

## Author's Note

When I began to research human trafficking for this novel, I was stunned by the extensive local and global reach of this insidious and cruel business. The harsh reality is almost mind-numbing for human trafficking may well be the fastest growing industry in the world. And, why not. The UN Population Fund recently reported that it was the third most lucrative illegal trade, surpassed only by drugs and arms trading, and brings in an estimated 32 billion tax-free dollars per year.

The International Office for Migration (IOM) estimates that between 700,000 to 4 million people are trafficked each year), but those numbers may be much higher, and because of the secretive nature of trafficking, the exact numbers will likely never be known.

Human trafficking remains the world's dirty little secret, and it's been easy for us to turn a blind eye because we've believed it happens *somewhere else*, in Cambodia or China or Bangladesh, but that *somewhere else* has come home, and these days, it's happening right where we live.

Here in the United States much of the sex trafficking occurs in massage parlors, which frequently operate in strip malls, office buildings, and, sometimes, residential homes in urban, suburban, and rural areas in almost all fifty US states. The Polaris Project reports that these store-front massage parlors have sometimes been found to be fronts for these brothels. The common denominator among victims is that, more often than not, they are undocumented, and therefore isolated. It is that isolation that makes them easy prey, invisible to the rest of us, and because they are, their miseries continue unabated.

Potential victims are everywhere. They are the voiceless, the invisible, the throw-away street children in big cities, the long forgotten and the most vulnerable among us.

There is much to be done but first we must open our eyes to the misery that is too often right in front of us. Only when we finally see them, can we make a difference.

For more information, please visit my website: [www.robertagately.com](http://www.robertagately.com).

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