

# Peace Returns

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The feeling of being all right, of being at peace, of not being fucked-up, that had grown steadily from when Trinnie had woken up shivering and sweating only a few hours before, was coming to its peak, the peak she knew so well and which was all that made her life worth living.

And then, so suddenly, it was over. An abrupt collapse into a state of sickness and disgust. At which point she sucked out the fluid from her veins back into the syringe.

Soon, and really very soon, she would push open the door of her shitty little room in the huge condemned apartment block, where she lived with only a mattress and a few, too few, possessions. She would padlock the door behind her, not wishing to lose what few things she had to the junkie with the haunted black eyes whose room was next door. She would then run a half mile or so of twisted roads clutching in a plastic sachet the mass of powder she'd reconstituted from the contents of the syringe. And when she got to that padlocked and claustrophobic apartment in the council estate, she would give the sachet to Ken, a thickset guy with a ring through his eyebrow and needle-thin pupils. For this she would be paid twenty, thirty or fifty pounds, depending on how much she'd extracted from her veins since she'd last seen him. A necessary transaction for both life and living.

And then with the money paid to her by Ken, dodging past his savage bull terrier as she squeezed out of his apartment, and with the money she also collected from the shops where she'd returned the food she'd regurgitated in neat parcels and wrapped up neatly, the alcohol she spat back into the bottles or cans before sealing them tightly and the cigarettes she artfully regenerated from the ashes left in her

ashtray, she would take all this money, sometimes a great deal of money, and go on to the streets where she would squander it on the entirely unsatisfactory sex to which she was somehow addicted and for which she would sometimes pay six, seven or eight men, in just an hour or so, for the privilege of fucking her.

Trinnie wasn't sure why she insisted on paying for sex. It was, if anything, the least pleasant part of her life; the most meaningful and satisfactory being those moments just before she extracted the fluid from her vein and then, with so much ceremony, undid the poultice around her ankle or arm, or released the pressure on the vein on her neck or crotch, and then by the miracle of the creative energy of her cigarette lighter and that old flame-enamelled spoon, manufacture the powder for which she was paid so well.

However, times were getting better. Things were steadily improving. Now she shared a squalid squat with Juanita, the small girl whose tits always dropped out of her shirt, and Phil, whose front teeth were missing, Although Trinnie's memory was at best hazy, she could still occasionally recall those times, long before she settled in the squat, when she mostly slept in shop doorways and underneath railway bridges. And somewhere in that time she remembered waking up after the most blissful high she could ever remember and soon became aware that everything in life was just shit. Shit, crap and just fucking awful!

Why did she spend so much money paying men to fuck her? Except for the odd few kind words they said when they left, and sometimes, but not always, when they met, it was just fucking. Fuck. Fuck. Fucking. They would push their tiny shrivelled penises into her vagina, cunt, twat, (whatever it was called, it was just a

hole between her legs, with no feeling and no sensation), sometimes sheathed in a condom and sometimes, but less frequently, not. Then it would almost suddenly suck up all the fluid that had previously swollen the nipple of the condom or trickled down her inner thighs, and, like a rubber syringe, become stiff and hard. And the pleasure of the fucking would be up against a wall in a dark alley, on the back seat of a car, on the mattress in her squalid room or behind a bush in the park.

For this dubious pleasure, she paid the men sometimes up to fifty pounds a time for the privilege of fucking her. Sometimes she would pay more, perhaps a whole ton, but for this she was paid at least twenty quid for a small room in a seedy hotel, that, despite the many semen stains on the linen, was the nearest to comfort Trinnie ever got to know. And usually before she splashed out on such an expensive fuck, sometimes where her arse was also violated, and on one occasion where she spat out urine from her mouth straight into the penis in front of her, she would stay in that room all night, usually totally smashed, before extracting the fluid from her veins for which Ken so handsomely rewarded her.

But her life was definitely getting better.

Trinnie regarded the skin on her calf muscle through bleary eyes. She remembered she once sported a horrible septic scar there, which got gradually worse and worse until that vicious bull terrier of Ken's pressed his teeth into her and in a few moments effected a miracle surgery that returned her calf to its current state, where only needle scars marred the skin. And there weren't as many parts of her body covered with scars like that as there used to be. In fact, they were gradually healing up, one by one.

She didn't feel as ill as she used to, either. Okay, she still felt pretty much like shit most of the time, but just straight nauseous, not like really, really influenza- or pneumonia-type ill. The horrible spots that had ruined her complexion were getting slightly less swollen. There wasn't nearly as much pus coming out of them nowadays.

