

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

He says "It's time now".

He's standing up. He's smiling, but why can't he say my name? "My name's Elizabeth", I tell him.

"It's time, Elizabeth. I have said your name, quite a few times you know, in the past hour."

I say "You say it but you don't mean it." Which is only the truth, isn't it?

He says "Well, we can talk about that next time Elizabeth, but it's time now and I do mean that." And there's that smile again he's so good at.

I don't call him anything. He's got those letters after his name and he didn't stop me once when I called him doctor. Is he a medical doctor? Once I nearly called him Sir and he looked at me. I know that look. It's when he knows I've stopped myself saying something. He knows I know it, too. I remember his words. "I'm not always going to draw attention to you not saying something by telling you. It must become your responsibility".

His smile makes me feel sick in the stomach.

I don't love him. It's not love. I don't, I really don't. But I do need him, yes, I want him, I want him to love me and approve of me and fold me in his arms and hold me, to rock me sort of and hum to me. And more, I suppose, yes alright, more.

He has done, well, sort of, once or twice. Anyway, the thought comes into my head sometimes, specially at night. And my hand goes down, to, well starts to, sort of wants to - but then it comes back again. I try saying his name. That's what I really want, to call him by his name, his Christian name, first name or whatever.

I don't call him his name, not to his face, it sort of doesn't come out. I feel strange. I even wondered at one time, if it is his real name.

He calls me Elizabeth, and I call him nothing.

Now she's gone off feeling bad.

I just wish I could help her more.

The water's cold over my hands. What relief. I didn't know I had so much breath in me to let out.

If only she could see what progress she makes. That would be a breakthrough alright, and it's about time she made it. I'm not going to help her say my name, though. She's so needy. Give her an inch and she'll be trying to do me for a mile.

I just wish I could help her through that bit.

Well, she goes off feeling bad but I get no satisfaction either. All that sighing and whimpering, but never real discharge, she never gets to a real catharsis, no climax, all that clinging. If only I could help her, help her move over that hump. Dear God, she certainly gets her money's worth.

So keep your distance, Tony. She can't have that. Not from me. It's the thing she's got to learn. Remember your composure, Tony.

Right. So now I'm shaking her out of my head.

She's become a nuisance.

Because, here we go, she leaves and I rinse my hands, wash away the energy, absorb new energy, I breathe a deep sigh and then, then there's this sinking, breathless tingle in my crutch, or my solar plexus or my pelvis or whatever. Anyway, one of those surprise randy highs in the middle of the working day is upon me.

Well, I've decided I'm going to enjoy it.

The trouble is, my girl-friend's busy, she's never into it at these times.

So I found a cryptic ad in a magazine and tried phoning.

I throw him my smile. "Hallo Tony," I say. And the wanker falls for it. Like they all do.

Trouble is, he's not a bad looker, this one.

I can manage all sorts - seedy, ageing, young, awkward, whatever - tensed-up managers, posh salesmen, even those pompous operatives from official places, an operative that's what one said he was once. He was pathetic. I was operating on him alright.

It's the relaxing massage for Tony, the way I always start, unless they say different.

The trouble is, when they look good. Long legs, or tanned and casual and young, even pale and nervous or getting on in years, so long as they keep their humour up, try to keep themselves laughing, and me with it, if it's natural, their real selves - - No, please no, that's just the way I really don't want them thank you very much.

Who do they think they are, anyway? Stupid fuckers. Why can't they score without paying? I can keep clear of the others, but that lot, I just despise them, that's the only way.

He's had the massage, now I say manual or oral Tony? I always ask first, and good value too if you ask me. Sometimes they want it intimate, which is fair, so long as they pay.

But I'm not going wet for them. Not my own wet. That's a different game, different altogether. I do it for the money. Which means wet from a tube.

I always know where to put them on my scale. Even if I forget to notice, my body rings bells, soon after they walk in.

This Tony is about half way along. Until he wants all this cuddling stuff afterwards that is. What a turn-off. Doesn't he realise?

Today he got excited as soon as he got in here. And he's come already, which was easy but now he wants to be stroked and fondled, that was his word, fondled. He's disgusting. I said it costs extra. He looked at me as if he was cut open or something. I'll give him strokes alright. He's looking at me now, with his brown eyes gone all mushy.

He's saying "Would you like to come out for tea?"

Come out for tea? What a stupid wanker, he can have a cup of tea here if he wants for Chrissake. He can fart on my tits, but come out for tea?

"We could walk in the park."

I say "I'm not free."

"What about another day then, Claire?" He's gone nervous now. I should hope so too.

I call him Tony but he doesn't know my real name. He doesn't know it and I'm not telling him. I tell him straight "I'm not free ever, Tony. Not ever, and it's time now."

He's gone all shriveled. He's not even worth a laugh.

He's taking the hint alright.

After he'd gone, she lit a cigarette and walked up and down.

She spent a long time on this sentence. She thought up different words. She really worked on it.

She formed it in her head and then rehearsed it. She imagined she was saying it to him, over and over again, so she would always remember it, ready for next time, which there was sure to be, with him or anyone else.

"I make it a rule never to socialise with clients."