

Renting LACY



A Story of America's Prostituted Children

A CALL TO ACTION

by Linda Smith
with Cindy Coloma

Linda's tenacity and advocacy for those who are trapped in these situations has already roused many to action, but this book will awaken far more. . . . Some will be shocked. Some will be outraged. Some will be saddened. My hope is that *all* will be spurred to action.

— Ernie Allen,
President and CEO, National Center for
Missing and Exploited Children



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Updated with
discussion
guide

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Content



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A Story of America's Prostituted Children

**by Linda Smith
with Cindy Coloma**

Foreword by Ernie Allen

President and CEO, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

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*Some names have been changed to protect the identities of the women and children we serve.

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Endorsements

I just finished your book (*Renting Lacy*) when I got out (of probation) for the second time. I finished it and when I saw that Lacy had gotten out and she's all cool, I didn't contact him anymore.

—15-year-old Survivor

* * * * *

I gave a copy (of *Renting Lacy*) to a young lady on my caseload that I felt was at-risk to become a victim of trafficking. She read the book and the other day she had a strange experience. A van stopped and asked her if she had a job. They talked to her a little more; she was wary and did not get close to the van. She was disturbed enough that she called me and gave me the information which I relayed to law enforcement ... This little gal was made aware and kept herself safe because of the book.

—Kay Vail, Probation Officer

* * * * *

Renting Lacy has served as a catalyst to many thoughtful conversations. It has proven to be an indispensable resource teens can relate to. Kids know what we don't, they see what we can't, and *Renting Lacy* gives them the ability to recognize the language, understand the vulnerabilities, and help protect themselves and others.

—Leslee Ferguson, Manager
Crisis Residential Center

* * * * *

The book was great in answering some typical questions like 'why they don't leave.' I liked how you learned a little from so many different viewpoints and

it helped correct many misconceptions in the world ... I was captivated by the book and read it in just about one afternoon.

—Banker

* * * * *

I am a survivor of human trafficking, prostitution, alcohol, drug addiction, rape, incest, and homelessness, and I thought the book was very honest and real. I really appreciate the truth being told, and the heart of the girls being revealed. People need to see the nightmares and devastation they endure, and that there are a lot of evil people out there who are very good at what they do. But, I know my God is greater, because of all the healing, restoration, and blessings He has given me. Thank God for Shared Hope, Linda Smith, and many loving, compassionate, empathetic hearts to reach beyond themselves to strangers, and let them know they are somebody, and their lives are worth saving

—Jeanette Bradley, Social Services Provider

* * * * *

I work as a child protective services worker for the State of Michigan, and I am more aware than most of my friends and family of the evil things that many of our children in this country face behind closed doors, but this book immediately caught my attention. It was amazingly well thought out and put together. It puts a real voice to the victims of sex trafficking and forced me to confront some of my own flawed thinking and acknowledge the truth about this problem. I haven't been able to shake the thoughts about just how many kids are facing this horrific struggle every day. It makes me want to do something to help put a stop to it.

—Social Services Provider

* * * * *

The stories in the book really made it come alive. The message was shocking, disturbing, horrifying. But it is also necessary. We in America need to know what is happening to our children right under our noses. We need to wake up to the fact that this horrific abuse is occurring and that we are allowing and

even, at times, encouraging it. What will it take to change this? More people understanding the facts and standing up and saying, “No! We cannot allow this to continue!” And this book does just that and encourages others to do the same. I challenge anyone to read *Renting Lacy* and not be motivated to do something to implement change in the abuse of children in America.

—Student

* * * * *

The first and best I have read that explains that trafficking of our own children is increasing and will increase unless we take action! The story is riveting and honest and true!

—Grandfather

* * * * *

This is a timely, difficult, and necessary read to understand the injustice and abuse going on daily and what we need to do to stop it.

—Vernon Smith, Founder
Defenders USA

* * * * *

Linda Smith is a remarkable woman. It has been my pleasure to know Linda and follow her political work at both the state and federal levels. Given all her achievements in politics, Linda will affirm that the work she is now doing with Shared Hope International is by far the most important thing she has ever done. I trust you will be stirred to action, contact Shared Hope International, and join Linda in her crusade.

—Pastor Ron Hart, Board Member
Shared Hope International

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Acknowledgements

This book needed a title that really shouted to the world the plight of children in slavery. Early one morning as I finished writing, I expressed my frustration to my husband Vern over not yet finding a title that would help people understand how children were being sold right here in America. After a few moments of reflection, he said, “They are not being sold outright by their trafficker; these girls’ young bodies are being rented out by the hour.”

Thus, the title *Renting Lacy*. Thank you, Vern, for helping craft just the right title, and thank you for reading the early drafts to help me understand how men might respond.

