

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:29,640

Good evening, welcome to a new series of strange but

2

00:00:29,640 --> 00:00:35,800

true in which eyewitnesses tell us of their encounters with the unknown. Tonight the story

3

00:00:35,800 --> 00:00:40,600

of a group of people who experienced something so disturbing that they cut short their holiday

4

00:00:40,600 --> 00:00:45,560

in one of the world's most beautiful cities rather than risk another night there. They were

5

00:00:45,560 --> 00:00:51,560

guests of Lady Bamford who'd spent nearly 20,000 pounds hiring a Venetian palace for two weeks.

6

00:00:52,280 --> 00:00:57,240

Every one of the guests who included film star Joan Collins abandoned their stay

7

00:00:57,240 --> 00:01:02,600

after just two nights. We've pieced together the strange events that ended with them all

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00:01:02,600 --> 00:01:09,320

fleeing the palace. Can their experience be explained away as collective hysteria or was there

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00:01:09,320 --> 00:01:24,840

something more? Venice is a living museum to an age of grandeur and privilege.

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00:01:25,560 --> 00:01:32,440

Today's tourists are attracted by its glorious architecture. It's public facade of faded glories.

11

00:01:33,960 --> 00:01:39,240

But there's a more melancholy sight to Venice too. A city struggling to save itself against the

12

00:01:39,240 --> 00:01:45,320

ravages of time. Perhaps that explains why time past and time present are met here.

13

00:01:45,960 --> 00:01:51,560

Why this is not just a city of gondolas but of ghosts. Well I think it's the most

14

00:01:52,120 --> 00:01:57,160

strange thing that's ever happened to me. It's not the most frightening thing or the most terrible

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00:01:57,160 --> 00:01:59,880

thing but it's certainly the weirdest thing that's ever happened to me.

16

00:02:05,640 --> 00:02:07,160

For me it was an absolute nightmare.

17

00:02:12,760 --> 00:02:14,360

I'm never going back to that place.

18

00:02:14,600 --> 00:02:15,560

I'm never going back.

19

00:02:19,560 --> 00:02:20,600

Don't take it away from there.

20

00:02:22,840 --> 00:02:24,680

Fantastic. Fantastic.

21

00:02:29,960 --> 00:02:35,480

Once one of Venice's most splendid edifices the Palazzo Albrizi stands in the center of the city.

22

00:02:36,120 --> 00:02:41,160

It was bought by the Albrizi family in the 17th century and is still owned by the family today.

23

00:02:41,320 --> 00:02:46,680

Despite its crumbling appearance it retains a charm of its own. A stylish backdrop for one wealthy

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00:02:46,680 --> 00:02:53,960

English woman to entertain a group of glamorous friends. Is it what we wanted? It's extraordinary.

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00:02:54,680 --> 00:02:59,800

It's like stepping back in time. Karen Keeling had worked for Lady Banford for 17 years.

26

00:03:00,520 --> 00:03:07,720

She was a perfectionist and she wanted everything to be perfect. She wanted to create a very

27

00:03:07,800 --> 00:03:15,800

romantic atmosphere as Venice would have been in its heyday sort of 400 years ago.

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00:03:17,000 --> 00:03:18,280

I'm sure you'll like it.

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00:03:21,080 --> 00:03:23,320

The guests were due to arrive later that day.

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00:03:24,760 --> 00:03:29,960

Sean Mullin the family's former chauffeur had also traveled ahead to give Karen a hand organizing

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00:03:29,960 --> 00:03:36,040

the Palazzo staff and a freelance butler Gastoni Burigama have been employed. This was his first

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00:03:36,040 --> 00:03:42,040

assignment at the Palazzo. We'd already been out the days before getting caterers ready and

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00:03:42,040 --> 00:03:48,760

ordering flowers to be delivered that day and organizing this room in the Palazzo so that

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00:03:48,760 --> 00:03:54,440

people could just come and sit down and have a nice dinner party. It's colder in here than any

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00:03:54,440 --> 00:03:58,360

other room in the palace don't you think? Oh don't worry it'll soon warm up when everyone's here.

