

Choices

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People say it's pro-choice - like there was an actual choice to be made. Not that I'm trying to absolve myself of any responsibility, just to say that, at that moment, I didn't really have any other choice.

My life is complicated, to say the least. I had left an abusive husband, with whom I had one child. Through the course of raising said child, though I loved him, I realized that motherhood was not really a good fit for me.

I immediately fell into a new relationship, one with a man who was kind to me in the beginning - the only criteria I had after so much pain. I just wanted someone to be kind to me. And after a year of living together, we had a little mishap.

Maybe my body was built for child-bearing, maybe he was really potent. We had an accident, and I immediately googled a workable substitute for the morning after pill. I took the four pills immediately, then four more twelve hours later. I bled after a few days, during a beach trip involving two 6 hour car rides and being tossed and dragged by the waves. I thought I was okay. I thought a crisis had been averted.

I thought wrong.

A month later, I took a test and it came out positive. The father immediately broke down in tears. He never wanted to have kids. He hated kids. And besides, any children I have will immediately be considered my legal husband's child.

We couldn't have the baby. We just couldn't.

I did as much research as I could. I had an ultrasound to confirm that my pregnancy wasn't ectopic - which would mean that a chemical abortion might cause me to bleed to death. Thank god it wasn't.

I had two options: I could either fly to Hong Kong or I could go to Quiapo. I didn't really have the money for Hong Kong, so I tried my luck in Quiapo.

My boyfriend, father of my unwanted spawn, refused to leave the car for this mission. I had my best friend, a gay man, go with me. I think people thought he was the father of the child I was looking to remove.

We walked around and saw a woman selling herbs, one of which was labelled “pamparegla.”

“Ano po ‘to?” I inquired. “Pamparegla, ‘neng.” I think she thought I just found it amusing.

“Meron po kayo nung gamot?”

A realization dawned on her face - and then a look of pity, I guess? She probably assumed I was younger than my 30 years. That I had this bright future I needed to protect. She was very kind when she gave me the pills and the instructions. She gave me her number so that I can call her in case I had any questions.

I had read up on Planned Parenthood about abortion through pills. I followed the instructions, but the accompanying nausea made me throw up. Maybe that’s why, even if I did bleed significantly, an ultrasound showed that I was still pregnant.

I texted the woman who sold me the pills, and she suggested I take a higher dosage. My best friend and I met her in a Chowking in Manila, with my boyfriend waiting in the car.

It was more horrible than the first time. And I bled a lot more. This time, I felt, this time it took. An ultrasound confirmed it.

It was over.

My boyfriend never wanted to talk about it. He felt like it was something we should put behind us. And it’s not really information you can share. I guess I still have some unresolved emotions bottled up inside me, but I’ve learned to live with it.

So, that was a choice I made. But was it really ever a choice? If I had wanted to keep it, I would have surely lost my boyfriend. I would have had to raise the child on my own, in an apartment I couldn’t afford without said boyfriend’s help. And even if my boyfriend stayed, he was in no way capable of being a father to a child as he could barely take care of himself. My estranged husband would have had a field day if I had gotten pregnant with someone else. He would have used that as a weapon to make my life miserable. There was no way I could have had that baby.

Yes, it was my choice. The same choice I would make if I could do it all over. But, even now,

I still wonder if I could have made a different one.