



SOUL DESTRUCTION: UNFORGIVABLE

RUTH JACOBS



At **TOUGH TALK**, we don't just focus on traditional 'tough' people such as martial arts and combat specialists, cops, bodyguards, bouncers etc., but we also look at other tough lives... and they don't come much tougher than Ruth's.

In her early '20s, Ruth was an intravenous heroin and crack addict, an alcoholic, she was kidnapped and raped, and was close to death with failed overdoses more times than she can remember. However, now she's a writer, charity and human rights campaigner, and has a day job in information security recruitment. She's also the mother of beautiful twins. Tough Talk caught up with Ruth over lunch at a café in London, and chatted about her past, her new book and how, over time, she managed to completely change her life around.

TT: Ruth, you have been through so much, enough to fill a book - or two - but can you just summarise your life story a little bit for our readers

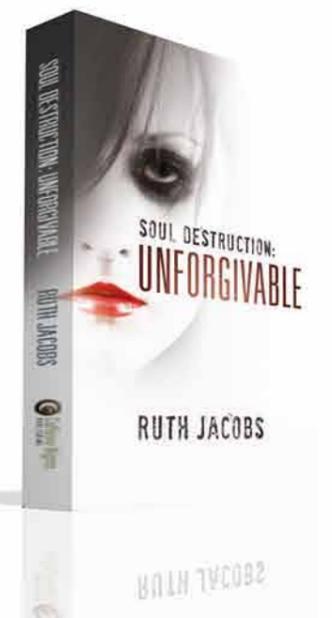
RJ: Of course! My life's been pretty mad, at times excruciatingly painful, often dangerous, and on occasions I have been very close to death. I was an unhappy but quiet child, turned wild in my early teens, and continued to descend into hell at an ever-increasing high-speed until my mid-twenties. To be honest, with the amount of heroin and crack I used to take - and I was an injector - and the amount of alcohol I also consumed at the same time, I never expected to live long, and certainly not past thirty. When I was 16 I fell pregnant with twins, and after an NHS abortion went wrong, was told I would probably never have children again. I didn't want not to have them, but at the same time, I was too scared to have them. I carried so much guilt, and shame and regret; it tormented me for years.

However, after countless failed overdoses - and I mean on-purpose overdoses, not accidents or cries for help - I finally gave up on trying to kill myself. Perhaps I just wasn't meant to die at that time! And so, once I

let go of death being an option, I realised I needed to stop taking heroin and crack, and to stop drinking if I was going to live. From being close to a walking corpse, I slowly turned my life around and eventually became a recruitment consultant in information security, which has been my career now for well over a decade. In 2001, I found out I was pregnant with twins again and my children are absolutely the biggest blessing in my life now. Sadly, their father and I didn't work out, but I gained Elizabeth, a mother-in-law without a marriage. Elizabeth's a second mother to me.

TT: Many people having led the life you have led either end up dead or in prison, but you have managed to change your life immeasurably. Did you just wake up one morning and say 'that's it, I've had enough' Or was it a long process? How did it all happen?

RJ: I know it might sound odd, but for me it really was about giving up on suicide attempts. After the amount of overdoses I've done, it's a complete miracle I am still alive! Let alone the dangerous situations I've been in - being raped twice, once in London and then in Australia, and also being kidnapped when I was in South Beach, Miami. When I



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was raped in Australia, I really thought I was going to die for sure. He drove me far into the outback, then I think we were walking for a while, I don't know how long, and I was sure he was going to kill me. Why else would he have taken me so far just to rape me? But then, after the rape, he took me back in his car and dropped me off near where I was staying. Much of that attack is blacked out. From the beginning of the rape until I got out of his car, I can't remember anything. I have suffered from crack psychosis, I have ended up in treatment centres and at times found myself in the A&E department, and a couple of times ended up sectioned in a psychiatric hospital. [Editors note: People are usually sectioned under the mental health act. To do this there usually has to be the person's GP, a registered social worker and a psychiatrist present. Once somebody is placed under a section they are usually in a psychiatric ward. A patient who is placed under a section does still have basic human rights, but a psychiatrist takes over some decisions if

they are not deemed competent to make the decision on their own.] So I suppose my process to change my life was because my life wasn't changing. I was doing the same things and the same things were happening; taking drugs, going psychotic and ending up in hospital, and all the suicide attempts were failing. It was like I wasn't allowed to choose death, I had to choose life.

TT: I know you have a book out at the moment, tell me more about it.

RJ: Soul Destruction: Unforgivable is fiction loosely based on some of my experiences and is the first of a series I have planned. The book is about a character called Shelley Hansard, who is call girl in London and, like I was, she is also a crack and heroin addict. She's having a really rough time with her family when a client dies in her presence at The Lanesborough Hotel. As her crack psychosis worsens, she struggles with leading her double life, or more like triple or quadruple life; she is one thing to her family, something

else to her clients, and she isn't even able to be her real self when she's with her closest friend. She's living through hell and things get even worse when she finds out one of the clients who raped her, has also raped her friends. But in making that discovery, she then has the opportunity to take revenge and to stop the serial rapist from raping other working girls. This means everything to Shelley, so you know she's going to give it all she's got, but being in the state she is, will that be enough, or will it make matters even worse?

