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# "It is a uniquely terrible feeling to watch your own autonomy be taken away by your government"

Editor finds words for Roe v. Wade decision when there's nothing left to say

Sydney Emerson, Opinion Editor | June 25, 2022

I'm going to surgically implant a kangaroo tail onto your lower back.

I hear your protests. They are a natural response to this news. You are understandably frightened at the prospect of suddenly having a kangaroo tail attached to your body. How will you ever sit comfortably on an airplane again? What about going for a bike ride or playing basketball? Your home may not be kangaroo-tail-friendly. It will have to be adapted, or else you will need to move. Work may be a challenge. Your boss may not think that having a kangaroo tail is professional. You may be demoted or fired, though they will insist that the tail is not the reason.

It's true, having a kangaroo tail will upend every part of your life. All things considered, you should be



grateful. There are plenty of people out there who would kill to have a kangaroo tail — two or three, even — and they never have the opportunity. It will make you happy in the long run, even if you don't want it right now.



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God built your body to have a tail, you know. It would be a shame if that tailbone sat dormant, lonely and taken for granted. So, settle in — the procedure will be lengthy. Your insurance will probably help, though I wouldn't count on it. After all, having a kangaroo tail is elective. If you didn't want one, you should never have gone near the zoo in the first place.

And ... scene.

The metaphor isn't perfect — few are — but, if I am being completely honest, I am fresh out of ways to plead this particular case. I am disheartened. I am exhausted. I am worried and frightened and filled with the futile, impotent rage of somebody who has screamed until her throat is raw. I have nothing left to give other than kangaroo tails and bitter sarcasm.

The Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* was not a shock to anybody. The probable majority opinion of the court was leaked a little over a month ago. We all knew this was coming, and yet, when the breaking news notification appeared on my phone as I pulled into work on Friday morning, my stomach dropped. Up until then, there was still a little part of me that thought the court might change its mind. I can never tell if holding out hope is one of the most foolish or beautiful human habits.

I'm worried and defeated, and I'm one of the lucky ones. I exist in a privileged sect of the population. I'm a middle-class white woman with health insurance. I've never had to obtain an abortion and I live in a state that's unlikely to ban abortion outright in the immediate future. I have never had an unwanted pregnancy. I have never been sexually assaulted. I cannot emphasize enough that these circumstances do not make me normal; they make me fortunate.

I have chronic pain as a result of what is probably endometriosis. (The road to diagnosis deserves its own separate article, but I digress.) To manage this pain, I relied on over-the-counter painkillers for years until they became less effective. I needed a more durable solution. So, like many other teenage girls, I went to the OB/GYN to be put on birth control.

I was immediately met with suspicion by my new doctor. He quizzed me about my sexual activity beyond the normal amount of first-appointment questions. He made me explain the differences between certain STDs and their symptoms to him. He asked why I was "really" trying to get birth control and told me that my pain was a normal part of womanhood that I would just have to get used to. Finally, after being given the third degree, he prescribed me a pill that my next doctor (a woman) later told me she would never prescribe.

I have nothing new or useful to say about *Roe* being overturned because every time I try to speak eloquently about a woman's right to choose what happens to her body, I am

speak eloquently about a woman's right to choose what happens to her body. I am immediately transported back to that doctor's office. I am fifteen years old and I am being treated like a ticking time bomb by a condescending middle-aged man. I am being asked if I had ever considered waiting until marriage, as if that would make my pain go away. I'm being told that the way I hurt is normal, that it's imaginary, that I'm trying to get attention, that my body was designed to shred itself apart and render me immobile for two days every month with pain.

There is no good solution. I have used several methods of birth control for six years now as a method of pain management. They have all worked to varying degrees of success. At best, they take the edge off and I can go about my day with only moderate pain. At worst, they increase my pain and add to it with awful side effects: depression, anxiety, acne, weight fluctuation, headaches, nausea and risk of blood clots.

It seems that there are never any good solutions when it comes to women's health. Our roads to diagnosis and care are long, twisted and frustrating — even if you are a member of a privileged class like myself. Take my negative experiences, and you now have the baseline for any and all women's healthcare in this nation. Now, compound that negativity, and you have the experiences of queer people, people of color, socioeconomically disadvantaged people and those who are victims of assault.

The ordeal of healthcare will become even more painful. In some states, it may even become criminal. There is a chance that access to contraception — a necessary form of pain relief for me and a useful tool from preventing the need for an abortion for many — will become severely limited or even outlawed. The cultural suspicion around women's bodies will be enumerated into law, make no mistake.

I am not crying wolf. I am upset and I no longer care about putting this elegantly, spoon feeding the crisis in women's healthcare to those who do not care enough to understand it. There is only so much pleading somebody can do before they shrivel, and I have reached my limit. I could talk about how many women will die if they do not have a safe abortion. I could talk about the women who are victims of rape and incest that would beg to differ about the life they carry being sacred. I could talk about how women should not be treated like walking incubators, that you don't need to have a reason for obtaining an abortion beyond not wanting a child.

All of these things and more have been said on wider platforms by people smarter than me, and clearly, they have convinced nobody. I do not see how adding my voice to the mix will help. Not anymore. It is a uniquely terrible feeling to watch your own autonomy be taken away by your government and then turn around and face a world where quite a bit of the population doesn't understand why you're being so dramatic.

I have no other tactics left except this: lean back, relax and count backwards from ten. I'm going to surgically implant a kangaroo tail on your lower back. See how you feel.

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## About the Contributor



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Sydney Emerson is a junior from Bradford, Pennsylvania. She is an English major with a history minor. In her free time, she enjoys baking, photography,...

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