

COURTS AND JAILS

ARRESTED at the same time as my sister, and like her charged with the dissemination of birth control information, I continued my activity as soon as I was released on bail. My first act had been to reopen the clinic in Brownsville. I was promptly rearrested and then charged with maintaining a public nuisance. By the time my case came up for trial, I was becoming more and more familiar with legal procedure and courtroom conventions. I must say that I was also more and more puzzled by the stilted language, the circumlocutions, the respect for precedent. I saw the realities, the suffering. All of these statutes were being defended while over the whole country women were suffering and sacrificing their lives. I must confess that these legal battles, fought in a curiously unreal world, intensified my defiance to the breaking point. I longed for a battle in the open, in simple, honest terms, without hypocrisy, above board, and on real merits.

My trial was as different from my sister's as day is from night. Although little more than three weeks had elapsed

between them, public opinion had changed in a very short time

The courtroom was packed. Smartly dressed women were present as well as the poor women of Brownsville. Reporters turned out in large numbers. Hundreds of photographs were taken. I went to the courtroom accompanied by a group of prominent women who had entertained me at breakfast. Officially, I had the backing of several organizations. The International Child Welfare League, the Women's City Club, the Committee of One Hundred, the various State Leagues for Birth Control.

The Court of Special Sessions was seething with a crowded assortment of humanity. About fifty of the poor mothers of the Brownsville section crowded into the courtroom with their children, their nursing babies, their fruit, their bread, their pacifiers and extra diapers. No less than thirty of these mothers had been subpoenaed by the District Attorney. Their testimony was to be offered in evidence against me, but they, dear things, smiled reassuringly at me, certain that they were going to help free me. Most of them had been in the Amboy Street clinic the day the raid had taken place.

One by one, as they were called to the witness stand to testify, they would bow acknowledgement to me, turning their heads toward me as they answered the questions of the District Attorney. Peremptorily they were commanded to address their answers toward the Court. Within a few moments the head would be turned again in my direction, as though looking for my approbation.

Did you go to 46 Amboy Street on the afternoon of October 26th? the District Attorney would sternly interrogate.

Yes! would come the timorous reply.

What did you go there for?

To see Mrs. Sanger, was the prompt and invariable answer.

Time after time these women gave answers that were like nails to seal my doom in the records of the court. Yet each woman thought she was helping me to win my freedom. At

last one woman more miserable and more poverty stricken than the rest was called to the stand

How many children have you? she was finally asked

Eight children and three that didn't live, she answered

What does your husband earn? queried one of the judges

Eighteen a week when he works, came the unabashed reply

After that reply, none of the other dozens of mothers of Brownsville were called to testify

I admitted the charge of giving birth control advice to the poor mothers of Brownsville. The prosecutor had little to prove. I knew I had violated the letter of the law. I was fighting that law. I thought there would be no argument at all. But once again an untrue charge was made. Police Sergeant John Mooney said I had told him that our whole clinic was a bluff, run to see if we could get away with something, to do away with the Jewish people. As that accusation fell flat, he then tried to make it appear that the clinic was a money making affair. Our ten-cent fee for the registration of patients did not begin to cover the regular expenses, of course, this was merely one of the stories our opponents had concocted to discredit us, if possible. We were faced with vindictive lies on every hand.

Justices Freschi, Herrman, and O'Keefe sat as a tribunal. My brilliant young attorney strongly advised me to accept a suspended sentence, if it were proffered. Owing to my ill health, he wanted me to avoid the prison term. The case was a big one, and to his legal mind, freedom alone meant victory.

I sat listening impatiently to what seemed an interminable discussion between my lawyer, Mr. Goldstein (now Magistrate), and Judge Freschi on the bench, until I was almost lulled to sleep.

Then suddenly I heard my lawyer declaring. I do make the statement to your Honor, with the full authority of those who stand back of Mrs. Sanger, that the appeal will be prosecuted in an absolutely quick and orderly fashion, and that pending those appeals and that pending the serious considera

tion by both the state in its commission and by the higher courts, by the appellate bench, that pending all that there will be no deliberate violation of any law of this kind

At this, my mind sprang into action and surreptitiously I tugged at the coat tails of Mr Goldstein. For it was not in my program to bargain for freedom by promising to be good, or to discontinue my activities. To do so, I thought, would be a confession of guilt. I would not admit the inviolability of that statute while women other than myself were every day paying for it with their lives.