TT: What was it like writing your first book? How hard was it to explore your past and be truthful about some of the things you have experienced? Are you a natural writer or was it a struggle?

RJ: Soul Destruction: Unforgivable isn't my first book, although it is the first book I've ever finished! I wrote on and off since I was sixteen years old, which was kind of my life story, but not quite. It was hell to write it, but

I think it would also have been hell to read it too. In 2007 I then started a new novel, but I stopped writing after 30,000 or so words, as it was too personal. Yes, Soul Destruction: Unforgivable was painful at times to write but I think it's necessary to ensure the characters are authentic in what they do, think, feel, say and experience. At times, because of the subject matter, I have had to put myself back into some horrific situations and I would often cry writing and continue to cry even after reading it countless times after. But I do hope that if it has that effect on me, then it will have the effect of being real to the reader and transport them into the world and the minds of my characters. I am not sure I am a natural writer though, but I think I do have a small gift with words and story-telling, and I have practised a great deal, I have read fifteen or so books on writing!

TT: What was the hardest thing about writing? Did you ever consider giving it up?

RJ: The hardest thing has to be keeping it real, because to do that I have to put myself back in pain. I have never considered giving up writing although I have gone long periods without writing.

TT: Could you say writing a book is a healing process? Closure on a past life?

RJ: Maybe for some people, yes. Maybe for me in some small way too I guess, but I couldn't say for sure. With the amount of trauma I've survived, I don't believe I will reach a place of definite healing, but perhaps at some point, hopefully, some kind of acceptance with what I've lived through. I think, without sounding like a pessimist, sometimes someone can go through just too much and there will never be closure - the pain is just too deep. But in general, by writing fiction, I feel can at least get the endings I want. But to me that's not real closure; it is only fiction after all, and though perhaps slightly cathartic to write, it is also relieving pain.

TT: Would you suggest other people who have also led an unorthodox life do the same?

RJ: If you mean in terms of writing a book, then why not? I have chosen to write fiction. I prefer to write this way, and it also means that I can use my experience as a seed for an idea and let it become something else of its own. Also, with all the overdoses I've taken and the post traumatic stress disorder I have suffered for most of my life, my poor memory means I wouldn't be capable of writing a memoir. If anyone wants to write their memoir though, I think they should. I know some people who have just done that, or are in the process of doing it, and from what they have said, it's been everything from a positive experience, to a painful but growing experience, and to one of learning and discovery. I guess it's so different for everyone depending what they have lived through and how it's affected them.

TT: How will you feel when you see your book on the bookshelves?

RJ: Like jumping up and down and screaming, but I will try to contain myself.

TT: Do you think it is possible for anyone to change their life around, no matter what their background?

RJ: Yes, I absolutely believe that with all my heart. In my mind, I never believe anyone is ever too far gone; there is no such thing as too far gone.



TT: What would you say to people who have led really tough lives but who want to change, want to take a new path?

RJ: I think getting support is essential and I could have never done it alone. I had the support of some amazing people, some whom I look back on now and firmly believe that if they weren't put in my life and loved me when I didn't know how to love myself, and showed me how to live a normal life, I wouldn't be alive today or, if I was, I'd be sectioned in a psychiatric ward or in prison! I think getting specialist help is essential too. Sometimes there is just so much toxicity in life to recover from; different people have different needs and different life experiences, and what might work for one person won't necessarily work for another. I'd say to anyone to keep on trying and to change support groups, and for those with specific needs, such as trauma, then looking for specialist assistance, help, support and counselling is so important, as well as connecting with others who have been there.

TT: We all learn from our experiences. What are the main things you have learned from your experiences?

To stop trying to die is number one on the list! I packed that one in a year or so before I became pregnant the second time with my children. However, there are still other patterns of behaviour I continue to repeat that I don't want to but, over the years, far more destructive patterns of behaviour have stopped. I guess I am growing and changing and moving on in some way but I certainly wouldn't claim to be forever moving forwards and in the right direction - that would be completely dishonest for me to say that. But sometimes a person needs to move backwards in order to push forward again. I don't know...

TT: Does your past come back and haunt you sometimes? If so, in what way?

RJ: In ways too painful to share. Some things I don't believe will ever leave me.

TT: Do you believe that all roads lead to the one destination, insofar as you would not be who you are today had you not led the life you had?

RJ: I do believe that, but would I rather have had a quiet, boring but peaceful life with no trauma? Yes! However, the caveat would be that I would want my children just as they are. So to have that, I have to accept that everything that has happened, at least up until that point, happened for a reason and was worth the pain.

TT: You have settled down and have a family now. What else are you up to at the moment? What are your plans for the future? What dreams do you have for the future?

RJ: I dream of my book becoming a global best-seller and an international blockbuster movie, possibly directed by Guy Ritchie - if he's interested! On top of this, I'm working on non-fiction for my charity and human rights campaigns; currently, I am involved in pushing for the Merseyside model to be implemented UK-wide, which keeps the clients who rape people in prostitution off the streets, and therefore keeps the people in prostitution - who are at the greatest risk - safer. And I will also be getting back to writing the second book in the Soul Destruction series very soon.

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Ruth's charity publication, *In Her Own Words... Interview with a London Call Girl*, is available to download via the Tough Talk website or direct from Amazon. All royalties are donated to *Beyond the Streets*, a charity working to end sexual exploitation.