

TIME LOST.

*An audio play inspired by conversations with, and ideas by Dennis Cattell.
by Vic Llewellyn.*



TIME LOST.

The text in red font indicates a sound effect.

A Fridge door opening.

Malcolm: (*disappointed*) Oh No...

A Fridge door closing.

Narrator: This story starts with a potential cup of tea. I say potential, because I didn't have any milk, and the cup of tea never got made. At least, not until later.

Malcolm: No blooming milk.

Narrator: The Newsagent was about a half a mile away, but I could take the short cut across the common. I put my coat on. Harris Tweed. I didn't buy it new, of course, too expensive a classy coat like that. I got it from the St Peters Hospice charity shop. Five pound it was. The lady behind the counter said it was a bargain. Coat like that would probably cost £100 new!

Front door opening.

Malcolm: Blooming Nora!

Narrator: That was my first big surprise. Maybe I never really got over it. Outside the front door the world, or at least the street, was covered in a thick fog. Like milk, I thought. It was like the clouds had come down to street level. That's what fog actually is, I suppose. I looked up the road towards where the common started, but I could see no further than a couple of feet.

I extended my right hand. It had a strange clarity in this damp atmosphere. Everything around it dissolved into a white oblivion.

Front door shutting.

Narrator: A dog barked in the distance. Unsettled by this wet mist that had suddenly enveloped its life.

Mrs Parkin comes out of number 42. Her sharp piercing voice that penetrates even this thick soggy air.

Mrs Parkin: See you later.... I'll be back at six....so, remember to put the Lasagne in the oven at a quarter past five.... Bye!

Morning Malcolm.

Malcolm: Morning.

Mrs Parkin: This is a right old pea-souper, isn't it?

Malcolm: Yes.

Mrs Parkin: I have to drive to Gloucester this morning. Just my luck.

Malcolm: Yes.

Mrs Parkin: Still it's going to burn off later. Going to be a beautiful day they reckon.

Malcolm: Do they?

Mrs Parkin: Bye.

Malcolm: Bye.

Narrator: Mrs Parkin always tells me where she is going. I never ask. She just tells me. That's what she's like. Never asks about me though. About where I'm going.

I head to the entrance to the common. I can nip across here to the Newsagent. It's a pleasant short cut. I always stay on the path, so my shoes don't get muddy.

It's a cold morning, and I stop to clap my numb hands together in an effort to warm them. I can hear rapid steps getting nearer. A couple, an old man and woman loom out of the mist.

Old Man: Watch where you're going mate. Didn't see you there.

Old Woman: Lurking in the gloom he was. Gave me a right old shock he did.

Malcolm: I wasn't lurking.... I was....

Old Man: No problem friend. Watch how you go.

Old Woman: Yeah...Don't stray off the path, ducky!

Old Man & Woman laughing...

Narrator: I entered the park; the cold misty air entered my lungs. Just off to the left is the tennis courts. I could see shadows moving about behind the wire fence. Surely no one was playing tennis in this fog...I could make out three amorphous dark figures condensing out of the hazy air. One of them begins rattling the fence. One is coughing as if he wants to release his lungs from his body.

The sound of a rattling fence.

The sound of dreadful coughing.

Man 1: Hey mate!

Man 2: Hey mate!

Man 3: *Cough...cough.... cough...*

Man 2: Hey Mate...stop!

Man 1: Yeah, stop will yer? Have you got a light mate?

Malcolm: No, sorry. I don't smoke.

Man 3: *Cough... cough.... cough....*

Man 2: You hear that sarge? He doesn't smoke.

All the men start coughing.

Narrator: The sound of the collective coughing makes me feel queasy, and I move away from the tennis courts. I begin to walk faster, the presence of the men loitering on the common has unsettled me and the damp air seems have taken on a malevolent energy. Almost like the mist was a sentient being and I had invaded its territory.

A strange and unearthly sound.

Malcolm: My God! What's that?

Narrator: The sound crawled out of the white and swirling space on my right. I instinctively begin to run in the opposite direction from which it came. I leave the path.

The sound of running and heavy breathing.

Narrator: A gigantic dark presence looms in front of me.

A sound of a thud and a gasp.

Malcolm begins to laugh.

Narrator: I'd run straight into a tree! I'm not a hippy but I gave that tree such a hug that it will probably live for another hundred years.

Then, the smell of a cigarette smoked outside.

"The men have found a light", I thought.

Each molecule of the white air around me felt suddenly hardened, altered, warped into thick dense tobacco smoke. I began to cough.

The sound of coughing.

Older Woman: Malcolm! Malcolm! Are you out there? Come on in your tea's getting cold.

Older Man: Come on Malcolm, Your Gran's cooked your favourite.

Narrator: Fear took over. I began to run. I reach the path. The expected crunch of the gravel does not arrive. I look down, and I am standing on a floral rug, worn in patches. The brown nap shows where restless feet have rubbed away the fibre.

A wooden chair is thrust into the back of my legs, and I sit with a jolt.

I am in a living room. An open coal fire burns in the corner fireplace. There is tatty floral wallpaper and brown dusty wooden furniture in a style that went out of fashion half a century ago. The smell of smoke pervades and clings to everything.

There is an old man sat in an armchair opposite me. An oily antimacassar lies like a crumpled bird on its back.

He is sucking on a cigarette as if his life depended on it.

Older Man: You alright Malcolm? You look like you've seen a ghost, lad.

Narrator: There in front of me, materialising out of the gloom, is an old lady, a lighted cigarette hanging from her lower lip as if it was part of her flesh.

Older Woman: Here you are love. I've cooked your favourite. Beef stew.

The sound of marching boots fades in and becomes loud before fading away into the distance.

Older Man: Don't be alarmed lad. It's just the young men that have joined up. Off to France they are.

The Older Woman: I hope they'll be alright.

Older Man: It'll all be over by Christmas.

A Police Car, its sirens wailing and lights flashing pass in the near distance.

Narrator: It was that moment that I suddenly came out of my reverie. I was sat on the bench that lies halfway across the common. I had sat on it many a time. It's where the old men sit and smoke.

Had I fallen asleep?

I quickly stood up and walked the short distance to the row of shops that contained the Newsagents.

Sound of a shop door bell.

Shopkeeper: Alright Mr Cooper?

Malcolm: Yes, thank you.

The sound of a fridge door opening and closing.

Malcolm: Just the milk please.

Shopkeeper: Anything else?

Malcolm: No thank you.

Shopkeeper: You alright, Mr Cooper? You look like you've seen a ghost.

Malcolm: It's just the fog. It's got into my bones a bit.

Shopkeeper: Fog?

Malcolm: It's outside.

Shopkeeper: Yeah right you have a good day now.

Narrator: I leave the shop. I'm shaking inside but not that anyone would notice. I look up across the common and I can see through cool clear air almost to my street. Way up in the sky an airplane leaves a white smoky contrail. A young lady approaches, her hair like a blonde flag blowing in the wind.

Young woman: What a lovely day.

Malcolm: Yes lovely.... It's a lovely day.

Young Woman: You can see for miles up here.

Malcolm: Yes, you can see for miles.

Narrator: I swiftly walk home. The potential cup of tea becoming more of a probability.

The End