

No one really knows where the blue balloon came from. Some say that it crossed the river from Chelsea, winked an eye to the Peace Pagoda, flew through Battersea Park and arrived onto our street. Others insist that they saw it coming from Richmond, but that its flight started farther away, maybe beyond the Channel.

I was in my study, marking exams when I saw it. It hit the window, spinning on itself, showing funny faces.

I called my son. Maybe I would be able to distract him from the TV, video games or whatever he was doing, wasting his half-term.

He didn't come. The blue balloon hit the window once more.

'Ernst! Come, quickly!

'What's up?' – he shouted from downstairs

'Nothing. Too late'

I put my spectacles on and returned to the exams, but couldn't concentrate. Outside, the sun was shining in the cold autumn afternoon. I remembered when I used to take Ernst to the playground in the common, centuries ago. I went out for a walk.

I sat down at Wandsworth Common's café.

'You haven't seen a blue balloon floating around, have you?' I asked Anna when she brought my tea.

'A blue balloon? Not really, when was that?'

'Oh, never mind'

'I've seen it' – a little girl pointed to the sky, in direction to the train tracks.

As I came into the other side of the common, black clouds covered the sky. Raindrops fell on my head, and then I saw it. The balloon was near Bolingbroke Hospital. As the rain poured, I ran.

I lost it a few seconds later. I stopped running, looking for a signal from the hospital's windows. They looked like black eyes in the darkness of the rain. I cried, without any sense, without any fear. I was wet, cold, looking for a silly balloon and it was getting dark.

I went on up Bolingbroke Grove towards the St Mary's cemetery, drifting away from home.

I sat on a bench at the cemetery as the rain stopped. I tried to arrange my hair, which was in a complete mess. I craved for a cigarette. Then I saw it again, pushed by the changing wind back towards Wandsworth. I shrugged.

'Time to go back to the exams' I told myself.

I warmed up a bit by walking fast to home. The last rays of the sun appeared for an instant over the horizon, and the raindrops hanging from the trees sparkled.

Ernst opened the door.

‘Well, look at you! Where have you been? I didn’t even notice that it was raining!’

‘What about you?’ - I asked – ‘I thought you wouldn’t leave your room until next Monday’

‘Something funny happened, I heard a knock on the window, I got distracted and I lost at level 33. Then it hit again, it was a balloon’

‘Which colour?’

‘I don’t know... red, I think?’ – and he passed me a cup of tea.