

F For FOG

“Fog is forecast”. A fog these days is of nought, a mere mist compared with the fogs of my childhood. Then the world, as I knew it, was transformed into a muffled, yellow-tinged, ghostly nightmare. Buses stopped running and returned to the depot in nose to tail convoy, trains were delayed and schools, factories, mills and offices closed early. I walked home, pleased to be let out of school early and before Homework had been set but I had about two miles to walk. The familiar route was obscured by a thick cloying miasma. Visibility was reduced to just a few feet. It was already dark when I left school with its reassuring lighted windows. The fog, which had been building all day, had grown thicker as darkness fell. The usual sounds of traffic trundling along the main road were muted and deadened. It was as though I had been robbed of my sense of sight, hearing and taste. My sense of smell was still intact. I could smell soot and coal and the unique smell of fog. I wrapped my school scarf firmly around my nose and mouth but my breath condensed making the wool wet and uncomfortable. Figures loomed up suddenly and unexpectedly, their footsteps silenced.

As I reached the park, only recognisable by its green painted railings, the fog was so dense that I could hardly see my own feet. Even the passing traffic was more sporadic and those drivers foolhardy enough to continue to drive along a road without distinguishing marks, were crawling along, their heads stuck out of the side window. The streetlights barely penetrated the gloom. Their dull faded light merely helped the impression that you were still moving forwards. A hacking cough from one side of the street was answered by one, or several, from my side of the road.

I was struggling to breathe. The air was thick and cloying. The wet wool against my nose was hardly up to the job of filtering the foul atmosphere. As I reached the Old Ball Inn, I caught up with Mrs H. struggling along with two heavy shopping bags. I startled her by saying in sepulchral tones

“Shall I carry a bag for you?”

She looked round fearfully, only recognising me as her near neighbour when I pulled aside my scarf-mask.

We walked on together, glad of the mutual support, grateful for a companion to negotiate our route home through streets made unrecognisable by a darkness that belonged to neither night nor day.
