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## Unwanted Visitor

by Stuart Carruthers

“Pour me a drink Valerie, no the bottle on the right, I’ve not had a week like this since Paul did you know what.”

Upstairs what sounded like a million kids’ feet hammered the old timber floors. Hysterical screaming vibrated around the old stone house. The doorbell sounded just at the wrong time.

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Steve paced the room with a sky view. His door remained locked and despite the endless requests, they ignored his appeals. A man of few possessions. Over the years he developed imaginary friends based on the characters he knew from the Boswell estate. When the dark nights rolled in, they kept him company inside his repressive world. Outside familiar voices fought hard to be heard. Faces pressed against cruel doors. It was best to drift away to another place for peace of mind. Despite their hardened exterior they were scared of the unknown. They knew something was coming. It was the lack of control that kept them awake at night.

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Earlier that morning Valerie ventured out on her own. She was desperate to speak to her other half as the virus was spreading fast. The phonebox by the corner shop was empty. Opening the door Valerie’s shoulders dropped when she saw the receiver in a million pieces. It was a long walk to Bakers Street and the nearest phone. But this was

outside her curfew zone. Turning right into the alleyway between the terraced houses she walked quickly to avoid attention from the preying windows. Emerging onto the deserted High Street she suddenly froze. Up ahead she spotted the car, its windows full of condensation. After what seemed like an age she emerged carefully, walking close to the shop fronts. The car occupants exhaled smoke from the small window gaps and laughed loudly. Valerie could feel her beating heart as she walked down the eerily quiet street. Too scared to walk any further she stepped back into the empty bookmakers' doorway and waited. The car didn't move. In the distance the bells of St Michaels struck ten. The weather turned nasty. Leaning against the shop door, she slowly slid down until she squatted on the floor. She was too strong to cry. The walk home took ages.

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It was the news they didn't want to hear. For weeks, depending on who shouted the loudest, that was how they got the latest news. Rumours often contain some element of truth. But eventually they reveal themselves for what they are. On a cold Tuesday morning while most of the occupants were still asleep, Lucifer came calling. Within hours fear gripped the hardened souls on E-Wing. Men who without blinking an eyelid would take your last breath, suddenly descended into a dark place. In that moment as they sat alone with their thoughts a realisation came over them. Suddenly they were vulnerable.

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The man in the long grey coat removed his finger just as the door opened. Despite his large frame the rain dusted Valerie's face. He spoke. Valerie called for the person he really wanted to see. On a damp cold doorstep, a young woman's life was about to descend into a world she wasn't prepared for.

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Steve paced up and down in his one room abode.

"Look lads, any idiot can face a crisis; it's this day-to-day living that wears you out."

"And we definitely have one in charge Steve." For a brief moment Steve smiled, as the howls of laughter from his friends occupied his mind.

"What? I'm serious, I'm constantly thinking about it 24/7."

"How did he every get into this position, I mean look at him?"

"You only have one tea bag left, so share it around."

On the other side of the door all hell was breaking loose. Blooded fists hammered unresponsive doors, as desperate cries called out the shadows descended.