

## Ouch

The ceremony was perfect; they did her proud, My Lovely. The celebrant spoke well and he told her life story with feeling and even raised the odd smile. She would have liked that. Afterwards, we went back to the little pub where we recently had our anniversary do, our Golden. We often went there for an afternoon coffee or a Sunday lunch, so it was a fitting place to say goodbye.

There were lots of people there at the reception; friends, relatives, colleagues who became friends, people from the dancing club and fellow gardeners from the allotment. More women than men, as is the way in later life. I am part of a select group, an elderly gent who still has (most of) his own teeth, and can walk without the aid of a walking stick and my memory is still in fine fettle.

I have no ambitions to meet anyone else; why would I? No one else can come near to My Lovely. We were kids when we met and old codgers when we parted. A whole lifetime together; five decades. Our two wonderful sons, our cozy home, our lovely holidays. No one else could come near sharing anything like the times we've had.

Time to go home now, alone for the first time. We've never been apart, especially since we both retired. My Lovely never minded me being at home, she loved sharing the days. Many of my friends have said how their wives resented them being around the house after they'd finished work, but My Lovely always had a big heart. She used to love the school holidays, having the Boys home and felt sad when they went back. She used to find it odd that other mothers were relieved to see their children return to school, when she missed our Boys so much. September always found her feeling a little low, as the boys weren't home for their lunchtime sandwiches and the days grew shorter.

We both liked to read and would often sit in the same room with our books, happy to be in each other's company, nothing more. That's intimacy, breathing the same air, in the same small space. After a while My Lovely would say "how about a cuppa?" and I would put the kettle on. Our favourite teabags are those that are joined in twos. I would pull them apart and say 'Ouch!' and My Lovely would smile in recognition of this little habit. "Shall we have a biscuit?" I'd ask and she would always say "But of course!" and we'd enjoy our tea break and chat about our respective books.

Perhaps I should make myself a cuppa now, keep my chin up. I inadvertently take two mugs from the cupboard. I replace one. Just one cup on the kitchen unit. I open up the tea caddy and absentmindedly pull out two teabags joined together. "Ouch!" I say as I pull them apart. The first of numerous ouches to come.