

## The Knitting Grannies and the Cloud of Doldrums

### Chapter 7

"Gertie?"

"Yes dear, what is it?" the green haired Granny looked up from knitting her latest heart.

"When you revealed your plan to us, you said that we start step three in ten days' time. Well, today is day 13 and Hamsey are still walking up and down that hill and we haven't stopped knitting these hearts yet let alone fired them at the cloud! I just wondered if something had gone a bit wrong?"

Well that earned me a very cold hard stare!

"We are Knitting Grannies," she retorted haughtily, "nothing ever goes wrong!"

"Or at least if it does, we sort it out very quickly!" put in Bluebell under her breath!

"Get off your high horse Gertie, even you have to admit that we underestimated the time the hearts would take and we could never have predicted Hamsey not wanting to stop their challenge and keeping on and on walking!" said Petunia mildly.

Gertie sighed. "I know, you are right Petunia, the school have risen to the challenge so magnificently I have been forced to wait a few more days and hoped you wouldn't notice!"

"Well, I did!" I put in cheekily, gently teasing Gertie.

"When I realised what was happening with the challenge, I didn't want to spoil the fun and consequently arranged with Mrs. Mace that they could have a few more days, so this is their last day. Mrs. Jordan is the last walker (carrying a bedpan I understand!) Yes Bella, I agree, very handy if you get caught short! Anyway, she started her laps in the night so will be finished by 5pm. All news media will be present for the end celebrations and Mrs. Mace will announce the news about the gathering on Riddlesdown Common tomorrow at midday. Our furry friends here will spread the news through the pet network and we will have completed the stars and will be ready to go. Everything is set for tomorrow and I hope that will then see the end of the doldrums although sadly not the end of the pandemic."

"Hopefully after this people will go about the lockdown with renewed determination until the vaccination program roles out more widely." said Petunia.

"If only we had some magic that would destroy the virus!" I sighed.

"Sadly, we don't dear so we can only help by dealing with situations like this as they arise and try to keep people focused." said Gertie.

Midnight threw his knitting needles down and stretched his paws. "Meeeeeeeeooooooooowwwwww" he declared.

"Haha! I think he is done with knitting!" chuckled Bluebell "and I must admit he has done very well. Extra fish for you tonight Midnight!"

"Time for us all to cast off and go and get a good nights' sleep before tomorrow" ordered Gertie. "We need our best and strongest throwing arms and 100% energy!"

The next day dawned grey and overcast. To be honest, with the doldrum cloud hanging about like a big dirty bed sheet. EVERY day was grey and overcast! Because we weren't meeting until midday I hoped for a leisurely start but Gertie was having none of it as her determined face on video call suggested!

"Come round in five minutes for bacon sandwiches and tea and then we need to prepare for the day ahead. Don't forget your launching implement!"

Frankie doesn't need telling twice when he hears the words "bacon sandwiches" although I don't actually think Gertie included him in the breakfast guest list! Indeed, when we arrived at the Grannies house there wasn't a spare sandwich for him but his favourite Granny hadn't let him down, for there was a very big bowl of sardines instead and one for Midnight too (put up on the sideboard so that Frankie couldn't gobble his down and snaffle the poor cat's bowlful as well! Foiled again Frankie!)

"What is your instrument of launch?" asked Bluebell playfully.

"A frying pan and the Frankie's tennis ball launcher" I replied. "I'll try both out and see which one is best!"

"Hmm, close run thing I would imagine" said Petunia thoughtfully, "maybe you will get more force behind it with the frying pan!"

"But the ball thingy is whippier" added Bluebell.

"I hate to interrupt you, serious discussions on the individual merits of these two items but at the end of the day it's a case of giving it some wellie and whacking or chucking as hard as you can!" said Gertie, "now time is ticking and we shouldn't still be here, so Bella, pop the dirty plates in the sink for later and let's get going."

As the morning progressed and time ticked away towards midday, more and more people arrived at Riddlesdown Common and stood in socially distanced groups. The school had kindly lent Gertie their megaphone so she could issue her instructions to the spread-out crowd.

"Now everyone" boomed Gertie's voice "I can see a splendid array of frying pans and Nerf guns, tennis ball launchers, tennis rackets and cricket bats, excellent job! You will have been given a pile of ammunition so when I give you the signal begin to whack it up into the cloud. Just keep going until I give you the signal to stop!"

Excitement grew all around the common, gazes went skyward where the cloud hung low, some were obviously sizing up the distance very seriously!

"10, 9,8, 7,6,5,4,3,2,1,GO!!!!"

I can hardly describe the scene dear reader! All across the common people were whacking the hearts with all their might up into the sky! Some even made a game of it with several families adopting cricket rules with one member taking a run up and bowling the heart to the batsman who would then send it soaring! Frying pans were being wielded with great gusto (and great effect!) and dogs were being totally confused as they caught sight of their ball launchers in action but could find not a trace of a tennis ball! (yes, Frankie was among the confused even though he was party to the plan and knew we were launching hearts not balls!) The more hearts that were launched the more fun people had and the laughing and giggling just got louder and louder. Supplies of the hearts never seem to run out and every heart seemed to find its target. (I'm guessing there was a little bit of Granny magic in action here!)

Slowly, oh so slowly at first the cloud seemed to get paler and thinner. Small holes began to appear in its surface and soon it resembled a pepper pot top. Small holes turned into bigger holes, holes turned into gaps and soon the whole cloud was nothing but a long streak of pale grey cotton wool marking a blue sky. The barrage balloons drifted silently away and the hearts fell back down, turning into small drops of red rain as they fell.

Everyone clapped and cheered until their hands were sore and their voices were hoarse, not minding at all that they were getting a bit wet!

"AND STOP!" boomed out Gertie's voice again "Ladies and gentlemen, girls, boys and pets of Warlingham and Hamsey Green you have done it! Marvellous show! Now we must return to our homes and continue to fight this virus with as much determination as we fought the cloud! It is up to us to follow the rules and keep ourselves and everyone safe until we have all had the vaccine. Yes, it will be hard, some days will be harder than others but we will help each other. We will lift each other up and, when we in turn have a bad day, it will be our turn to be lifted. Kindness and caring will win this war not selfishness and derision. Go home, be kind, keep safe and let's get this job done!"

Tired but filled with renewed hope that this virus could be beaten with a little bit of determination and courage, people drifted home leaving the common quiet once more. It had been quite an extraordinary day! To be honest, every day with the Grannies is extraordinary!

The End.