weeks; all the way up to \$1,200 for even later abortions.

And for bringing all these abortions in, I got paid six dollars an hour.

Don't think for a minute that doctors who are looking at these figures will put just anybody on the phone. I was good. My job was to make the appointment and to get the women to show up, and I had an enviable 90 percent show-up rate—until, that is, I started intentionally sending people away.

I still wasn't a true believer, however. "Give me a raise, and I'll bring 'em all back," I told Arnie. "I'll make it all right." My conscience was pricked, but I could still be bought.

"No, I pay you enough now."

Fine, I thought. Then you bring them back.

Referring for Life

To make matters worse, I also started referring women next door—to Operation Rescue!

"A Choice for Women, this is Norma."

"I need to get an abortion." The quivering voice on the other end of the line alerted me to the fact that I wasn't talking to a woman. This was a girl.

"How old are you, honey?"

"Fifteen."

"Girl, does your mama know what you're doing?"

"No. If she found out, she'd go crazy. She'd kill me."

"I don't believe that. Let me give you the phone number of some people who will take care of you."

Operation Rescue handled these referrals perfectly. If they had made a big deal about it, gone to the press, and proclaimed their victory, that would have been the end of it. My fighting pride would have taken over, and my process of conversion would have ground to a halt—of that I'm sure.

Instead of grandstanding, however, O.R. treated my behavior as the most natural thing in the world. "Sure, Miss Norma, we'd love to talk to her. Send her over."

There was no triumphant condescension in their tone of voice, no claiming of victory, just a pleasant agreement to help a friend. We were supposed to be enemies, but, somehow, we had begun to act like allies.

A Living Sticker

A few weeks later, Ronda told me she was going to look for furniture for the crisis pregnancy center. "I know the store you need to look at," I said, and we set a date to go shopping for furniture together.

I'm sure no one was more surprised than Ronda that Jane Roe would offer to help her furnish the crisis pregnancy center. Ronda, in fact, was scared even thinking about it, so she asked several women from her church to pray for her.

Ronda was not the only one who was scared. We had agreed that Ronda would pick me up, which meant that Ronda would find out where I lived. After you've had your house shot up, you're a little particular about who gets ahold of your address. Was I willing to trust one of O.R.'s leaders with that sensitive piece of information?

"Ronda," I warned her, "if I tell you where I live, you must promise me that you'll never, ever tell anyone else how to get there."

"I promise," Ronda said.

"Ronda Mackey," I said again, wanting to emphasize how important this was to me, "as I live and breathe, if I wake up some morning and find rescuers demonstrating outside my window, I'll, I'll, I'll . . . I'll have a conniption fit."

I know, it sounds funny to say "conniption fit," but I didn't know how to express myself very well without curse words. For me, it was an entirely new experience to make a threat without throwing in a few choice obscenities, and conniption fit was the only thing that came to mind!

"That includes Flip," I added. "I don't want Flip to know. Will you promise me that?"

"Yes," Ronda said.

I gave her my address, hoping that I was not making a tragic mistake.

The day of our adventure, Ronda and her two girls picked me up. I needed to get some money for lunch, so I looked at Ronda and said, "Hey Ronda, would you mind pulling over to that convenience store? I need to cash in a bunch of scratched-off lotto tickets."

Ronda laughed, rolled her eyes, and pulled over. Throughout our early friendship, there were these constant reminders of our different values.

Fifteen minutes later, we pulled up to Chili's for lunch. We slid into a booth, with Ronda and Chelsey occupying one side, and Emily sliding in next to me on the opposite side. Emily was all over me, hugging me, smiling into my eyes, hanging on to my arm. Ronda started fidgeting; something was clearly making her uncomfortable.

"You know, Norma," Ronda finally said after a big sigh, "Emily was almost aborted." And there she told me her story. She didn't make the connection—"and it's your fault"—but she didn't have to. This precious girl, throwing more love my way than anybody had in years, was almost never born because of an affidavit I had signed.

