

FINAL DESTINATION

Nobody knows I'm here.

Nobody cares.

It's been over five years now. People come and go, but I remain. I've been 'left on the shelf'. No husband, no children. Only the cleaner Agnes notices me, flicking her duster around, as if conducting an orchestra. She gently strokes my face, 'One day,' she whispers, 'One day'. Making the sign of the cross, she switches the light off and shuts the door. Newcomers arrive and they are settled in, but within a few weeks they are taken away. Off to new homes with relatives, maybe to their favourite park? Some might go to the coast, others back to the golf course. But still I sit here. Forgotten.

Mrs Barton, the owner of the establishment, bustles into the room. Blonde hair swept up, her sharp black suit in contrast to the cream frilled blouse around her neck. She taps her immaculate manicured nails on her clipboard. Eyes darting across the room, she sees me, tilts her head to one side and sighs.

I don't remember how I got here. I'd started to forget things, then one day I got on a bus, I couldn't remember where I was going, I don't recall much before or after that. But I know I have no one left in the world.

Mrs Barton and a man I've seen before come in. They stop in front of me.

"It's time we moved her on, it's been five years now."

"Yes, such a shame, all the press coverage at the time. Nobody knew who she was."

Taking a white handkerchief from his top pocket, he loudly blows his nose and continues,

"Do you think we should try one more appeal? Somebody must have known her, surely someone remembers her?"

"Ok," Mrs Barton sighs, "We'll give her six more weeks. Then I'm afraid that's it." She notes something on her clipboard and they move on.

Judith sits with the newspaper on her lap, tears plopping onto the paper.

"It's Annie, I know it's her. This article describes what she was wearing when she went missing."

She tells her husband, "We should never have let her stay on her own once she started getting dementia, but she went downhill so quickly." Judith sobs, "Can we go and pick her up now? Let's bring her home. I'm her sister, her only family. I've let her down."

Two hours later Judith and her husband stand outside the home. Mrs Barton lets them in.

'I'll bring her in. Err, you said her name's Annie? I'll give you some time.' She nods.

"Oh Annie, I'm so sorry. You must have been getting the bus to see me, but got confused and went in completely the wrong direction." My sister holds me close. I have a vague memory now.

"Then you made the fatal mistake of stepping off the kerb in front the bus."

Judith cradles me in the urn as we start the long journey home, I wonder where my final destination will be?