My attorney kept right on talking, refusing to notice my indignation. Then finally, I heard these words directed toward me: Margaret Sanger, stand up! There was an ominous gravity in Judge Freschi's voice.

You have been in court during the time that your counsel made the statement here as to your purposes in future that you intend to prosecute the appeal, and that pending the prosecution of that appeal neither you nor those affiliated with you in this so-called movement will violate the law—this particular statute in question. That is the promise your counsel makes for you. Now, the Court is considering extreme clemency in your case. Possibly you know what extreme clemency means. Now, do you personally make that promise to respect the law and not to violate the Law?

I made the suggestion to Mr Goldstein that so far as I personally and those working with me are concerned, we feel that we have gained about all we have started out to do—that is, we have awakened public opinion, I replied,—adding that I would refrain from violating the law pending the appeal to higher courts. To which the Court replied:

If Mrs Sanger will state publicly and openly that she will abide by the law, be a law abiding citizen, without any qualification whatsoever, this Court is prepared to exercise the highest degree of leniency.

That is, pending the orderly— interrupted my attorney.

Never mind that is, said Justice O'Keefe. It is the law today, and it will remain the law until it is overturned over

turned by a higher court or overturned by the vote of the people. When that arrives, if it does arrive, then there will be no violation of the law.

It must be without any qualification whatsoever, as stated by the Presiding Judge, added Justice Herrmann.

I'd like to have it understood by the gentlemen of the Court that the offer of leniency is very kind and I appreciate it very much, I replied. With me it is not a question of personal imprisonment or personal disadvantage. I am today and always have been more concerned with changing the law and the sweeping away of the law, regardless of what I have to undergo to have it done.

Then I take it that you are indifferent about this matter entirely, said one of the judges.

No, I am not indifferent, I replied. I am indifferent as to the personal consequences to myself, but I am not indifferent to the cause and the influence which can be attained for the cause.

Since you are of that mind, am I to infer that you intend to go on in this matter, violating the law, irrespective of consequences? asked one of my judges.

I haven't said that. I said I am personally willing to abide by this law and not to violate Section 1142—pending the appeal in this case, I mean.

Then you absolutely and unqualifiedly say that you will abide by the law if this Court will show you extreme leniency?

Pending my appeal, yes, I answered. That's the only way I can do it—pending my appeal.

What is the use of beating around the bush! exclaimed the Justice, and with undisguised anger he addressed these sharp words to my lawyer. You have communicated to me in my chambers the physical condition of your client, and you told me that this woman would respect the law. We are not hardhearted men, we are not persecutors, we are not looking for blood, so to speak. This law was not made by us. We are simply here to judge the case, as we must judge all cases,

conscientiously, with an eye to the best interests of the whole people, and that's all we have tried to do here

We harbor no feeling against Mrs Sanger We have nothing to do with her beliefs, except in so far as she carries those beliefs into practice and violates the law But in view of your statement as to her physical condition, in view of your statement that you intend to prosecute this appeal and make a test case out of this, and in view of the fact that we are to regard her as a first offender, surely we want to temper justice with mercy, and that's all we are trying to do And we ask her, openly and above board, will you publicly declare that you will respect the law and not violate it? And then we get an answer with a qualification Now, what can the prisoner at the bar for sentence expect, after the Court is inclined to be merciful and do all we can for her? I don't know that a prisoner under such circumstances is entitled to very much consideration after all

I am perfectly willing to promise so far as I can see, I interjected

We don't want you to do impossible things it is only the reasonable, possible thing, and that is to comply with this law as long as it remains unchanged and as long as it remains the law It is the law for you, it is the law for me, it is the law for all of us until it is changed, and you know what means and avenues are open to you to have it changed, and they are lawful ways You may prosecute these methods, and no one can find fault with you If you succeed, well and good If you fail, then you have to bow in submission to the majority rule, for this is a government of majority rule, after all It might be a whole lot more inconvenient for a minority to respect a law of the majority, but that is the government system of our country

I quite appreciate that It is just the right chance, the opportunity to test it, I answered

Very good! You have had your day in court, you advocated a cause, you were brought to the bar, you wanted to be tried here, you were judged, you didn't go on the stand and

commit perjury in any sense, you took the facts and accepted them as true, and you are ready for judgment, even the worst. Now, we are prepared, however, under all the circumstances of this case, to be extremely lenient with you if you will tell us that you will abide by this law and respect this law and not violate it again.

