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The Good Old Days

by Garf Collins

“My childhood seems to belong to another world,” said Gerald.

His wife Mary looked apologetically at their neighbours and said,

“You’re sounding pompous again Gerald.”

Gerald and Mary often invited Peter and his wife Christine for a sociable drink. As usual Gerald sat in a commanding position, Christine sat separately in a smaller chair, leaving the sofa to Mary and Peter.

“Well I am sorry but it’s true.” Gerald went on, “Young people fiddle all the time with their phones. It’s a wonder they know how to speak any more. Not like in my day.”

“You’re right Gerald,” Christine added, “they spend all day collecting friends on Facebook. When I was a teenager I collected dolls. I had one for every country of the Commonwealth. But on my fifteenth birthday my mother gave them all away. I have never forgiven her.”

“I wasn’t one for collections,” said Mary as she poured another round of drinks, “more for playing games, hopscotch, skipping and kiss chase.”

“Just like me,” added Peter, “Not kiss chase of course, but being active. I made models of all sorts of things.”

Gerald, conscious of his assumed status said,

“I had an unsurpassed collection of coins. Sold them when I was fifteen for a lot of money.”

“I do collect friends though,” said Christine, “but they’re real people. I keep a record of everywhere we go on cruises and every person we’ve met.”

Peter surreptitiously nudged Mary who hurriedly raised her glass to cover a smirk.

They all quickly agreed that modern teenagers were bound to end up as deaf mutes incapable of remembering anything without Wikipedia and went on to deplore the incredible price of houses.

About 8pm they said their usual goodbyes. Gerald with stiff handshakes, Mary with enthusiastic hugs, especially of Peter. Then as Christine moved to give her a token kiss, she noticed a brooch Mary was wearing.

“Where did you get that? I’ve got one just like that in my collection.”

“I bought it at the Scout’s jumble sale,” Mary answered.

Peter looked startled but said nothing.

“Awful woman,” said Gerald after they had left. “Cruises indeed. Don’t know why we see them so often.”

Mary quickly replied,

“She’s not so bad really and Peter’s very nice. He can be quite funny when you give him the chance to get a word in edgeways.”

The following day Christine said to Peter,

“You made such a good job of tidying up the spare room, I can’t find my cruise records or costume jewellery collection anywhere.”

“Oh! I got rid of all the old stuff. I threw those old records out and my models and your junk jewellery I sent to the Scout’s jumble sale.”

“You bastard. I hate you. You are worse than my mother. You’ve dumped years of effort and to crown it all Mary got my favourite brooch from the sale. You seem to prefer her to me anyway so you can just bugger off and join her and the brooch.”