

'Time like an ever-rolling stream bears all its sons away...'- the refrain from the Ancient and Modern Hymn drifted through Geoff's mind as he comfortably lay in the hospital bed. 'Not politically correct these days', he mused to himself, 'it had been so linguistically simple and convenient when the word 'sons' was inclusive of daughters, and the word 'mankind' was inclusive of women. Life was so complicated these days!' It seemed only last August that he and Jenny had been swimming in the refreshing seas of the Adriatic ... and then she was suddenly gone – only a few months later – just like that – as they had waved goodbye outside a crowded Charing Cross station. Then she lay there dying with the devastated driver wringing his hands not knowing what to do. He had lost control of the wheel apparently – distracted by a small girl who slipped her mother's hand and lurched into the road just a few feet in front of him as the traffic rounded the corner and Jenny had tripped on the kerb. There it is was – a fatal accident and Jenny gone from time – and Geoff left with only memories of her... and, yes, the disposal of her clothes and her books.

Her wake had been a surprisingly cheerful occasion. Most of their friends came and helped him give her a worthy send off. He had felt challenged to make new strides and adventures in whatever time he had left – but as he was torn between finding that new momentum – that desire to move on – and the temptation to wallow in self-pity or even despair. He recalled a friend repeating the cliché, "Time will heal! You never know - you might find someone new one day."

'Yes,' he had thought, 'maybe, but I'm not sure that I really want to start again.'

He thought about when Jenny and he first met at a friend's birthday party. He was a quite shy boy but when the conversation had turned to beer, he had been showing off his knowledge extravagantly about the chemistry of brewing and subconsciously he had registered her attentiveness.

When the conversation moved on, he engaged her further. She had coyly listened and he had felt proud of her attention. As they rubbed shoulders over the next few months, they both felt a chemistry developing between them. And when Jenny had mentioned that she had been offered a job in another town, he felt the time was right to venture on the rising tide of their relationship – he drew her close and they kissed. Jenny had melted into him and he felt strong and protective towards her and knew he couldn't live without her. But now he had to!

Or did he? Was he sad? Yes. Was he regretful? No. Even though time had cruelly robbed him of her, he wouldn't have it any other way. Their love had been bigger than either of their lives.

A light breeze stirred through the open ward window. His thoughts flickered back to his friend's cliché. 'Time doesn't really heal,' Geoff mused, 'but it can't rob me of the fact of our love and what that meant to Jenny and me. I suppose memories do fade –

but even so, she will ever be part of me – more than I realise, I guess.' 'And that was fifty years ago.

Thank you, God, I've had a good life,' Geoff drifted into unconsciousness from which time itself now relieved him of his final memories.