

Collateral Damage

by Molly Henderson

Hello my name is *Molly*, but I think Collateral Damage seems more fitting of a name. Another term recently described is "viminal". This means victim criminals and all those caught in between. This is a tale of motherhood, sex work, the judicial system and exploitation at the hands of men from all different walks of life. My birth wasn't planned and I think that if my father had a choice he would have chosen to NOT have me. I can't say if he would have chosen not to have me at all or to have had me with another woman. I'd like to think the latter. Although my father did everything within his power to teach me right from wrong, unfortunately I was only with him on the weekends. Long story short children are a product of their environment. Now, I'm not going to go into my torrential childhood of how I was tossed around. Or how I never truly felt that I was loved or even wanted, just merely tolerated. That's a whole nother story for a different day.

This tale begins with a woman hurting so badly that she was searching for something so desperately yet she didn't even truly know what she was searching for. That woman is me. I used drugs and alcohol for the first time at ten years old. My habit progressed rather quickly. By the time I was in 11th grade I was shooting heroin regularly. At 18 I started stripping after meeting two women at a bar who stripped at the local strip club. One was a white girl with blonde hair, blue eyes and tattoos everywhere. The other was an extremely thin Spanish girl who was beautiful and ended up taking me under her wing. I was immediately entranced. These women carried themselves with a certain level of confidence that I had never witnessed in my life. The sex scene. The party scene. The money scene. I found my place. Or so I had thought. By 20 I am pregnant and going to the methadone clinic. At 21 I gave birth to my first child. A daughter. When I look at this perfect little human being that grew inside my body I know for the first time in my life I've done something right. I wanted more than anything in the world to be "normal". I wanted to be a stay at home mom and have a beautiful home. But the drugs and the fast life were all I really knew. I didn't know how to leave it behind and no matter how hard I tried, it seemed like nothing would change me. Not my beautiful perfect baby girl. Not a loving husband who works hard and genuinely loves me, Not anything. Time lapses...

I was “recruited” for “companionship dating” outside of the methadone clinic I was going to in Orlando, Florida. Nage as he called himself was a black man with dreads and my door to a world I could have never imagined existed. He told me I would make so much money. My worth? He told me that too: \$100 for 15 minutes; \$150 for 30 minutes; \$300 for 1 hour. It was simply his means of luring me in. How could I have known that? Vulnerable was practically my middle name. One thing he didn’t lie about, was the fact that I was to never tell him no for any reason. I found out quickly what the consequences were. If you can imagine. He took me to a city where I didn’t know anyone, posted my ad on Backpage and literally told me what to say and do. We set appointments and guy after guy showed up. They were there for sex and I was to give that to them. If I didn’t I wouldn’t have any money to turn in and that would have severe consequences as well. I learned fast. What to say. What not to say. What to do. What not to do. I learned fast for my own sake. Eventually I find a way to get away from Nage, but not before he beats me senseless many many times. By the time I do manage to get away I am three months pregnant with his baby and I only get the courage to leave because he is going to force me to have an abortion, something I can’t do. Won’t do.

I managed to get an apartment with an old boyfriend and I gave birth to another baby girl in 2013. She is beautiful and I name her Ariella. But she is drug addicted and so am I. The hospital calls child services and she is placed with a family member while I voluntarily go to rehab. I try for my daughters. I try for my dad. I try for everyone I ever loved. The money, the drugs, the fast life, they at this point really had a hold of me. This cycle of pimp and boyfriend repeats itself for a few years with me always on the losing end every time. The cities. The hotels. The drug dealers. The sugar daddies. The money. The drugs. The parties. Drug overdoses. Beatings. Living out of a suitcase. Taxi cabs, city buses, and Greyhounds. I have worked in every state from Washington D.C. to south Florida to Texas and every state in between. 7 days a week. 24 hours a day. Sex sells. I saved the numbers in my phone by the name they gave and the city we were in. When I hit that city again I was sure to let them know I was there. I learned that I made better money in high dollar hotels rather than the sleazy ones middle class and upper class men would be afraid to enter. During this time I met a girl named Chelsea. We quickly became best friends and decided to share a hotel room. She worked on Backpage even though she was a lesbian. Chelsea stays by my side as different men take advantage of me again and again. We became so incredibly close over the next year and a half. Looking back it seems we found each other at the perfect time.

