

not like the old days

you told me they were all miserable around here
“its not like the old days where we used to live;
when we knew each other’s business
we knew each other’s ways.
we could leave our door open - most of the time
a baby out the front
the washing on the line
the milk on the step
and run credit at the shop
come to think of it, when did that all stop?”

but you didn’t remember that business of Dad getting grassed up for doing cash in hand
the weird looking neighbour and his brother Stan
that house that burnt down
mysteriously
and the jumper that smelt of smoke
or the nights when I was too scared to get off the bus from school
not knowing who I was going to meet
not knowing if I’d get home in one piece
and that morning when our dog didn’t come back...

this place though
you say
“it’s not like the old days here
nobody speaks
nobody crosses the road
nobody laughs - nobody jokes
nobody knows one another’s names
nobody cares
nobody has five minutes
nobody shares – nothin’.”

but that day you had your fall
and Rob at 32 rang me up
to tell me that Mr and Mrs Gadhavi had taken you to the Walk-In centre
and could Mrs Franks have the spare key as she’s got some food
to stock up your cupboards
and to turn on the heating
and for Mr O’Hare to move your bed downstairs
I think you could tell
this was not like the old days
at all
the old days was hell.

By Nick Knibb