

# **That One Time I Falsely Accused Someone of Rape**

## **by Claresa Baggs**

“Place your hand on this bible.”

“Now you know what will happen if you swear on the bible and do the opposite, right?”

“Yes, Sir. I will go to Hell.”

“Now, if anybody asks if someone messed with you, tell them it was your Uncle “Ted”.”

“Yes, Sir.”

I was dismissed back to my room.

Shortly thereafter, I was sitting at the kitchen table eating, when suddenly; I felt the flutter of what reminded me of butterflies in my belly. Call it intuition, but I knew. Strangely, as quickly as the realization came to me, it went away just as quickly. I never put any thought into it again. I was not yet able to appreciate the magnitude of change the butterflies represented.

A few months passed and I began to gain weight, specifically in my belly.

After talking with a friend, Mama decided to take me to the doctor. That is an additional event, I will by no means forget. The nurse took me into the examination room and had me lay upon the examination table. The doctor came in and used the stethoscope to listen to my abdomen. She had a look of real concern on her face. She called another doctor over. His reaction was the same. They were quiet and spoke in whispers.

I was beginning to be very afraid. I was told to pee in a cup, get dressed and go back into the waiting room. I returned and sat next to my mother.

Sometime later, the female doctor came out to the waiting area and dropped a major bomb. Now remember, there was no such thing as privacy laws back then. So here we are in the reception room with all eyes on us!

First, she asked if I had had my period. The answer was no. She then calmly stated that I was pregnant! I can't remember how far along she said I was. Then came the questions. Did I let someone touch me?

What had I been up to? At first, I vehemently denied everything. Then when I was full, I lied as instructed.

“Uncle “Ted”!” I blurted out.

“When was this?” My mama asked. “Did he make you?”

“Yes ma’am. He said if I didn’t, he would punch me in the face.” I cried. Honestly, this was the worst thing I could come up with. My uncle was always nice to us and I could not imagine him putting his hands on us-ever.

“Oh yeah-he must have. He is bigger than she is” my mom told the nurse.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“He told me not to.”

Dear God-they believed me! This all took place in the office waiting room in front of a bunch of strangers. I did not know enough to be ashamed.

While in the parking lot, on our way to the car, Mama was ranting and raving about what she was going to do to my uncle. I felt sick to my stomach. What had I done?

“What am I gonna tell your grandma, Aunt Alice and everybody else?” Mama ranted, not really asking a question. In my mind, I screamed, “Fuck them, what about me?”

Not once, did she console her daughter.

We arrived home after what seem to be an extremely long three-mile ride. As soon as we hit the door, Mama was yelling and cussing. She told Daddy everything that happened and she was vowing to find my uncle and kill him. She was looking for Daddy’s shotgun. Daddy called me into the kitchen and asked what I’d told mama. I assured him, his secret was safe. He smiled.

After Daddy put on the false front of trying to stop Mama, she put the gun and me in the car and we headed for St. Martinville. Supposedly, so Mama could shoot Uncle “Ted”.

The mere fact that he was okay with his brother being accused and threatened with certain death spoke to the rotted blackness of his soul.

We arrived there a few hours later. While at my step-grandma’s house, Ms. “Ann”, she carried on about how wrong it was for “Ted” to touch her child. After all, she was just a child.

Shortly after our arrival, my aunt “Tina”, Daddy’s sister, suggested Mama and me take a ride with her. Immediately, Aunt “Tina” started telling me that if her daughter were pregnant she would beat her between the legs with a two-by-four. She said I was lucky she wasn’t my mother. That she would beat me so badly, I would never have sex again. Then she graphically told of her wedding night and the fact that she was a virgin at the

time. She spoke in detail of the pain and blood. I was horrified. Mama just sat there seconding the motion. Why were they so angry with me? I did nothing wrong. On the other hand, maybe I did. Was this really my fault?

Finally, we made it back to the house. Mama was walking up and down on the porch with her gun, waiting for my uncle. I knew I had to do something. I went on the porch and spoke to my mama.

“I’ve got something to tell you.” I said meekly.

“What?”

“Uncle “Ted” didn’t touch me.”

“What?” she repeated.

“Daddy did it. He told me to say it was Uncle “Ted”.”

With that, she turned and went into the house and announced what I just told her. We both got into the car, shotgun included and left for home.

Upon our return, Mama informed Daddy of this new news. She yelled, cussed and threatened. Mama yelled so loudly, people were looking out of their windows. I was of course, shame faced.

I later learned that his punishment for raping and getting an eleven-year-old girl pregnant was a vasectomy.

Funny thing though, she never pulled the shotgun on him.

So now, God and I have a problem. What kind of god would place me in a position to be forced to place my hand on the Bible and lie? Then to save the life of another, I had to tell the truth-now I am doomed to Hell.

A couple of years later, I sat on the porch with Uncle “Tim” and another uncle. My entire body was constricted in absolute fear. I lied on him. I knew that he knew about the lie. I could barely hold a conversation.

Uncle “Tim” called me off the porch. He wanted to talk.

“Let me ask you a question.”

“Yes, Sir.” My stomach was clinched in terror.

I never touched you did I?"

"No Sir." Head hung, mouth dry.

Your daddy told you to say that, didn't he?"

"Yes, Sir."

"That's what I thought. It's okay, I'm not mad at you."

I cried. I felt as light as a feather. As if the weight of the world were lifted from my shoulders. Forgiveness does that for a person.