NESTOR

an

age

recalled

by

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NESTOR

1

once

there were cobblestones

which stretched

all the distance

of the lane

you could

tell when the ice-cream

cart arrived by

the chattering hooves

and clattering wheels

echoing from

wall to wall

then from every

doorway would

tumble ragged britched

urchins with

blacked faces

and strong

dark eyes

glowing with

anticipation

as they charged

helter-skelter

to the cart

clutching in

mucky paws

the precious

coin

then away

it would go

followed noisily

by the unlucky ones

and the street

would return

to normal

with a tattered

ball

retrieved from

the guttering

around the

tennis courts

a memory

of the

summer

being kicked

to and fro

and over the

wall

and to and fro

by the tireless

mass

11

slowly the

mist would crawl

up the valley

from the

coast

and the iron red

sunset would

fade gradually

into evening

and the

weeds between

the cobbles

would be

lost in the

shadows as

they slept

grateful of another days

grace

closing their

eyes before

the hard gas

lights were]

primed into

action

setting up

their own challenge

against the night

and around the

base of the lamp

at the corner

the last remnants

of the mass

would gather

silhouetted in

the half light

each one

protected by the

glare

from the

strange unknown

beyond the dark

and later

there would

just be the

lamp as it

watched over

the lane

111

The lane

held many secrets

as it stood secure

watching with

patience

the comings

and goings

the living

and the dying

as days

altered the

stage of life

a faded

autumn leaf

lifting its tail

as it fought

between the

cobbles and

the wind

the cold wind

that was always

present

people did not

venture out much

in that time

the streets

hollow

but for

the leaves

now pulling on

the winter overcoat

of frost

seizing their chance

to sparkle

before the coaldust

settled over

and around them

then

the morning

when you woke

and knew

that the snow

had arrived

children

peering through

crisp windows

thoughts of

sledges and

springwell bank

but the old people

just turned

away a

shiver of the

past

or possibly

the future

these were the

hard times

when children

asked and

fathers cried

1V

the snow never

lay deep

in jarrow

but the cold

cut to the quick

as the winds

from the north

bleached faces that

had forgotten

warmth

bodies that even

love could not

heat

the empty hearths

gaped laughingly

a joke echoing

past doorless

frames

they had long since

provided heat

and in those caverns

mothers still

performed miracles

with no-one asking

questions

life continued

as the white

turned slowly

black

and the icicles

shortened

the sun could

once more be

seen between

the piers

in the east

people started

to smile once

more and

wink in time

to the rattle

of the riveters

in the shipyard

at the end

of the

street

V

there are still

cobblestones

all the distance

of the lane

but they now

lie asleep

under a blanket

of tarmac

the ice cream man

still comes down

the lane

and children

much like any

other children

still come

clutching their

money

theyre not so

ragged now

but the unlucky

ones can’t

run after the

cart anymore

it goes too fast

for them and

leaves behind

a smell of

diesel

but now their

parents have learned

and the wind

blows warmer