Early on, I was told by several that the book as written could be too intense, and even repulse and anger readers. I took this concern to Ernie Allen, President of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. After listening several minutes, Ernie thoughtfully encouraged me to err on the side of keeping it accurate to the truth I had discovered, even if it meant rejection by some. Finding a way to write the truth of the horrible things that happen to these children while not causing such strong revulsion that people would put the book down was a constant struggle. Thank you, Ernie, for speaking for the missing and exploited children who cannot speak for themselves. Your advice helped shape this book.

Thank you Sheila Avery, Nancy Winston, Pastor Ron Hart, David and Marjie Austen, Reverend David White, James Varner, Joe Varella, Robin and Russ Gunn, Beverly Morin, Juana Killion, and Jan Kennedy for suffering through some of the early drafts and delivering your “at times” painful but helpful observations, suggestions, and edits. Because of you, readers are more likely to finish the book and act on what they learn.

There are no words to express the admiration I have for our research team, led by Samantha Healy-Vardaman and Melissa Snow. This book is based on in-depth research performed by Shared Hope International from 2006 to 2009, resulting in *The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America's Prostituted Children*, published in June 2009. Without Samantha's and Melissa's leadership, the shocking findings and resulting National Report would not be possible. Thank you, Samantha and Melissa. Renting Lacy would not stand on the strong foundation of truth without you.

Thank you Kristy Childs, Elesondra ("El") DeRomano, Rachel Lloyd, Tina Frundt, and Annette Lindley for digging back into your pain-filled lives as prostituted children so I could understand and express more accurately the lives of the hundreds of thousands of children held in sex slavery. Thank you for taking the suffering from your childhood and turning it into hope for the victimized women and children of today.

Foreword

To millions of Americans, the trafficking of children for commercial sexual purposes only happens somewhere else — in Southeast Asia or Central America — not on Main Street USA. Yet, it is abundantly clear that today at least 100,000 American children are being used as commodities for sale or trade in cities across the nation. These kids are 21st Century slaves. They cannot walk away.

A quarter-century ago, a police commander said to me, “The only way not to find this problem in any community is simply not to look for it.” The good news is that America has begun to look. The bad news is that millions still do not understand the depth and severity of this problem. They don’t understand what really happens to these kids, or that these kids come from families just like ours.

My hope is that this book will change all of that. Linda’s tenacity and advocacy for those who are trapped in these situations has already roused many to action, but this book will awaken far more. She tells the stories in the style of a novel, and in a manner that leaves no room for misunderstanding. She helps those who doubt the existence of such criminal enterprises trading on the young to see. These accounts are gripping and shocking. They convey the horror and hopelessness that so many American kids face on the streets of our cities.

Linda neither glamorizes the lives these kids are required to live, nor does she demonize them. She portrays them exactly as they are, as victims who desperately need and deserve rescue.

Some will be shocked. Some will be outraged. Some will be saddened. My hope is that *all* will be spurred to action.

Ernie Allen
President and CEO, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

Introduction

I didn't want to touch the foul-smelling girl, and I certainly didn't want to dramatically change my life.

More than 10 years ago, my days were crammed with policy, legislation, and serving my constituents as Congresswoman Linda Smith representing Washington State's Third Congressional District. But in the midst of my hectic schedule, five days opened up — and I was able to squeeze in a trip to India.

It wasn't a pleasure trip. I was going because a missionary had told me about the commercial sex industry — forced prostitution — and I was going to see for myself. Could it really be as bad as he said?

I would soon discover it was worse than I could have imagined or believed.

Those five days transformed my life.

On Falkland Road in Mumbai, I was stunned by the reality of the sex trade industry. Children and women lined streets where raw sewage flowed in uncovered ditches. I found young girls, mere children, locked in rooms deep within brothels, or several stories up behind barred windows, waiting for the men who “like them young.”

One girl in particular would change me.

She was just a wisp of a thing, filthy, alone. The conditions of her life were deplorable. The scent of a thousand men was upon her. She was about the age of my granddaughter.

I am doomed forever, her eyes said to me, *beyond help, beyond hope*.

And then, I heard a still, small voice telling me to touch her.

I denied it, but the voice returned.

Finally, I reached for her.

My mind had been changed already, shocked and scarred by the

images on Falkland Road. But in the instant I touched this child — as she fell into my arms — my heart was branded. Feeling the frail humanity of her heartbeat against mine, I knew I had to do something.

I returned to the United States. My supporters had planned for me to run for another political office. Instead, my life took a radical turn. Within weeks I created a non-profit corporation, Shared Hope International. Here, my husband Vern and I — and as many friends as I could convince to join us — put together our assets and resources to create homes for girls ... girls like the one I had held in my arms that first life-changing night.

