

EXTRACT: SUSANNAH THOMPSON

Like an infinity pool, but a garden, she thought, pulling herself over the ha-ha. And then, a folly, completely concealed, delicious, behind a thick curtain of yew. The building is a chapel, a sacred space in a secular Modernist sanctuary. Overlooked and unseen, an oratory, built over the grave of an early martyr and the only one to have escaped the iconoclast's gaze. Or so says the plaque. She pushes open the doors. They scrape heavily, scratching a worn stone path, creaking and groaning.

She had arrived a week ago. Going weak in the presence of beauty was nothing to do with profound emotion but the very lack of it: she was just exhausted. Absolutely exhausted. And when she stopped to look at things in the gallery the tiredness overcame her.

She continues. An effigy of a knight and his lady, five funeral hatchments on the wall, a small ceremonial wooden shield used in mock jousting. And more...a plain 12th-century *piscina*, a pair of Norman arches decorated with chevron and zigzag carvings, an ancient font in a chalice shape, an exquisite piece of tracery carved from a single block of stone. And on the floor, a tiny painting, or a copy of one. 'Prudence', it appears, has three faces: past, present and future. A compass in her right hand, a mirror in her left, she is seated in a *studiolo*, a study with reading desk and book. On the pedestal, the following words are legible: RES ET TEMPUS SUMMA CURA...VIDENTIS MEMORATUR...“

She is agnostic but it feels miraculous. Woozy with synaesthesia, her weariness lifts and flies.