I was somber as we left the restaurant, but did my best to keep a brave face. When we pulled up to the furniture store, we saw two winged-back chairs in the window. "Those would be perfect," I shouted, and Ronda agreed.

"They do look nice," she said. "Let's go in and get a closer look."

I jumped out of the car with the eagerness that comes only from shopping. We looked at the chairs for a while and walked around the store, then I excused myself to go outside and smoke a cigarette.

As soon as I walked out of the store, I caught a glimpse of Ronda's van and almost collapsed on the spot.

Because Ronda routinely parked her van in the parking lot where our abortion clinic was located, she made sure she kept clean, visible bumper stickers on it at all times. That way, women would be given the opportunity to consider a pro-life slogan before they came inside our clinic. For some reason, I had never noticed these stickers on Ronda's van before, but suddenly, one of them hit me between the eyes:

Abortion Stops a Beating Heart

The vivid red in the sticker just about knocked me over. The heart pictured on it looked so real, I wouldn't have been surprised if it had started beating right in front of my eyes. Spiritually, I was crushed.

At that same moment, Ronda and the girls came out of the store, and I saw Emily skipping behind Ronda. The thought that Emily's heart might have been intentionally stopped overwhelmed me. I couldn't take it.

And then when I realized that I had signed the affidavit that resulted in the law being changed so that Ronda could have legally stopped Emily's heart, I was practically overcome with grief, horror, and revulsion.

My whole body hurt just thinking about it.

And then, I don't know if it was a vision or what, I saw Emily not as a young girl, but as a tiny, aborted infant—but an infant that bore Emily's unmistakable features. It was just a flash of a vision, over before I knew it had started, but the sadness it left behind was overwhelming.

Five minutes earlier, Ronda, the girls, and I had been laughing like silly schoolchildren. Suddenly, I was as morbid and downcast as someone who had just been told they had less than twenty-four hours left to live.

Ronda instantly sensed that something was wrong.

"You just have to take me home," I told Ronda. "I can't deal with this." I put on my sunglasses so Emily and Chelsey couldn't see the tears welling up in my eyes.

What happened?

It was the first time abortion had been personalized for me. I no longer saw abortion as a convenient way of dealing with "products of conception" or "missed periods." Instead, abortion represented the "legal right" to end the life of a child as precious as Emily. *This beautiful young girl could have been legally killed without penalty*, I thought—and it was all my fault.

The heaviness that covered me was suffocating. The bumper sticker haunted me. I sat silently in the passenger's seat, asking myself, *How can I love this lady and her two children and still be pro-choice? I'll lose her!* But I didn't want to lose her! This was the woman I had trusted with my address, the woman who in turn had trusted me with her firstborn child.

I jumped out of the van as soon as Ronda dropped me off. Talking was an impossibility, given my emotional state. As soon as I got inside the house, I spent a good hour crying, then Ronda and I talked on the phone for over an hour later in the day.

It was around this time that Ronda says she finally began to get over her picture of me as the symbol of legalized abortion. My weakness, of which I was desperately ashamed, made me seem more human to Ronda. And my delight in her children caught her totally by surprise. I was the last person she expected to take an interest in little kids.

"She's Ready"

Now that Ronda saw me as a real person, we began relating on an entirely new level. In June 1995 Ronda's husband, Ron, who works for a major computer-related firm, found out I was still trying to operate my home computer using DOS, so he purchased Microsoft Windows software and gave it to me.

After years of struggling with outdated software, I thought I was in heaven. I wrote him a card saying, "Dearest Ron, thank you for opening my world up with windows! Plus you have a lovely family. God bless, Norma the storm."

What was this "God bless" all about, I thought, as I reread my own writing. Oh, well. It was in ink, and I was not about to purchase a new card.

I kept calling Operation Rescue for prayer, more frequently now. In early July I had a particularly intense encounter with Flip. Unknown to me at the time, he hung up the phone and looked at Ronda.