In 2016 Chelsea and I met a black man named Darien who responded to one of my ads on Backpage. He was actually a pimp who lived in Macon, Georgia. At this point Chelsea decides to leave sex work for good. She

returns to south Florida to begin a new life with a woman she had been dating. Leaving me now alone with Darien. We develop a relationship of sorts. I am still working. Staying in hotels anywhere between Macon, Georgia and south Florida. It was fun at first. I thought I had the boyfriend type of relationship I had always wanted however was still doing sex work. Soon after we parted ways with Chelsea I found out that I was pregnant. I cried. I did not want to have another baby that I could not care for. I knew that my lifestyle was not the proper environment for a baby. He was happy. He said that he wanted me to be the mother of his child, that he always wanted to have a baby with a white woman. Before the week is over Darien starts telling me that "If I loved him I'd be stuffing his pockets." We got a house together in middle Georgia. I paint. I decorate. I buy furniture. I make this house my home. Something I haven't had in ten years. We argue daily. He tries to get me up at 8am to post my ad and catch the morning rush. Makes me feel bad when I want to go to sleep before 2am. He is taking all of the money I make and yet it is still not enough. He finds other women on Backpage and tries to get us to work as a team, often from other states. It never works out, for various reasons. When I am only 6 weeks pregnant Darien and I part ways. He takes all the money and leaves with one of the other women. Leaving me in Florida, by myself. With nothing. I came back to an empty hotel room. Déjà vu.

In October 2016 I gave birth to my third daughter. She was born a perfectly healthy beautiful baby. I named her Lola. I contacted Darien and told him that he has a daughter. He started coming around to see her. It was really nice seeing him bond with her. I had never experienced this before. All I ever wanted was a Family. I was still working on Backpage only seeing regulars and going to the methadone clinic. But I had managed at this point to stay clean for almost 6 months. Which is something that I hadn't managed to do in over 10 years. I was paying my own bills, taking care of my child for the first time in my life and maintaining all by myself. Things were going pretty good and I decided to let him move into my house. Looking back I think this was the biggest mistake I have ever made. It isn't long before he is demanding I give him my money, again. Déjà vu.

I went out and put in applications a few times. But my teeth were so bad that my confidence was basically nonexistent. In the beginning of March 2017 Darien mentioned to me that he met some girl off of Backpage and that he is going to go pick her up from another pimp in Macon. Despite my protests, he brings this girl to my house. He insists that I help work her, and I refuse. He threatens me again, using our child as leverage saying that I will never see my daughter again. I'm intimidated. I'm scared. I realized, I have no ground to stand on. I ended up giving in, like I always do, afraid of the outcome if I didn't. The next morning her first "date" shows up while I'm cleaning the bathroom. After a few minutes pass I hear very loud banging on my front door. I go to the door and open it. I am immediately picked up off of my feet and placed outside my front door. I realize that there are several white officers in uniform with weapons drawn. He then yells for anyone in the house to come out with their hands visible. After some time Kylie and the unknown male client come out of the room. They are both cuffed immediately. At this point they look at me and say "do you know that she is 15 years old?" I believe that my jaw probably hit the ground. I had absolutely no idea she was a minor.