I discovered that many of these little girls had been brought to India all the way from Nepal. As impossible as it seemed, most had actually been sold by their own parents — duped into believing they would have good work and a better life. Others had literally been kidnapped, stolen.

In every case, the cause was the same: someone had to supply product for the hungry sex markets in Mumbai.

My heart broke for these little Nepalese girls; they wanted to go home, home to their own culture, the familiar food, the familiar climate. So I began reaching out to ministries in Kathmandu, and we began opening homes in Nepal as well.

But India and Nepal were only a first taste ... only an introduction into human trafficking and the sex trade industry. I would soon find that this horror stretches around the world. And after five years of work in the field, I came into a new, perhaps even more awful, shock: this nightmare was happening in my own backyard.

This wasn't just an India problem. It wasn't just an international problem. It was also a United States problem.

Where did the sex trade industry come from? How can this happen in America? Why isn't it stopped? What can be done? Can hope be found?

This book offers some answers. But the bottom line is very simple, and very terrible. The human trafficking of children is occurring every day in the United States. It is happening in your town and mine — all over the nation.

And it is happening in greater volume than one can hardly imagine. I'll tell you the stories. I'll introduce you to the victims and their

tormentors. You'll meet the victims' families, the law enforcers, even the buyers of children.

It will not be pretty, and it will not be easy. But it will be the truth.

I've presented them here in story form because this is how life really happens in the world of human trafficking. The language is rough, vulgar in places. I don't wish to offend anyone, especially not those who have given so generously down through the years to enable the work of Shared Hope International. In fact, deeply conservative people of great propriety and dignity are among our strongest supporters — the people for whom I thank God every day — and yet these are the ones perhaps most at risk of taking offense at the words on these pages. Yet I pray for their understanding and pardon, because this book is tragically necessary. After more than a decade of undercover investigations, extensive research, generating a million words or more in reports and articles and media interviews and testimony before Congress and international conferences — all to plead for action against the human traffickers — it is clear to me that only the harshness of the truth can wake the world to this horror. It will take a real-life confrontation with the agony these children are living through. It will take a painful but authentic look into the ugly underworld. Then, perhaps — and I hope and pray — people will rally to the cause of putting a stop to it all.

So the stories you'll read in these pages are true. They are compiled from actual events. Of course, for the protection of innocent people, I've altered names and other details. And as for the profane language, rest assured that I have already "toned it down" considerably; the actual transcripts would be even more terrible.

Along the way, I'll offer comments and insights from my decade of experience in the field. (As a matter of convention, I'll refer to the children as females and the buyers as males; this is overwhelmingly the case, but it's also true that occasionally we encounter boys as victims and women as buyers.)

I offer this book for the sake of the girls I've found trapped in slavery, the girls we've rescued, the girls to whom we've been able to give a fresh start — and the thousands upon thousands of girls we have yet to reach. If the journey you're about to take with me can inspire you to help us help even one of them, it will have been worth the risk, worth any effort, any sacrifice.

I invite you, I urge you, to pull that girl close. Hold her in your arms.
Feel her heartbeat. Remember her face. Join us in saving her life.

*“May heaven’s rich blessing come down on everyone,
American, English or Turk,
who will help to heal this open sore of the world.”*

—David Livingstone’s final plea to abolish the slave trade in Africa, 1873

Glossary of Terms

To understand the terrible truth about human trafficking, we have to understand the terrible terms. This will be uncomfortable, perhaps, but to view this awful other world accurately requires us to listen to some things we'd rather never hear.

This, then, is a glossary for the world we're about to enter.

Automatic — the victim's routine when her pimp is out of town, in jail, or otherwise not in direct contact with those he is prostituting. Victims are expected to be “on automatic,” and they generally comply — either out of fear of punishment or because they have been psychologically manipulated into a sense of loyalty or love. All money generated “on automatic” is turned over to the pimp when he returns.

Bottom (sometimes called bottom bitch, bottom ho, bottom girl) — one girl, among several controlled by a single pimp, appointed by him to supervise the others, reports rule violations, and sometimes even helps inflict punishment on them.

Caught a Case — a pimp or a prostituted person has been arrested and charged with a crime.

Choosing Up — the process by which a different pimp takes “ownership” of a victim. Choosing up actually occurs simply by making eye contact with another pimp (which is why eye contact with other pimps is strictly prohibited). If the original pimp wants the victim back, he must pay a fee to the new pimp. It's the victim, however, who is then required to “work” to pay restitution to her original pimp. And usually the debt is increased

— as a penalty for the disrespect of the original pimp that “choosing up” represents.

