

together into a harmonious and transforming process - a catharsis which did take us through tragedy to quiet triumph.

Years after, friends have spoken of the impact of the occasion on their lives, on their thoughts about life and death, on their wishes for their own funerals and those of their loved ones.

**7 April Tuesday:** Yesterday went wonderfully - while the buzz of preparation protected me to some extent from the sorrow of it - listening to his music, making the tapes made me cry and reading my funeral piece to Terry choked me up. (It was hard on the day, too, though I got through it.)

Mary from Sheffield phoned in the evening after the funeral and asked how it had been - 'Wonderful!' I said - she sounded shocked, but it was true. There were laughter and tears - drunkenness (largely restrained) and so much goodwill, affection, warmth - vivid, loving memories of Roy from such a huge gathering of excellent people.

I felt very exhausted afterwards, but also content, fulfilled. I cried in the evening on my own in the kitchen over the cards and cheques (so many!) but steeled myself to start afresh today - the symbolic first day of a new life (some of it beckons - much of it seems unstimulating) which I've just got to get stuck into - the conflict is mainly that I just want to sit and think about Roy - everything else seems trivial, unexciting, flat.

I felt OK today and have sensed my old self and energies surfacing. On the tube home from work I felt very nourished, full - and realised (as it seemed) that

yesterday had restored the complete Roy to me - memories of the suffering, weak, dependent, voracious patient gone, as the 'golden man' returned in full richness.

The funeral was entirely about the living man (well, yes, about our loss too) - but overwhelmingly about him from cradle to grave - got lots of glimpses, echoes, new insights from all kinds of people and angles. Relatives of his whom I hardly knew and whom I might well have thought felt that our lives were very peculiar told me warmly and without reservation how lucky he had been to meet me, to get out of the cocoon of Rotherham - to have had the chance to do so much. There was much appreciation, acceptance, of that kind - very positive, supportive and touching.

Though I knew the funeral was going on for a long time (much longer than planned) I had no sense of time during the ceremony - it was - well - luxurious. I did not want it to end.

I feel both that he's inside me and also that there's a staggering distance between us now - between now that is, this moment, and the smiling robust reality on the world trip and on the QE2 picture just on the desk here - was it a dream? No, of course, but how very far off it seems - how far off his reality here seems - though I feel his absence constantly - the empty house, the half portions of food, his barrel-bag still packed from the expedition to Yorkshire.

Just phoned David in Brighton - so pleased he came to the funeral but with the sad news of his lover being HIV positive. He's invited me to join a crowd of his friends for

an AIDS charity concert that they've been organising next Sunday evening in Brighton. I had to take a deep breath before saying yes, but I must start to get out and about again, and this seems a peculiarly appropriate event. (David is one half of a cabaret drag act ('The Trollettes') which Roy loved. We used to follow them round the London circuit and I had persuaded David to visit us once on Roy's birthday as a surprise.)

Back to work on Monday - and the old kind of normality.

**14 April Tuesday:** I was going to say 'the urge to write has gone' - in once sense true (recording feelings) - but in other senses I've hardly stopped - endless letters - bills, post and (of course) work. Last evening I had two glasses of sherry and two glasses of claret and I felt slaughtered by 9pm - went to bed.

He's been dead over two weeks - I'm beginning to accommodate the fact, but still think of him constantly, miss him, miss the chat at home (how easily that's taken for granted, though I don't think that we did - but how important it is!) - miss him - planning, thinking about theatre trips - on my own? The sad, limited shopping expeditions (why when there are two of you do you buy stuff for six?!)

There have been some deeply touching letters - from Eric and Audrey about the funeral, from Ben and Tony with a huge cheque for Roy's fund - so sweet and fraternal; one from Roy's aunt saying the funeral was 'beautiful' - though she'd not known what to expect. Lots of cheques (nearly £1,300 to date) - one from the

partners at Sue's legal firm - contributions from all over. The memorial fund seems to have touched people's hearts - several have remarked about not having thought about being ill and dying at home as an alternative to hospital.

The charity concert at Brighton (including Dora Bryan and all kinds of big names) was a splendid show - but I felt there was a real barrier between my rational perception of its excellence and my capacity to feel its pleasure and exhilaration. I felt Roy's absence so powerfully - he'd have loved it - even a Vicky Wood sketch!

I travelled home by train feeling curiously unsettled. David, Don, Del and all the (many!) others at the guest house and in the pubs were sweet and thoughtful, and I felt the power of their circle, their acquaintance with half of Brighton - home seemed very lonely and isolated from that perspective.