I have given you my answer.

We don't want any qualification. We are not concerned with the appeal, we have nothing to do with that, Mrs. Sanger. This is not an appellate court.

And so the endless argument went on.

Finally, after what seemed to me a tiresomely repetitious discussion of the same theme, the decisive question was put to me:

All we are concerned about is this statute, and as long as it remains the law will this woman promise here and now unqualifiedly to respect it and obey it? Now, is it yes or no? What is your answer, Mrs. Sanger?

I cannot respect that law as it stands today, I answered. Then I was sentenced.

Margaret Sanger, with the additional evidence submitted by the learned District Attorney after your case reopened last Friday to meet the claim that the proof was insufficient, there is now additional evidence that makes out a strong case that you established and maintained a birth control clinic where you exhibited to various women articles which purported to be for the prevention of conception, and that there you made a determined effort to disseminate birth control information and advice.

We are not here to applaud nor to condemn your beliefs, but your declarations and public utterances reflect an absolute disregard for law and order. You have challenged the constitutionality of the law under consideration and the jurisdiction of this Court. When this is done in an orderly way, no one can find fault. It is your right as a citizen. Refusal to obey the law becomes an open defiance of the rule of the majority as expressed in this statute. I can see no good reason

for all this excitement by some people. They have a perfect right to argue freely about amending the law, but not to advise how to prevent conception.

While the law is in its present form, defiance provokes anything but reasonable consideration. It is wholesome that we have discussion by citizens on matters that affect the welfare of the citizens.

People have the right to free speech, but they should not allow it to degenerate into license and defiance of the law. The judgment of the Court is that you be confined to the workhouse for the period of thirty days.

After the sentence had been pronounced by the presiding judge, there was a moment's silence, and then a murmur of protest and resentment spread throughout the crowded room.

I took a seat in the front row near the adjoining room, the doorway of which was filled with young men and attendants waiting their turn in court like actors in the wings of the stage waiting for their cue.

I was not surprised at the conviction. It was expected. I was relieved at the sentence of thirty days. This would not need a hunger strike protest. I can scarcely remember how else I felt, and the principal event which still stands out in my mind is the nonchalance with which one young man in the doorway waited for the call of his name. When the court officer called him, he was leaning against the wall smoking a cigarette. He raised his head to give the sign that he had heard, and yet kept on smoking. His name was called again, and he gave still another puff, then he deliberately stepped back into the room to extinguish the light. After which, with poise and unconcern he sauntered in a leisurely way into the courtroom to receive his sentence.

In the meantime, my attorney, Jonah J. Goldstein, was busy taking care of technicalities while my attention was taken up by reporters' questions. Before I knew what was wanted of me, I was being pushed into an anteroom with dozens of other prisoners. Here the first fingerprinting took place. I resolved that I should not be classed as a kind of criminal.

whose fingers must be printed I refused to submit to the indignity. Complaint was immediately made to the Court. The Judge replied that that was no part of his work, and he refused to take any action. I was not fingerprinted. We were then herded through the rear of the courthouse into an open courtyard and then into Black Maria, the police patrol wagon.

There were eight or nine others in that wagon, about five of them young men not a day over twenty-one or twenty two. Here I saw again the nonchalant youth who had been so deliberate in answering the call of the court. He and three others of about the same age were apparently gay, and laughed as they waved farewell to friends who loitered outside. How long Jake? asked one of the friends.

Five years! I heard him reply. He laughed as he said it, and the other two boys shouted, Three! and Three! consecutively as they rocked to and fro with arms about one another's shoulders. I was horrified at the lightness with which these long sentences were passed over. Could they be out of their minds? Were these boys normal? Could liberty be so little regarded? The muscles in my throat contracted as I pictured the mother love once spent on their childhood days. And now the reckless, dauntless disregard for life and liberty, resulting in a ride in Black Maria and marking time in life for five years!

The women who huddled beside me in the wagon were more serious. One woman, especially, was hysterical and in tears, bemoaning the fact that her little four year old boy was waiting for her return and that she could not get back to see him and to arrange for his welfare until her sentence had been served.

