

A young man in the city

David is a young man from a farm in Iowa. Since leaving home and coming to San Francisco, he has had to hustle (sell his body for sex to older men) in order to survive. David is 22, but he could pass for 15, and because of that, he had little trouble staying alive once he got into the swing of hustling. He was getting \$25 to \$50 dollars a "trick" and could "turn" three or four tricks in an evening.

When I met David, he wasn't hustling as much as he had been. He was spending most of his time in his room watching TV, and was spending most of his money on grass so he could stay stoned.

I felt alienated from him. As we talked, he would start to tell me about his feelings, and then suddenly he would flip out and become cold and distant.

It wasn't hard for me to understand why. I represented another older man to him... an older man who really didn't care about him, but desired his body.

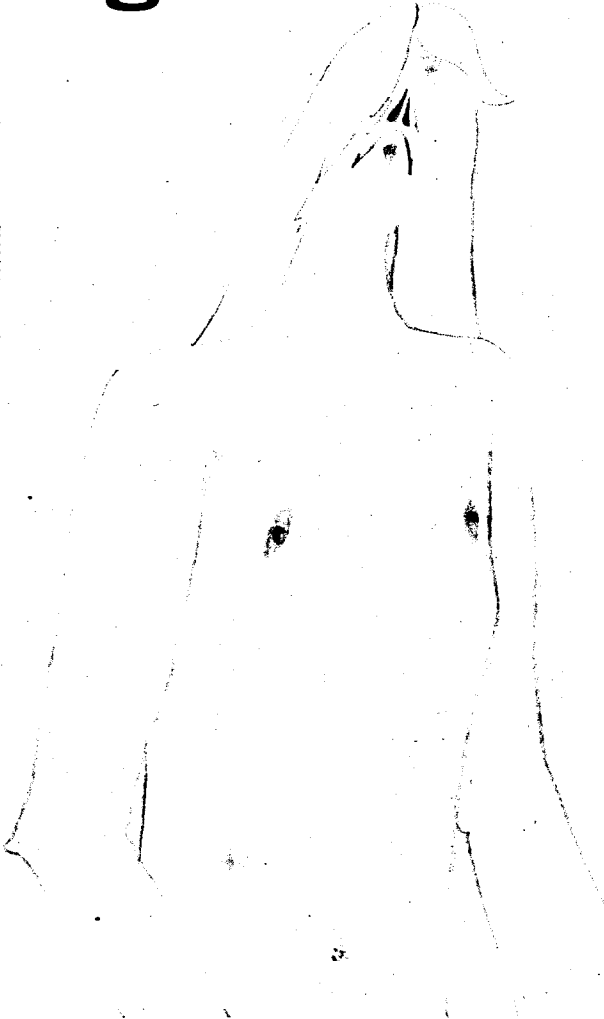
And I guess I did desire his body, which made me feel doubly uptight. It pained me because it was so plain how much he desired honest affection, and how much of a threat of exploitation there was in every move toward affection with me.

One night I came across him hustling on Market Street - dressed for the part, stoned out of his mind, and totally indifferent and matter-of-fact about his being there. My stopping to talk to him bugged him because it was hurting his business. His eyes flitted around me in search of a business contact (a "john" in hustler's terminology) while I stood there.

I felt totally shitty. Deep down I knew I was just another john, and that was why I really didn't have anything to say to him. I fucked me over so much that I really wished I'd never see him again.

I did not see him again until he knocked on my door a few months later, about ready to keel over from O.D.ing on drugs. He had to find someone, and I guess I was the only person he could think of to come to. He said he was afraid he was dying.

After spending a few days with me to get himself together, he went back to Iowa, back home to his parents who had



years before sent him away to a mental hospital in Omaha where shock treatments did something, he fears, permanently, to his brain. Back home to where all he did was work all day, watch T.V. in the evening and go to bed. A couple of weeks ago, David came around to my place again. He couldn't stand Iowa any longer. He spent two weeks here looking for a job, but couldn't find any.

The other night, he turned his first trick since coming back out. He hated it, but said he would have to do it more if he couldn't find a job soon.

We talked about life... about being a young man in the city.

David can think... it's just that he had been denied the opportunity for twenty years in the Bible belt.

After rapping awhile he flashed, "You know, I just thought of it... how awful it must be to be a woman."

He talked about how being a young hustler is like being a woman, insofar as older men were constantly seeking to exploit him for the sake of his body value. He spun on and on, running the gamut of his oppression applying it all to women's oppression, and then talking about his oppression of women.

He summed it up by saying, "I guess you have to be a girl before you can be a boy."

It was a simplified way of stating the basic reality of gay liberation. A more complicated way of putting the same thing would be to say that feminine oppression (the exploitation and oppression of women, children, and the feminine aspects of the male) is gay oppression so that gay liberation is the liberation of women, children and feminine qualities from the influence of the straight, "macho" pig male.

David understands gay liberation, I think, better than all those bourgeois homosexuals in gay organizations who talk about their own liberation while continuing to be the oppressors of younger men like David as well as the oppressors of women.

Gay liberation lies with the likes of David, except that right now David is finding himself being forced back into patterns of alienation that have destroyed so many.

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