I was very busy on Saturday - went through most of Roy's clothes. Tried trousers on - chucked out a lot of his stuff and mine - bundled up for jumble sales. It all seemed fine - there were just one or two things which seemed to be essentially him - the lumberjack shirt and those dark blue, stretchy jeans (32" waist!) which I couldn't get rid of. Emptying pockets - anything which reached back to an action of his - seemed a bit strange - cutting the links. (Yesterday having the building society account put into my sole name struck me very forcibly - the white label obliterating his name for ever.) The envelope from Barclays today enclosing the requested new cheque book in my sole name was addressed to us both...

Interestingly enough, I haven't got round to sorting out the drugs and equipment for the community care team to take away. The gear is a pretty potent reminder, connection - even more than the clothes which he hasn't worn for such a long time. The 'pharmacy' has remained in a real mess - so much time spent in there - such responsibility - such duty - such life-enhancing stuff (how rotten I felt the once or twice I forgot a routine or was late - oh dear!)

I suppose the subconscious sifts through everything - there have been some odd emotions popping up - anger, guilt, jealousy (I think) over incidents long past - just twinges, glimpses which I've not dwelt on - they're real but of little account in the large picture.

I've wondered if I really looked after him as well as I could have done - was rough or thoughtless from time to time - only in retrospect does his long-term suffering (moment by moment) strike me - I was so immersed in the present, the actual, that perspectives didn't present themselves - it was all about comfort, reassurance NOW! I wonder how he managed the world trip - there was so much to endure for him - New York was a crunch - but we overcame it; he completely and voluntarily put aside whatever reservations there may have been deep down. He would not give up and (oh I do hope so) gained the rewards. Yes, there were extraordinary times - excellent times - I must re-read the diary to reassure me - yes, magic times - Barbados, flying fish, mountains - the sea - turtles - yes! Magic! - keep hold, Bruce!

The funeral was a grand finale - it left me feeling strong and comforted - proud of what we achieved - and true, I'm sure and everyone says - to Roy.

I postponed listening to the tape of the funeral till Friday night - fearing a devastating effect - but I found myself laughing and smiling as much as we had done on the day - the mere words seemed a little flat out of the dramatic context of the day - music, emotion, occasion, tears, so many people - but the words were good - far-reaching, rich, evocative of the whole spirit and life that were Roy's.

I have to resist being busy all the time - I find myself writing letters, doing this and that, filling the evenings - taking some little sleepy pleasure in TV, newspaper. (My sex drive has been active and satisfied on my own. It was diminished over the last months undoubtedly - often only getting relief when my balls ached with fullness - but it never went. I thought yesterday of the night Roy and I loved each other on our summer lawn in the dark - good times!) I think I feel less desperate to get back to the house than I did a few days ago, but the set of anxious feelings associated with leaving the house and going out - for so long I have been rushing back to it like a compass needle to north - and the sense of the vulnerability of it and its contents (especially mementos of Roy) and also a loss of self-confidence - can I manage on my own? Can I leave the house safe without his oversight? Can I cope socially? Shall I be OK on my own? Not dramatic, but definitely there.

I seem to be able to apply myself satisfactorily to work - I've had a very productive day today - and performed very well at the two training days in Bristol. I feel vigour returning - very slowly. Christina, our lovely GP, has given

me some more Temazepan (at my request) - and it seems to be helping - though last night (went to bed at 9.30) woke up several times. All will be well, I'm sure, but I do miss him.

**19 April Easter day:** (Three weeks since he died) I've not cried since the evening of the funeral nor until now, I think, have I felt depressed. This has been brought on by reading the diary for 1989/90 and being reminded of Roy's suffering - his bewilderment, vulnerability.

Last night saw 'Hear My Song' with Peter and Geraldine - excellent, nourishing, witty entertainment followed by satisfactory meal at The Olive Tree - didn't feel his absence as strongly as at Brighton - able to let myself go more and enjoy the present.

When I'm not applying myself to some task at work, I think about him all the time - go to sleep looking at his picture on the funeral booklet.

I've been very busy - extraordinary degree of sorting out and chucking out - I'm not anxious to remove physical evidence of his presence (indeed chucking his stuff out is actually disturbing) but I seem compelled to get things in order - some things like his wallet I've not been able to dismantle, but I've been through practically everything else). I remind myself that the material objects (stuff that is junk or useless clothing, shoes that don't fit me) mean nothing - in clearing them out I'm not clearing him out - how could I? - there's so much else (internal and external) to remind me of him.

Yesterday I cut the hedges, tidied up the front garden, gave the lawn a rough cut (first of the season), tied the

rambler rose back up. I've nearly sorted out the little bedroom and all the medical stuff. It's all something to do, I think, while I sort out how I'm to fill my life now - all this time. I feel again the desperate wish to get going with writing - what's the blockage to getting things published - what stops my stuff getting anywhere - what should I be writing and who should I send it to? When will I be fit to start again? When am I going to do something with the mountains of manuscripts in the filing cabinet?