After a short ride, we were all dumped out at Raymond Street and we entered the jail. The girls and women were ushered into a waiting room, there to be greeted by a thin lipped woman attendant who gave one the impression that she was ready for anything or any one. She roughly pushed

the weeping girl through the doorway into the doctor's room, where she was to undergo a physical examination

Get ready over there, you! she tossed over her shoulder at me

For what? I retorted

For the doctor, she said, seemingly a little impressed I sat unmoved, and waited for her return I knew I was in for something, and I knew, from my inner self, that I'd be firm in my principles

Soon the Amazon like female swept into the room

Come on and get ready for the doctor's examination

I had decided that I would neither be fingerprinted nor examined, nor in any way accept the same treatment as a pickpocket or a prostitute I was not in need of an examination by the doctor, I replied, and refused to submit to it

You're one of the fighting kind, are you? A cruel grin spread over her metallic face Well, we'll soon fix you, young lady

She swung her heavy, massive frame out of the door, leaving me trembling with excited determination to resist prison routine

Within five minutes she returned, all smiles and politeness, an entirely different person Come on, Mrs Sanger, you don't need to bother with that, pointing toward the examination room I was taken upstairs into a large room Then a heavy iron door was unlocked, and I was shown the cot of my cell and left alone

The cell was one of a dozen or more, each of which opened upon two corridors, front and back Never can I erase from my mind memories of that night First, the bed clothing of the cot designed for me was so filthy that its stench nauseated me It was one of those cold February nights when it was not a comforting thought to go without bed clothing I wrapped my coat about me and lay on the bed No sheets were in sight, and but one towel, which I used as a cover for my face and head Then began a battle with roaches, bugs and rats which lasted until daylight It was a relief to

have morning come and to be told to prepare for my removal to Blackwell's Island and the Workhouse

Soon, after a cup of disgusting coffee, I was taken inside the van with other prisoners on our way to that house of torture from which my sister had recently been carried on a stretcher. We finally arrived at the Workhouse, and there again a long wait for action followed. The men were sent somewhere, the women into other buildings, while I sat and waited. After at least two hours of waiting, a woman in a coat and hat asked me to follow her. I did so. We left the building and climbed into another patrol wagon where two men in plain clothes sat silently while we drove and drove, seemingly for hours, until we reached Queens County Penitentiary.

There are some experiences that come to you in life that, although unexpected, are nevertheless partially expected in the subconscious. This was not my feeling in regard to serving a jail sentence. I believed fully and firmly that some miracle would happen and that I should not go to jail. The miracle did not happen. I went to the Penitentiary and spent thirty full days there. The only benefit I derived from my stay there was to lose fifteen pounds and stir up the germ of tuberculosis which had been latent for a few years. It's a good place in which to gain a slender figure in a short time!

A few pages from my diary will show the prison routine

Feb 8th

First Day's Routine

Only a few minutes after the reporters left me at the Workhouse, I was taken into the Hospital or Doctor's room to be examined and fingerprinted. I refused both.

Then I was taken back to Mother Slattery's room, and all of my possessions were returned to me. I was passed over to a woman and man, placed into a wagon, and driven some distance down the Island in front of the Penitentiary. We then got on the boat and came to New York City—Fifty Seventh Street, I think. Not a word as to where I was being taken—Alice in Wonderland I truly was. After various

changes on cars, we arrived at the Queens County Penitentiary, Long Island

The warden, a nice, youthful chap, met me, asked me about lunch, and hoped I was not going on a hunger strike, to which I said no—not unless I was forced on one from bad food

Introduced a very motherly, matronly woman to me and sent up some lunch Put me into cell 210, where a woman named Josephine Blank is also near by in same corridor

Josephine is a very interesting type—a half wild creature, irritated by chains and bars Naturally intuitive, high tempered, and quick Outspoken to an unpleasant degree at times Has no use for men or women, but drinks a bit once in a while A kind, big hearted woman, considered off, but I think fairly intelligent Has been arrested over seventy times

Afternoon drags slowly, and supper—bread and molasses and tea—seemed tasteless Locked in at 6 p m, lights out at 9 o'clock Other women in corridor work for warden, and only come in at 7 o'clock So my days are spent alone with erratic Josephine

Wednesday

Cells open at 7 a m, but bells ring at 6 o'clock Breakfast—oatmeal with salt and milk, and coffee, two slices bread (salt peter said to make it taste so queer)

Clean cells—a walk in air Talked with little colored girl, Liza, who knew of Mrs Sanger and called out, You se eats don t you? referring to Mrs Byrne s hunger strike

Dinner of stew and bread Afternoon, four letters Called to Warden s room to be fingerprinted Told him I objected to being classed as a criminal and would not submit

