

Chapter 1

There was a knock on the front door and, as usual I found myself racing Frankie dog to see who would get to the door first! I don't think there was ever any doubt who the winner would be! Opening the door, there appeared to be no one there, but looking down I found a cat with fur as black as the night sky and eyes as green as the finest Emeralds. On his head he wore a green hat with two little pockets in which he popped his ears and a strap which fixed under his chin.

"Meow, meow, meeeeeeeowwww!" he instructed bossily. Yes, Granny fans, you know who it is, Midnight the cat from next door and if I am not very much mistaken, I was being summoned!

"Meeeeeeowwww!" he continued, stalking past Frankie and me and heading towards the sitting room. Closing the door, we followed to find him sitting next to the laptop on the coffee table, washing his paws nonchalantly.

"Ahhh, yes, the new way of doing things now we are in the pandemic" I murmured, reaching to turn the laptop back on. "No more popping next door, technology rules!"

Instantly I was alerted to a video call coming in and there on the screen was a colourful array of heads, green, pink and blue hair mingling as three faces jostled for position!

"Move over Gertie, I can't get in!"

"Ouch, Petunia your elbow is sharp, mind where you put it!"

"Bella, just move a bit to your right there's a dear, now, are we all sorted? Well, thank goodness for that!" Finally settled the Grannies smiled out at me as I settled back on the sofa with the laptop on my lap and an animal settled each side of me.

"Now then dear have you seen the news just now? Mr. Boris has locked us all down again! Most unpleasant!" started Petunia.

"Thank you Petunia" interrupted Gertie, "I'll take it from here than you! This wretched virus has played the most dastardly trick on us all dear and changed itself so that it can spread more easily.....and it is, spreading like wildfire so there is no choice but for all of us to go back to lockdown and shut the schools as well and that is what has caused it you know!"

"Caused what?" I asked

"Oh my dear, twittered Bluebell, "it was so dramatic, I felt it immediately because it was my turn to wear it and I felt the tug on my neck and when I looked well, I couldn't believe my eyes and just had to run and tell Gertie and Petunia right away!"

"What are you talking about Bluebell, what did you wear and what did you feel?" I was totally confused.

"Bella, will you stop wittering on and let me explain to the poor woman, she doesn't know about it!"

Bella looked crestfallen "Sorry Gertie"

"As Grannies of some repute, we are bestowed with a special instrument that we wear as a necklace, we take it in turns to be on "duty" as it were with it. It is rather like a weather barometer for indicating a change in the weather only this one indicates severe sudden changes in the mood atmosphere of the local area. That is how we know if there is anything afoot that might need our attention!"

"Yes and just now it changed so quickly it jerked the chain around my neck and I almost fell to the floor with the weight of it!" put in Bluebell. "It was such a shock!"

"It's quite serious when that happens" said Petunia who, up to this moment had been quietly listening to the other two. "I immediately ran upstairs to check my laboratory equipment and monitoring station and I am afraid that we are in quite a pickle!"

"Yes, one look outside confirms it, even on a dark evening like tonight!" finished Gertie.

Now they had really lost me! I must have looked very confused too as Petunia leaned forward into the screen and said "the sudden drop in the mood-ometer is because of Mr. Boris. He has locked us down and shut the schools and the Mums and Dads and children are severely disappointed and shocked. Teachers are upset to as they were looking forward to seeing their pupils again. Grannies and Grandads are beside themselves with upset as they were so wanting hugs from their grandchildren, those living on their own are frightened andwell everyone feels as if they have fallen down a big black hole into the darkness!"

"I must admit to feeling the same," twittered Bluebell, "we seem to have gone around in a circle and find ourselves back where we started and I don't know if I can bear it!"

"Stiffen that backbone Bella, that is no way to talk!" ordered Gertie, (she would have made a good sergeant major in the army!) "the only way to deal with difficult situations is to get on with it!"

"Sorry Gertie," sniffed Bluebell.

"Now" continued Gertie "this severe and sudden tumble in mood has caused a quite extensive and dense cloud to form, and anchor itself above Warlingham and Hamsey Green. In fact, it is of such a size that it stretches to Sanderstead, Caterham and far beyond Knights Garden Centre too!"

"There is a real danger that other areas have had a similar situation occur and it has been known for the clouds from different areas to join up, and if that happens over the whole country we will be in severe danger and I mean severe!" One look at Gerties face showed just how severe she was talking about!

"But how can a cloud be so dangerous?" I asked

"Because dear," replied Petunia "it isn't just any every day cloud. It is the Cloud of Doldrums!"

Bluebell let out a gasp and clutched her blouse in nervous hands, looking very distressed!" Gertie and Petunia gave each other grim looks.....

To be continued.