I think his absence - permanently - is beginning to sink in. I'm tempted to fill the time with trivial household tasks - feeling them must be more important things to do - but what?

Money for the fund is coming along well - around £1,400 now - need to find ways of boosting it to generate real income - how long will the Charity Commissioners take to approve it? I think I'll go off and sort out the mailing list for it.

**23 April Thursday:** A really bad night after an entertaining and excessive evening with Ben in Earls Court - simply hardly sleeping and going over and over Roy's death - the minute by minute details - not threatening, unpleasant, but obsessive recounting, recording, reporting. I slept for a couple of hours until about 2am and then - physically uncomfortable, thirsty, mind full, hardly slept again - not till well after the dawn chorus. Also some very vivid dreams of strange inexplicable groups of good-natured people, not including Roy, with some warm, provocative sexy

interludes. Then I woke with an awful cramp in my leg. I was trying to let go of the endless replaying of the mental tape of Roy's last few minutes, trying patiently to get through it, then calm it down, saying to myself, 'OK old boy, OK,' trying to satisfy something, someone, letting it take its time and then trying to get to sleep.

I feel as though the natural mechanisms of sleep aren't working - is this because of the Temazepan? Or simply my exhausted, overwrought mind and body? There's certainly a real change - is it the tail end or the beginning of new patterns? It worries me. Shall I take any more? Will more tablets cause long-term problems? The pressure to sleep well is so great.

**25 April Saturday:** (Four weeks) What has struck me is the unpredictability of mood, feeling, memory, of energy levels, of the cycle of (brief) depression, sweet melancholy and bitter-sweet reminiscence. I feel a strange discontinuity from him - I look at the photographs and feel that they represent a world which doesn't belong to me any more - links severed, indeed, another world.

I find myself vaguely spooked from time to time. I haven't been able to finish watching 'Truly, Madly, Deeply' (which I started without any knowledge of its contents) for fear it will unbalance me - I've been aware of that inner world of chaos - of overactive imagination, of susceptibility to dark and disturbing images. In its simplest sense, I have been haunted by his death - a recurring picture - not distressing, just replaying the tape, as it were - though my

main memories now are of times before serious illness - I wonder if I underestimated his pain - if I took sufficient account of it while he was alive - but also feel that such thoughts are a distraction - I did all I could, there is no cause for guilt.

This week I had to concentrate my mind on planning holidays - and thought again I might go to Barcelona and Seville, then this morning thought I might visit Lynn and Bob in Hong Kong. I phoned them and they seemed happy with the prospect. The autumn, perhaps. Lynn is in the UK in June and may come and stay. She said she wanted to see the video of our time in Hong Kong with them.

I'm beginning to get a sense of what I have to do - take initiatives, get on with planning, but it's a process full of conflict - today I thought about going to a film - phoning someone for companionship - but think I've decided I want to stay at home. Next weekend is a busy one - off to West Cumbria for training, Berwick for the retirement party, staying with friends in Maryport, so I'll clear the decks for being away (whatever that means - probably spending compensatory time here as much as anything else).

I spoke to community care nurse Vicky about the sleeping tablets - she was reassuring and said I should carry on - they are remarkable and I wake up feeling better - I just hope the need for them will diminish and natural sleep rhythms will return. Thursday was an awful reminder of the hours of sleeplessness.

I spent some hours staring pretty vacantly at the TV - reasonably discriminatingly - turning off the crap - but I

found it difficult to switch it off finally and get to bed. Apart from first class things (Have I Got News For You?) - watching is actually rather depressing, I think - and there's so much about death and disaster!

**4 May Bank Holiday Monday:** (Five weeks) I do miss him. It's a kind of generalised 'less than best' feeling; I miss the intimacy - all the chat about the day, about inconsequential things; I miss the person next to me. Over the last few days I've travelled hundreds of miles by train (Cumbria/Berwick) and there's this feeling of the empty seat beside me - waiting for him to come back. I'm playing Elkie Brooks now (one of his favourites) - Pearl's a Singer - which has accelerated a sense of melancholy, of irreplaceable companionship.

I've been doing quite well - busy at work and at home, keeping everything in order as he taught me! It's been exciting to discover there'll actually be quite a lot of money in the estate. I think I shall pay a substantial chunk off the mortgage and probably do something to the house.

I've become slightly obsessed with getting things done to the house - especially the bathroom and waiting to see what the chaps' estimates look like - may include big wardrobe in my bedroom, cupboards in the study, kitchen, possibly small bedroom. Thought about loft conversion - but that can wait! There should be some cash left after most of that so I think it's probably the building society or something - it'll be nice having that sort of cash available.

If I pay off the Company share bank loan; smaller mortgage, possible pension, there should be lots more

cash around each month. I'll need to be careful so as not to spend, spend, spend and leave no safety net for the future.

