

Natasha Falle turned her first trick when she was 14 years old. Soon after she was addicted to crack cocaine. Today she is clean and helping teens get off the streets, and she credits her triumph over drugs to the unconditional love of her mother, Rose. Here is their story.

HOME AT LAST

BY NATASHA FALLE
AS TOLD TO SUSAN McCLELLAND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY EDWARD POND

On my 27th birthday, I smoked a lot of crack. I had developed a \$500-a-night habit. I also had drug-induced schizophrenia and was convinced people were out to get me. By about 3 a.m., my head was spinning and I thought I was going to be sick. I got a taxi to take me all the way from Toronto to my mum's house in Midland, Ont., where I often went when I was out of control. I would have a shower and be sound asleep by the time she woke up. But on this night, she was awake when I arrived.

I didn't believe it was really her because I was so high, so I yelled at her to prove she was really my mum. At one point I remember her asking me, "Are you all right?"

"No, I am not all right," I cried. "I'm really high and I don't know if you are my mum."

She pulled me into her arms. She rocked me from the time the sun rose until it set that night. She rocked me until the drugs wore off, telling me stories about my childhood.

By night, I knew it was my mum. It was the love I saw in her eyes that convinced me. She was tired and worn, and the dark circles under her eyes betrayed her exhaustion and pain. Still, she found the strength to look at me with the most loving expression.

My mum used to tell people, "Natasha is a great daughter." But I was the worst daughter ever. I stole. I lied. I even tried to kill her once. But that night on my birthday, I knew I would never hurt her again. The next morning, I told my mum I was going into drug treatment and back to school. I told her that I would never do drugs, turn another trick or return to my pimp again. I wasn't going to let her down this time. ▶