"Miss Norma is ready to receive the Lord," he said.

"You're kidding!"

"No. She would have done it right there if I had pushed it."

"Then why didn't you? She needs the Lord!"

"Because I don't think I'm the one who is supposed to do it. I think God has somebody else in mind."

"I wonder who?" Ronda said.

Saved!

"Miss Norma, why don't you go to church with us tonight?"

I don't know how many times Emily had assaulted me with that question. It was hard for me to say no to Emily, so I had always found a way to put her off, but this time I must have been feeling weak. For the first time, I was going to make a promise.

"I can't tonight, honey," I replied, "but I'll go with you next week."

Emily let out a whoop, and I thought she was going to get out of her seat belt right there and begin dancing. I also realized that she was going to hold me to my word. I had thought that by putting off the commitment for a week or so, she might forget; but it was clear to me now that that would never happen. Emily would be counting down the days.

I helped Emily out of the truck and carried her into O.R.'s offices. I "carried" Emily because she was very small for her seven years. People had a tendency to underestimate how smart she was because she looked so much younger. I didn't.

Ronda stood up and walked toward us.

"Here's your firstborn!" I said, handing Emily over to her mom. Ronda looked at Emily and smiled.

"Emily asked me to go to church with you all," I explained.

"She did?" Ronda asked. I could tell she was skeptical.

"Yeah. I can't go tonight, but I thought that maybe I could go next Saturday."

"Well, next Saturday we'll be in Little Rock. We have a big event going on there. What about the week after that?"

"Sure," I said, but I could tell that Ronda was still skeptical.

She had this look that said, "The sun's gonna come up a hundred thousand more times before you get to church once!"

It was a long week while Ronda, Flip, and the others were in Little Rock. I actually missed my terrorist friends!

I made sure I was in the office on the Monday that they were due to return, and as soon as I saw Ronda's van pull up, I walked out to greet them.

"I missed you all," I said. I had a huge smile on my face, and I think my sincerity surprised even as it delighted them.

"Well, we missed you, too, Miss Norma," several of them said.

I asked Ronda, "So, when are you going to pick me up for church this Saturday?"

"Well, we can pick you up at five o'clock and go get dinner first."

That night, Ronda called her pastor, Rev. Morris Sheats, and asked him what his sermon was going to be about. He told her something that wasn't very evangelistic so Ronda explained that she was bringing me to church and hoped he'd find a way to include an evangelistic altar call.

"I'm pleased Norma's coming," Pastor Sheats said. "The Holy Spirit will show up, so don't worry—there will be an opportunity for Norma to come to know Christ."

I guess I didn't really have a chance. When the Holy Spirit and Pastor Sheats get together—watch out!

The next day, I did something totally out of character for me. You wouldn't think this would be out of character for most women, but then again, I wasn't your average woman.

I went shopping.

I needed something to wear to church, so I drove over to the mall, looking nervously up at the sky as I walked in, certain that the mere thought of Norma McCorvey, Jane Roe of *Roe v. Wade*, buying clothes so she could look presentable in church, would be enough to call fire out of the sky.

But none of that happened. I found some appropriate clothes. I made it through the week. And on Saturday evening, the Mackey family picked me up about an hour and a half early so that we could go out for dinner.

As we ate, I eagerly told Ronda about my idea for the next great American novel. It was a science-fiction, New Age-type thriller, where people with super vision and enlightened insight ended up saving planet Earth.

Ronda and her husband listened politely, praying that I'd be pointed to an entirely different type of Savior.

Dinner was over—too soon, I thought, as my stomach suddenly felt nervous—and Ronda said we needed to leave to get to church on time.

Suddenly, the word *church* sounded so threatening I could barely contain myself. I was fidgeting during the entire (though relatively short) drive to the church building, feeling not unlike

a woman being driven to her execution. As we parked the car, I looked up at Hillcrest Church and wondered what in the world I was doing there.