The actual reality of his day to day presence is fading - it's becoming the sheer fact of his absence which hurts - no one to phone up from hotels in far places - no one at home, interested in my movements, knowing when I'm due home - and except for the cleaning and ironing which dear Edith does - nothing new, surprising, delightful when I come home.

I'm having some difficulty with his ashes - not keen to have them hanging around the house; also a bit anxious about the photos Vera asked me to take after he died - will they be upsetting? I'll soon know.

He looks so well in this QE2 photograph - so full of life and his lovely good will. 'I'm so happy I could cry,' he said as we set off on the Orient Express. Precious memory of precious times.

I've just re-read the first article I did for Gay Times after the initial diagnosis - and filled my eyes with tears.

I can feel how easy it would be to try to fill the void he's left with someone else - but how fatal that would be. I feel very promiscuous in a theoretical kind of way - looking at men - searching for that magical being who'll light up my life - but of course, doing nothing at all about it - it would be dreadful! (It would simply be filling the void, and I couldn't face getting involved - all that pressure, energy etc.) I need to disentangle myself - and I think exploit my free energy - writing, work - being myself before thinking about partnership. I now know that partnership takes

energy - and it is one of at least two choices - now there is more time and energy for other - different things. If I've always talked about doing things consecutively, then now I must return to finding out who I am and achieving the writing and other ambitions that haven't got anywhere so far.

I just watched some of the world trip video - surprisingly cool reaction - happy memories but manageable. Am I cutting all the pain off?

I must get somewhere - the theme of my diaries for twenty years - perhaps now, through the current success of the business I will get somewhere - again (like Probation) getting onto the national scene - this time, perhaps stay there and get further?

I feel listless and useless tonight. Perhaps just a little depressed?

**17 May Sunday:** It's not been as difficult or as painful as I expected. I feel alone, melancholy, sad, at a loss from time to time (and had one acute attack of loneliness in Bristol ten days ago), but I don't feel empty - I feel solid and ready to go forward. I miss him most of the time - all the time, I think - and look at the flourishing garden, the ears of oats and the dried flower arrangements, details he created - everywhere in the house - things that were expressions of his domestic happiness - how he is interwoven into everything, the physical fabric of the house.

I was anxious about getting the photographs of him and Vera at the deathbed and about the delivery of his

ashes - but both were OK - I've not been dwelling on them. It's still intellectually difficult to accept he's gone - the fact - the end of all that rich, complex, lovely being.

I discover he's left me the present of a pension - and more money in total than I had expected. I shall enjoy that! (By some astonishing coincidence, he died on the very last day of his employment with London Transport, though he did not know it. I had not troubled him with the papers about the termination of his employment on medical grounds, and he could have had no idea that dying when he did, within a few hours of the deadline, gave me a little monthly pension for the rest of my life. The paperwork had been completed weeks before, and I had completely forgotten about it.)

I've booked five nights in Amsterdam (Alan may join me) and am about to send out invitations for the 'summer breakfast party' in July - the first big return to 'normality' and the usual patterns of the house's hospitality.

**31 May Sunday:** (Ten weeks) That I felt so little inclined to write since Roy's death, is significant, I think - though what it means I'm not sure. Before, it was a record of him and us - a record of unique, disappearing times; the writing was a part of my relationship with him, with giving it that dimension of permanence which life itself could not give; the writing was a kind of therapy - a companion under so much pressure when, at full pressure, there had to be a safety valve.

While I've done well, I think, in recovering my energy, in restoring more or less normal sleep patterns, in crossing the known and hidden obstacles to being a single man again, I've also had periods of real loneliness; of disbelieving sadness, sweet melancholy; and a deeper sense of 'who am I now?', 'does life have any point on my own?', 'is anything worth doing on my own?' that will take a long time to overcome.

I've reached the point of acknowledging that I must construct a new life - and I've positively started doing it - lunches, dinners, plays, films, planning the new bathroom, booking the holiday. And yesterday, feeling a bit limp in the afternoon, I thought, 'You can't not do things because there's no one at the moment to do them with.' So I went out to a film - actually feeling quite confident - then on to a gay pub in town where I chatted to two or three people, was briefly picked up by a charming scrounger, went to the piano bar, Madam Jo Jo's and Heaven; cruised unashamedly; came home at four in the morning, had bacon and eggs and went to bed. (Felt pretty grim today - very prostrate time with Sunday papers and coffee!)

The question is the quality of each day - that adjustment is huge. I had a great evening with Ronnie last week - Italian meal on Goodge Street, Drill Hall (wonderful show); espresso in late night Soho, on to Heaven - all excellent - time flew, immersion, but the rest of the time what deep pleasures are to be taken without him - and without sharing them with him? What do the evenings and weekends hold without him? Answer: the

time has to be filled with quality activities and relationships - but there's such a risk that they'll seem shallow, unsatisfying in comparison. Need to deal with that - by taking everything as it comes, being fully in the moment - not comparing, regretting the past, but living in the present. That's hard, because having lost so much that was amongst the best - much else seems inevitably less rich.

