**BSH 1**

**WHEN WE WERE YOUNG**

Four elderly gentleman, John, Arthur, Fred and Dave sat round a table of their local Pub, The Blackbirds, with a pint of their favourite brew and remain to reminisce about their childhood to a young lady reporter from the local paper, who introduced herself as Denise. She wanted to know how life in the forties and early fifties compares to the hustle of today’s world. John was the self-appointed main speaker and as he began to talk about the old times they all seemed to drift back to the days of their youth…

“Everything was different when we were young” he began, “the early nineteen fifties that is. Buses and trains ran on time, people were polite and the unemployment figures were low. Children respected their elderlies, the police were always honest, well, nearly always and hospital waiting list were non existent. On the other hand central heating was for rich people and schools, double glazing was unheard of, pea soup referred to fog and everyone went to jumble sales as car boot sales hadn’t been thought of simply because not that many people had cars.

Even the sport was different. No-one argued with the ref. at a football match, except the crowd. The England team could actually play cricket, snooker was associated with misspent youth and contrary to the male boasts of the time most men and women were virgins on their wedding day.

Fishing tackle was also different. No boxes then for anglers to carry or sit on. Most had an army big pack, bought from the local surplus store and a folding stool with a canvass seat. These were usually adequate but they had their drawbacks as a fishing trip the four of us went on was to prove.” He took a sip of his pint and his three friends smiled knowing what he was going to say. He then continued;

“We were fourteen at the time and had all piled into a railway carriage where the only occupant was a middle aged lady wearing a wide brimmed hat, a dark woollen coat and glasses, a real Miss Prim. She was reading a book and looked up with annoyance as we all heaved our army big packs, laden with fishing tackle, into the luggage racks, that had what looked like string vests for support, above the seats.

The train pulled out and one of us, can’t remember who, lit up a cigarette. The lady tutted loudly and looked as though she wished she were somewhere else but there were no corridors on this train. To compensate for her inability to change carriages she gave everyone an icy stare and with a loud ‘hmmph’ sound continued to read her book. The journey started in silence, of Miss Prim being an effective deterrent to conversation, so I looked out the window at the passing scenery. After a few minutes I received a nudge in the ribs from Arthur and as I turned round his eyebrows arched and his head nodded gently toward the seat opposite. My eyes followed the direction he was indicating and for a moment I could not understand what I was supposed to see, everything looked much as it did five minutes before, then, horror of horrors I saw what he was looking at. I watched as, one by one, maggots crawled from the top of my army big pack, which was lying on the string vest luggage rack, drop through the wide mesh and land in the brim of Miss Prim’s hat. As she read down the page her head tilted forward slightly and the maggots could be seen hurrying round and round as though searching for a place to hide. No one said anything, no one dared, after all we could hardly say,

“Excuse me Miss did you know there are maggots in your hat?” We all just sat and watched in silence as more of the white wriggling creatures fell into space and landed gently in the brim of Miss Prim’s hat. We were all silently praying that we would arrive at the next station, which was where we would get off, before the woman was aware of what was happening. Our prayers though were not to be answered.

Her head tilted forward a bit more than usual as she reached the bottom of one page and the maggots rolled forward to the front of the hat and cascaded over the top onto the open book. With a sharp intake of breath she lifted her head to look up and that was the wrong thing to do. The maggots left in her hat rolled backwards and spilled onto the back of her seat with a few dropping down her neck, whilst those falling from the luggage rack made their way down the front of her coat and blouse. She screamed, got to her feet and reached up to remove the pin that held her hat in place. Another wrong move because in her panic her hands crashed into the string vest luggage rack tilting the army pack to one side and instead of the maggots crawling out one by one they were tipped out in a rush onto the seats below.

Thousands of maggots were crawling on the seat and on the floor. Miss Prim began to get hysterical and started to rip her clothes off, shaking her head at the same time in a vain attempt to dislodge her hat. She managed to drag her coat off but was restrained from doing the same to her blouse. Fred and Dave were crawling round the confined floor space with an empty tin trying to rescue maggots from under her stamping feet while I tried desperately to collect those on the seat and Arthur tried to calm her down by saying all the wrong things like;

“It’s all right Miss they won’t hurt you, they change into bluebottles not wasps.” Miss Prim waved her arms about and began to shout, “Eeee arrrgh, oohhhh aaaahh.”

She managed to pull her blouse from the confines of her skirt and more maggots fell onto the floor, then she fainted landing in an untidy heap on top of Fred who promptly spilled the maggots he had just collected all over the floor again.

As quickly as they could and without any ceremony at all, Arthur and Dave picked her up and laid her on the maggot free seat opposite. No-one tried to revive her as we were all too busy trying to gather up as many escapees as we could find. We had just about finished the task when the train pulled into the station. Grabbing our fishing tackle we all leapt out, leaving the door open and whilst I told a station man, who looked incredibly like the ‘Fat Controller’, that a lady had collapsed in one of the carriages, the others rushed up the stairs with their tickets at the ready.

That sort of thing wouldn’t happen today of course. Oh, there are times when I long for the ‘days of my youth.”

“I wonder what happened to Miss Prim,” Arthur said smiling at the memory. Dave and Fred laughed at the memory too and they all took a drink from their pints.