

# 1 William Davies

“He’s coming back, Peter!”

“Hang on to him!” ordered the cardiovascular surgeon as he quickly scanned the machines and monitors on the racks above the opposite side of the bed with a well-practiced eye. “Don’t let him lose consciousness again, it might be the last time if we do.”

All the flashing, spiking and streaming lights on all the monitors were normalising, as were the beeps and buzzing sounds.

“Come on, William, don’t go to sleep on us now,” he urged his patient.

“I’m trying not to,” I heard myself saying in my head, but I couldn’t get my lips to voice my thoughts. In fact, for a while, I thought that I had died ten minutes before I heard the first voice speak. The only reason I had for doubting my demise was that I’m a Spiritualist, and I have always believed that friends and relatives waited on the Other Side to welcome the dying over. There had been no-one waiting for me... Not that I have many friends or relatives dead or alive, although there was one I knew I could count on.

I had to put myself into the doctors’ hands and trust in their ability. I wanted to give them a sign that I could hear them, so I tried to drum my fingers and wiggle my toes, but had no idea whether they were moving or not. I guessed not by the lack of reaction from the doctors and nurses who were obviously surrounding the bed trying to help me.

“His eyes are twitching, I think he’s trying to open them,” observed a female voice emotionally. Emboldened by such encouragement I tried harder, and, after a minute or so, I could see a kindly male face smiling down at me through a crack in my eyelids.

“Welcome back, William,” he said seeming to mean it, “we thought we’d lost you that time. Welcome back to the land of the living. I’m terribly sorry about this, Old Man, but I have to rush off now that you’re going to be all right, but these ladies and gentlemen are supremely competent and will take care of you just as well as I could. I’ll see you later”.

He whispered his instructions to the others and left.

It is strange, but when you have very little strength left, you can feel it ebbing or returning remarkably easily. In my case, I was getting stronger by the second. I don’t know what drugs they’ve given me, but they and the will to live are working wonders.

“We’ll keep you in tonight, William, but if the signs are good tomorrow, you can go back to your own bed. That’ll be nice, won’t it?”

I tried to nod and smile, but instead, I felt a tear run out of my left eye down over my temple and into my ear. I haven’t slept in my own bed for nearly three years, but I knew what she meant of course. She was just trying to be kind... upbeat, and I did appreciate it. It’s just that it’s funny what you think about when you realise that you might be drawing your last breaths.

I don’t consider myself religious, although I suppose others might. I believe simply in life after death, reincarnation and Karma. Therefore, death has never held any terrors for me, and life is only slightly preferable because it allows a wider range of experiences and more of them.

My last thoughts had not been about life or death or even meeting my Maker, they had been about the people I have loved, and especially the females, because I had always preferred theirs to male company. You could argue that that was my life flashing before my eyes, but it was a niche, edited version and it didn’t flash. It lingered in a languid, lavish, seductive fashion.

In fact, I don’t believe that that film of my life would have finished if I had died from the heart attack when I thought I might have. It would have carried on and I would have been without a body

– the only change.

I have been a big, strong man all my adult life: over six feet and over sixteen stones, but fit and healthy with it. I have been ill and broken bones, but nothing has floored me for long. However, I fear that those days are at an end, because that was the second heart attack you just saw me recover from, and I am realistic enough to know, that I will probably not be able to ignore the third call to leave this Mortal Coil.

To be honest, I'm not all that sure that I would want to anyway. I am now seventy-one, living in an old people's home in southern Spain and my wife and friends have all gone on before me. Don't get me wrong, it is a very comfortable hospice, operated especially for English-speaking oldies like myself. It really is very nice, but it's not home, as I am sure you can appreciate and the bed they referred to as my own, is not the one I shared with my wife until she died two years, three months and seventeen days ago.

Actually, she was rushed from our bed into hospital and died there without recovering consciousness. She didn't survive her first heart attack. It's a shame, I thought she would have... when the time came. I slept in a hotel after that for a while and then I moved into the hospice – God's Waiting Room, we residents call it!

Anyway, I digress, but I'm afraid you will have to forgive me, dear reader, for it is true, an old man's mind does wander. However, if you have the tenacity to stick with me to the end, I will tell you the story of a woman that I want the whole world to know.

Trying to tell the story of someone else is difficult, and in this case it is obscured by the mists of time and an old man's power of recollection, but I will get there, I promise you that most sincerely

"I am the eldest child in my family, of my generation in our family, I should say, three years older than my next sibling, so for a long time, I was like an only child. I was lucky though, because there were lots of children in the nearest five houses to ours and as luck would have it, eight of those nine children were girls. I loved them all in my preschool days as I had no sisters of my own... I have fond memories of playing Daddy to their Mummy at make-believe tea parties.

Most of them were years older than myself, so when they started school they found new friends and eventually, so did I. It was there that at the age of six I fell in love with a girl called Debbie. One day, after school, at the age of seven, we were sitting on the swings in the thunder, lightening and rain and hoped that a bolt of lightening would send us to a romantic death together. It didn't, of course, all it got us was a telling-off from our parents.

Then there was Sally when we were nine. I used to stalk her and when she said that I was the third most handsome boy she knew, I was in Seventh Heaven. At fifteen there was Lesley, whom I loved from afar, but never ever spoke to, and so it went on until I was seventeen.

I will never forget those wonderful girls, our innocence and the great times we had, or I wanted to have, together.

Some things you cannot tell, even at seventy-one and fresh off your death bed, and other things you don't want to tell because they are memories best savoured in private. I often wonder whether those early loves, for lovers they were not, remember me fondly too, but I will never know now and that is probably for the best. I can pretend that they do.

You see, I cannot ask them, because I have always moved around and never kept in touch. It is a reason for the lack of friends and close family. First, I went to university a hundred and fifty miles from home and then I joined the Diplomatic Service which also involved travelling... but I am starting to get ahead of myself.

Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three, the girls I was going out with started to become women, and that was even more exciting. I remember Janine, Glenys and Andrea... so many more friends and lovers alike. I dream about them all often and in a way which is not disrespectful to my

wife.

The nurse has come to put me to sleep... not like an old dog, you understand, more in the manner of a sick child, which I am frightened I am in danger of becoming. It is a reason for wanting to tell you my story soon. I will do my best to get on with it tomorrow.