The trip to Amsterdam is going to be a real test. I was thinking today how I must use the time there creatively - museums, concerts, finding real richness - perhaps I could write (it just occurs to me - there's a real challenge!). Where I am at any given moment is where my heart and mind must be - not let them constantly linger at home (or with Roy) where they have been for so long.

I listen to his CDs - and think of him - my throat is aching as I write - so far had we gone together, so deeply and completely. I went to dinner with Roger and Jane (who'd bought our first house in Balham from us) - and there was even now so much of the house which showed Roy's hand at work - tiling, painted mantelpieces, garden (I remember him building the aviary there or perched precariously on top of the garden shed sweeping the autumn debris off it).

Every day or so there's letting go of things that he touched or had around him - I thought today about the support hand-rails we had put up in the loo and the bathroom for him - they'll soon be swept away as the new bathroom takes shape; bottles of lemonade, ginger beer -

the last bit of the ice cream soda he so much enjoyed that night - oddly potent legacies.

I still look at the great collection of photographs with a kind of incredulity - how can that lovely, full, complete person and body simply have gone? From vigour, energy to nothing - to the canister of grey ash in the wardrobe upstairs? (It just crosses my mind that perhaps I should open it up and confront it. I don't know.)

I don't feel very strongly motivated about anything, I think (I'm working hard at work, though) - I ought to be using all this 'free' time to achieve things - though I'm keeping the house in order, doing bits in the garden, shopping, letters, bills, planning the party and so on - reading the papers - at one level profoundly passive and unproductive.

I have a general kind of angst as the weekend finishes - it's quite irrational because tomorrow (for example) holds nothing dreadful (though the demands and challenges are substantial) - and there's nothing else at present which can make any serious demands on my loyalty or time - I'm not even getting stuck into the memorial fund administration (though I pay all the cheques in).

I suppose I must be patient. There's lots of grieving and healing still to do - though I wonder if I can perform as I did without the stimulus and comfort of him.

**19 June Amsterdam:** (Twelve weeks) Memories of Roy are very strong here - the train from Schipol, the *dagkaart* for buses and trams, the tram into town - Leidsestraat - Taverne de Pul, Thermos, even the bistro where Ian and I ate.

After an infuriating journey (my 13.20 flight cancelled, late departure of 15.30 flight thanks to the World's Favourite Airline...) Ian was waiting patiently in the hotel. We had an agreeable evening - meal, lots of talk (mostly very serious stuff about him and his girlfriend), beers in De Pul, and then I went off to Thermos - not very busy but agreeable, including an affectionate, mutually pleasing session in the dark.

Got back to the hotel about 3am, but woke up feeling a bit peculiar - not sure if it's physiological or psychological - the thought that there would be a lot going on inside me in this place provided a little relief - perhaps there's some quite strong sadness at his absence - this was one of the particular places in which we had some wonderful times as well as some quite serious disagreements - not least about Thermos (the sauna), and though I certainly didn't feel anything but relaxed there - it did represent one part of me that (early on anyway) he wasn't entirely easy with. I can be the naughty boy now!

It poured with rain during the night - now bright and cloudy. It would be good if the sun shone!

**26 June:** Just back from the five days in Amsterdam - and missing him very acutely. I felt it beginning especially yesterday - almost all day just on my own - shopping, pottering, the Flower Market, wandering the streets, watching the people as we'd so often done together. Today, too, at the airport - so clearly remembering being there with him - spending our last guilders. The verve has definitely gone out of my continental shopping - much less joy in it!

First night (Thursday) went to Bistro de Vlier (with Ian) - where Roy and I went in 1990 - when he was beginning to feel weary and to lose his appetite. Then Sluizer restaurant (twice) - where he so loved the warm goat's cheese joke at the expense of my struggling Dutch (what I'd actually said seems to have been, 'I'd like the warm fuck,' which sent the entire staff into fits of merriment all evening). And to the Flower Market (I bought flowers for the room as usual) - well, everything full of memory - it has only crept up on me towards the end. (I bought our usual selection of duty-free perfumes for his sister and nieces - just as we'd always done - probably for the last time - letting go so much!) but I also had a great time - the sauna gave up its usual riches - steamy Greek in the Turkish bath; friendly Indonesian in a dark corner; lovely, brief horizontal lovemaking in the dark room; pleasant pickup by New York Indonesian Chemical Engineer on the last night - and so on.

