

The Visit from the Rose Lady

One thing was for certain, Charles had been here before. As he looked around him, old familiar sights met him. There was the rose garden with its plump pink roses, climbing up their trellis, set against a sea of lilac and, above him were a small flock of birds with their short stumpy bodies and their large oval shaped wings.

A noise brought his attention from the sky and, from the depths of the roses appeared a face. It was her. After all these years, the lady of Willow wood had returned to him. Gracefully she stepped from the plant.

“Come.” She commanded, her voice sounding like an echo from the past. Charles followed her, realising that it was the first time he had seen her without the rose bush being entwined round her. She wore a robe, almost like a kimono and it was a pearlescent cream, not silver as he once thought. Now that he could see her clearly, the robe was encrusted with beads of many colours. Before, he believed them to be mirrored with the odd hint of blue.

The deeper into Willow wood, Charles was met with visions he had forgotten about. The strange angular willow trees with their creamy white catkin hanging low, trying to kiss the ground, the old pieces of twisted willow that had tangled itself looking almost like a grid with the long slender, rich bluebells growing at the base and the sound of the small waterfall, where green and pink droplets of water fell to the ground. All these visions he had manifested as art for the Willow Tea Room... but why was he here again, after thirteen years?

They walked towards the centre of Willow Wood, where the large well sat but, this time the lady did not stop here like she did before and so, Charles glanced into the depths of the well, seeing the lost souls reflected in the water, looking and searching for their lost love. The lady walked into thicker woodland and down an incline. Here the atmosphere was cool, strong. This part of Willow Wood was new to him. The branches criss-crossed each other and were covered in lichen giving it a blue tinge, while in other areas old rounded tree stumps, which were almost black with damp had a scattering of

bluebell petals, as if giving the stump a cushioned lining. Towards the back of the area, where the foliage was so dense it looked like a black canvas, vibrant coloured blooms sat, bunched together as if, nature had collected them in its own basket of flowers and, beside it was a dense rectangular patch of violet crocuses framed by bright canary yellow daffodils. The lady walked to the side of the floral displays and sat in an ornate throne. It was most unusual. A large black diamond framed in red. This in turn was framed in white and then blue. Either side of the diamond were three triangular peaks, flowing with the same inlaid colours. It was striking, unusual and so different to anything he had seen before and, yet its angular form was so fitting with the lines and shapes within the wood.

“Why have you brought me here?”

“You needed to see.”

“See what?” The lady outstretched her arms. Charles looked around him. There were many pieces of art that he could manifest from these visions. She stood and walked towards him, a small rose appearing from her robes behind her as she walked. Following her guided hand he saw that the willow trees here, had pink and lilac catkin shapes, the green bushes were square... Fluttering his eyes, he woke. The room was dark and Margaret was gently snoring beside him.

It was around ten thirty when Margaret walked down the street and bumped into the postman who handed her a letter. Charles looked at her study the handwriting and smile before entering through the turquoise door. He always liked the door colour. It brightened up what would be a very drab Glebe Place and Chelsea needed more colour.

“If I am not very much mistaken, I believe you have just received a letter from Kate Cranston.” Margaret said, handing the letter to her husband. Charles opened the envelope and took out the sheet of paper. “Well don’t keep me in suspense Toshie, am I right?” He looked up from the letter and nodded to her.

“It was Kate. It turns out she has bought the neighbouring basement property next door to the Willow Tea Rooms and she wants me to design the space for another men’s only area.” Charles suddenly remembered the rose lady from the night before and

like a tsunami, ideas and colours began to flood his mind. He knew exactly what this new area would look like. The Dug Out was born.