Circuit (or Track) — a set area known for prostitution activity. This can be a local term: the area around a group of strip clubs and pornography stores, or a particular stretch of street. Or it can be a series of cities among which prostituted people are moved — one example would be the West Coast circuit of San Diego, Las Vegas, Vancouver (British Columbia), and the cities between. The term can also refer to a chain of states, such as the “Minnesota pipeline” by which victims are moved through a series of locations from Minnesota to markets in New York.

Daddy — what pimps require their victims to call them. (See *Family* or *Folk*.)

Date — the exchange when prostitution takes place, or the activity of prostitution. A victim is said to be “with a date” or “dating.”

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) — DMST is the commercial sexual exploitation of American children within U.S. borders. It is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where the person is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18 years.

Escort Service — an organization, operating chiefly via cell phone and increasingly the Internet, which sends a victim to a buyer’s location (an “outcall”) or arranges for the buyer to come to a house or apartment (an “in-call”); this may be the workplace of a single woman or actually a small brothel. Some escort services are networked with others and can assemble large numbers of women for parties and conventions. Some serve those with fetishes, such as sex with children or sadomasochism.

Exit Fee — money a pimp demands from a victim who is thinking about leaving. This is routinely an exorbitant sum intended to discourage her

departure. (Victims usually don't have money, other than what the pimps give to them to supply their needs.) Most pimps never let their victims leave freely.

Facilitator — any business or person allowing a trafficker/pimp to carry out his exploitations. These facilitators — taxi drivers, hotel owners, newspapers where girls are advertised — work in direct and indirect partnerships with pimps and enable the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Family or Folk — a group of people under the control of one pimp; he plays the role of father or “Daddy.” This idea can be extremely complicated psychologically for a victim who has never had a supportive family.

Finesse Pimp — one who prides himself on controlling others primarily through psychological manipulation. Even in such cases, however, the threat of violence is always present.

The Game/The Life — the subculture of prostitution. “The game” functions as a fully formed subculture, complete with established rules, hierarchy, and language. People who do not actively participate in “the game” are viewed as not understanding how it works nor understanding the people involved in it. The victim is said to be “in the life.”

Gorilla (or Guerilla) Pimp — one who controls his victims almost entirely through violence.

Ho Line — a loose network of inter-city or interstate communication between pimps, chiefly by phone, used to trade, buy, and sell prostituted women and children. A ho line uses frequently changing slang and code words to confound law enforcement.

John or Buyer — a person paying another for sexual gratification, control, and/or domination. The term “john” comes from the alias often used by customers in order to remain anonymous. The john drives the entire system. Without a

buyer, there wouldn't be a seller and there wouldn't be a victim. The demand for commercial sexual services fuels the problem of domestic minor sex trafficking. Victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are forced to sell their bodies to meet this demand.

Lot Lizard — a derogatory term for a person who is prostituted at truck stops.

Madam — an older woman who manages a brothel. The madam has usually been prostituted in her earlier years; she may be a pimp herself, perhaps a career criminal.

Quota — a set amount of money that a trafficked girl must make each night before she can come “home.” Quotas are often set between \$300 and \$2,000. If the child returns without meeting the quota, she is typically beaten or sent back out.

Renegade — a prostituted person not under the control of a pimp. Renegades are usually vulnerable to threats, harassment, and violence intended to make them “choose” a pimp. The term also sometimes refers to a victim who violates a pimp's rules.

Seasoning — a combination of psychological manipulation, intimidation, gang rape, sodomy, beatings, deprivation of food or sleep, isolation from family, friends, and other sources of support, and threatening or holding hostage of a victim's children. Seasoning is designed to totally break down a victim's resistance and ensure that she will do anything she is told.

Sister Wife, Sister-in-Law, Wife-in-Law, Stable Sister — what women in a pimp's “stable” call each other. (See Family or Folk and Stable.)

Stable — a group of victims under the control of a single pimp. (The choice of a farming word is worse than ironic, in that pimps indeed treat their victims like animals.)

Survival Sex — a situation involving a homeless youth who trades a sex act with an adult in exchange for basic needs such as shelter, food, etc. Knowing that homeless youth are unable to work legally and provide for themselves, sexual predators commonly target them, taking advantage of their vulnerability. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) defines a “victim” of sex trafficking as any child under the age of 18 and involved in a commercial sex act where money or something of value is given to or received by any person. Accordingly, “survival sex” actually qualifies as domestic minor sex trafficking.

