



## The Las Vegas Madam: The Escorts, The Clients, The Truth

**Jami Rodman**

Maktub Press and Publishing (Dec 10, 2015)

Softcover \$19.99 (375pp)

978-0-9965682-0-3

*Rodman understands moral complexity; she neither glorifies nor vilifies her past trade in the Las Vegas sex industry.*

Sparing no detail, memoirist Jami Rodman, aka Haley Heston, opens the doors on the epicenter of the Sin City sex industry in her book, *The Las Vegas Madam*. She shares explicit tales that have the flavor of great erotica, but also weaves in remarkable, telling portraits of people on both sides of an age-old transaction.

Rodman grew up in a conservative family in small-town Oregon. The first chapters of her book examine the alienation she experienced as a teenager. After a failed marriage and some secondary education, she broadened her horizons to Las Vegas.

The city's sex, drugs, and money lured Rodman in. She began waiting tables, working at strip clubs, and soon enough was propositioned by her first client. The rest of the book chronicles the author's rise to becoming an elite escort, and eventually madam of her own escort company, before getting out of the industry altogether.

Rodman's writing shows excellent skill. Rather bookish as a child, she studied cultural anthropology in college before moving to Vegas, and her natural talent and education show in the way she perceives and analyzes the characters and customs of the sex industry, particularly how wealth and privilege fuel dissatisfaction. "It was ironic," Rodman writes of a dominatrix session she and a friend—"a feminist with a bachelor's degree"—hosted for a powerful businessman. "This was a man who was feared in his professional life, yet he was paying two anonymous girls to verbally and physically insult him."

Rodman also understands moral complexity. For the most part, she neither glorifies nor vilifies her past trade. She explores the freedom and empowerment that high-end escorts enjoy. At the same time, she doesn't shy away from the darker side of the sex industry: "The largest group of women in the sex industry—60 percent—is trafficked." Her most moving passages involve her attempts to save working girls from pimps and drug addiction: "Underneath it all, they were my friends more than anything else."

The book's episodic nature occasionally undermines its own narrative arc. For instance, after reflective chapters on her personal relationships and finding meaning in a double life, Rodman includes a few more salacious episodes about "sugar daddies" and open relationships, the latter particularly redundant in light of her earlier chapter on threesomes.

On the whole, however, *The Las Vegas Madam* is a captivating exploration of an elusive industry. It's not a book for readers squeamish about sex or about women who choose to sell it for a living. Fans of erotica will appreciate Rodman's evocative descriptions of sex, while fans of memoir and general nonfiction will appreciate her keen sociological insights.

SCOTT NEUFFER (January 4, 2016)

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