I cast another worried glance around me. The skies had remained silent, but surely the ceiling and walls would cave in as soon as God realized that Norma McCorvey had dared to set foot in a holy house of worship.

We sat down in chairs. *Okay, when is the ceiling coming down?* I thought. *When will the walls start to crumble? The glass is going to start shooting out any second now. I just know it.*

I thought I stuck out like a big red thumb, as if I were the only new person there. What was I supposed to do next? Several offering envelopes were tucked into the bulletin that was given to me, so I messed around in my purse until I came up with two dollars.

I really had no idea what to expect. Part of me thought that Flip would come bursting onto the stage, replete with lasers and surround sound, and bark out my damnation. Flip didn't even attend this church, but I didn't know that then. I just assumed that everybody at Rescue always hung out together.

I expected any of a hundred things to happen, just not the thing that really did happen.

Though I assumed I was a stranger in this church, half of the congregation knew who I was—they had been warned ahead of time—and they were praying their hearts out. Ronda had called her growth group (a home fellowship group), and then called the leader of every other growth group she could think of. People all over the congregation were praying for me. Ronda's husband, Ron, who sat next to us, doesn't remember a word of the sermon. He was too busy pleading with God for me to accept Jesus into my heart.

As the pastor spoke, his words burned their way into my soul. I can't really recall much of what he shared, but each word began to open the window in my heart just a little bit farther. This was truth. This was the way out I had been looking for all

my life. I wanted someone to love me. I wanted someone to take care of me. I wanted someone who could wipe out all the ghastly things that I had done and that had been done to me. In an instant, I realized that Jesus Christ was the only one who could do that.

By the time Pastor Sheats got to the ending, when he read John 3:16, I felt my heart pounding.

"For God so loved the world," he read, "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The pastor then told everyone to bow their heads and close their eyes. I started to get really hot. I was even sweating, something this Texas girl rarely does.

"Is anyone here tired of living a sinner's life?" he asked.

How could I say no? I had been tired of it for years, but it was the only life I knew.

I slowly raised my hand. I opened my eyes and looked up to see if that really was my hand raised up high. It was. I couldn't believe it.

"Then I want you to come up to the altar and meet Jesus."

Meet Jesus? I thought. *Did that man say I could go forward and meet Jesus?* Time seemed to stop.

This will be a kick. I've never met Jesus before. My heart started to pound, and I thought, If I get up the nerve to go up front, Jesus had better be there.

My eyes filled with tears. Ronda noticed my fidgeting and asked me, "Do you want to go up front?"

"Yes," I said.

Ronda was radiantly happy, but I got the distinct impression that she was even more scared than I was. We clasped hands, and I leaned on her for strength, feeling weaker and weaker with each step. Something was happening inside me.

What are you doing??? I asked myself. I then found myself answering my own question. *I'm going to meet Jesus.*

Don't be silly, a voice said. Jesus isn't up there.

Oh yes, he is, I thought. The pastor said so.

When Ronda and I finally made it to the front, I lifted my head, took one look in Pastor Morris Sheats's eyes, and I saw Jesus. I saw the Spirit of God. It was true. Jesus was meeting me through this man.

How can I describe what happened next? The best way I can explain it is that I felt something "swooshy" inside, like something flew right through me. I began bawling like a baby. I couldn't have held back the tears even if I'd wanted to.

Seeing Jesus in Pastor Sheats's eyes made me feel so incredibly sorry for all my sins, especially for my role in legalizing abortion. As a church counselor led me into the prayer chapel, I was telling myself, *Okay, Norma, this is your judgment day.* In that room I repented of everything I've ever done.

"I just want to undo all the evil I've done in this world," I kept repeating over and over, wringing my hands. "I'm so sorry. I'm so, so sorry. As far as abortion is concerned, I just want to undo it. I want it all to just go away."

Nobody led me in these prayers. The words simply erupted from inside me and forced their way out. I was incredibly sorry. In many ways, it was a supernatural sorrow, and it filled my soul.

