

# The stories she heard

---

Danielle Hill

Oh yeah, she's heard the stories, all the different ways women would try to get it out of their system. She knew about the "herbalists" around the church, wizened old women with boiled-root concoctions and, if you ask the right question, small round pills sold at 400% more than the actual retail price. She'd heard that if you knew where to look, you might find yourself in a hut somewhere in the alley, with a midwife who's done this before, with varying amounts of success. The services cost a small fortune, but manang is risking jail time for this, so it's fair game, isn't it? Now hush, hija, be quiet. Someone might hear.

The worst stories she'd heard came from the nurses over at Fabella, about women who didn't have enough money or contacts, and opted to do it themselves:

There were the ones who tried to fish it out with a hanger.

The ones that were advised to expel it with laundry detergent.

The ones who "fell" down flights of stairs in an attempt to dislodge it.

Only the last accomplished anything, really, but even then it was a 50-50 chance of success. The rest of the stories, if they were lucky, ended with a woman in the midnight ward getting stitched up for some minor bleeding, a couple of fractures here and there, or getting her stomach pumped.

If they weren't lucky, it ended with the death of a woman who just wanted to be saved.

Saved from what? the grandmothers in church would say, Children are a blessing from God.

Would that it were so. But a blessing imposed

on the mother of four whose husband doesn't like wearing condoms because "It doesn't feel as good,"

on the mental health advocate who doesn't want to pass on her predisposition to depression to another human being, because a child does not deserve to inherit a mind that turns upon its owner,

on the aspiring lawyer who wants this, but not yet, not until she's conquered her own demons and can raise a child to do the same,

on the high schooler whose mom told her that night, in the convenience store, that she must've been asking for it,

on the 13-year-old that daddy's friend from work really, really, really liked,

is a curse.

Or at least, that's what those women told her.

"Not that anybody listened," they said, as the babies on their laps cried for more milk.