Supper of tea, bread, and stewed peaches

Women here seem to like Warden McCann and matron Atmosphere here very different from Workhouse or Raymond Street Jail Women are not treated so well as men, though—not allowed papers, nor to send out for anything like food,

papers or cigarettes as men are allowed to do No visitors except two a month All letters read going and coming—which is an outrage

Thursday

Hominy and coffee (no sugar ever) Walked, talked to mulatto woman—dope fiend—indefinite sentence

Horrible liberties a state takes with human lives for a Crime of drink or dope which should be considered disease The court has a right to sentence her for one day to three years

Women out in yard look pathetically around the ground to see if the men prisoners have left stubs of cigarettes round Tragic to see human beings forced to so low a level—digging in the frozen ground with fingers for stubs

Some lovely looking girls here—dope, mainly

Dinner—meat, potatoes, cornmeal pudding No knives and forks, only *one* large spoon

Letter today and telegrams Again question of finger prints Warden very decent about it all No visitors

I was given a clean cell and a clean prison garb—unlike Raymond Street Jail Sunday I was invited to attend the Catholic Mass, an invitation I did not accept Later in the week, a Roman Catholic woman visitor came to see me She pleaded with me to be good, to give up such work of the devil and to save myself by joining the Roman Catholic Church I expressed myself as freely as she had done, saying that I thought it was presumption on her part to assume she had anything to do with my life or my salvation if I wanted her advice, I'd let her know She continued to babble on about wickedness, and when I requested her to leave me she flung back the threat We'll get you yet! Just what she meant I cannot fathom The only reading material available were two Catholic weekly papers and the *Christian Science Monitor* It was a relief to read the latter

The Penitentiary housed about three hundred women and an equal number of men Those sent there had been given

indefinite sentences of from one to three years. In the corridor with me was the Josephine mentioned in my diary who had been in jail some seventy times, mainly for drunkenness and disorderly conduct. She had a complex against policemen. Consequently, when she got out of jail and had worked long enough to get something to drink, she looked up the police in her district and started something. There were dope fiends, pickpockets, embezzlers, prostitutes, keepers of brothels, Tiffany or high-class thieves, accomplices of safe blowers, and a few trans Atlantic fliers, assistants to big hauls from Paris or London. Many of the women were mothers. A few were supporting children in good schools. The scheming and planning to keep from their families the painful knowledge of their whereabouts was worthy of one's deepest admiration.

I asked the warden if he would allow me to see the records of the women, especially as to the size of the families from which they came. He said that was against the rules, but he would give me such facts separately, and he assured me that I'd be surprised and disappointed. I was. The records he took from the books seemed to show that all of these women had been only children, or that, if a brother or sister had been born, it no longer survived. This was difficult to believe, but I had to accept it for what it was worth.

When I had become better acquainted with these same women, however, and had revealed to them my interests, they told me quite a different story. One after another with bitterness in their voices, they told to each other and to me their real family history. When I inquired why they had given false statements for the records, they all agreed that it was to save their relatives from disgrace and constant annoyance by the authorities. It seemed to be an unwritten rule among these old timers to keep their families out of the clutch of authority. We took a poll of thirty girls in our corridor, and the result showed an average of eight children to each family. Ninety eight percent of the thirty had been born and reared as Roman Catholics.

One day an amusing incident happened when one of the

women prisoners asked me to give the other girls a straight talk after the matrons went down to their dinner. I gladly assented. When the time came, I asked the matron to let me into their corridor while she was gone.

What for? she asked.

I'd like to give them a talk on sex hygiene, I replied.

Ah, go on wid you! she laughed. They know bad enough already.

There were so many absurd rules and regulations which only aroused constant irritation and duplicity and did no one any good. The assistant police commissioner called to see me, and kindly asked if I had any suggestions for improving the conditions. I suggested more time out of doors, the existing arrangement allowing only fifteen minutes morning and after noon for air and exercise.

The class snobbishness among offenders was highly amusing to me. No one cared how nor where another had been reared, what kind of a family background or education she had, but the nature of her offense was the key to her social prestige. The girl who picked pockets was looked down upon by the girls who helped themselves to pearl or diamond necklaces, the shoplifter did not sell her body in prostitution, etc.

To my surprise I was called upon to write and to read letters for some of the girls. I had not believed that any American born girl of sixteen to eighteen years of age could neither read nor write. There were at least ten in that group.