36

00:03:59,400 --> 00:04:05,480

We couldn't have a dinner party without these. We had been out scouring Venice in fact for

37

00:04:05,480 --> 00:04:13,560

these tragedies because Lady Bamford likes them wherever she is. They're golden silver hard chocolate

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00:04:13,560 --> 00:04:20,520

things. Night fell the guests finally arrived and the holiday was launched with the dinner party.

39

00:04:21,960 --> 00:04:25,960

Post-S Lady Carol Bamford who'd spent months planning the proceedings.

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00:04:27,240 --> 00:04:33,240

Film star Joan Collins accompanying Joan Collins was Robin Hurlston.

41

00:04:33,480 --> 00:04:41,000

When we walked in Robin and I first of all it was it was September so it was very very hot

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00:04:41,640 --> 00:04:48,920

in Venice but as soon as we walked in it was like 15 or 20 degrees colder and dark and gloomy

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00:04:48,920 --> 00:04:56,760

with all kinds of artifacts on the walls kind of old machetes and knives and strange things.

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00:04:57,960 --> 00:05:02,760

Alice Bamford the hostess's daughter was there with her friend Caroline Wellesley.

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00:05:04,040 --> 00:05:08,200

And Hugo Guinness whose birthday they were celebrating. We think that all the planning

46

00:05:08,200 --> 00:05:12,360

and preparation had been a success because everybody seemed to control themselves at this dinner

47

00:05:12,360 --> 00:05:19,560

party and the champagne flowed. People were happy. Everyone to a week in Venice. Oh to Venice.

48

00:05:20,680 --> 00:05:28,280

And of course to Hugo happy birthday. Happy birthday. Thank you. Oh boys. But already there was a hint

49

00:05:28,360 --> 00:05:34,760

of things to come. This night air certainly brings the temperature down doesn't it. During dinner

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00:05:34,760 --> 00:05:41,960

I felt this freezing cold draft on my ankles but I mean really like somebody was blowing

51

00:05:41,960 --> 00:05:48,600

on my the bottom part of my legs. We left that evening and everyone seemed very happy. It wasn't

52

00:05:48,600 --> 00:05:55,160

until the next morning when things started to go wrong. Morning. Morning Robin. I've had an awful

53

00:05:55,160 --> 00:06:00,920

night. Just couldn't sleep. That's probably the rich food you had. I don't know what it was. You're

54

00:06:00,920 --> 00:06:07,080

not the only one. The girls have been complaining too. They say they felt a bit spooked. Come on let's go and eat.

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00:06:08,280 --> 00:06:17,880

We'd all had dreams very strange dreams very troubled haunted dreams I suppose. I'm usually

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00:06:17,880 --> 00:06:24,360

sleep like a log and I did not sleep well at all that night. Down in the kitchen Gastoni the

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00:06:24,360 --> 00:06:28,280

temporary butler was with the cook who'd worked at the palazzo for many years.

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00:06:42,840 --> 00:06:49,480

I remember walking into the room the very room that we'd thrown this dinner party in

59

00:06:50,440 --> 00:06:57,640

as I enter the double doors I just stopped dead in my tracks. I couldn't quite believe my eyes.

60

00:06:59,720 --> 00:07:03,400

This lady was walking towards me a gray outline.

61

00:07:06,440 --> 00:07:11,880

She took three or four places at which point she turned at right angles and disappeared through

62

00:07:11,880 --> 00:07:17,240

the wall. I don't believe in ghosts I'd never seen a ghost done because I could see through

63

00:07:17,400 --> 00:07:21,240

this woman's body and clothing. I assume that's what I was looking at.

64

00:07:23,320 --> 00:07:28,520

You'll never believe what's just happened. Are you okay? I think I've just seen a ghost.

65

00:07:30,200 --> 00:07:35,160

You're joking. I couldn't believe it. I didn't believe you I thought you was making it up

66

00:07:35,160 --> 00:07:39,480

and but he wasn't. It's not the kind of person to make stories like that.

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00:07:40,040 --> 00:07:40,600

I don't.

68

00:07:47,480 --> 00:07:50,680

She said a huge black moth has just flown in through the kitchen window

69

00:07:51,240 --> 00:07:57,320

and she said and every time someone sees a ghost the moth has seen. Now at this time in Venice it

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00:07:57,320 --> 00:08:05,480

wasn't the season for moths. The cook then went on to tell us a story of the house which happened

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00:08:05,480 --> 00:08:11,880

apparently 400 years ago. It was the story of the woman in the dining room portrait.

