

Green Elastic
Elly Strigner 2012

Green is said to be the colour most closely connected to the heart. I used to have a green hair bobble that I wore around my wrist every day. I had it for months. I don't know where it came from – I just found it somewhere and claimed it.

It was a bright, simple green, with a plastic heart-shaped bead at the join – quite indistinctive, but I liked it. A lot of hair bobbles snap very quickly after the first use, but this one always stayed the same. It never frayed or overstretched. Some days I even avoided using it to tie back my hair, and kept it around my wrist, where it nestled awkwardly between my watch and silver bangle.

Occasionally it would act as a tool to combat boredom. I'd repeatedly twist it around my thumb during lectures; stretch my fingers through it as wide as possible, attempting a one-step cat's cradle; or I'd take it off and trace the outline of the green heart with my biro, making clunky patterns across my notebook.

On nights out, it was as essential to my outfit as my real jewellery. Fun, success with boys, not falling over or getting lost was all because of the green bobble. Forgetting it might result in serious disappointment; it just wasn't worth the risk.

One day my friend asked me if she could borrow it – she didn't have one of her own to hand. For a split second, I hesitated, but then I said yes, and took it off my wrist.

"Can I have it back, though?" I said, "that one is special..."

As soon as I said it I felt silly. Who on earth has a 'special' hair bobble? Maybe a bead-crocheted iridescent scrunchie, inlaid with crystals and hand-spun by Chinese silkworms in Sonia Rykiel's back garden might be 'special', but how could I explain the value of a generic piece of green elastic?

"Actually" I said, "You can keep it."

For weeks afterwards, I'd struggle to divert my gaze from my friend's ponytail, smiling and nodding and straining to catch a glimpse of green. Once I thought I saw a flash of it under her sleeve – but it was an illusion, a plastic bangle.

Did she still have the bobble? Had she forgotten it somewhere, in the bottom of a jewellery box, a make-up bag or, worse, a bathroom bin? Had she passed it on to somebody, another hair-accessory magpie? It couldn't be broken – could it?

But these were questions I could never ask, so I never saw it again.

I've worked my way through hundreds of cheap hair elastics since then. They break too easily, or cut off the circulation in my arm, or are simply ugly. I can't look for an imitation of the green bobble, because it would be just that – an imitation. Besides, that sort of thing can't be bought. It has to appear. I keep hoping that it will.