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The Same Old Story

by Rosalyn Hurst

The unrepaired tarmac surface littered with holes and cracked like smallpox added to the gloom of the silent parade of shops. Built for a housing estate in the optimistic days of the 1960s, it could not, nor would not change to accommodate the new residents of some thousands, who had moved into new developments, suburbs of a suburb. Only the frail and elderly now made quick and short expeditions the few shops that remained open, no cheerful café, no inviting seats to encourage them to linger. Isolated in this hinterland devoid of public transport the younger residents traded entirely on line while driving their children to distant schools. So, on this early winter afternoon, the team gathered, a an endless number of vehicles raced along roads, avenues and closes, competing with the school run, the commuter run.

The team were a motely crew, but increased in number from the last round. There were three young enthusiasts, that is to say they looked to be under forty. All recently moved in, seemingly having in common that they had bought a doer-uppers. Looking down the list, the regular members of the team were surprised to note that many changes of property ownership had been not entered. 'I never knew Mrs Mitchell had died,' said one, 'No gone to a Care Home, had to sell up quickly, that's how we could afford the house,' There was a shocked and some introspective silence from the older members of the team.

The rain was easing off, developing into the light but lethal drizzle that works down the back of necks, that makes leaflets soggy and thus unable to post through obstinate letter boxes. Leaflets were handed out, directions given and the team broke into pairs as they started the trek to their area.

Old age and cunning always beats youth and enthusiasm, so it was with years of experience, that the recently joined and younger members of the team were given the east section. There was East Road, with their steps up to every front door, East Roads flats, easy access to each door but a lethal climb up concrete stairs strewn with

debris that only the rain blowing in stops it from being a constant fire hazard and East Close, where every house had a letter box right at the bottom of the door plus dogs that would snatch at fingers.

No, the more experienced team were directed, with thanks, to the west. They walked more slowly these days, some had posted leaflets for the Party since the election of 1970 and they thought fondly of that time, of coming down this very road, in the sunshine and people in their front gardens, or washing cars, or children playing on the pavement. But now the silence, the lonely faces looking out at them, almost without curiosity.

Another election, same old story, same old lies. A new beginning or a return the same old place. A sense of optimism, a sense of despair. Another leaflet to post, another vote to be cast.

The world turns, something new, something old. Election days in May are warm, but November afternoons are cold.