

# 'I Feel Like I Committed A Crime'

"I feel like I don't want my life anymore. I know I did the wrong thing. I feel like a murderer," wrote a 23-year-old area woman a few weeks ago to a trusted administrator in the local company where she works. She had just had an abortion at a local hospital. This is her story.

She sits calmly, smoking and reflecting on the journey of the last few weeks. "How long does it take you to get over this horrible feeling?" she asks, only half to herself.

"I feel like I committed a crime, only I wasn't tried for it. I'm not a Catholic or anything, so religion has nothing to do with it, although I believe in God.

"You see, I'm not sorry I got pregnant — I was happy because I love children. "I felt really great when the nurse told me — until I went home to my mother.

"I knew I had to tell my mother but I didn't know how. So I went to Family Service in Morristown and told them. There are certain things I just can't talk to my mother about.

"She always told me not to have sex before marriage. Family Services asked her if she thought I was capable of raising a child, and the way she answered, I just knew 'that's it.' I might as well forget about raising the child.

"My brother was great. He told me he would help in any way, but hoped I would make the 'right decision' — that meant abortion. It was a disgrace to the family, he said.

"He said a child would tie me down. But that didn't matter to me. That's what I wanted.

"My boyfriend of whom I dated for two years was happy at first. But after the abortion, he said he was sorry I had done it. He split the area a few days later.

"I thought I loved him, but what's love? I don't know do you? I know I cared for him deeply. I was intimate with guys once or twice before, but even with him, it was hardly sex all the time, like parents might think.

"You get involved because you're searching for love. At the first sign of tenderness, you think, 'Oh, he loves me!' I guess now I would say let him get involved with you first.

"I had a private room in the hospital — that was definitely better

Interview by  
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Photo by  
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me, I guess, for the abortion. Who would understand how I feel? I just don't want to go out or see people: I don't want to talk to anybody.

"When I was 20, I had two girlfriends who got pregnant. One had an abortion; the other had her baby adopted. I guess I decided then that if I ever got pregnant I would never have an abortion. Just the fact of giving life — that means a lot to me — I could never kill a life.

"It will take me a while to cope with what I did — to live with the fact. I feel bitterness against myself and family, and maybe against these laws that are so easy.

"These are some of the things, I'll be straightening out with the psychiatrist.

"I have a habit of attracting the 'stragglers' ... that seems to be a pattern in my life.

"My boyfriend and I were going to live together, but we were waiting until he could hold down a job. I definitely would live with a man before marriage, considering all the divorces in the country ... just to be a little sure, because I don't think you can ever really be sure.

"A lot of my friends are divorced, and that scares me. My father divorced my mother when I was young, with at least seven or eight separations before that.

"I'm not down on men or marriage. I had a lot of love from my mother when I was growing up. I think I could raise that child myself. If I was faced with that decision again, I'd definitely do that.

"If I had a younger sister, I guess I would tell her to be careful about relationships, although I wouldn't condemn her for living with a man.

"I still wouldn't take the pill. For a teenager or someone who doesn't want kids, that's okay. It's better than going through an abortion or an unwanted pregnancy.

"Marriage means a lot to me. I feel great when I hear about somebody getting married. To me mar-

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than being in a maternity ward, where a lot of hospitals put you.

"I had to wait four hours until I went down to the operating room. I was thinking of walking right out of there. They (the staff) were nice and all, but they'd come in and say, 'Oh, you're the one having the abortion.'

"Just the word condemns you," she said, her voice rising audibly. "I hate that word. It seems barbaric to me. It's easy to get pregnant and it's easy to get rid of it. Like being sick and saying, 'Gee, I better go to the doctor.' It's that easy.

"A lot of pregnant girls might think an abortion is a great way

out, but I would say if you don't want the child, have it adopted.

"The abortion itself wasn't painful. I still don't believe I did it. There wasn't any pain; but I have such a strong feeling I killed a life. I dream at night I had the baby and killed it.

"I think a lot of girls are scared

into an abortion. I wasn't strong enough to fight my mother and brother.

"I didn't talk to a doctor before I went into the hospital. I think I should have, because I understand they want you to feel comfortable with your decision. Maybe he would have helped me stand up.

In a way, I blame my mother and brother. But I made the decision. The only reason I said yes to the abortion was because they had such strong feelings against raising the baby in the house, and the baby might have felt that resentment.

"Most people wouldn't condemn

riage means bringing together two people for the rest of their lives.

"But it's going to take some time before I'm sure about getting married. I'd let him get a little more involved, too. But I probably won't date anybody for a long time.

"I've got to get my head together first."