A prayer counselor kept praying over me. I vaguely sensed Ronda's presence. The world of the Spirit was more real to me than anything else. I kept getting extremely hot, then extremely cold. One minute, I was shaking the sweat off; the next, I was unbearably chilled, looking for a coat.

"Hold me," I asked Ronda at one point, "I'm cold." It was a hundred degrees out that day, but I was cold.

Finally—I don't know how long it took—I stopped crying. I looked up and saw an altar in front of the chapel's stained-glass windows and an almost instant peace told me that everything was going to be okay. Instead of weeping, I struggled against an uncontrollable, ear-to-ear smile. Not only had the ceiling and walls not caved in, but I no longer felt the pressure of my sin pushing down on my shoulders. The release was so quick, I felt as if I could almost float.

And then it dawned on me. Norma McCorvey, a.k.a. Jane Roe of *Roe v. Wade*, had just become a Christian.

A New Woman

Ron and the girls were waiting for us outside. Emily, of course, was deliriously happy, so we spent the drive home being silly girls—playing pat-a-cake, laughing, just silly stuff.

"Are you going to call Flip and tell him?" I asked Ronda.

"Absolutely not," Ronda said. "He won't believe this hearing it from me. *You* call him."

When Ron pulled up to my house, I realized that an entirely new woman was about to walk through those old, familiar doors. I had almost been killed in this house. I had cried buckets of tears, drunk gallons of alcohol, and consumed obscene quantities of drugs within these walls. This old house had seen everything. But now, it was going to shelter a new woman. I had the same face, but I wore a radically different expression. I had the same past, but I couldn't help smiling as I realized I faced a radically different future.

Connie saw me walk in and politely asked, "How was church?"

"Fine," I said. "By the way, I just accepted Jesus into my heart."

"Well, good. Want a beer?" There was a confused pause, then a wild, "You did *what*?"

I laughed, and Connie laughed. She had spent many an evening trying to get me to convert to Roman Catholicism and I had steadfastly refused to listen. I had even forbade her from hanging any religious art in the house. I couldn't stand the eyes, certain that they would always be looking at me in judgment. So Connie was actually delighted, though clearly surprised.

We chatted for a few minutes until I remembered some important business. "Listen, Connie," I said, "hold that thought. I've got to call Flip."

■ WON BY LOVE

As soon as Flip answered the phone, I played a little coy. "Well, I went to church tonight," I said.

"Good," Flip answered.

"And I accepted Jesus into my heart."

"Do you mind if I call Ronda?" He wanted to double-check my story and get all the details. I laughed and said that would be fine.

Joy flooded the voice of the man who had once pronounced God's judgment on my soul. He was delighted and did not act as surprised as I expected him to be. Because of his own past, Flip knew how God could call even those people who have fallen far away.

I hung up the phone and marveled at what had taken place. Finally, I had found a love that was all-encompassing. On many occasions, Sarah Weddington had made it clear that to her I was nothing more than a name in a class-action lawsuit. Jane Roe was all that mattered to Sarah; the real Norma McCorvey was irrelevant.

In Jesus, I realized it was exactly the opposite. God did not view me solely through the lens of what I had done or how I had been used. Now, after I had been forgiven, Jane Roe was irrelevant. The woman he loved—the woman he saved—was Norma Leah McCorvey.

CHAPTER

23

A Change of Address

■ *Of course, now* that I had become a Christian, working at the clinic seemed impossible. In the first few moments of my conversion, the thought of abortion was not a factor at all. I realized I needed God. That need, and that need alone, consumed me. But once the decision was made, I was overcome by the offensiveness of my abortion-related activities.

On Monday, I wrote out my resignation:

Dear doctor,

I've become a Christian so I can't work here anymore. This is my official two-weeks' notice.

Norma McCorvey

I handed the note to Connie, since she was technically my superior. She read it and said, "Well, why don't you just go right now?" There was no animosity in her tone; she simply