The officers interrogated me for some time. Asking all kinds of questions. They ask if they are going to find me on Backpage as well. What's the point of lying? All they have to do is look. I am there. They decided not to arrest me right off. They want me to bring in Darien. I agree. Darien knew that the police were there, he called my phone and the officer answered it. They told him the same thing they told me. To be at the Sheriff department

Monday morning. We both agreed. Afterwards Darien changes his mind and decides to get us a lawyer. The lawyer advises us not to go to the Sheriff department. We do as he says we should. Four months later warrants were issued on both Darien and I. Prostitution of a minor. Pimping of a minor. Sexual exploitation of a minor. Enticing a minor for indecent purposes. Keeping a place for the purposes of prostitution of a minor. And prostitution. Both of us charged individually, as co-defendants. The lawyer recommended we turn ourselves in. I cannot. I am still breastfeeding my baby. I am on methadone. I am scared. I decide to go on the run after Darien takes all the money and turns himself in. Leaving me and my 4 month old baby in a hotel in Macon, Georgia with \$5 and no car. Déjà vu again.

I make my way down to Florida and decide to let a family friend care for my now 7 month old baby. I am desolate without her. I started using drugs again. I was staying wherever I could and doing whatever it takes to stay away from the police. Eventually I find myself at a drug dealers house when it is being raided and am subsequently arrested in September of 2017.

AFTERMATH: In December 2019 my attorney, a white man who if I am going by looks could very well have been one of my clients. He offered me a plea deal. I agree to testify against Darian. My judge, also a white man who again could have been a client, sentenced me to 20 years. After I testify I go back to court for a resentencing hearing and am sentenced to 4 years prison with 6 years of probation. I was never told that I would have to register as a sex offender. I would not have agreed to this plea deal if I had been informed of this! At this point I just wanted to go home and be a mother to my daughter. I go to prison just after the new year 2020. When I finish with the intake process I am shipped to Pulaski State Prison in Hawkinsville, Georgia. When I meet with my counselor for the first time she informs me that I will have to register as a sex offender upon my release and for the rest of my life. My release date is set for September 5 2021 with no eligibility for parole. While in prison I attend all of the groups and classes that I am required to take. Including the sex offender class. This class was designed for pedophiles and rapists, neither of which I am. Several times while I was in prison I was targeted by others for being a “sex offender” and I was involved in several fights where I was attacked, leaving me with a scar across my chest.

I am released from prison in 2021. I immediately report to probation. I am allowed to stay in Florida while a probation transfer is put in. This first transfer is denied. My probation Officer then puts another transfer through. Which is again, denied. She informs me that I am to return to Georgia or violate my probation. I am about to lose everything I have just just worked so hard to get back, my partner, my child, my support system, my job. Everything. I run a few addresses by the sex offender registration officer, all of which will not work with the Georgia specifications for sex offenders. I have to live AND work at least 1000 feet away from a school, church, daycare, bus stop, and playground. He then informs me that if I am going to take the homeless route that I can stay in the Walmart parking lot or a run down hotel known for drugs and prostitution. I chose the Walmart parking lot, no longer willing to put myself in those environments. With it being winter and all I don't know how long the money I have will last at this rate. Thankfully I had just enough money to be able to start up the car a few times a night to warm up the inside.

Now I am alone in a city where I know no one living in a car in the Walmart parking lot. I am running out of money. I can not go to a shelter or a rehab because I am a sex offender. I can not stay with anyone who has children, as a matter of fact I had to get a court order stating that I had permission to be around and live in the same

home with my own children. So what am I to do? I have to make this work because it is the only choice I have. Saving money is almost impossible. My fiance and daughter come to visit me for about 5 days each month, that is all we can afford at the one hotel I am allowed to stay at.

Update: with the help of SWOP behind bars and several private donors I was able to buy a camper. The mother of a sex worker that was murdered happened to have a camper she was no longer living in. I found a campground approved by probation and am currently living in my camper in Georgia. I work all the time and still struggle to save money but I am somewhat more stable. This helps. I still only see my family once a month due to probation and limited funds. Hopefully soon that will change too. I will say that without the support that I have received I don't think I would have made it this far. I am definitely one of the lucky ones. Rickie was murdered. And her killer never brought to justice.



About the Author

My name is Molly Henderson is a survivor of sex trafficking and former sex worker. I was unjustly incarcerated and forced to register as a sex offender due to my unknowing proximity to a minor who was also involved in the sex trade. I am a loving mother, and I want to educate the public on the shortcomings of the criminal justice system.