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00:08:13,560 --> 00:08:17,160

The husband couldn't have any children so his wife took a lover

73

00:08:18,040 --> 00:08:22,200

and they were found together in the dining room which would then have been a bedroom

74

00:08:24,920 --> 00:08:26,840

and he chopped off her head.

75

00:08:29,240 --> 00:08:33,960

And in his rage decapitated her with his sword and that's the story the cook told us.

76

00:08:34,760 --> 00:08:40,840

Well, it's on your story. I don't think we should be too concerned. It's a nasty one but not one to

77

00:08:40,840 --> 00:08:45,560

give us nightmares. Sean must be overworking. Come on let's go. I can't wait to see the doggies palace.

78

00:08:46,440 --> 00:08:51,240

The guests spent the rest of the day taking in the sights of the city trying to forget the Palazzo

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00:08:51,240 --> 00:08:58,840

in its gruesome tale for a few hours. Karen and Sean also went out to stock up on supplies

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00:08:58,840 --> 00:09:03,240

returning to the Albreitzi later that afternoon. Come on up look at this.

81

00:09:03,960 --> 00:09:08,120

Castoni led them into the dining room. The scene of the previous night's dinner party

82

00:09:08,120 --> 00:09:14,040

where a strange sight awaited them. It's probably one of the girls having a joke.

83

00:09:14,040 --> 00:09:18,120

No one has been in here all day. I am the only one who has been here. I know.

84

00:09:19,720 --> 00:09:26,200

There was no way this was an accident. The dry cheese on the floor was six foot from the bowl.

85

00:09:27,400 --> 00:09:32,440

That had put them in and there was still some left in the bowl and the bowl hadn't been tipped on the

86

00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:40,840

floor. I began to think about it. Not that there was a ghost but what had really happened.

87

00:09:42,360 --> 00:09:46,360

The guests et out that night at the famous Harry's Bar in the center of the city.

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00:09:47,560 --> 00:09:54,840

Well when we left Harry's Bar the bill was rather extraordinarily high because we'd had truffles,

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00:09:54,840 --> 00:09:58,760

white truffles which are very expensive so there was a lot of laughing about that.

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00:09:58,840 --> 00:10:07,640

And we took the water taxi across the canal and as we grew closer and closer to the piazza

91

00:10:09,080 --> 00:10:19,400

we became more and more subdued. We were feeling more and more sort of quieter and thinking what

92

00:10:19,400 --> 00:10:26,120

does tonight hold for us. To make matters worse Venice experienced one of its biggest

93

00:10:26,200 --> 00:10:30,760

thunderstorms for several years. We had to go running around closing all the windows.

94

00:10:32,040 --> 00:10:36,840

The net curtains were blowing into the rooms. Water was running down the inside of the walls.

95

00:10:37,880 --> 00:10:42,040

We had to switch all the lights off because they were flickering. So really the whole house

96

00:10:42,040 --> 00:10:49,000

was plunged into semi-darkness. Everyone was still talking about the ghost and was it safe for them

97

00:10:49,000 --> 00:10:55,880

to stay that evening at the platso. Sean you do think we'll be all right here on our own? Of course

98

00:10:55,880 --> 00:11:01,880

this place is perfectly safe. We'll be fine. Karen and Sean were staying at a nearby hotel.

99

00:11:01,880 --> 00:11:07,080

None of the staff stayed at the platso after dark. Look at that!

100

00:11:17,080 --> 00:11:21,720

It's a trick of the light. That's probably what you saw this morning when you saw that ghost.

101

00:11:21,720 --> 00:11:26,520

The shadows in here are playing tricks with your eyes. Maybe. Go and get the others. We'll show

102

00:11:26,520 --> 00:11:30,920

them this and stop them worrying about everything. Okay. It was quite obvious that it was a trick of

103

00:11:30,920 --> 00:11:36,840

the light because as you walked towards the image it disappeared, faded into the wall. I did this

104

00:11:36,840 --> 00:11:40,920

several times just to check. Look at this!