Then there was the time with Ian and Katie, trying to help them through the crisis in their relationship. (While we were not holidaying together, I had suggested Ian might come over to Amsterdam to spend some time talking. A couple of days after he had arrived Katie came over for two days as well - lots of serious talk, some drama between them and their counsellor (including my storming out of the restaurant where we were having dinner - I was so fed up with his recalcitrant stupidity) but I think there was real progress and greater clarity for them both about where they were to go.)

A good time, though, and I was very happy to be there - to pig out gastronomically, sexually, sleeping long, etc - and

have surely put back all those pounds I so carefully tried to lose beforehand!

But the house is empty, and he's gone.

**19 July:** (Four months) Had a quite lovely afternoon and evening yesterday at Kenwood with Derek, Ken, Andrew, Mark, Sally, Ken's mother - open air concert with pink sparkling wine, canapés, strawberries, fruit kebabs and fireworks at the end of the concert. Everyone came back here and talked and drank for an hour or two while Andrew and Mark stayed till about three.

The whole day was excellent - I felt comfortably part of a group - accepted, unreserved, easy. Everything was delightful. I also felt satisfied, even exhilarated by the party here on 28 June - the 'summer breakfast party' - about twenty eight people came - lots of people I was really pleased to see - including Roy's registrar and her ex-patriot hubby, Geoffrey.

Chris, the butler, was a great success and the tapas-style food which I'd cooked looked wonderful. Two dozen bottles of champagne lasted the day - and the last guests were trickling off by 11pm or so (twelve hours on the go!) and Dalziel and David stayed the night. It was wonderful having two such golden young people arrive unexpectedly - David enormously impressive in the morning stripped to the waist in his pyjamas - sexy, lovely to look at, quite at ease - gave me and the guests a real sense of the exotic. And Dalziel was lovely as always. Monday (last day of my hols) we had champagne breakfast in the garden, and David worked out on the lawn (Dalziel sat on him while he did

press ups!) and then they hosed each other down - Dalziel stripped to the waist as well - until the builders started drifting out into the garden to start bathroom project.

There have been lots of good times - meal and Drill Hall with Ronnie and Canadian Greg - then Village and Bang where we stayed till 3.30am or so - felt weak and useless all Sunday!

Last fortnight saw the great step of my first masseur ever - in Bristol within easy walk of my regular hotel - a very pleasing, relaxing and satisfying encounter - friendly and uncomplicated: coffee, fag, massage then gentle finish. £40 is a bit much to do it often, but I shall certainly go back. I was pleased to discover it wasn't a problem for me, no guilt, disgust, reservation. I left walking on air.

Summer party on the ward at the Middlesex last Thursday, pleasant occasion - nice people - talked to Bill (Keith's partner) - we talked about our grieving - going through very similar feelings - and both, I think, doing very well. Last night (after the Kenwood concert) - while we had the furs and the stilettos out - I looked at Roy's picture on the wall - and thought he'd have approved. In logical terms why that should matter, I don't know, but it means something somewhere - though I don't think I'm going to be inhibited from doing things of which he would not approve.

Talking a lot with Andrew at Kenwood yesterday I felt very liberated, quite camp and witty - he seemed surprised/pleased as he'd seen me as 'reserved' before - but he also brought out a rather more persistently outrageous

streak in me that I've experienced recently - I felt good, at ease, confident, whole - throughout the entire occasion.

I've not been feeling too well for a fortnight or so - heavy, nasal/chesty cold and my brain's been a bit addled - though I've managed to keep all functions alert and active - even when feeling grotty. Work is going well, though I'm dashing about all over the UK - very wearing, especially appalling BR reliability recently - and I feel half oppressed by the amount of demanding stuff which has to be done in the next six months. Oh for remuneration with less sweat!!

Had lunch with Jeremy H on Friday - very agreeable Italian meal in sunshine on the pavement - good vigorous conversation about real matters - he let me talk a good deal about Roy - and lots of good, real personal stuff. I wasn't keen to leave and to get to my next appointment.

There's so much in prospect - Drill Hall and a meal with Sue Lodge next weekend; dinner with Ken and day trip to Bologne with Helly the following weekend; to Dan and Jude in the country the following weekend - and so on! When I'll get the hedge cut or world-beating TV scripts done I've no idea!

Went to 'Six Degrees of Separation' with Katie last weekend - splendid American play (about a young guy who pretends to be Sidney Poitier's son and exploits his hosts' gullibility) and had very agreeable after-show coffee and brandy. My first visit to the Royal Court - lots of firsts these days!

I just opened the bottom draw of the desk and found a notice of death card, funeral booklet - reflected on the oddity

of getting all that stuff ready while he was still alive. There was obviously no doubt in my mind that the end was near and in fact the timing was exact.

