

## The Roman Swim

Jamie always struggled with fitting in. He always felt invisible, hidden, ignored. He drifted behind the group, taking in the surroundings, the damp air of the Roman Baths, the echoing trickle of water and his class taking selfies with each other. The water shining against the light bought him a sense of peace. The others reached the gift shop, but he didn't have much time to take it in as he was mostly trying to follow everyone around, in the hopes that someone would talk to him.

Jamie stayed for a bit by the bath, imagining what life was like when the baths used to be working, a community; as a loner Jamie struggled with the idea of community.

Not too far down the bath, he could hear one of those tour guides - they were talking about some sort of legend. Jamie was interested so he edged closer, while making sure his class hadn't gone, not that they'd notice anyway. Now the tour guide's voice was clear, he was talking about a past legend that a young boy drowned here in the 1800s; the guide saying that he had snuck in after closing. Some say they can still see his horrified reflection. Jamie brushed that daunting thought to the very corner of his mind, but somehow it stayed with him, like tiny pebbles in your shoe.

That night the hostel was hot, six people in a cramped room with a fan clanging and on its last legs. Jamie could not sleep. The thought crossed his mind again, but was quickly shut down as he thought he didn't want to turn into another drowning boy myth. The Roman Baths were only a few streets away, and he didn't get much of a chance to look around earlier. Then an idea occurred to him. He crept along the hall, dodging the reception and slipping out of the fire door, praying it was not alarmed. For obvious reasons, the main door was locked, but using his knowledge of lip reading, he had seen the staff say that they always left the fire escape gate open. He chuckled as he slipped out undetected. It was dark, but the baths were still visible in the moonlight.

Jamie crept about for a while, taking in the eerie yet mystical surroundings. The museum was locked so he had to stay around the main roman bath, but there was still a lot to take in. Jamie also found a set of hidden stairs which led up to a balcony, this had a view of the abbey. He didn't know how long he sat there for, but he just enjoyed the moment of sanctuary. He thought about messaging his mum about his 1am adventure because she would probably find it funny, but he thought better of it; just in case.

The late, night breeze brushed his face. Jamie heard the sound of some echoing owls who were trying very hard to make themselves heard, and the scuttling of seagulls and their babies sorting through rubbish like a recycling centre.

After some thought of what he may do next, he walked back down, bearing in mind the thought of how much trouble he would be in if he was caught. He walked past the closed museum doors and leant on the gate which guarded the main bath; which was where

people mainly used to be, back in the day. Barely a few moments later Jamie heard some sort of noise, and he was unsure if it was old broken fence or a person.

Panic struck in. Certainly, it was a person, but surely not? This was a flight or fight moment. So the only logical thing in that moment was to jump in, there was no other place to go. No, he thought. There must be all sorts of yucky diseases in there! It was all too confusing and time was running out because a figure was approaching.

Thoughts rushed through Jamie's head, it was warm, it was cold, maybe lukewarm? He stayed there for as long as he could, the unending emptiness beginning to grow on him. As Jamie rapidly ran out of patience to hold his breath the 13-year-old boy had to rise, and quietly pop his head out of the water. Thankfully whoever the unsettling figure was, had gone.

Jamie's mouth tasted like metal or blood, he couldn't decide which one of the two this was. It was gross, he was in such a state that his teacher would definitely say he is not acting with decorum. Suddenly, Jamie was sucked down very, very quickly and washed, carried deep into the depth of the bath and was sucked onto a grate; thankfully, slightly too small for him to fit through! He was glad he didn't go to the gym – although he may re-consider this thought on a later date. Jamie tried to swim up but was losing hope as there was a constant suction. The rushing sound of the water in his ears was overwhelming. Just as he was about to pass out - it all stopped. Was it the suction? Or had he gone faint? His partially lifeless body floated to the bath surface; the surprising amount of salts and minerals in this Roman pool kept him afloat.

From this moment on Jamie had absolutely no memory or recollection of what happened. Jamie must have been floating there for long because the next day he woke up, in his bed, with all of his roommates still asleep? He was very confused. Jamie didn't know who brought him back, how he was still alive. Was someone watching him the whole time?

As usual Jamie got up, showered and stumbled down to breakfast. Last night's activity got him deep in thought. We will never know who saved him and brought him back through the locked doors. That remains a mystery.