105

00:11:44,040 --> 00:11:49,080

You see? It disappears as you get closer to it. Well I don't like it and I'm not going up to my

106

00:11:49,080 --> 00:11:52,120

bedroom without a torch. Well don't worry we'll get you one.

107

00:11:59,400 --> 00:12:05,720

I looked up at the painting of the Contessa and for some strange reason I felt very sad. A lot of grief.

108

00:12:08,840 --> 00:12:11,720

And water started streaming out of my eyes down my face.

109

00:12:13,320 --> 00:12:15,320

Sean?

110

00:12:16,760 --> 00:12:18,760

Sean?

111

00:12:20,040 --> 00:12:24,040

Sean, let's get out of here. Come on.

112

00:12:24,040 --> 00:12:32,600

They were standing in the doorway and they both looked very shaken, very white and Sean had tears rolling down his face.

113

00:12:32,600 --> 00:12:35,480

I don't believe it! What now?

114

00:12:35,480 --> 00:12:37,880

I'll go and have a look. This place is beginning to fray my nerves.

115

00:12:37,880 --> 00:12:39,320

I'll come with you.

116

00:12:39,320 --> 00:12:44,280

All I wanted to do was to clear the matter up, sort it out so the guests could be happy.

117

00:12:45,080 --> 00:12:50,840

We were thrilled at being invited to Venice and we were looking forward to 10 days looking after these people.

118

00:12:51,640 --> 00:12:54,360

And the last thing I wanted was for anything to go wrong.

119

00:12:55,080 --> 00:12:59,160

We came into the room, Robin stood there and I was just here when...

120

00:13:14,280 --> 00:13:24,280

Two men, one mission.

121

00:13:32,760 --> 00:13:37,320

For Sean, Karen and the guests the holiday was turning into a nightmare.

122

00:13:37,320 --> 00:13:40,840

They felt they were encountering something beyond any rational explanation.

123

00:13:40,840 --> 00:13:42,840

Oh Sean, what's the matter?

124

00:13:42,840 --> 00:13:45,960

I felt as if someone was trying to push me into the ground.

125

00:13:45,960 --> 00:13:49,960

There was a tremendous pressure on my back. I've never felt anything like it before.

126

00:13:50,920 --> 00:13:57,800

It felt like I had this ton weight and I was doubling up with pain because it was really hurting.

127

00:13:58,680 --> 00:14:01,000

I was in quite some agony.

128

00:14:02,280 --> 00:14:05,800

Sean was the one that went around scoffing. I don't believe in ghosts. I don't believe in ghosts.

129

00:14:05,800 --> 00:14:10,520

Absolutely ridiculous. So stupid. Nobody a hope. How can any of you think about it?

130

00:14:11,080 --> 00:14:16,840

So he, because he seemed to be the one that was the most vehement in his disbelief,

131

00:14:17,400 --> 00:14:20,200

he was the one that seemed to be the most affected.

132

00:14:22,200 --> 00:14:23,480

This is extraordinary.

133

00:14:25,880 --> 00:14:26,920

There's nothing here.

134

00:14:28,120 --> 00:14:30,680

But when I got to this spot it was like crossing a line

135

00:14:31,640 --> 00:14:34,120

and I felt as if I was walking into a fridge.

136

00:14:35,000 --> 00:14:36,840

Karen, Karen, what's going on?

137

00:14:36,920 --> 00:14:42,760

I found myself looking at the painting on the wall. In particular her eyes seemed to look straight through me.

138

00:14:45,080 --> 00:14:50,760

I just felt very cut off and very distant as if hypnotized almost into a different world.

139

00:14:51,720 --> 00:14:53,480

For God's sake Karen get away from there!

140

00:14:55,720 --> 00:14:59,240

There's something there. I don't know what it is but there's definitely something there.

141

00:14:59,240 --> 00:15:01,240

Not enough. I'm going to get to the bottom of this.

142

00:15:01,240 --> 00:15:03,000

Oh please stop now! Please!

143

00:15:03,000 --> 00:15:04,440

Karen's right. Stay away.

144

00:15:07,240 --> 00:15:10,680

This time the pressure was three or four times as heavy.

145

00:15:10,680 --> 00:15:16,120

My shoulders were being squeezed together so hard that it felt like my blood was bubbling and boiling.

146

00:15:17,640 --> 00:15:20,360

I really think that Karen thought I was having some sort of heart attack.

