

2020-21 6th Chapel Arts Short Story Competition Winner (over 16)
Harriet Mummery

BLUE

Beep beep beep ...

Reaching out to stop the alarm in the half-light, she was aware that her outstretched hand looked odd. She turned on the bedside light.

Blue.

Why was her hand blue? And her arm? They hadn't been blue last night. But the bathroom mirror revealed more. Blue face, blue neck – presumably ...? yes, all the rest too. And blue hair. Good grief. Whatever was going on?

Should she phone the doctor? She felt well enough, with no other symptoms - just a very great deal of blue. Could it be something to do with blueberries? She hadn't eaten that many, but just look at blueberry jam. That's extremely blue, isn't it?

Should she go to work, or throw a sickie? It might be contagious. What if she turned everyone else blue? A strategic work-from-home day, perhaps? Sit it out for a day and see what happened. Phone round, cancel a few things, make some excuses. Tomorrow would be another day and who knew, it might have sorted itself out by then.

A quick scrub with a sponge to see if it would fade. It wouldn't.

After breakfast – porridge, but no blueberries - she felt a bit more relaxed and got down to work. They'd been very understanding when she'd told them that she wouldn't be coming in today. "Feeling a bit off colour". So, after an hour or so at the keyboard, trying not to look at her hands, she was just putting it to the back of her mind when the postman tapped at the door and gestured to her with a letter to be signed for.

"Make-up", she explained. "I've been trying something out for a thing I'm doing. With the drama society."

"Ah. Looks pretty realistic, that. Should be good. What's the play?"

"it's called 'Feeling Blue'. It's only a small role but it's important to get into it."

"Break a leg then. And it suits you."

By lunch time she was feeling peckish. A bowl of soup would do the trick, and some of that nice bread. But on close inspection, the end of the loaf had spots of blue. Should she wrap up and run to the shop? Could she get away with it?

Fortunately, on a chilly day, the big hooded coat and gloves didn't look too out of place, and for once the facemask was a blessing. The sun was out and the sky was blue, so the sunglasses were justifiable and might just be a distraction.

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Pretty quiet in the village and nobody in the shop gave her a second glance. She gathered together a few things and took the basket to the checkout. Liz was talking into her phone and scanned the shopping without looking up. She paid with her card and moved towards the door, waving back to Liz as she left.

"That's a strong look. You might start something with that. Have a good day."

By the afternoon she began to worry again. What if it didn't just wear off? She couldn't miss another day of work and she couldn't dress up like that every time she went out. But studying her face in the mirror, she thought it might just be starting to fade a bit. It might be wishful thinking, but she felt as though she looked a bit more normal. She'd still better see the doctor in the morning though. There was another knock at the door and from behind the curtains she saw a delivery driver hurrying away. Cautiously opening the door, she found a long, flat box on the step.

In the kitchen, she read the attached note from her friend at work. "Sorry you've got the blues", it said, and it wished her a speedy recovery. Inside the box were flowers. Blue hyacinths.

At bedtime, she was quite sure the blue was wearing off. Perhaps it's going to be all right after all. Whatever was causing it couldn't be that serious and she really felt ok in herself. Her hands were much pinker now and the blue tint in her hair was considerably less noticeable. With a dab of foundation in the morning she might be able to cover it up. It'd been a funny day.

Beep beep beep ...

In the half-light she looked at her outstretched hand and was relieved to see it didn't look at all blue. She reached up to open the curtains and the morning light spilled into the room and onto her hand.

Which was yellow.