

★ "GRABS READERS FROM THE BEGINNING AND DOESN'T LET GO."
—PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED

THE LONDON EYE MYSTERY



YEARLING

SIOBHAN DOWD

ONE

A Giant Bicycle Wheel in the Sky

My favourite thing to do in London is to fly the Eye.

On a clear day you can see for twenty-five miles in all directions because you are in the largest observation wheel ever built. You are sealed into one of the thirty-two capsules with the strangers who were next to you in the queue, and when they close the doors, the sound of the city is cut off. You begin to rise. The capsules are made of glass and steel and are hung from the rim of the wheel. As the wheel turns, the capsules use the force of gravity to stay upright. It takes thirty minutes to go a full circle.

From the top of the ride, Kat says London looks like toy-town and the cars on the roads below look like abacus beads going left and right and stopping and starting. I think London looks like London and the cars like cars, only smaller.

The best thing to see from up there is the river Thames. You can see how it loops and curves but

when you are on the ground you think it is straight.

The next best thing to look at is the spokes and metallic hawsers of the Eye itself. You are looking at the only cantilevered structure of its kind on earth. It is designed like a giant bicycle wheel in the sky, supported by a massive A-frame.

It is also interesting to watch the capsules on either side of yours. You see strangers looking out, just like you are doing. The capsule that is higher than yours becomes lower than yours and the capsule that is lower becomes higher. You have to shut your eyes because it makes a strange feeling go up your oesophagus. You are glad the movement is smooth and slow.

And then your capsule goes lower and you are sad because you do not want the ride to end. You would like to go round one more time, but it's not allowed. So you get out feeling like an astronaut coming down from space, a little lighter than you were.

We took Salim to the Eye because he'd never been up before. A stranger came up to us in the queue, offering us a free ticket. We took it and gave it to

Salim. We shouldn't have done this, but we did. He went up on his own at 11.32, 24 May, and was due to come down at 12.02 the same day. He turned and waved to Kat and me as he boarded, but you couldn't see his face, just his shadow. They sealed him in with twenty other people whom we didn't know.

Kat and I tracked Salim's capsule as it made its orbit. When it reached its highest point, we both said, 'NOW!' at the same time and Kat laughed and I joined in. That's how we knew we'd been tracking the right one. We saw the people bunch up as the capsule came back down, facing northeast towards the automatic camera for the souvenir photograph. They were just dark bits of jackets, legs, dresses and sleeves.

Then the capsule landed. The doors opened and the passengers came out in twos and threes. They walked off in different directions. Their faces were smiling. Their paths probably never crossed again.

But Salim wasn't among them.

We waited for the next capsule and the next and the one after that. He still didn't appear.

Monday 24 May, 11.32 a.m.

Ted and Kat watch their cousin Salim get on board the London Eye. He turns and waves and the pod rises from the ground.

Monday 24 May, 12.02 p.m.

The pod lands and the doors open. People exit in all shapes and sizes—but where is Salim?

When Aunt Gloria's son, Salim, mysteriously disappears from a sealed pod on the London Eye, everyone is frantic.

Has he spontaneously combusted? (Ted's theory.) Has he been kidnapped? (Aunt Gloria's theory.) Is he even still alive? (The family's unspoken fear.)

Even the police are baffled. Ted, whose brain runs on its own unique operating system, and his older sister, Kat, overcome their prickly relationship to become sleuthing partners. They follow a trail of clues across London in a desperate bid to find their cousin, while time ticks dangerously by . . .