**10 August:** (Four and a half months) I've been sad and a bit depressed this weekend. Looking through photos on Saturday (for the second Gay Times article and to give to Terry) I cried for a few moments, and I think grief has taken a slight grip - I did feel low when I went to bed. And this morning - I just noticed the little plastic box of black and white paper clips and desk miscellanea, map pins and other office odds and ends in the study which he'd bought me, and thought how no one has ever bought me such wonderful presents - chosen to give me particular, unique pleasure - no one has ever known the peculiarities of my taste so well (saucepans, Mapplethorpe calendar and cards, Liberty bow tie, candle lamps and so on).

Perhaps talking about him (and the world trip) with Dan and Jude yesterday and a little at Roy and Andy's party on Saturday has stirred things up (as well as news of the QE2's grounding off New York!) - I certainly feel moved and sad - not surprisingly perhaps (I was also copying the funeral tape).

Last weekend was very rich and busy - Friday evening dinner with Ken in Streatham - Derek, met Roy and Andy (neighbours down the road here) and Chris and Dave. Good evening, then trained from Streatham to Victoria and Canterbury for night with Helly before Saturday in Bologne - champagne on the ferry for breakfast then bars and long lunch in sunny courtyard and too much food for us to finish!

Then Sunday afternoon Ben came to talk about his crisis (very useful, sad, companionable meeting followed by dinner here) then friend from Cumbria turns up to stay the night - and launch the new bathroom in spectacular style - what a very good night! I couldn't believe what a weekend of exhausting riches it was!

I've been feeling knackered generally - whizzing round Britain during the week (last week, for example, two days in Bristol, one in Derby, afternoon in Chichester). This morning - while I wait for London Electricity to come and the electrician checks out the new electrics - I do feel washed out - it may have something to do with alcohol - every evening for ages!

There's such a busy week ahead: two days in Bristol, two days in Lancashire (both training) - then Ronnie on Saturday and Audrey and Eric on Sunday. Should I calm down and sleep a bit?!

**22 August:** (Five months) Last week I booked the holiday in Thailand (my first time) - with some reservations, I think: is it the best way of recuperating/enjoying myself? Unusual for me to be uncertain - it's got something to do with travelling alone, I think. But I'm pleased!

I've been saying to people recently that Roy is 'becoming part of the past', rather than the present - I suppose I do feel that - but also feel saddened by the change - as he becomes part of the past, so I must face being alone - even more alone as memory, immediate, sharp, accurate memory fades - I feel a pang of sadness even as I write - there he is on the QE2 with me - just a year ago - what a year - just one year?

How remarkable a companionship it was - and the joy that it is not sentimental re-creation or nostalgic fictionalising - it was wonderful at the time - and we both knew and acknowledged that. How lucky, how lucky!

**21 September:** (Six months) It's the night before Thailand and I'm feeling tired, subdued, even a little depressed, I think. I performed splendidly at training in Keswick yesterday but feel very under the weather today - it may have been the midday sherry - and being woken at 8.30am by a client on the phone.

I'm hugely satisfied and excited at having made such progress with this manuscript - at last something real, solid, rich, achieved. I've been thinking so much about Roy as I wrote, as I travelled, he's been strongly with me - I don't quite understand how or why, but the time has been going through my consciousness regularly and calmly - I occasionally feel acutely sad - melancholy - listening to music or whatever, but not wretched. Life has been too full - frantic - for that or for loneliness.

I've travelled thousands of miles in the last two months by train, addressed hundreds of trainees, been to theatres, films, parties - there's so much to do, so many people to enjoy.

Thailand will be a transformation - I must rise to it physically and spiritually - refreshment, recuperation, meditation - feed the spirit and start a new life on my own!

Pieces Published in *Gay Times*

## Grief, Anger and Hope

October 1990

**W**hen I returned home from town today, knowing that he would have set off for the train north to see his Mum, there was a scented rose of the purest salmon pink, picked from the garden on the kitchen table, with a note under it: 'Much love,' it said.

I am moved by this gift of tenderness - it is by me as I write - for, while thoughtful and affectionate, he is not typically demonstrative. Recent months have brought us closer, certainly, but this rose touches me deeply in its simple symbolism and beauty.

Knowledge of death sharpens the mind and the heart: its bitter reality leaping out of the dark with sudden drama. Lying in bed with him tight in my arms, I feel his warmth, the rhythm of his breathing, lay my hand on that loved, familiar forehead and suddenly am numbed with a vision of his absence - absence for ever (how precious is the flesh). Even now, when he is away from home I wander round the house, strangely helpless on my own. I pick up his familiar things and, for a moment, it is as if they no longer have an owner, are mere mementos of a former life.

But what, for me - I think guiltily - are these mere pinpricks of pain beside his great sorrow - his not knowing from day to day if he will feel ill or well, his uncertainty that he will see next Christmas, his grief and outrage that his once lively and co-operative body has been subverted, invaded, poisoned? Close though we are, I only glimpse the depth of that horror.

