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## One Boy's Story

**A**t 10 years old, abandoned by his mother, he went to live on the streets. And there he grew up.

By the time he was 12, he was starring in movies -- the type where you take off your clothes and smile at the camera. He was good at posing. So good, in fact, that he was put on "the circuit" and taught to dance naked on bar counters for tips and liquor.

At 16, totally corrupted by the new values he had learned on the streets, he was selling kids himself. And he was successful enough to come to New York and make the big film of his short "career."

His plan, however, fell apart when Port Authority police picked him as a runaway and brought him to us. He stayed with us only until he could leave the next day.

By then, however, he had missed his appointment to make that movie and he was terrified. He knew what happened to kids who backed out of deals. The beating and sexual torture he endured when his new employer found him put him in the hospital for four days.

After that, he came to live with us. Over the next four weeks, we put him in a series of "safehouses" that physically protected him from his past. And we waited and prayed for him to heal.

He did. Slowly. Painfully. He had to become like a little child to reclaim the innocence he had lost. But it happened. "We gave him a whole new self," recalls one of our coun-



selors. "He got a whole new way of looking at himself because we looked at him that way."

Almost a year later he came back to New York, but this time to talk on TV about his life as a prostitute and porn star. Through the use of certain techniques, his identity was disguised (he was still being hunted). He made no efforts, however, to disguise his own feelings or hide the truth about life on the streets from his viewers. "If I helped even one kid, then I could die happy right now," he said as he walked out of the studio.

Back home, he put the past behind him as he plunged into school. It was a new experience to him, but he worked incredibly hard to catch up.

He began thinking that he would go into pre-med for a career and specialize in plastic surgery. "It will be my way to repay the world for the help I got," he told us in a letter. "I'll have a practice, but I'll always make room for runaway and homeless kids who have gotten hurt on the streets."

There were still wounds to heal, though. And one day the issue of pornography cut uncomfortably close in his sociology class when the professor began debating First Amendment freedoms vs. the "victimless" crime of pornography. To the boy's horror and growing dread, his teacher played a videotape of the special he had appeared on. His whole life, in a very real

sense, flashed before his eyes. He would never be free, he thought miserably, as the class looked at his image on the screen.

And then he heard one of his new classmates raise a question as she waved her hand angrily. "Hey, what about the rights of those kids? What about them?" The discussion continued, and he realized that no one, thanks to the techniques used to disguise his face and voice, had recognized him.

Somehow, knowing his friends shared his pain made him feel less of a victim. Unknown to his new friends, he was starring in a "real" special, only this time the ending was different...