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The Blue Rinse Brigade

by Penny Humphrey

They used to call them the blue or pink rinse brigade in the 60's. White haired old ladies who dyed their hair a gentle baby pink or blue. The elderly were beginning to rebel but in a very soft way. And so it was that the coachload of old girls who, on the previous years' Jolly, had all turned out as a sea of fluffy white clouds, now struggled on to the coach looking more like a bunch of candy floss. The coach driver climbed into the driving seat. "Off we go then ladies" he called as loudly as he could manage for the sake of those with impaired hearing but Ethel, who always organised the trips, had just done a count up and there was one missing.

The driver sighed and switched off the engine.

"It's Mary, Ethel said, not like her to be late for anything. Anyone know if she's ok?"

No one did.

Five minutes later Mary came trotting breathlessly around the corner to roars of laughter and welcome from the pinks and blues. She was full of apologies as she boarded the coach and sat herself at the front next to Eileen. She was wearing her best dress of course but also a very large scarf tied tightly under her chin which caused a few titters from the seats behind.

At last they were on their way with a rousing chorus of 'Didn't we have a lovely time the day we went to Bangor', the bawdy songs would be reserved for the return journey after a few port and lemonades.

They arrived at Eastbourne front and saw the blue sea and the pier, they were ready for a fun day of ice creams, slot machines, and a ride on the Dotto train but first it was into the pub for lunch and a few drinks.

Eileen noticed that Mary, was unusually quiet today, she kept fidgeting with her scarf and frankly looking a bit miserable.

Lunch over, the happy bunch moved onto the pier and bought ninety nines before buying their tickets for the Dotto train.

Eileen turned to Mary. "Cheer up love, why don't you take that scarf off, it looks as if it's been bothering you." She leant over and deftly undid the scarf before Mary knew what was happening.

And then a chorused gasp from the assembled crowd as the cause of Mary's discomfort was revealed. Her hair was Green, not just any old green but bright green. Something had gone seriously wrong with the dyeing process, that was obvious. Her friends tried to keep straight and sympathetic faces but it dissolved into titters and giggles.

But then a couple of young lads walked by and wolf whistled, an old man winked, the Mods nearby Wowed with envy at the sight of the hair.

Mary's face turned from a look of horror to one of triumph, amongst all the blues and pinks it was she alone who had truly become unique