Yet, once the early days had passed - the days and nights of grief and anger and tears, when death itself appeared to hover behind him - since then he has been in generally great spirits - even in hospital sparkling and attentive - his old self which always prompted - and still prompts - such warm, affectionate responses from others. I marvel at his strength, his stability, the resources which must lie at the core of his being, now feeding and invigorating him.

There are dark hours for him, hours of lethargy and queasiness; there are restless nights made intolerable by torrential sweats and livid nightmares. There are moments of uncomprehending rage or deepest sadness when all that is unlikely to happen, when all that may be lost for ever snaps sharply into focus.

He is not now ill - an early touch of PCP seems to have been suppressed by pentamidine, and oral thrush is under control with antibiotics - yet his vital energy is ebbing: a few hours' exertion one day makes him almost incapable of getting out of bed the next, and he almost always falls quickly asleep with his head in my lap when we watch the television. Things are not as they were, not by a long way.

Over last Christmas and the New Year his persistent debility, night sweats and loss of appetite made him suspect

something serious was wrong. The several weeks of painful sinus infection and dry convulsive coughing took him eventually to the doctor, fearing the worst. But that premonition did nothing to soften the steely impact of the positive result.

That day, I arrived home late in the evening (oh god, to be absent at such a time!) - to find him sitting pale, bolt-upright in bed with the news instantly, cataclysmically on his lips. Stunned, by turns we talked mechanically or wept in each other's arms - faced suddenly, unambiguously with the possible end of all we had built together, all we had planned for the future, the final act of a life that had hardly begun. That night there were moments of rage and grief, of beating the bedclothes with despair and frustration, but nothing to the climax of reaction ahead.

The next day (a Friday) we spent together at home, intensely, closely, talking - amongst much else - with uncanny coolness about very practical matters - about wills, life assurance, maintaining our income, paying the mortgage - talking as if he were about to die - for that was how it felt to him: it seemed as if the news had itself not only given him the disease, but also pronounced a sentence of imminent death.

In the height of the early shock, we agreed to tell no one else. This fearful, depressed reaction rapidly gave way, as we thought of our circle of kindly, supportive friends, to a determination to tell most of them: secrecy would only intensify our sadness and cut us off from those very resources which would provide comfort and hope.

It was the sense of injustice which, I think, he felt most - we had both for so many years been careful, responsible. It must have happened before he knew there were risks to take or choices to be made - eight, ten years ago: oh, the unfairness of it! 'Why me? Why me?'

The following evening (Saturday) he was booked to go out with two dear friends of ours (we have always enjoyed some social life independently of each other) while I remained at home. I spent much of the evening recording the week in our diary.

Very late, the three of them returned, our friends leading him pale, unsteady, drunk beyond measure from the taxi. He slumped on the stairs, weeping raspily, while they went into the front room in floods of choking tears. Evidently he had told them. I closed the door and stayed on the stairs with him. He was desperate, furious, grief-stricken, violently, helplessly angry: 'Bastard life, bastard life!' he hissed again and again through his sobbing.

Slowly, the peak of anger passed. We returned to the room. Our friends' grief at the thought of losing someone they loved so much - and others who might fall victim too - was violent, and he and they cried and cried, hurt and fearful, as we sat successively in each other's arms till early morning, the tear ducts aching and wide open.

It was a time of the most extravagant grief I have ever been close to - dear people overcome, overtaken, utterly overpowered by one commanding emotion. I alone remained dry-eyed and unaccountably calm.

He and I woke together on Sunday strangely relaxed and cleansed - the depths seemed to have been plunged and

were now passed. The climax - the nadir - was now over.

So we told many - most - of our friends during the following days and weeks. It prompted such an outpouring of love and support and concern that it was exhilarating and beautiful. It was as if knowledge of death allowed hearts to be opened in a way sometimes only apparent at funerals - when the frank declaration of love and appreciation is tragically too late to enrich the life of the loved one.

There is no cynicism in this - for even doing our best, most of us have, on occasion, learnt only too late that we could, should have done better - should not have wasted those precious times when love was felt but not shown.

If our friends comfort and sustain us, there is also much else that gives strength: we feel great pride and pleasure in our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and in our community especially, now, knowing at first hand at a time of need their practical, effective and generous responses to the reality of the virus and disease; pride that 'our' people and their many friends have confronted the nightmare with imagination, responsibility and maturity.

Strength and comfort come too from the NHS doctors and nurses in clinic and hospital who have not simply provided efficient medical services, but have also demonstrated great goodwill, patience - and humour. None of us should expect less in any circumstances, but we are grateful to find such qualities in the midst of our crisis.

Knowledge of death concentrates the mind and the affections. We do not feel that we have wasted our nearly seven years together - we have had a full, varied and