Trade Up, Trade Down — to move a victim like merchandise. Pimps are quick to get rid of victims who cause problems, or who no longer match the profile sought by the clientele that the pimp serves. A pimp may trade straight across, or trade with some exchange of money, or trade one victim in return for two or more other victims. The sale price for a victim is usually \$2,500 to \$3,500. The victims can be moved long distances rapidly — with a guard, overnight, and/or by air.

Trafficker/Pimp — anyone who receives money or something of value for the sexual exploitation of another person.

Trick — the act of prostitution/ also the person buying it. A victim is said to be “turning a trick” or “with a trick.”

Turn Out — to be forced into prostitution/ also a person newly involved in prostitution.

Chapter 6

Pimping Lives

Ricco in Kansas City

More girls. He needed more girls.

“You sure you’ll get me at least 15?” Bobby was calling to check on the progress. “I’ll pay for more.”

Ricco promised — though he only had 10 lined up so far. Kelsey would make 11. Then he would need four more, at least.

His nephew was competing at a junior wrestling match that afternoon. Ricco scanned the bleachers. Yeah, there were a few interesting girls. A group of guys, with one girl sitting in the middle of them — then a group of girls, a large group, with two sitting off at one end.

They were all young enough. A number of them were dressed well, overly confident, giving him a look of disdain when he smiled at them. Thirteen or 14 years old — and they could look down on him? Ricco thought about doing something. Have them beg, see them cry — he hated high and mighty girls who looked at him like he was scum. Someday he just might do what he thought of doing. Wipe those smug, upper-middle-class smiles off their faces.

But for now, Ricco would leave them alone. He didn’t need the attention you get with frantic parents crying on the evening news.

His nephew Jasper came over and sat beside him. “Got any weed I can buy?”

“Not to buy. I’ll give you some.”

“Really? Cool, Uncle Ricco.”

“You gotta do something for me, though.”

The smile on Jasper’s face faded.

“Invite some friends over tonight. We’ll have a little party at my place.

And I want you to invite some girls.”

“Okay, cool.” Ricco knew he’d just made his nephew one popular dude among his friends.

“Tell me about those girls.”

“What girls?”

Ricco motioned slightly with his head.

“Jackie and that skinny girl? They live in some group home.”

Ricco chuckled at that. “Invite them.”

“They’re freaks.”

“Listen. Make sure those two are there. Invite your team. Forget the other girls, though. Do it and I’ll get a keg and whatever else you want for Saturday night.”

It was too easy really. Ricco was reminded of how much he liked his job. The two girls came to the party at his house, and with the wrestling team all around them, they felt popular for the first time in their lives. Within an hour, the girls were drunk and high. Horny teen guys, fried on drugs, and with the right encouragement, would do exactly what he needed them to do. Jasper helped get the girls into the bedrooms. His nephew didn’t think they were freaks anymore, when he took off their clothes. One of the girls had huge boobs. The skinny one that Ricco had led to his bed wore pink panties and bra.

Ricco set up business.

First he called one of the guys to follow him.

“You gotta see this.” He peeked around the corner, then drew back and motioned for the guy to look in. Jasper was already having sex with Big Boobs. Then Ricco showed him the thin girl in Ricco’s own room.

“Want a turn?”

The kid was scared. Maybe even a 17-year-old virgin. The girl was drunk but still conscious.

“Go talk to her and see what happens. I saw her eyeing you earlier in the night. She wants you.”

The kid still didn’t step forward, just stared and shifted, wanting it.

“What are you, playing for the other team? Ah, that’s why you like wrestling them sweaty boys.”

That moved the kid. Ricco closed the door behind him. Then he headed into the living room to the other boys. He’d get them into the bedroom either as a team or one at a time. Ricco had all night.

“We have a cover charge, boys. But lots of amenities. Just 20 bucks.”

“Cover charge?” a kid asked.

“Twenty bucks. Didn’t Jasper tell you? It helps cover expenses. Come see what we’ve got going on in the bedrooms.”

The twenties came out. Two guys only had a ten, but Ricco was generous. By the time the guys had left or passed out, Ricco had gotten five or six guys to take a turn in one or both of the rooms.

The next morning, Ricco woke to one of the girls crying. She was trying to wake up the other girl.

“Try this; it’ll help with the hangover.” Ricco handed Big Boobs a bong. It would be her first taste of rock. She’d be an addict by the end of the week. Nothing Ricco hated worse than a junkie whore — they were unreliable, and quickly turned ugly and desperate. But these girls weren’t his. He had a number to fill for Bobby, and he’d made a promise.

“I want to go home,” Big Boobs said, pushing away the bong.

“Home, what home? You don’t have a home.”

The second girl was awake now, looking around for her clothing. He almost laughed as she tried to hide her shapeless figure. The first girl was dressed, sitting on the edge of the bed, spinning out from the drug already. “Come on, Carrie,” she said. “Let’s get out of here.”

