

When the clocks stop

Gary chose not to join Margaret in the garden after their evening meal. He preferred to escape the sultry heat. There was thunder in the air. Bruised clouds thickened in the west, swept on by atmospheric winds. It had been a usual sort of day in the office. A day glued to the ubiquitous screen, except for an hour in the weekly high-powered management meeting. He had not learned that success opened the door to even more demands on him and his staff. On normal evenings he would clear his mind taking the dog for a walk and tackling one of those hundred and one jobs on Margaret's list. Tonight however the dog had a pleading look – *Let's not go out tonight!* It was far too hot to mow the lawn. In any case the midges would be wanting to share his supper. He had wanted to tidy the shed but it would be like an oven in there after today's heat. No, this was an evening for Gary to sit, relax and chill. It felt right. He was too tired even for the regular routine of finding what programmes were on the television and deciding there was nothing worth watching.

It was the strange silence which drew Gary's attention. No cars racing along the avenue tonight. No children's voices squealing innocent pleasure across in the park. He went across to the window, pulled back the net curtain to see out. He could have been alone in the world. There was an air – of expectation – a brooding consciousness of time. Sitting still again with heavy eyes, he rested his head against his raised hand and in the quiet, first became aware of his watch – the merry, earnest ticking, exciting or irritating, depending on your mood, hungrily gobbling up the seconds. So different to the old cased-clock in the hall. Gary could hear it clearly. From childhood that slow, steady beat had been the background to many sleepless nights. A comfortable, caressing sound as though the old clock relished each measured moment. Gary compared it to the flashing button on his television recorder, urgently demanding, *Press me! I can turn yesterday into tomorrow.*

It happened in no time at all, or rather it just **was!** There was no time! Time had stopped! His thoughts, comfortably free, Gary was conscious instantly, of a strange silence. A stillness, filled with one gentle sound. It could have been the amalgam of all noise condensed into a single low note. He saw the clouds had stopped moving. The tick, tick, ticking watch was suddenly silent as though having screeched to a halt at a sudden red light. The television's flashing numbers signed off – there was no tomorrow for which to save today. The old hall clock's pendulum hung straight, weighed down as with a restful sigh.

Gary's thoughts, which took no time, for now there was no time, were all about *no time!*

No time to prepare – prepare for what?

No time to pack – but he needed nothing.

No time to mow the lawn, to tidy out the shed.

No time to say goodbye.

Not even time to have regrets.

No time to say '*I'm sorry*'.

No time. Time had ended. Now in that new dimension beyond time there was only Gary and his God. Only Gary and Jesus. Jesus – timeless love. Jesus of the eternal scars.

Gary and Jesus - and Judgement!