But Trinnie had only recently started caring at all about anything much, and her memories of really not that long ago seemed to be increasingly repulsive, whereas at the time she didn't care very much at all. Her life was one round of pulling fluid out of her veins, selling it to Ken and his vicious bull terrier, which Trinnie was much more careful about treading on, and buying men's services.

Of course, Trinnie didn't just pay men to fuck her. Sometimes she paid for a blow job, where she fed the semen from her throat back into the penis's tiny little hole. Sometimes all she did, and this hardly cost her anything, hardly the price of even one fix for which she was paid by Ken, was to take the penis in the palm of her hand, coated with semen that she'd rubbed onto it from a tissue in her pocket, feed it back into the vent, and then pump the shaft until it lost the stiffness it so abruptly began with and fell soft and limp between the man's knees. However, she noticed that as time went by, she was paying more and more for sex, but finding less need for it, while at the same time her business of extracting powder from her veins to sell to Ken was becoming less profitable.

Trinnie wasn't at all sure when it was she somehow gained a kind of lucidity and clarity of thought that had simply not been there until that time. At first, it appeared as a little chink between her passion for sex and her declining, but still lucrative, business in powder extraction. It was probably about the time that she

moved out of the squat, leaving behind her companions, some she observed to be in a totally unhealthy condition, and moved into a relatively luxurious, but actually squalid, bedsit, where at least she had a proper bed and a kitchen. She was also surrounded by spoons, razor blades, mirrors, empty bottles of wine and whiskey, crumpled-up newspapers and the remains of take-away food she might later return neatly wrapped and miraculously reconstituted.

She still had plenty of sex, although quite often the men who provided her with it would arrive at her apartment unannounced. Then Trinnie would pay them for the sex they would enjoy for the next five to ten minutes and then escort them back to the street corner where for a short while she would linger smoking cigarettes before returning to her bedsit. Then, after another while, and perhaps a spliff, another unannounced visitor would come to her apartment only for her to have to pay him for sex.

She wasn't so much beginning to enjoy sex as becoming more aware of it actually happening. Her cunt was becoming more sensitive, and yes! now and then, she got a sensation from the penis thrusting into her, usually not long after it was put in place and sucked in its semen, that was very nearly pleasurable. But nothing as much as pleasurable as that sensation she got just before she extracted fluid from her veins and reconstituted it into powder ready to sell to Ken.

After a while, it wasn't Ken at all to whom she was selling powder, although Trinnie knew of his whereabouts. He was now a much less frequent buyer, and one she found rather less appealing as her sensitivity towards her environment grew more acute. In fact, she now only sold powder to Ken once or twice a week. More often, she

sold powder to a much nicer couple who were both fairly blitzed out of it all the time, but a lot less prone to irrational acts of violence and didn't keep horrible dogs around their apartment. But as her friendship warmed towards Ally and Pete, as they were called, and she had fewer arguments with them about how they weren't able to afford to buy the powder from her that she'd extracted from her veins, she saw less and less of Ken, and became correspondingly less keen on having sex with strange men.

Just as Trinnie's consciousness and awareness became more coherent, she also became more untidy. For some reason, she stopped steadily removing rubbish from her floor and returning it to the shops where she bought it, and began to deliberately add to it. Maybe, she wasn't that bad to start off with, maybe only once a month or whatever, but just after she'd returned every last bit of rubbish to the shops, and a huge exercise that had been, perhaps taking six months or more to do, she deliberately emptied a whole load of rubbish all over the place. She blew out dust onto the carpet, scattered newspapers about, spilt ashtrays onto the floor and carefully replaced stains and marks to the kitchen and bathroom furniture.

Still, despite this sluttish behaviour, she was actually paying for sex rather less often, though she paid more for it, and, strangely enough, got rather less sex for her money. She was also treated with more kindness by her clients, some of whom she paid to see more than once a week. Perhaps she paid more for sex because she was better looking. Many of the spots on her face had cleared up, some of her needle scars had vanished, and she started applying make-up around her lips and eyes. At first she was rather inexpert, always being in a hurry and not really bothered by the results, but after a while, just after waking up each evening, she washed out of the sink a more

attractive face that she so laboriously removed later in the day.

And she was still extracting a lot of fluid from her veins, but now mostly from those in her arm and legs. And she was being paid less, sometimes a lot less, for the paltry amounts she sold to Ally and Pete, who would take the reconstituted powder, carefully weigh it, and replace it into plastic sachets.

