

Diamond's Story — A Survivor Composite Story
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Diamond, age 19

Diamond was sex trafficked by her mother until she was 18. Every time Diamond tried to run away, her mother / trafficker called the police and claimed that she was suicidal so that they would 5150 her and lock her in an involuntary psychiatric hospital hold. Each time this happened, she was given so many sedatives she felt like she was trapped in a nightmare she couldn't wake from. She tried to convince nurses and doctors to put her in foster care, but they thought she was lying about her mother's abuse because her mother told the hospital staff that she was manipulative.

Diamond now sleeps in a squat house with other homeless youth. The boy they call King requires everyone to pay taxes. Diamond has nothing, so King told her that she can help him steal things and sell drugs to pay her rent. Diamond has no better option. When she told King she wasn't sure if she felt safe stealing things and selling drugs, he threatened her with a gun and told her to leave if she felt so unsafe. Diamond felt certain King would kill her if she tried to leave, so she agreed to stay. The next day, King gave Diamond an expensive-looking necklace to return to a luxury boutique. One of the other girls helped her get dressed and do her makeup so she would look more wealthy and not raise any questions for the retail staff. Diamond asked King if there was a receipt for the necklace. King laughed at her and walked away without answering. Diamond began to believe that the necklace was actually stolen, but she was too worried that King might kill her if she asked any more questions or refused to do as he told her.

Diamond was shaking from anxiety when she walked into the boutique with the necklace. When she tried to return it, the woman at the counter said that they could only give store credit if there was no receipt. Diamond got very nervous and ran out of the store. Staff called the police who then chased Diamond and arrested her. She was charged with theft for stealing the necklace that King had forced her to try to return for a cash refund. Diamond tried to explain the forced criminality of the squat house to her public defender, but he has a very large caseload and doesn't have the time to thoroughly listen to her. Diamond is sentenced to prison for three years. She is assigned to sew clothing and make dog food for companies while in prison. Diamond hopes she can find a job and an apartment once she is released, but she isn't very hopeful because she had trouble finding a job and an apartment even before she had a criminal record for theft. She hopes she can get her record expunged because she didn't want to do anything bad, but she doesn't know how to do that or who to talk to.