147

00:15:21,960 --> 00:15:25,720

What's going on in here? Oh my god!

148

00:15:25,720 --> 00:15:33,720

Now this is a, you know, a very sort of stalwart man in his forties who looks like

149

00:15:33,800 --> 00:15:38,760

he could certainly say boo to a goose who has become a sort of gibbering wreck.

150

00:15:39,640 --> 00:15:41,960

That's it. That's enough. We're getting out of here.

151

00:15:42,680 --> 00:15:45,720

Alison Caroline you go to your room together and get your things.

152

00:15:46,520 --> 00:15:47,880

Hugo and Robin you do the same.

153

00:15:48,520 --> 00:15:51,080

Where are we going to go? It's one o'clock in the morning.

154

00:15:51,080 --> 00:15:54,440

We'll think about that later. The priority is to get out of here.

155

00:15:54,440 --> 00:15:56,120

Come on, shall we? Let's get you outside.

156

00:15:56,120 --> 00:15:56,840

Oh all right.

157

00:15:56,840 --> 00:15:57,400

Come on let's get him.

158

00:15:58,360 --> 00:15:59,000

Get him outside.

159

00:15:59,000 --> 00:16:00,360

Doctor did you feel it?

160

00:16:00,360 --> 00:16:02,200

I felt something strange in here earlier.

161

00:16:02,200 --> 00:16:02,920

I'm sorry.

162

00:16:04,520 --> 00:16:11,480

When Lady Bamford had made the decision to leave I was relieved and I couldn't wait to get out of the platter.

163

00:16:15,320 --> 00:16:19,960

By this time the two teenage girls were very very frightened and they were shaking.

164

00:16:21,320 --> 00:16:31,240

And so I was also frightened but I remember my parents and grown-ups during the Blitz

165

00:16:31,960 --> 00:16:37,240

um making me as a little tiny girl less frightened by singing.

166

00:16:38,200 --> 00:16:41,800

So I thought I'll sing. I'm a performer. I can sing.

167

00:16:42,680 --> 00:16:43,960

Who would believe this?

168

00:16:43,960 --> 00:16:46,840

We've been forced out of this beautiful palace in the middle of the night.

169

00:16:47,400 --> 00:16:49,400

We'll thank goodness we're all in one piece.

170

00:16:51,960 --> 00:16:58,680

I see trees of green, red roses too.

171

00:16:58,760 --> 00:17:05,400

Joan was brilliant really and she was keeping everyone in a good mood and she even started

172

00:17:05,400 --> 00:17:09,720

singing songs to take her minds off what had just happened.

173

00:17:10,280 --> 00:17:19,240

And I think to myself what a wonderful world.

174

00:17:19,880 --> 00:17:23,000

And we'll find this quite amusing at sort of two o'clock in the morning.

175

00:17:23,960 --> 00:17:28,680

But if it wasn't for Joan I think it would have really been a sort of a state of panic.

176

00:17:30,040 --> 00:17:32,200

Hugo and Robin had yet to join the group.

177

00:17:34,280 --> 00:17:34,920

Did you hear that?

178

00:17:47,240 --> 00:17:48,040

Let's get out of here.

179

00:17:53,800 --> 00:17:57,160

Knives only quiver right after they've been thrown.

180

00:17:57,160 --> 00:17:59,880

You know you cannot get a knifed quiver other than that.

181

00:18:00,520 --> 00:18:04,760

And um they were quite stunned.

182

00:18:11,000 --> 00:18:11,720

Are you all right?

183

00:18:11,720 --> 00:18:13,800

Oh never mind I'll tell you about it later let's just go.

184

00:18:16,920 --> 00:18:20,360

The Venetian holiday was over after just two nights.

185

00:18:23,240 --> 00:18:34,360

The next morning Gastoni knowing nothing of the previous night's events arrived to start work.

186

00:18:36,360 --> 00:18:38,760

I wouldn't bother with that Gastoni there's no one here.

187

00:18:38,760 --> 00:18:39,800

I don't understand.

188

00:18:41,320 --> 00:18:43,640

We were driven out of here last night.

189

00:18:43,640 --> 00:18:47,320

Well something ghosts whatever frightened us half to death.