It was difficult to tell when Trinnie lost her appetite for sex with strange men. Bit by bit, it became less frequent. Perhaps only one or two a night, usually just before taking them to a hotel where she might buy them a drink or two as a reward.

And then one morning, just before going to bed, she had a blazing row with a tall fair-haired man who stormed angrily into her room. This was Paul, who after this acrimonious and tearful encounter became her most frequent lover. In fact, there were sometimes days on end when the only person Trinnie would fuck was Paul. And she didn't even have to pay him anything to persuade him to do so!

Life was now much better, although Paul was often quite tearful, sometimes angry, sometimes melancholy, and he lived in a flat elsewhere in the city where he increasingly asked Trinnie to live with him. In fact, this seemed to be the general direction of Trinnie's relationship with him. She often wondered whether she would ever live with Paul permanently rather than stay in the bedsit, which incidentally was gradually becoming tidier. She would now empty rubbish onto the floor two, even three times a week, but not nearly in such great quantity. She was drinking less, smoking less, but strangely, although she was extracting fluid from her veins once, sometimes twice, a day she was also now smoking dope, snorting out neat lines of cocaine into neat rows and spitting out neat little pills. As she became more lucid, she



also appreciated quite varied new feelings and sensations, some of which intimately related to whatever substance she regurgitated and for which she was paid by Ally and Paul, and also by some other friends of hers.

She wasn't sure when she stopped paying for sex. Not long before she took up this job in an office. Not that she was very good at her job. In fact, she was absolutely useless. From the day she was escorted to her desk by the security guard, she wasn't sure why anyone would tolerate her being there. She'd sit in the toilet, extracting fluid from her veins, and, rather more often, snort powder down her nose through a twenty pound note and onto a glass mirror she carried for the purposes of catching the powder before gathering it into a plastic sachet to sell to Ally and Pete.

Paul was strange. He was always agitated, always tearful, telling her how much he loved her. And he was especially agitated just before any incident took place. He was especially agitated the day before she started working for the law firm, asking her again and again where she would find the money to afford her habits. Of course, she had almost totally given up paying for sex with men, though there were the odd occasions she went out for that purpose, usually followed a few days later by a phone call from a very posh sounding woman, Camilla, who at first complained about the quality of the sexual services she received from clients, but came increasingly to congratulate her and encourage her to spend more and more on this relatively infrequent habit.

However, Trinnie was pleased that her appearance was gradually improving. One morning, she looked in satisfaction at her reflection in the mirror, which also reflected Clem, a guy from Conveyancing, slumped naked on her bed, and saw that

she had only one little spot left on her face: hardly anything to worry about. Her face looked quite good really. Her eyes had colour, although her pupils were slightly small, always a sign that she was due to extract fluid from her veins fairly soon, and she was being paid more and more to regurgitate healthier and heartier meals.

Trinnie had a series of lovers from work and elsewhere, intermixed with the occasional, but less frequent, lover for whom she paid money. At first, she didn't care what Paul thought about them, although he was the most frequent, and to be honest, the most loving, of her lovers. She had gained a genuine kind of feeling in her vagina, and she found herself drenched with sweat and passion just before she had sex with anyone, but the more urgently and most vocally with Paul.

And things were improving at work too. She even got a phone call from some old people whom she discovered were her parents, although they were a bit tearful and kept on asking Trinnie why she was living in a seedy little bedsit when she could be living in a much more comfortable mortgaged property with Paul.

And then, one day, there was no Paul. Trinnie was living alone in the flat, but she now had more frequent lovers and she met for the last time the woman from the escort agency who arranged her meetings with strange men. She was extracting fluid from her veins less regularly now. She sometimes didn't bother reconstituting it into a powder from her veins, but simply blew it out of her nose in its original powder form. She also went out much more frequently. Just after waking up with a lover, quite often a different one each evening, she would head to a nightclub where she would dance and fuck in the toilet cubicles, and after a while she would spit out alcohol into glasses and tablets into her hands for which she was always later paid. She was having a great

time, though she missed Paul, who might not always be the best fuck in her life, but was the most considerate and thoughtful.

And then, one day, Paul reappeared. After a long day, which started with Trinnie leaving the small hotel room she'd been living in, with all her possessions, for the last week or so after having previously left the bedsit she'd lived in for the last few years, she found herself shouting and yelling at Paul as she entered his well-appointed apartment in the town centre. It had been six months or more since she'd last seen him, when he left her meekly and apologetically at the ground floor door of the apartment block that housed her bedsit.

