

Around the corner.

She only lived around the corner.

It was in the local paper. Susan Green, widow, found after the neighbours called the police. Dead ,apparently for months.

I`d seen her once putting out her rubbish, hadn`t wanted to interrupt. I hadn`t seen her face. I never even nodded `hello`.

Thought little of it. I had rushed on, to some trivial task, loaf of bread ,newspaper ,packet of tissues purchase. Often the highlight of my day was realising I needed to pop to the shop where I`d be able to pass a few words with an assistant, or if I was feeling brave tut about the weather to a stranger in the queue.

I`d noticed as I passed that she held her body like a friend I had known, many years ago. Of course I made no connection, as this lady was elderly.....but of then, so am I now. It`s easy to forget, until you glance at yourself in a shop window. Or a sales assistant addresses you as `love` or `dear, with concern as you fumble to retrieve your credit card from its holder or hesitate to recall a PIN number. Or great excitement on a Tuesday when you joined the other `elderly` to claim your `over 60 Iceland discount`.

The newspaper article played on my mind, I wasn.t sure why. The next week there was discussion in the paper about loneliness and isolation, showing this Susans photo, relating again to her death. `A Lonely woman, kept herself to herself`, the article highlighting how neighbours sometimes have no idea who lives in their nearby houses. That`s not me, I tell myself. Why I nod at various people I pass in the street.

Susans photo, showed her frailty as she had attended a Local charity Christmas meal. Again, there was something about her face caught my attention.

I read on through the article. Used to live in Bolton, why -I had too. She had worked in the towns sausage factory before moving to our town a few years ago. With a gasp, the penny dropped. This wasn.t Susan Green to me, it was `Sass`, We girls had called her that because she was 20 year old Sassy who had cheeked the foreman relentlessly. I choked back a tear, how had I not realised - when I thought she held her body in that familiar way. Why had I not taken a second of my day to say `good morning`, Then I would have heard her

distinctive accent. We could have shared a chat, even a cuppa and reminisced on our factory days.

We could both have stopped being lonely.

If only I`d realised she was just around the corner.