

## **The Knitting Grannies and the Cloud of Doldrums.**

### **Chapter 6**

I had just enough time to run next door, kick off my slippers and grab my shoes, coat and Frankie's lead and even then, I had to run to catch up with Gertie who was already striding smartly up the road only stopping to seemingly listen to a passing cat or dog. (Seriously, they were definitely talking to her!)

"Good, good! Seems that Frankie and Midnight have done an excellent job getting the message across to the pets of the area and already they are taking action!" She glanced up at the cloud "not much change in it yet but I am sure it won't be long!"

I was very out of breath by the time we arrived at the old Infant School car park! How could Gertie keep such a pace up at her age! Phew! We found Mrs. Mace sensibly doing some warm up exercises but not sensibly dressed! She had decreed that, as the money they would raise would be for the NHS, they would all have to wear medical clothing! She herself was attired in blue medical scrubs as if she was about to enter theatre for an operation! There was a blue ribbon stretched across the gate and a table set up under a gazebo (which Mrs. Smith the caretaker was just finishing setting up) on which was a first aid pack with blister sticks and plasters, water, food supplies and a clip board which would be used to record the completed laps. Several members of staff were standing around waiting to send Mrs. Mace off with a rousing cheer and a man was buzzing around with his camera taking photos. (A newspaper reporter apparently!) As 9.00 o'clock approached, Mrs. Mace gave a speech outlining the schools' mission and inviting donations after which, she was handed a big pair of scissors and she cut the ribbon and was off! Mrs. Taylor settled herself behind the desk ready with anything that the courageous walker might need and the other staff then drifted off back to school as, of course, they were still open for some children and there was online learning also to keep running. The reporter had followed Mrs. Mace (socially distanced of course) and was taking photos at various points down the hill. I have to say if you don't know the hill it is a very steep one with an especially difficult bit about a quarter of the way as you come back up again. For there, it suddenly decides to get really steep and it's a struggle to walk and talk at the same time I can tell you! I think it must have been a struggle to walk and take photos too for when they both reappeared having completed the first-round trip, the photographer was finding it very difficult to catch his breath and was sweating profusely! Not so Mrs. Mace who, pausing only to have a drink set smartly off again for her second trip!

By the time she had completed 20 laps (the photographer had long gone by this time to file his report at the Newspapers offices) it seemed that news had spread as a few curious people had stirred their stumps and come to see what was going on, not many I must admit but some.

"To get some is a miracle at this stage," explained Gertie "don't forget everyone is in a state of stagnation and can't be bothered so for some to have the energy to struggle past that is more than I could hope for. It is early days and I know more people will make it out as time goes on."

"why aren't the staff and Mrs. Mace affected then?" I asked as the intrepid head teacher came into view again on her 21st lap.

"My dear girl, they are teachers and as such are rather super human don't you think?" Gertie smiled. "come along dear, Hamsey have done a great job organising this and have everything in hand so we can go back to the house and get on with helping the others with the knitting. I am sure that poor Midnight's paws need a rest by now" With that she was off once again, with me running behind!

Gertie was absolutely right in everything she said! Come day five of the challenge the big news corporations had sent camera crews and Mrs. Mace was kept busy giving interviews at every turn, she even made an appearance on The One Show! The walk caught the imagination of the area and in fact the whole country, donations flooded into the just giving page, messages were sent from celebrities and sports stars, to the staff; and the icing on the cake was a message from Captain Tom himself which came in on day nine! In other parts of the country, other schools copied Hamsey and set their own similar challenges up. It all seemed to put extra energy and determination into the weary legs of the staff who, by this stage, seemed to all be adorned with blister plasters and the smell of Deep Heat! (achy muscle heat rub dear reader!)

On day 10, Mr. Brown raised smiles from onlookers, who were now daily manning specially marked spots along the route (yep, socially distanced, carefully measured and marked by Mr. Boffa) by taking Mrs. Mace's instructions to heart and dressing in full old-style nurses' uniform, dress, apron, buckle, belt and hat! Not to be outdone, Mrs. Larkman dressed as a midwife from the TV series on the TV (yes babies are still being born even in a pandemic!) and pushed a pram all the way up and down on her day of laps! Mrs. Connery and Mrs. Booker did their laps as a team with one sitting in a wheelchair on the way down and one sitting in it on the way up! The more outrageous the staff became (yes it became a competition now and believe me, the sight of Mr. Liam and Mr. Richards in full faces of make-up, nurses' outfits and wheeling drip stands was a sight to behold!) the more the onlookers cheered and smiled and, imperceptibly the cloud of doldrums seem to lighten a bit in colour.

With the pets' mission breaking through their owners' stagnation and filling them with "happy", the barrage balloons successfully guarding the edges of the cloud and the awesome effort of the Hamsey Green crew, there was only one thing left to do.

To be continued.....