

Knitting Grannies and the Cloud of Doldrums

Chapter 2

"ARRRRRH!"

A sudden scream emitted from the laptop and Bluebell suddenly disappeared from view quickly followed by Petunia leaving a very annoyed looking Gertie on screen!

"Oh! for goodness sake give me strength!" muttered the Green haired Granny crossly! "You two sort yourselves out then get up off the floor and go and put the kettle on! We really haven't got time for all this zoom lark! We were so crammed in trying to all get on the screen and now Bella has fallen off her stool and taken Petunia with her and there is serious stuff to discuss! Well no more of it that is what I say! I am declaring a support bubble and you dear are in it so get over here quick smart!"

With that the screen went black as Gertie obviously lost patience with the whole video calling lark!

"C'mon then you two" I said to Midnight and Frankie, "better get ourselves round there and check that there is no lasting damage to Bluebell and Petunia!"

The pink haired Granny was already at their front door waiting for us and ushered us inside impatiently.

"Go straight into the front room dear, Gertie is there, Bella is just making the tea and I'm just finding the Jammie Dodgers oh, and yes Frankie, you go into the kitchen dear, Bella has a carrot for you!"

Midnight gave Frankie a look of disdain as if to say "oh how common!" and stalked off with his tail high into the front room where Gertie was sitting grim faced staring at what looked like a necklace in her lap.

This I presumed was the mood-ometer! I glanced curiously at it. It looked as if it was made of gold and I could see lots of cogs and dials, like you have got a watch and turned it inside out so that all the inner workings were on the outside! It kept giving strange little jerky movements too. Very odd!

Petunia arrived wheeling the tea trolley in followed by Bluebell and Frankie. After the tea was poured and passed round Bluebell gave out slices of left-over Christmas cake.

"I've kept the Jammie Dodgers for another day, thought we could finish the cake off first" explained Bluebell.

Gertie gave her a dirty look as if to show her what she thought of that idea but Bluebell was not to be budged and ignored her!

After a few minutes munching, (always time for that despite the emergency apparently!) Gertie put her tea plate down and looked around at us all.

"This is a very serious situation" she began "the cloud on its own is bad enough but it is the size of it and the fact that others have appeared over the whole country that is worrying me and I can't begin to think how we will remove it or how long that will take."

"Gertie, I am sorry for being a bit slow on the uptake here, but what exactly is the cloud of doldrums?" I asked in confusion.

Petunia answered me. "There are regions of the ocean that sailors refer to as the doldrums" she began.

"In those areas the weather is unpredictable with sudden storms and then long, long calms. If a sailing ship was in the area at an extended time of calm then they literally stagnated. Nothing happened for days, weeks even and slowly their food and water supplies ran down to nothing as did their spirits. The only hope was for the weather to change and often it didn't and well, you can guess it was not a happy ending! Seafaring folk started to refer to these areas as the Doldrums and the word then became to mean a period of depression, melancholy and stagnation. A cloud of Doldrums is a heavy cloud that blocks happiness and light and suffocates progress forward. It keeps people in the same place all the time just like those ships. Slowly the people lose their enthusiasm for trying, they give up, can't be bothered. They feel gloomy, sad, depressed all the time as if a big black weight is pushing them down. They become dull, listless, no motivation, no smiles, no hope. The cloud smothers joy, removes the kindness from the world. People just give up. They sit in their chairs, if they can be bothered to get out of bed in the first place, don't wash, don't eat.....well you can see where this will lead."

"This sounds horrendous!" I exclaimed

"Yes, you are right there dear" continued Petunia. This could go on for months, years even if these clouds join up. So not only do we have to sort our cloud out, we have to stop it joining up with others, and it's the size of the thing that worries me!"

"It doesn't sound as if you can knit your way out of this one!" I said thinking aloud.

"Well, no, that's not quite true" replied Gertie. Knitting won't be the whole answer but it may be part of the solution. We have to do some quick information gathering, find out the complete extent of the problem, then when we have all the information at hand we can formulate and fine tune a plan. First of all, I need you, Petunia, to fire up the "Granny interweb" and get reports in on the state of play across the country. Use the red button so that all the others know this is an emergency but my guess is that they have worked that out already! Then we must find out more about our cloud. How dense it is, how

mature it is at this stage." She turned to me to explain "at the start it is very thin, sort of like cotton wool, but as it gets more established it becomes more like pizza dough and then finally like concrete! We don't want to get to the concrete stage!"

Gertie paused to take a sip of tea, (talking is thirsty work, ask your teachers!) and continued "Bella and Midnight, I want you to go and spy out in Warlingham and you dear and Frankie the other way in Sanderstead. How are the people? Are they still moving around, talking, eating, wearing their masks, or are they just standing around, gloomy and cross and being unkind to each other and not wearing masks, picking fights that sort of thing. Also look out for other clues, like our hidden rainbows for example, are they still appearing and disappearing and full of colour and giving joy to the children? They should be as we put some fresh ones about only the other day. Just look out for anything that looks odd. We will meet back here in one hour's time so be quick smart!"

"And what will you be doing Gertie?" asked Bluebell "You know whilst we are running around doing all the work?"

Gertie looked sharply at the blue haired Granny. "Oh! dear Bella, it seems as if the cloud is starting to affect you already! This isn't good! Fight it Bella dear, fight it!"

Tears welled up in Bluebell's eyes, "Oh Gertie!" she sobbed!

At this point Frankie got up and did something very strange! He walked purposefully up to the stricken normally gentle and kind-hearted Granny. Standing in front of her he wagged his tail gently and stared right into her eyes, his gaze never wavering. It was as if those big brown eyes of his were beaming hope and love right into her heart. He stood there like that for maybe three or four minutes as we all watched afraid to move. Then he gently moved right up to her and nudged her with his wet nose. Bluebell gave herself a little shake and fell to her knees, putting her arms around him and cuddling him close.

"Oh Frankie, you make my heart so warm!" she cried. "Bless you my darling boy!"

"Hmmm, now that was very interesting, " murmured Gertie. "very interesting indeed. Bluebell how do you feel now?"

"Full of happy and ready to do my job!" came the reply.

"Now that gives me an idea," said Gertie to herself. "Ok troops, forward march, off you go and do your jobs, meet back here in an hour. I think I will have a plan together by the time you get back!"

To be continued...