“You’ve got a new home here with me.”

“What’s he talking about?” Carrie said. *Carrie?* Ricco said to himself. He liked “Scrawny” better for her. Her face and body reminded him of a scrawny little rat. He’d give them street names later; but for right now, he’d call them whatever he liked.

“I have a new life for you,” he said with a smile, “and a new job.”

Big Boobs stared silently at him. Scrawny was picking up speed, trying to hide herself from him. He set the bong down.

“Listen,” Ricco went on, calm but threatening. “You aren’t leaving.”

Scrawny sat down beside Big Boobs and started shaking. He gave them a cold stare. "Don't you think I know where you live? You think you can run away? What will you do?"

Big Boobs grabbed Scrawny's hand as the tears began.

"Do you know what happens to hos?"

Big Boobs was shaking her head. "We're not hos."

"No? What do you think you were last night? Go back to school Monday and find out which of those guys you screwed are your boyfriends. You screwed half the wrestling team. You should've seen the cell phone flashes going last night." He laughed at that. Scrawny was shaking her head like a crazy person.

"They paid for you. You made \$300, girls. I have it here for you." He held up the money. "But you know what that means. The police won't help you. They arrest hos. Your rich little friends won't ever talk to you again. You probably screwed their boyfriends last night. And if you do go home, what then? The group home can't have hookers there — you might infect the other girls."

It was sinking in now.

"Listen. You can stay with me," Ricco said, switching to a warmer tone. "I'll give you a better life than this crappy town. You'll get to see the world. And you two can stay together."

Scrawny was still crying. Big Boobs glanced around the room. That he had money was obvious everywhere — in the expensive rugs, the black furniture, the stereo system. Such were the advantages of having a home base. He could impress when he needed to.

"Why don't you just rest a while and talk?" he offered. "I have a really good opportunity to offer you two. I'll make you ladies some breakfast, and then we can talk about Las Vegas." He started out, then turned back. "Oh," he said, extending his hand, "and here's your money."

Star in Las Vegas

Star held the magazine open and stared at the picture. *I really look*

like a model.

“Didn’t I promise you?” Bobby said. “You’re on your way, kid.” He leaned over to where she sat on the edge of the motel bed. “More of that to come.” He rubbed her head and walked out the motel door.

Cherry and Kiki were stretched out on the bed, flipping through the pages of another copy of the magazine.

“You look so good, girl,” Kiki said. “Bobby had me in an all-Asian rag once, but this is high-classed.”

In the photograph, Star looked years older. She looked like someone famous. The magazine was in stands all over the city. They were free — so tons of people would see her. She wasn’t a black-and-white image. Hers was a real magazine — color and glossy. Bobby said she was a *hot commodity*.

Lacy was in the adjoining room. She hadn’t even looked. A waste of money, she’d told Bobby, a huge expense. Lacy had never been in the magazine.

Star had to admit that the photo shoot had been humiliating. She was completely nude — so many men in the room — and the photographer was a greasy looking guy she had to do in the back room when it was over. In the shoot, first she had to move around in a lot of very exposing positions. It was easier when Bobby joined the shoot, but she still didn’t like having to do a lot of those nasty things in front of all those men. But at least it was Bobby, she told herself; and that night, he’d let her sleep all night with him. He’d even allowed her to “spoon” up against his back for a while. And Bobby said he wished they could be like that every night.

“I remember being that young,” Cherry said with a sigh. “That was a long time ago.”

Star couldn’t stop staring at the picture. It was almost good enough for *Maxim* or *Playboy* or the other magazines that Bobby gave her to help her practice her poses. The picture showed her sitting turned to the side. Her head was tilted up with her mouth slightly open. A little image covered her breasts and read, “Barely legal!”

Star looked down at her breasts, imagining them bigger. A lot of the older girls had implants; some of them were huge. Star’s boobs looked so small compared to the others — but they looked good in the picture, so maybe

for now they were fine. Brandi had said she was way too young for implants. Not even the back alley places they went to would do them till she was at least 15. She needed to be patient.

“Those boobs will start sprouting in another year or two,” Brandi told her every time she caught Star looking at them in the mirror.

Star thought of Grandma Doris back home in Nebraska. Grandma would have a heart attack on the spot if she ever saw this. Her friends in school would be horrified — and jealous. The guys would all want her — she'd have more guys than she'd know what to do with. That would be a change. Star wondered if she could put the picture up on Facebook. Or maybe the magazine had a website. Star thought about forwarding it from Cherry's account to some of her old friends in Nebraska. They'd finally see that she'd gotten out of that crappy town. She was working toward the dream. She already looked like an actress.