190

00:18:47,320 --> 00:18:52,120

The next morning I had to go back to the plight so to pack the suitcases for the guests.

191

00:18:52,200 --> 00:18:54,120

Because the night before we'd left in Sottari.

192

00:18:58,280 --> 00:19:02,760

More incredible still were the secrets that the cook told Karen and Gastoni.

193

00:19:02,760 --> 00:19:07,000

It was apparently not the first time that guests have been driven from the palazzo by fear.

194

00:19:09,800 --> 00:19:16,120

That day the cook told us a story about a gentleman who was staying at Palazzo 10 years ago.

195

00:19:22,840 --> 00:19:28,600

He'd woken up in the middle of the night three o'clock in the morning praying in front of the picture.

196

00:19:29,160 --> 00:19:34,600

It was so frightened and so shocked by this experience that the next day packed Paul his luggage

197

00:19:36,200 --> 00:19:37,320

and left straight away.

198

00:19:41,000 --> 00:19:43,080

She then made an extraordinary request.

199

00:19:45,400 --> 00:19:49,480

The cook then suggested to me that all the guests should come back

200

00:19:50,200 --> 00:19:52,200

and say sorry to the painting.

201

00:19:54,200 --> 00:19:57,800

The atmosphere was very still and very quiet.

202

00:20:00,200 --> 00:20:03,000

And one by one everyone walked up to the painting.

203

00:20:05,640 --> 00:20:07,320

It was almost like taking communion church.

204

00:20:10,040 --> 00:20:16,920

I'm an actor so I'm very superstitious so I went and I said uh I'm sorry to the painter,

205

00:20:17,000 --> 00:20:21,560

to the painting, to the woman. I'm sorry Contessa whatever it was that we did to offend you.

206

00:20:21,560 --> 00:20:27,400

Apparently what we did to offend her was that we we ate in her dining room which is her domain

207

00:20:27,400 --> 00:20:28,600

and nobody ever goes in there.

208

00:20:36,440 --> 00:20:41,960

In my long career 45 years working in hotels and restaurants with all the greatest green

209

00:20:42,040 --> 00:20:49,800

personalities I have to say I have never had to say sorry to a ghost as if it were some kind of pilgrimage before.

210

00:20:54,040 --> 00:20:56,840

If I wrote this in a novel do you think anyone would believe me?

211

00:20:56,840 --> 00:20:57,960

Not in a million years.

212

00:21:00,680 --> 00:21:06,120

There were too many different things that had been happening in the uh almost 48 hours that we'd been there

213

00:21:06,680 --> 00:21:10,440

to say uh oh well this is just our imagination.

214

00:21:12,920 --> 00:21:16,840

Inspired by her Venetian adventure Joan Collins began writing a book.

215

00:21:17,480 --> 00:21:19,480

Part of the story is said in Venice.

216

00:21:21,240 --> 00:21:25,720

In a small cobbled piazza where the trees grew even taller than the narrow houses

217

00:21:26,360 --> 00:21:29,000

stood the decaying Palazzo Adbrizzi.

218

00:21:32,680 --> 00:21:37,080

She'd heard the rumors that the Palazzo was haunted by a beautiful Contessa

219

00:21:37,800 --> 00:21:45,320

decapitated by her husband in a fit of jealous rage 400 years earlier.

220

00:21:48,360 --> 00:21:52,440

It was an experience that um has certainly stayed with me.

221

00:21:52,440 --> 00:21:56,520

It's not something that has um a blurred with time.

222

00:21:58,920 --> 00:22:01,240

I wouldn't go back to the Palazzo again.

223

00:22:01,880 --> 00:22:03,080

No definitely not.

224

00:22:07,160 --> 00:22:10,680

The experience left an imprint on the lives of everyone on the trip.

225

00:22:10,680 --> 00:22:14,440

For Joan Collins it proved to be the source of inspiration for her work.

226

00:22:14,440 --> 00:22:20,520

Karen and Sean however were so seriously affected by what happened that they turned to the church for help.

227

00:22:20,520 --> 00:22:26,680

It was only after they received a blessing from their vicar that they say the nightmare has receded.

228

00:22:26,680 --> 00:22:28,680

Good night.

229

00:22:37,080 --> 00:23:02,140

Biblog