But living with Paul was pretty dreadful to start off with. They were always having arguments, even though these often started with the two of them making passionate love in the huge bed they shared.

He didn't like the heroin she was gradually extracting rather less often from her veins. He didn't like the cocaine she was snorting out of her nostrils. He didn't like that she smoked so much. Most of all, he didn't like the fact that she'd started having sex with someone called Tony, whom she'd met at a party once. Of course, there was nothing wrong with Tony, although Trinnie didn't pay him a penny for his services. There wasn't just Tony, although Paul didn't seem to know this, but other lovers, if many fewer than she'd had in the past. There was Vikram the computer magazine journalist, Roddy the Irish barman, Ally and Paul themselves who liked a little threesome, Paolo the Italian waiter, and what would Paul make of Jayne, the girl she'd got to know just before she went on that all-girls night out? Trinnie was fairly dismissive at first of Paul's accusations, but as time went on, she began to care more

and more. Gone were the times when she'd say "So fucking what if I'm fucking Tony!" or "If I want to get high, I'll get fucking high!" and more often she would try and persuade Paul he was really the only one who mattered.

But life was undeniably getting better all the time. A kind of peace was beginning to form in Trinnie's life. Her work improved dramatically. In fact, she now only snorted out one line of coke from her nostrils each day, usually around eleven o'clock. She still smoked a fair bit, and she still had a few other lovers besides Paul, whom, she became aware, was actually her husband.

Indeed, she was much more discreet about the men she made love with, deliberately making sure that Paul wouldn't find out about them. Tony was only one of them to be sure, but lately her liaisons tended to be fewer and fewer between. And although Paul and she would often spend hours at a time, fucking away, sweat and fluids intermingled in slippery, orgasmic coition, her other sessions were at least as passionate. There was none of the abruptness she had once associated with sex. The build-up towards lovemaking was slow and tender, the male partner gradually awakening from his pre-coital slumber toward a long discussion about life and its meaning, and then after hours of sexual coupling that was tiring and energetic, there would be a period of enrobing followed by the regurgitation of cannabis and cocaine.

It was about this time that Trinnie stopped selling heroin to Ally and Pete. In fact, after she last saw them, sitting in their apartment, surrounded by huge cushions and the sound of some pretty funky Arabic and Asian world music, she didn't have any to blow down a rolled-up five pound note to sell to anyone. Indeed, when she gave Paul and Ally the pitifully small amount they were so incredibly mean about

reimbursing, she never had any more at all. However, she felt better for it. Perhaps, all that stuff she'd squeezed out of her was better for having been removed, although it had once been such a lucrative source of income. How else would she have been able to afford to have sex with so many men?

However, that was one addiction she also saw less and less need for. Somehow, Paul became all that Trinnie needed in the form of a lover. Trinnie said goodbye (or, in truth, "hello") to Gavin, Paul's best friend from college, who she had been making love with on an occasional basis for so long, well ever since that acrimonious argument between Paul and him, which was when she first met Gavin. And all that was left to satisfy her lust for pleasure was Paul. Okay, she also had the occasional snort of coke, but most of the fun that Trinnie had was with Paul and no one else.

As she settled down naked in Paul's arms, the sounds of the Dave Holland Quintet emerging from the Bang & Olufssen speakers, passing a cigarette from lip to lip, Trinnie felt at last the peace that had evaded her for so long. Somehow, as far back as she could remember, everything had been a progression leading step by step from her ragged disease-ridden beginnings where she had been placed so carefully by the policeman who had dragged her corpse there from the ambulance, to this moment now, where the peace she had once only attained fitfully before extracting heroin from her veins was now solid and real. And as she regarded Paul, who smiled back at her, a hand cupped around a nipple, while she stroked his tumescent penis, she compared their love with that which she'd had with so many others. It was true that, by being circumscribed by Paul's rather unadventurous sexual preferences, their love had less

of the sense of danger or passion she'd experienced with other men. But whereas in the past, she had found his reluctance to even engage in such relatively innocent variants as anal intercourse a sufficient cause for contempt, now she saw it as just a part of his character. After all, no other lover, including Jayne, had expressed as much love with his tongue nor could anyone else succeed in bringing her to such spasms of ecstasy without the assistance of drugs, just with his teeth, tongue and lips around her vagina.

Trinnie hugged Paul close to her. She knew now she was truly in love. Her drugs, her casual lovers, her degeneracy behind her. From now on, all she could see was a future of love and passion.

This was her moment of peace. This was the zenith of her life. She just wished there was some sense, in the vagaries of time and space, that this moment could last forever.