Once, while passing through the corridor, I noticed a woman, whom I had never seen out in the yard nor at the table. She was tall, well built, stately and erect, with white hair, and a face which did not belong in the Penitentiary. She refused to associate with any of the other prisoners, although she had already spent over nine months sharing their food and working beside them. Her story was unusual. A teacher by training and profession for fifteen years, she had married a minister, who died almost penniless. She moved from hotel to hotel, escaping angry looks and bills, until finally

she was arrested, convicted, and given an indefinite sentence of from one to three years

As soon as I found out her story, we two got together on the task of teaching the illiterate girls to read and write I sent out for school books, and Henry Holt and Company sent over, through Mabel and William Spinney, free of charge, several packages of primers and lower grade books to help in the instruction That rebellious spirit was soon at work giving helpless girls the kind of instruction she was capable of giving She was dismissed about six months later, and came to my office to show me the advancement and progress her girls had made

I was never asked to do the regular work of cleaning cells, not even my own I was not allowed to go into the workshop to sew or to operate the machines with the other prisoners The Irish matron, when once asked why I did not work like the others, replied, She looks better with a pen in hand She had fixed up a table to serve as a desk for me, and I sat reading or writing during the entire day Hundreds of letters came to me, and every day brought new interests and new friends

When I was released on March 6th, 1917, although I was peaked and pale as a result of the unfamiliar routine of life in a cell, it was my spirit rather than my body which ached I had been treated with reasonable decency, up until the last two hours I had been able quietly to give birth control talks to the women with whom I came in contact, in spite of supervision

But those last two hours were horrible An attempt was made again, just before I left jail, to take my fingerprints This was, I felt, an outrageous gesture I resisted It was time the authorities learned to discriminate between political prisoners and cut throats Why should I submit to having a record of my fingerprints filed away with those of thieves and narcotics? I had been uncomplaining through the thirty days, but I made up my mind to fight this needless assertion of authority even if it meant postponing my release

The only brutal treatment I received in jail was during those last hours. Two burly keepers tried by force to get my finger prints. It was a bitter cold day, and outside in the courtyard my friends were waiting for me. I knew they were there, and I longed to see them, but even in order to join them, I would not give in to the demands of Warden Joseph McCann. At first we argued, then he turned me over to the two keepers, who tried to force my fingers down on the print pad. One of them held me while the other struggled with my arms, but I managed each time to keep my fingertips from touching the pad.

I do not know yet from what source I drew my physical strength, for certainly those men tried from eight until ten o'clock that morning to make me submit to fingerprinting. I thank the powers that be that I was able to hold out until relief came. My arms were bruised, and I was weak with exhaustion when an officer telephoned from the department headquarters, where my attorney had protested against the delay, ordering that I be released without the usual fingerprinting ceremony.

And then I was free! No other experience in my life has been more thrilling than that release. Through the big metal doorway of the Queens County Penitentiary I stepped on that gray day, and the tingling air of outdoors rushed against my face. In front of me stood my attorney, my friends and fellow workers, their voices lifted in the martial strains of the Marseillaise, led by Kitty Marion, the veteran of suffragettes. Behind them, at the windows of an upper floor, were the faces of newly made friends, the women with whom I had spent the month, and they too were singing for me.

Something choked me. I felt weak and dazed. Something still chokes me as I go through it in retrospect and hear the song again. Ye sons of freedom, wake to Glory! All the beauty and tragedy and hope of life's struggle seemed crammed into that moment of my life.

I plunged down the steps to enter the closed car waiting

for me The echoes of those tender voices remained in my ears

A small group of poor women stood together in the back ground, and as I waved and greeted them I became dazed as I saw before me, though aloof from the others, the tragic face of the woman from Brownsville who had run after the patrol wagon on the day of my arrest, calling, Come back! Come back and save me!

There she had been, the gate keeper told us, since seven thirty that morning She was afraid she d miss me, and that she would be denied the information she was still seeking She had ground a glass into powder ready to drink should she have another pregnancy

Later there was a testimonial breakfast, a dinner, fine speakers, bright lights, honors, warm friendships But the supreme triumph of everything to me was in the glowing faces of a group of Brownsville mothers who had come to the prison gates to greet me I knew that hundreds of them were at last informed about contraceptive methods That number would ultimately grow a hundredfold, a thousandfold, until the motherhood of the world should at last become consciously free