

BODY & SOLD: USA

by Deborah Lake Fortson

Based on real stories from American young people who ran away from home and were "introduced" to prostitution through different pimp-predator strategies.

This scene takes place at a bus station, created with a few chairs. Jeanette enters. She is 13, pretty, African-American or Hispanic-American. She is carrying a backpack with a small teddy bear sticking out. During her monologue, she re-packs some of the things in the pack, and Billy drifts in. He is a good-looking African-American man in his late 20's or early 30's, dressed in a casual but well put-together outfit. He spots Jeanette and watches her.

JEANETTE

I was nine when I first ran from home. I'm thirteen now.

My parents shouldn't've never had kids. Things they did to me, I don't ever tell nobody. Just my brothers. But it's different for boys. When I was nine, I finally ran, and the police picked me up. They told me I shouldn't go back. -, the social - like the agency - they said I shouldn't go back home - and they were right - so I went in a foster home. I went to three different foster homes. The first family was really nice. Then my foster mother got sick and couldn't take care of kids any more, so I got moved. And the next one, I got into these fights with the lady. She just was all up in my face about everything. So they moved me again. In this last home, there were some weird things happening. It was the same as in my real home --I mean not exactly the same, because my real Dad was more violent, but ... anyway, I couldn't stay at that place. So that's why I'm gonna get on a bus to somewhere.

I have twenty dollars. I found it in my foster-mother's purse. She was going to spend it on clubbing anyway. I have an extra pair of pants and a shirt and an extra pair of shoes. But you know, I forgot to bring *any* damn extra underwear, can you believe it? But I brought my small teddy bear.

She laughs a little, picks up her pack and Billy catches her eye.

BILLY

What's good?

JEANETTE

Hey.

BILLY

So - you getting a bus today? Taking your teddy bear for a ride?

JEANETTE

Yeah. I guess.

BILLY

Want to talk a little? I'd like to talk with you.

Jeanette shrugs her shoulders.

BILLY

You new to the city?

JEANETTE

Nah, I live right here -- over by the --

BILLY

No, no, no! Don't tell me where you live! You don't know nothin' about me. You don't have to say nothin', it's all right. I know what it's like to be runnin' alone. Yep, I do.

JEANETTE

Runnin'?

BILLY

Yeah. You're runnin' away right? Somethin' not going right at home?

JEANETTE

Kind of.

BILLY

I can help you. Because I've been there myself. But you don't have to listen to me. I'm just talking to keep warm, you know.

She smiles a little. He laughs.

BILLY

Your teddy bear doesn't need to talk to keep warm. He's got that fur.

He reaches out to touch her teddy bear. She pulls back.

Don't be scared!

JEANETTE

I'm not scared.

Billy moves off. Jeanette turns away from him. Gregg enters onto the opposite side of the stage. He is a good-looking white guy in his twenties, playing himself at the age of 16, when he first ran away from home.

GREGG

Port Authority Bus Terminal, New York. I get off the bus from Iowa, look around, and a guy comes up to me, right here. Asks if I need a place to stay.

BILLY (*To Jeanette*)

You're a good-looking girl, too, you know that? You remind me of a cousin of mine! Seriously. Don't be scared of me. I'm nobody to be scared of. I just like to talk with you.

GREGG

He just started in talking.

BILLY

Look, why don't you just come over here where we can get a cup of coffee, or some hot chocolate or somethin' ? It's cold standing near the door like this.

GREGG

He said he knew a cheap place that was safe. He talked about New York and what a great town it was, what a good time I was going to have here. He talked really well. He used kind of 'expensive' words. I had never heard anyone talk like him.

JEANETTE

It felt good to hear him talk. We sat there a couple of hours. He was real sympathetic about my family and stuff. He gave me a place to stay. I thought, "This dude is nice!"

GREGG

Ron - that was his name - was a bit older. He had a nice place and he had a lot of nice stuff. Statues and shit. Paintings. He took me out to eat. It was so flattering, an older dude like that, taking time to help me out. I mean I knew it would involve sex, but shit, that was OK with me. I wanted to learn Everything!

JEANETTE

He didn't even ask me to have sex with him or anythin' . Well, not for the first two weeks.

GREGG

For a couple of weeks, Ron really treated me. We went all over the city.

JEANETTE

There was another couple of girls there - part of his business operation, he said. He told me I was pretty. You know, no one in my family had ever told me that? I kind of fell in love with him.

BILLY (*To the audience*)

Yeah, you got to be cool. You got to make them think that you love them. Doesn't take too much work. You got to be gentle and cool. You got to love them.