

Somewhere Unfamiliar

Kathy awoke and, even before her eyes were fully open, she knew something peculiar had happened.

She let her eyelids pull apart and very quickly realised that this was not her bed. It was far less comfortable, in fact it was hard and without sheets, pillows or a duvet. As she roused a little more it dawned on her that she was not lying on a bed at all, she wasn't even in her bedroom. She was outside, facing upwards towards the stillest sky, and sprawled, slightly awkwardly, along a park bench. All the more odd was that she had no idea how she had got here. The last thing she remembered was being in the art gallery, walking her tour group round, explaining the pictures and artists, gently advising them not to touch the paintings and tarnish their authenticity, as she had always been strictly advised, and answering their sporadic questions. There had been wine at the event but Kathy knew she had not touched a drop. So how had she ended up on a bench in a park? And why was it so quiet and still, and sort of strange?

Kathy frowned as she turned her head back up towards the sky. It was a weird sky, there were clouds but they didn't seem to be floating, just sort of white hazy blobs above her. And where were the birds? And people?

She tried to retrace her steps to fill the gaps between being at the gallery and here. She recalled explaining the painting of the teapot with the flowers flowing out of the spout. Then her group had moved to the one with the girl hiding under a table supposedly 'hiding from a scary monster' (according to a tour group member who had been attempting to crack jokes at every painting).

Kathy had then guided them further along the hall to the hazy seaside scene with silhouettes of bathers in 1950s beachwear, to the abstract Earth painting

where the planet was a chalky grey against a blue and green washed out background, to the picture of the park bench that rested unoccupied under a slightly oddly coloured sky with white hazy blob clouds that she'd felt a sudden overwhelming urge to touch...

Kathy threw her hand to her mouth and felt her eyes bulging. Her heart began to race and she thrust her head sideways. Through a film-like almost crinkled sheen she saw them. The giant faces of the people she'd been guiding through the gallery, all staring at her, the lady lying on the bench in the park in the painting, their eyes wide, their mouths huge gaping circles of disbelief.

Written by Jo Ash © 2024