

WOMAN JAILED TO FORCE SERIAL KILLER TESTIMONY COPS HOLD VICTIM WHO HELPED CATCH SUSPECT

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The **woman** who led police **to** the confessed Highland Park **serial killer** is in jail against her will **to force** her **to** testify in court.

The **woman** , identified by the Free Press as Donna because she is an alleged rape victim who requested anonymity, was arrested Sept. 23 outside her Detroit home. A Highland Park judge signed a warrant saying she had **to** post \$50,000 bail **to** stay free.

In a telephone interview from Detroit police headquarters, where she is being held, Donna, 36, said she regrets talking **to** police about Benjamin (Tony) Atkins, who is charged with attacking her and with killing 11 **women** .

"I wouldn't have told if I thought I was going **to** be locked up," she said. "It's like I did a crime. I have no way **to** get out. . . . If I ever saw anything else happen, I wouldn't tell."

Paul Denenfeld, legal director for the ACLU of Michigan, said, "I think it's outrageous. The fact that she is at least an alleged rape victim just compounds the outrage."

Donna made a report **to** Detroit police March 6 saying that last fall she was stripped, raped, and choked on the grounds of the Monterey Motel, where the bodies of three **women** were found Feb. 17. On Aug. 19, she picked out Atkins on the street, and he confessed **to** the 11 slayings and the attack on her, police said.

Detectives said Donna was arrested not only because they need her **testimony** for the cases, but for her own good. They put her in the **women** 's eighth floor lockup because they believed she was slowly killing herself.

"They can kiss where the sun will never shine if that's a favor," Donna said in response.

During her first days in jail, Donna said she had spent "at least 23 hours" a day alone in a cell that is about 10 feet by 6 feet and is equipped with a bed, a toilet and a sink.

She said she's allowed **to** have a mattress and a blanket while others sleep on bare wood.

Meals are basic: juice, milk and cereal for breakfast at 5 a.m., and bologna sandwiches "with that nasty mayonnaise" for lunch at 11. Dinner is at 5 p.m. and is always a surprise.

"You never know. And when you get it, you still don't know," she said.

Donna admits she was battling an addiction **to** crack cocaine and was drinking too much alcohol. When she was arrested Sept. 23, she had consumed two 40-ounce bottles of beer, she said. She was unkempt, and sobbed and coughed uncontrollably that day. Now, her voice sounds stronger, healthier.

She is receiving no counseling, but would accept it if offered, she said. In the meantime, she's happy **to** be clean of mind-altering substances, though she thinks she should have been allowed **to** handle that on her own.

Denenfeld agreed. "Oh gosh, we're really helping her out by throwing her in jail. Let me say I'm slightly skeptical. . . . If she's going **to** be a prosecution witness, they could find her a rehab program without taking away her liberty."

Donna was **jailed** under a Michigan law that allows a judge **to** require key witnesses **to** put up substantial collateral **to** guarantee they will appear in court, or **to** be **jailed** if they can't.

Denenfeld said the law is rarely used and highly questionable. "There's a serious question of whether she is being **jailed** solely because of her indigence," he said.

Assistant Wayne County Prosecutor Michael Reynolds said it is likely Donna will be released after testifying at Atkins' preliminary exam on Oct. 15. On Tuesday, Atkins was found competent **to** stand trial.

Until then, Donna waits in jail. Last Wednesday, members of the special assignment squad in the police homicide section began allowing her **to** spend her mornings in their office.

"They'll bring me down, let me have coffee, give me a paper. Let me make my phone calls. They fuss at me about my life-style, the way I was living, that they want me **to** do better."

She said that despite her bitterness about being **jailed** , she still will testify.

Caption: Photo Color

: Benjamin Atkins ***

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