Star hopped up from the bed. “I'm going to go show Brandi,” she said brightly.

“She's working,” Kiki called after her, but Star thought she'd see if she was around anyway.

And then, as she walked toward the stairs, she heard the crying. It was coming from inside a room with an open door. Star peered in; there was one of Blade's girls, sitting on the bed. Star paused, then looked up and down the corridor. She wasn't supposed to talk to other girls.

“Are you okay?”

The girl wiped away some tears and nodded.

“You're Candy, right?”

Another nod as Star took a step inside the door. She saw bright red marks on Candy's neck.

“What happened?”

Candy started crying again. Star was too afraid to go further into the room. She knew what had happened. The girls often talked about how violent Blade was with his hos, especially this one. Star couldn't imagine what she'd do if she was with a guy like that. She looked Candy over. The girl was scrawny, with blonde scraggly hair. Bobby would never find her attractive, Star knew that — so maybe she'd be a good addition for Bobby. He was planning to grow

the stable, or so Lacy said.

“You know, Bobby’s really nice,” Star suggested. “He hardly ever beats us. Maybe you should trade up.”

Candy shook her head. “Blade. He’d kill me.”

“Looks like he might anyway.”

Candy pulled her legs in close to her. “You better go. He was coming right back.”

Star hesitated, then said good-bye.

Lacy and Cherry

They sat at the plastic table with McFlurry shakes in hand. Lacy took a sip, trying to figure out how to convince Cherry.

“You just need to drop it,” Cherry said, taking the lid off her cup.

“You’re the one who told me to always get tested, no matter what.”

“That was a long time ago.” Cherry spooned a bit of Oreo shake into her mouth. “The thing is, I already know I’ve got HIV.”

Lacy nearly knocked over her cup. “What? How do you know?”

“Sometimes you just know these things,” Cherry said with a shrug.

A woman and two children walked by: one child was crying, another tugged on his mother’s shirtsleeve, pleading to go to the playground. Across from them, Lacy looked at a washed-out old man sitting bent over steaming coffee and a hamburger, idly lining up pennies and dimes on the table. Cherry was the closest thing to a mother or big sister that Lacy had known in the past five years.

Cherry shook Lacy’s arm. “Aw, don’t make that face and ruin our secret McDonald’s escape.”

“They’ve got drugs now,” Lacy said in sober tones. “Keeps AIDS away for decades.”

Cherry laughed. “Why the hell would I want to live for decades, in this life?”

“You want to die like Belle?” Lacy demanded. She pushed her

milkshake away. They'd watched Belle deteriorate fast. She started taking meth to get through it. One day she overdosed herself, to escape the suffering. Cherry had found her.

"You're talking to *me* here, Lacy. I *am* going to die like Belle. It might not be AIDS, but it'll be something like that." Cherry poked with the spoon in the cup. "We're all going out like that. You don't see little ol' *former hookers* like us playing bridge at the old folks' home."

Lacy couldn't respond to that. She'd spent half her morning with Star — who believed she'd be like Britney Spears some day — and now she had Cherry looking at life like it was already over.

"I just hope to take some johns with me," Cherry added, grim-faced. "They wanna go without a rubber, more power to 'em. They wanna screw around on their sweet marriages, I'll give them a big fat reminder of their time with Cherry."

Lacy's throat went a little dry. "They'll go home and infect their wives."

Cherry shrugged. "Not my problem. Not my fault."

Lacy closed her eyes a moment. She got tested every six months. She always tried to use a condom, though a number of tricks wouldn't go for it. It was Cherry who had taught her all the ways to survive.

But something had changed in her. Ever since Belle.

"Where's little Miss America?" Cherry asked. It was just like her, dodging away from a difficult subject.

Lacy shrugged. "Bobby's got her on another 'photo shoot,' as Star calls them. She doesn't know the dough Bobby's making on her with his new cyber porn sites. Today they were shooting 'a party.'"

Cherry knew. Bobby and his pimp pals liked to "party." The girls had all taken turns, but Star acted like she was the first. It annoyed Lacy, but she also knew it wouldn't be long before the kid faced the reality of her position. Bobby needed her the least of all his girls.

"You better watch out for that one. She's ambitious."

Lacy nodded. "She just thinks she's in love. It'll kill her one day."

Cherry snorted. "Yeah, just like the rest of us."

Commentary — How Children Get Abducted

From the streets of Las Vegas, a bus station in Detroit, to a 7-Eleven in Eugene and a shelter for hurricane victims in Louisiana ... all across the country, there are people watching and waiting for the unsuspecting and vulnerable. If this seems far-fetched, if this seems paranoid, I understand. But our extensive investigations have documented it. There is no longer any way to doubt the truth. It's happening in America. And the system connects around the world. There is a demand and they will supply.

