

tempera and the iridescence of colour in the work was captivating. Analiese smiled back as he looked at her, this 500-year old young man, his skin translucent and radiant, dark hair falling to his broad shoulders, eyes warm, mood pensive. She admired his handsomeness, more enticing for the lack of perfection, his uneven lips and pert nose.

Analiese wondered about the young man she was waiting for. Bringing a finger to her face and running it up and down her nose, she remembered his nose and decided it was like that of the young man in the portrait, a smidgen too broad and too long. Not that she was in a position to judge, her own nose being too long for her face, ruler straight and with a blob at the end that looked like Blu-tack. She held her forefinger against the point of her nose, forcing her eyes to engage with the painting rather than drifting back to the doorway.

The rhythm of footsteps behind her caused her to jump and she sat upright with a start, having long forgotten about her initial attempts to perfect her posture in anticipation of his arrival. Her nerves like beads in a shaker, she turned to face the sound, unsure of whether she was going to say something about his tardiness or launch into a hug.

“Closing for the day now. If you could make your way to the exit please.” There was no warmth to the words, a mechanical phrase uttered by the security guard day in, day out. Analiese frowned, nodding in acquiescence. She bowed her head before the painting as she stood, accepting without admitting that the only young man she was going to meet that day had been hanging before her for the best part of the afternoon. She sighed a long drawn out breath, trying to disperse the suffocating sadness.

As she left the gallery, her posture, with its curved shoulders, bent head and downward eyes, spoke of defeat. Her mood was a fading grey against the terracotta bricks of the gallery, its verdant lawns and rainbow flowerbeds. The dainty pastel petals of new roses brightened Analiese’s path as she left the gallery, their scent tainting the cooling night air. Had she not been distracted by her sorrow, she might have noticed them swaying in the breeze, waiting to be praised for their beautiful spectacle.

And had she not been lost in a fog of remorse, she might have seen the young man, not dissimilar to the one from the gallery, standing across the street, watching her.