

THE COLOUR KITTERS **By Shirley Basket**

There had been a lot of activity in the colour shop. Another baby was about to be born and all the bones and muscles had been formed.

The brain was finished, the skin was being completed and all the final details were coming to an end. Soon the new human would be ready to enter the world.

A team of colour kitters was ready to go. Their job would be to provide colour as long as this new human was on the earth.

There were the skin painters who were skilled with their palettes of pink, brown, black & blue, yellow, red and white. They were ready to follow the plan for this new person; ready for any emergency.

The eye kitters were carrying pots of white paint, brown and yellow. The hair kitters had tankers of dark brown dye and equipment ready, shiny new pumps and hoses.

Then the day arrived and the baby joined two sisters in a house by a lake. The baby was a boy with a round face and a tussle of tight brown curls. When he was a little older his sisters loved to help him bath. They liked to make soap towers of his curly locks. They were practicing to be hairdressers.

The hair kitters were enjoying pumping brown dye into every hair. They loved to keep busy. They drove about in their tankers watching for new hairs to begin their life in the huge hair forest.

Their job was to climb into the hair root and to pour the colour into the new shoot that would grow up and up into corkscrews joining all the others in ringlets like springs all over the boy's head.

The kitters had always done their job exactly according to the plan and the pattern given to them for each person they were assigned to. The tankers lasted such a long time.

However, as time went on and people got older the tankers would begin to run out. The baby's grandma had lost most of her tankers. They had been sent back to the master painter when she was fast asleep. The workers had gradually lost their jobs and had gone back for new assignments too. Just a few were using up their last pots of dye.

Every kitter knew how important it was to go along with the plan; everyone but the new kitter, on this new job. His name was Regan the rascal. Regan was tired of following instructions and decided that he had his own ideas. He thought his ideas were better than the master painter's. He thought he could make an improvement that would be so much better for this human.

As the baby grew up and became a little boy of seven, his hair started to get darker and darker. Soon some strange bright red streaks grew right in the middle of the boy's hair. Not the natural carrot colour that one of his sister's had, but a bright cherry red.

The teenage boy next door whose name was Aaron, looked over the fence and said, "cool!" He rushed off to the chemist to get a bottle of the same colour for his hair.

Then Regan the rascal, basking in his success, began to experiment with more colours. A blonde bit here and black bit there. The young boy looked a bit like a rainbow. His mother was worried. His father was sure that Aaron had been visiting with his dyes. The young boy didn't know what to wear.

Regan the rascal was so busy running from hair to hair pumping dye as fast as he could. The other kitters were trying to catch him and keep him to the plan. When suddenly Regan realised that he had run out of dye! He had used up so much in his experiments that he had not kept enough for the rest of the boy's long life!

The other kitters groaned because their selections of hair would be growing healthy and strong for a long long time, but Regan's began to grow out without any colour. The boy was going grey at 7 years of age!

The mother and father were now very worried. The father had stopped blaming Aaron and decided to take the boy to the doctor. He must be getting sick. He was almost as grey as his granny.

Regan was in big trouble. His tanker wouldn't pump one more drop. He started to go white with fright. What a mess he had made! There was only one thing for it. He would have to return to the master painter and admit his stupidity. He would probably never get another job. He started to feel very unhappy. He loved to colour hairs.

That night he drove back to his base. The boss was waiting. Everyone had been watching. The guardian in charge of the boy had first noticed as he did his hourly hair count and had reported Regan up the line. Regan was indeed in big trouble.

"Sit down!" Said the boss kitter. "I want to know what on earth gave you the idea to change the plan."

Poor Regan was feeling very, very sorry. He said that he wanted to make amends. That he had learned a very big lesson.

It was an unusual situation in the paint shop. No one quite knew what to do. Just then, a message came from up the line. Regan had been given another chance. Only the master painter had the right to change the plan. Somehow Regan must have shown that he really had learnt a lesson.

A new tanker arrived. It was a little smaller but the pump was gleaming and the engine purring. Regan couldn't believe his good fortune. He raced back to the earth as fast as he could. He worked so hard that night that he even had time to paint right to the ends of his white strands. By morning he was so tired he fell asleep in the cab of his tanker.

The boy woke up and yawned. His mother came in to wake him. It was time to go to the doctor. The boy sat up and his mother gasped. The boy's hair was quite normal; more normal than normal. The mother ran to get the father who was eating his breakfast. The father came in and started to mutter. "Even Aaron couldn't make hair change colour as often as this!"

The boy was a bit sorry and decided that when he was old enough he would go to the chemist and buy some dye. But right now he had some sisters to tease and natural carrot red hair was always good to tug on.