Their product is named Cassie and Shelly, and on occasion Steve, and thousands of other names and faces that disappear into the darkness. They disappear to us, but somewhere they are living and suffering, longing to escape before they finally adapt to the world they exist in, resigning themselves to a living death.

Usually, a newly-acquired victim is shipped to another city, although occasionally they actually remain in their hometown. We've found that few American girls have ever been sent to a foreign country; also, fewer and fewer foreign girls are being shipped into the U.S. It's simply cheaper to "produce" domestically — commercial sex turns out to be one of the few U.S. products produced cheaply.

There are small-time pimps and hustlers. And there are large prostitution rings, organized, systematic, and powerful.

But large or small, they all know what to do. They've created a system that includes these elements:

1. *Targets* — Though any girl can become a target, there is generally a certain "profile" driving selection. Pimps find it easiest to manipulate vulnerable girls with low self-esteem, girls from troubled homes, foster children, runaways, and sometimes the mentally disabled.
2. *Courtship* — The pimp will introduce himself and gradually get to know a girl. He will listen to her problems and act like he cares. He may shower her with gifts and compliments. Perhaps he'll provide her with food and a place to sleep at night. However, he'll always

establish himself as the victim's "boyfriend," creating a sense of protection and security. This period can last anywhere from a few days to several months.

3. *Isolation* — As the pimp listens to the youth's "troubles" at home or school, and as he is establishing himself as her savior, the pimp also works to isolate the child from those who may object to their relationship. The strategic removal of friends and family members ensures, as the relationship shifts from caring to exploitative, that the child will have no one to turn to other than the pimp.
4. *Transition* — Eventually (after days or months, depending on the unique dynamics of the specific relationship), the pimp will introduce the idea of prostitution. He may say:
 - a. "We really need the money."
 - b. "You owe me for everything I've done for you."
 - c. "It will only be this one time."
 - d. "If you love me you'll do it for me."

Or the pimp may immediately use physical violence once he's gained the victim's trust.

It is crucial to recognize, however, that ANY child can become a victim of domestic minor sex trafficking; the strategies described here are only the most common examples of how recruitment takes place.

5. *Control* — The pimp's primary focus is control: controlling every movement the girls make and every dollar they bring in. The physical control is easier to identify and observe; the psychological abuse can be more difficult to understand. A girl who is frequently beaten, cut, raped, and tortured is guaranteed to do everything the pimp wants her to do. Many victims have telltale marks — bruises, scars, tattoos — of the physical violence they endure.

A pimp typically, however, uses a mixture of love and affection with anger and violence. He's quick to fluctuate between the two states. He may tell one of his girls he loves her and in the next minute slap her across the

face. This creates a powerful combination of love and fear that makes the victim obedient.

From *The Pimp Game: An Instructional Manual*, describing the grooming/breaking process:

You'll start to dress her[,] think for her, own her. If you and your victim are sexually active, slow it down. After sex, take her shopping for one item. Hair and/or nails is fine. She'll develop a feeling of accomplishment. This shopping after a month will be replaced with cash. The love making turns into raw sex. She'll start to crave the intimacy and be willing to get back into your good graces. After you have broken her spirit, she has no sense of self value. Now pimp, put a price tag on the item you've manufactured.

“I met this guy and he said he was going to take care of me.”

—Former prostituted child from Atlanta, Georgia

- The book balances well between gripping narrative and illuminating data. As the father of two young daughters, I swung emotionally from anger to horror to sorrow and finally to hope — a hope that these vivid stories of victimized little girls will catalyze readers to action.

—Mark Bergin, WORLD Magazine

- This book was a somber affirmation of what I have come to know through my profession, yet I know others in law enforcement would respond in disbelief at some aspects of the narrative.

—Law Officer and Father of five

- The book was shocking and devastating but I believe an important book to read for all who care about our children.

—Retired DOJ attorney, Criminal Division

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

U.S. Representative Linda Smith founded Shared Hope International in November of 1998 to fight sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and to serve the long-term restoration needs of women and children in crisis. Shared Hope is active today in countries that circle the globe.

She founded the War Against Trafficking Alliance (WATA) in January 2001 to coordinate regional and international efforts necessary to combat sex trafficking.

Linda began serving in 1983 as a Washington state legislator. She won a write-in campaign for Congress in 1994. Her compassionate and uncompromising belief that every individual has dignity has carried her from the halls of Congress to searching out victims in the red light districts around the world. Linda and her husband, Vern, reside in Vancouver, Washington, and are the proud parents of two and grandparents of six.

