

The Knitting Grannies and "Operation bring the colour back!"

Episode 1

There was a knock at my back door. Frankie, determined to be first to see who it was, pushed past me, but I didn't hurry, knowing who it would be, for there is only one person who would knock on the back door instead of the front. Person did I say? I should have said animal of course! For (as you have come to expect dear readers) there, sitting on the doormat was a small cat with fur as black as the night sky and eyes as green as emeralds. On his head was a green hat with two pockets for him to pop his ears in and a strap that fastened under his chin with a button.

"Meow, meow, meow!" he said with a very insistent tone, whilst pointing with his paw at next door, which meant, "meeting now, follow me!"

Picking up my keys and shutting the door, I followed Midnight the cat and Frankie through the knitted gate in the fence and into next doors garden. It had been a few days since I had been here, all had been pretty quiet especially with the lockdown in place. As we approached the house, I could see a smiling Bluebell waiting at the back door, blue hair glowing from the kitchen light behind her.

"Ah hello dear and here's my best boy Frankie!" she exclaimed, fussing over him and almost getting whipped by his wagging tail! "Come in and go straight through dear, we are in the front room. Would you mind taking the biscuit barrel with you and I will bring the tea." She handed me a biscuit barrel shaped like a big ball of wool and I headed towards the front room where Frankie was already being fussed over by Gertie and Petunia, the other Knitting Grannies. Midnight looked disdainfully at it all and jumped up onto the window sill where his comfy cushion awaited him.

"Pop the biscuit barrel down there dear and make yourself comfy!" said Petunia, indicating the squishy arm chair next to her. "Glad you could join us for a cup of tea, it's pretty quiet at the moment out there isn't it?"

As I sat down, Gertie leaned forward and peered hopefully into the biscuit barrel.

"Oh, hobnobs again!" she sighed "I was hoping for chocolate digestives or those jammy dodgers! I love eating all the biscuit and just leaving the jam in the middle for the very last mouthful!"

"There is a lockdown on you know" said Bluebell coming in and depositing the tea tray next to the barrel, "with all the silly stockpiling going on, I could only get the hobnobs so you will just have to have what is available! Oh Gertie, don't take three, they need to last!"

Gertie looking shamefaced, hastily put the third biscuit back and retreated to the depths of her chair.

"Shall I be mother?" tinkled Bluebell and proceeded to pour the tea into the delicate bone china teacups and hand them round. Pouring a special saucer of tea for Midnight and another for Frankie, she settled herself into her chair and beamed around at everyone, "How nice!" she sighed contentedly.

Petunia agreed with her "It's nice to have a rest after our last adventure, dealing with Eunice Parker did rather take it out of me I must admit! Thank goodness for the timely arrival of the Giddy Aunt!"

"Yes and thank goodness for Petunia" added Gertie, "that changing device you created and stuck on the sucking up machine was a genius idea, credit where credit is due!"

Petunia blushed "Why thank you Gertie, that is so kind of you! Unfortunately, I was in the middle of refining the device and it wasn't quite 100% ready for use so it won't last for ever, but we should still have at least another two weeks of clean streets!"

Gertie chuckled "changing the machine from sucking up naughty children to sucking up the dog mess was a masterstroke however long it lasts! But I guess that we will have to be on our guard against her soon enough, no doubt she will be looking for revenge!"

Bluebell shuddered and changed the subject. "I see that most people are now following the new Boris rules. Midnight reports all is quiet out there on the streets with people only out food shopping, dog walking, or exercising."

"It's really strange when you do go out" I put in "it's so quiet. When I take Frankie out it's so.....empty and lonely."

Everyone fell silent, concentrating on munching their biscuits and drinking their tea.

"Do you know what I think is the worst thing in all this?" ventured Bluebell "the absence of children's laughter and chatter. There is no fun being had. The colour is fading from the world!"

"Oh, don't be so dramatic!" snapped Gertie. "You always were over sensitive and you let your imagination run away with you! Colour fading indeed!"

"No, don't be mean to Bella, Gertie," chided Petunia. "You know how she feels things, she is the gentlest of the three of us" she patted Bluebell on the arm reassuringly. "I have to say that I sort of

know what she means. I hate to think of all the children stuck in their houses, not going to school to learn, not seeing their friends."

"It's the Easter holidays, they should be having fun!" cried Bluebell.

"Well their teachers are setting their learning online, and their parents are taking the role of teachers....."

"Poor dears!" broke in Petunia.

"Who?" said Gertie looking confused, "who are we talking about now?"

"The parents dear, it takes years of training and experience to be a teacher and they have had the role suddenly thrust upon them!"

"Oh yes, well I agree with you there dear, but remember Petunia, parents are extraordinary beings. They do whatever it takes and will find the courage to step into the role and to help them, the school is there to support them."

"Yes, yes but that is all very well Gertie" put in Bluebell who was getting more agitated by the minute, "but that is not fun for the children or their grown-ups! It's not going to make them laugh! On the contrary, they will probably end up all being stressed and arguing with all the pressure. They can't go and let off steam with their friends! Oh, what they need is something like an exciting adventure story to follow, brave characters fighting wrong doers, someone to cheer, someone saving the day! The day can be very long without laughter and without laughter the colour fades."

"I see what you are saying now Bella, I get your drift" said Gertie reassuringly. "It's like they need US but that is silly, because we are a story and no one is going to write about us, are they?" ("Shhh! don't tell!")

She took another biscuit (her fourth!) and sat back nibbling it thoughtfully. Midnight raised his head and stared at Petunia, his green eyes shining. He didn't drop his gaze for one minute and I don't think he blinked either, it was most extraordinary! Almost as if he was transferring thoughts to her! Now who is being dramatic and silly!

"Yes, quite so" Petunia nodded at Midnight, "I totally agree!" She looked around at the others.

"Gertie, you are exactly right. What the children need is us! We need to reverse the colour fading and restore it to its full glory!"

All eyes turned to Gertie. She was, after all, their leader in all things. Popping the very last crumbs of the hobnob into her mouth and swallowing the last mouthful of tea she seemed to come to some sort of decision.

"Petunia, Bluebell and you dear (she said looking at me) not every adventure needs to be dangerous, so ladies, "Operation bring the colour back" is on! Petunia, put the kettle on and break out a new packet of Hobnobs! Time to make a plan!"

To be continued.....