

## The Knitting Grannies and the Pirate ship in the birdbath! Episode 1

"Meow, meow, meow.....me.....ow!" called the small cat with fur as black as the night sky and eyes as green as emeralds. He was sitting beside the open knitted gate in the fence between my garden and the one next door. "MEOW!" he concluded rather bossily and, adjusting the strap of the green hat that he wore on his head (you know, the one with two pockets for him to pop his ears in) he turned around and disappeared back through the gate. Frankie bounded after his friend, tail wagging furiously whilst I followed more sedately. I closed the gate behind me and turned around to find the three Grannies sitting in their garden in deckchairs which strangely matched their hair colour! Green for Gertie, Pink for Petunia and Blue for Bluebell! They were all sitting knitting but put their needles down when they saw me approaching and smiled a welcome. Frankie had already greeted them one at a time and made himself comfy on the tartan rug next to Midnight who, by the looks of things, was only just tolerating his presence! To the side of Bluebell was a small metal table on which a tray sat containing four tumblers, a jug of straw-coloured liquid and a plate with delicious slices of fruit cake!

"Elderflower Cordial for everyone?" asked Bluebell with the jug already poised to pour. "Pass the cake round dear please" she instructed. With my waitressing duties completed, I took my tumbler and plate and plonked myself carefully down into the chair that was just a little apart from their own.

"Social distancing dear!" explained Bluebell.

We all sat in comfortable silence whilst we concentrated on eating the fruit cake and sipping our cordial. Once only crumbs remained, conversation started up once more.

"That last operation was so successful" remarked Gertie "did you know dear that we knitted another batch of rainbows and we go out on our daily exercise and leave a few around each day, just so the fun continues for the children! This time though, it's a test of their imaginations, we have hidden them in places where you wouldn't expect to find a rainbow.....in a soap bubble, a puddle or reflecting from a spider web! Such fun for them to come across, just like a treasure hunt for rainbows!" They all smiled contentedly. "A good job done!"

"How on earth do you get a knitted rainbow into a spiders web or puddle?" I asked.

"That would be telling" winked Petunia.

Knowing she would say no more, I changed the subject. "What are you knitting now though, it is unusual for you to be knitting in the day time!"

"They are face masks dear" replied Bluebell. "We are doing our bit for the NHS. We are knitting face masks."

"Not ideal" interrupted Petunia, "knitted ones can be quite hot, but we have tried to mix the wool to make them a bit cooler. Box 19 normal everyday wool, Box 91 which has anti-viral properties, and a smidge of special box zero, it's wool from the Arctic circle so it's quite cool when it's mixed in with the others."

"We have been knitting in the night time too, but it's such a lovely day today, we thought we would carry on in the garden as well. We are trying to get a good stock going" finished Gertie. "Here dear, you might as well make yourself useful whilst you are sitting there, grab a pair of needles from the box and a ball each of the wool there, mix the yarns as you knit." She told me how many stitches to cast on and showed me the pattern for knitting the mask and I was off!

We sat there knitting and nattering in the sunshine with Frankie gently snoring on the rug.

"It's so peaceful sitting here all together knitting" sighed Bluebell happily.

I thought it was a good time to try to find out a bit more about the Grannies so, after complimenting them on their lovely garden and some other general chit chat, I asked them where they had lived before they had come to Hamsey Green.

"We have lived all over the world dear!" said Gertie gaily "New York, Las Vegas, Sydney, Moscow (now that was very cold!) Dubai (very hot!) and Copenhagen. Before we came here we lived in Devon for a while, actually that is where we met and made friends with Marigold."

"Yes, we bought a lovely cottage just next door to her in Pebble Sands", carried on Petunia. "It had a such a lovely garden at the back"

"Why did you move?" I asked.

"Well, it was so quiet dear. Pebble Sands is a fishing village and there wasn't much that went on apart from the day to day routine of the fishing boats going out and coming in again. Oh, there was the odd big storm that caused drama and one or two sea rescues we took a hand in. We made friends with one of the nice Lighthouse keepers that worked on the lighthouse round the bay. Of

course, that is how we knew all about you and we bought this house to keep our eye on ....."  
She stopped abruptly as Gertie gave her a warning look"

"Well that doesn't really sound very quiet to me!" I said, wondering how I could get the conversation back to the lighthouse and them buying a house next to me.

"Not for you perhaps dear, but we are used to a bit more action!" said Petunia "Don't get me wrong, we love that little cottage, so much so in fact that we have kept it as a holiday home and try to go back for a couple of months a year if all is quiet here!"

"Oh, I loved living there" sighed Bluebell. "It was so peaceful and no dramas going on.....well not often. Everything was so straightforward and normal!"

Bluebell was the gentlest of the three Grannies, always the one to make the tea, or look after someone when they needed it. She hated raised voices or confrontations. I often wondered how she had got caught up with the other two! It must have been something to do with her skill at knitting.

"Well I think you are remembering it all through rose tinted glasses dear!" said Gertie sourly "it wasn't that straightforward, or normal! I can remember quite a few times when the peace was shattered and our skills were called for!"

I was confused. One minute Pebble Sands was a sleepy place where nothing happened and now Gertie was saying the complete opposite! I sensed a story!

"You can't leave it there Gertie, I am totally confused! Tell me all about Pebble Sands and what happened to make it change from peaceful to less err normal? .....come on, tell me!"

"You can't leave the poor girl dangling Gertie, you will have to tell her now!" said Petunia, "and I guess we are all thinking of BL....."

"Oh, don't mention his name!" cried Bluebell hands clutching the neck of her dress. "Such a horrible, ghastly smelly man!"

"Calm down dear" said Petunia "Let Gertie tell her all about it."

Gertie settled back into her chair, "very well dear, let's start at the beginning....."

*To be continued.....*