

# THE WRONG CLOTHES

by Jonathan Edgington

(A monologue for a male or female actor.)

(The actor stands in Salisbury Museum looking at John Constable's famous painting *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows*.)

Nice painting that. I've been in it. Not this one. The original. The one in the Tate. Some paintings let me in. Others don't. There are rules.

Things have to be real. Paintings of things actually there. The rainbow's fake in this one. Surprised I got in. Not like Constable to slip in a bit of fantasy. His wife had died not long before he started painting it and he added the rainbow to cheer himself up. A sign of hope in troubled times. Nice touch. That's what he told me anyway when I peered over his shoulder. I left him to get on with it. Best not to interrupt the creation of a masterpiece!

There has to be a link between me and the painting for it to let me in. When it's about to happen I get this feeling of electricity running through my body and a sensation of being sucked towards it. I have about ten seconds to walk away otherwise it's too late and I'm inside before you can say "good brushwork".

The guys in the cart gave me a funny look but didn't stop. Fortunately my coat didn't look too out of place and my Nike trainers were so caked with mud that they couldn't see them. Not a good idea to get caught wearing the wrong clothes in 1831!

I squelched over to the church. Turned out my great, great, great, grandmother was buried in the churchyard. **(Points to the churchyard in the painting.)** There's her grave-marker. That was my link. My escape route. Just about to head back to the Tate when the local clergyman nabbed me for a chat. Nice chap. Thought I was a surveyor from the Great Western Railway Company. Worried that they were going to knock down his church to build a railway through Salisbury! I reassured him on that score and got out of there as fast as I could.

You're only allowed inside a painting once. There's no way back in once you're out. The problem is getting out. If you can't find your link you're stuck there forever!

The whole Constable episode really shook me up. And it cost me – my trainers were ruined! I vowed never to go near a painting again. It was all going well until last night when I popped round to a friend's for dinner. She'd bought a water colour of Salisbury Museum at a car boot sale. Cleaned it up and stuck it on her dining room wall. Never told me. Caught be completely unawares! So here I am back in Salisbury. Can't find the link to get out this time. Getting a bit desperate. Need to be back in 2040 tomorrow for my daughter's wedding...

**-END-**