

The Knitting Grannies and the Cloud of Doldrums.

Chapter 4

"It's as I suspected" said Petunia rejoining us after spending some time in her laboratory. (Another pot of tea had to be made, she had been so long, but never fear on the Jammie Dodger front, for Bluebell keeps a tight rein on their consumption!), "Pizza dough consistency so we have time to turn things around!"

Gertie nodded in satisfaction and whilst the pink haired Granny munched her biscuit and drank her tea, Gertie reached behind her armchair and brought out a white board on which wrote "The Plan" with a dramatic flourish!

"Step 1" (she said, speaking as she wrote) "we have to balance the news bulletins that are coming at us all constantly. There is no way we can stop that, people need to know the severity of the situation so they will more readily comply with the restrictions but they are listening to far too many as the day goes on and its only serving to feed their mood."

"And the cloud" interjected Bluebell.

"I'll thank you not to interrupt when I am talking!" snapped Gertie. Bluebell blushed and tears welled up in her gentle eyes.

"Gertie, steady on!" rebuked Petunia, patting the distressed blue haired Granny on the hand.

"Sorry Bella dear, I am rather wound up at the moment! My head is full of the plan and I have to get it out of my brain and shared or I shall burst!" She went over to Bluebell and gave her an apologetic hug.

"Thank you, Gertie, it is all getting rather tense, you carry on dear." Frankie moved to lay by his favourite Granny's chair and rested his head on her slippers as if to say "I still loves you!"

"As I said, we can't stop the news but we must make sure there are good things on it as well that will worm themselves into the minds of the viewers and maybe just trigger some well-being and even inspire some of them to action. A bit like Captain Tom Moore in the previous lockdown. We can't expect the poor man to set off once again with his walking frame, I think he has done his bit don't you, but we do need a figure like him, someone taking on a challenge that in normal circumstances would be crazy but at the same time would be achievable. I have a couple of ideas in my head about this, not sure which one to go with at the moment.

"Step 2, I am going to call Pet Rescue and it was Frankie that reminded me of the power of pets. Do you remember when Bella went a bit snappy and Frank went over and stared at her with those big brown pools of chocolate he has for eyes? What was it you said Bella, how his stare made you feel?"

"Full of happy" answered Bluebell, "I felt warm and fuzzy inside"

"Exactly. Our pets love us without boundaries and just want us to be happy and we can use that to break through the stagnant state the doldrum cloud has tipped everyone into. Midnight and Frankie will muster all the pets in the area from horses right down to goldfish and every pet in between and they will do what Frankie did and beam their love at their human families. That will make a big difference."

Midnight and Frankie looked at Gertie and both gave a little nod of their furry heads in understanding of the mission she had given to them.

"Don't go just yet, let me finish the plan and then you can start" she advised them.

"Step 3, I am afraid is knitting and we have two projects to complete as soon as we can. First of all, we need to knit barrage balloons- like the ones in the war that floated over London and other places. We need to position them on the edges of our cloud to prevent it from floating near any neighbouring ones. Of course, the ones in the war were attached with steel cables but we don't need that. If we use the correct wool they will be quite stable and remain in position on their own with a sprinkling of Granny magic! If we each knit one balloon I am sure that the Queen Pin will ensure that we have enough to surround the cloud. After the balloons we must set to and knit as many little hearts as we can. I think Bella, if you agree that the wool in box 2,000 section W will be required. It absorbs love and kindness from the hands of the person holding it"

"Perfect Gertie!" cried Bluebell. "and I know just the wool for the balloons too!"

"You always were the expert on our wool stock dear, I don't know what we do without you" said Gertie kindly trying to make up for her earlier nastiness. Bluebell blushed and smiled.

"My plan is to rally the people of Waringham and Hamsey Green to meet on Riddlesdown Common in 10 days' time, that should give us enough time. They will bring with them anything that will fling the hearts into the air and into the cloud. It shouldn't be too difficult as the cloud is getting lower and will almost be touching the trees by then. Anything can be used, Nerf guns, tennis rackets, catapults,

frying pans.....I am sure the people will come up trumps here! The hearts will pierce the clouds dough and the more we fire, the more holes will be made and the dough will start to disperse. The people will be all doing something together that is fun as well so that will generate a feel-good factor which will raise spirits and the wave of happiness that will generate will float up and attack the doldrums as well.

"What do you think?"

"I want to go straight to step 3 is what I think!" I exclaimed, "It sounds such a lot of fun!"

"Yes dear but we can't have step 3 without the other steps before it. The stagnation is massive in the people and they don't have the energy to respond at the moment. We need to re-motivate them or we will be the only people on Riddlesdown Common in 4 days' time! Petunia, you have been very quiet in all this, what do you think?" "I would rather meet much earlier than 10 days but we need time for step 1 to get into action and break into the news as well. Once that happens it should start to affect the density of the cloud in our favour for there should be a lift of spirits. Preparation is the key!"

"I've been thinking about step 1 Gertie," Petunia replied, "although dear, the rest of the plan is perfect too. One name keeps coming into my mind. Stanley Shufflebottom!"

"Exactly the name that has been in my mind too" said Gertie " but my other idea was Hamsey Green School"

"Oh? why is that?" asked Petunia intrigued. "Stanley would be perfect. He must be about 105 by now and with his war wound and shrapnel still in his back he would gain much sympathy and admiration for whatever task you have in mind."

"Yes but Captain Tom really can't be beaten can he? I want something different and I think that Hamsey Green School maybe the answer. With the children at home at the moment it will have to be the staff that do this. You never know, if they get re-energized and inspired, some of the children might join in and that would be fantastic."

"I see your point Gertie but what have you got in mind?"

"It's quite simple, I am going to use a resource they have close to hand. All it will take is a little bit (well, more than a little bit but that's the whole point isn't it?) of physical effort on their part." Gertie stood lost in thought for a moment and then continued "Yes! I really do think that is it! I am sure the school will agree and we can generate enough publicity that we can get on the national news! Grannies (and you dear, yes you too Frankie and Midnight) get ready for The Tithepit Shaw Challenge!"

To be continued.....