

ELLA: So, I had no choice, really. I mean, I was only 16 and I didn't know anything about life. I was a good, Baptist girl. But not for long. The passion building up inside me was so great that it made me start doing awful things--things I never would have done before. I knew that our time together was growing short; he'd be out on the road soon, so I started sneaking out of the house at night to be with him.

When I got pregnant, I knew what I had to do. In 1950's Memphis, dating outside your race was not something any respectable girl would do. It was bad enough me being in the company of a white boy, but this was too much.

I don't know how I did it, but I talked him into giving me the money. I never could have afforded the \$100 that it cost. I went to this place. It was all very secretive. It was not only immoral, but illegal and if anyone caught us...well, that's just something I don't like to think about. I was blindfolded and put in the back of a long, dark sedan. We drove for what seemed like hours. When the car finally stopped, a voice said

VOICE: Wait here.

ELLA: I did as I was told. Within a few minutes, a woman opened the back door and helped me out of the car. I couldn't see her, but I could tell it was a woman because of her soft, gentle touch and the faint smell of roses that drifted lightly by my nose. She led me down what seemed to be a long gravel walkway. I heard the sound of a garage door being opened and was led inside. The woman leading me helped me up onto a rickety old wooden table. She whispered in my ear

WOMAN'S VOICE: Try and relax, dear. Everything is going to be all right. Now take off your skirt and panties.

ELLA: I did as I was told without saying a word. I could feel cold hands on my legs, spreading them apart. The smell of motor oil and rubbing alcohol assaulted my nostrils. I was freezing. Hot tears streamed down my cheeks. I felt something cold go inside, and then red hot pain. My body reacted violently. I tried to scream, but I was paralyzed. I heard the woman gasp and then felt her hand on my forehead.

When it was over, I put my clothes back on and was led back to the car. I was dropped off in an alley and told to count to 100 after getting out of the car before I could remove the blindfold.