

TIME TO DECIDE

Eric had been naïve. He had listened to his wife, Suzi, when she had told him that she kept getting home late because of the pressure of work. And the smell of smoke on her clothing? That was because she had to share an office with a chain-smoker. Eric believed his wife because, as a minister himself, he knew that they had sworn their undying love for one another before God and Suzi would never break her word.

Then, one day, Eric came home early and, not wanting to disturb his wife, who had taken the day off for some relaxation at home, let himself in through the back door. His ears were assailed by the sound of his wife's voice.

'Yes, of course I love you more than anyone else in the world, you know that. Yes, I shall leave him, of course, but now is not the right time. He's a kind man and he deserves my respect. I just don't feel any passion for him. That's the problem.'

Stunned, Eric turned around and let himself out through the back door again, taking himself off through the local streets, where he witnessed children playing and mothers laughing. But Eric was lost in a bubble of sadness, lacking any comprehension of what he had heard.

Eric did not say anything when he returned home, apologising for being late, an irony not lost on him, given Suzi's repeated excuses.

Over the next months Eric turned from minister to detective, changing the habits that he had kept all his life, regularly rooting through his wife's handbag, as he pieced together her other life, with a man called Richard. Eric did not confide in anyone, preferring instead to speak to The Almighty, who he knew was always listening.

'I've organised a special birthday surprise for you,' announced Suzi, two weeks before a day that Eric had no inclination to celebrate. 'You know how much you enjoy cave diving? Well, I've booked you with a local group. Eric The Cave Man will be reborn!'

How could she sound so happy when she knew the truth, that she had deserted him for another man because he was not the cave man she truly desired?

Then the day came. Eric was in a group of ten. As the adventure evolved, an unexpected surge of water separated Eric and another man from the rest. Water, man's best friend and his reason for life on Earth, was now his enemy.

Was this God intervening, taking his life and ending his misery, without guilt?

The other man was struggling even more. 'Help me! Help me!' he yelled. His hands were clinging to a rock, but his fingers were letting go, perhaps for the last time.

'Please! Please! I have to live.'

'I'll do my best. What's your name?'

'Richard. Your wife knows me.'

At that moment Eric understood that he had to make a decision for himself, or a decision for God.

But which was the right one?