

The Knitting Grannies and the Pirate Ship in the birdbath Episode 2

Whilst the other Grannies picked up their knitting, Gertie sat back and closed her eyes.

"Pebble Sands is a small fishing village in Devon laying in the crook of a sweeping bay, with a tall white finger of a lighthouse at one end and a rock formation that looks very much like a horse's head, at the other. There are several villages dotted along the curve of the bay. The main industry is fishing for mackerel and crabs so there are always colourful boats pulled up on the beach and a few rusty tractors that push them down to the water when it is time to go and fish and pull them up again at the end of the day. The village has one or two shops and a couple of tea rooms, a pub, a church, a village hall and a school and of course, houses. That is pretty much it really. Not a pretty village, more of a working one. The houses are practical and sensible not chocolate-box ones like some Devon villages have. Life is hard in the winter when the storms rattle around but summer is much calmer. It gets a few visitors these days, they come along with their cameras taking endless photos but the tea shop and pub do very well out of them! Many of them stop off after visiting the Lighthouse at the end of the bay, either to go to the pub or to have a cream tea or one of Marigolds famous Cornish Pasties! Just as you come to the end of the main road and if you go left and, on a bit, you will find the ruins of the old village which was washed away in the Greatest Storm of all many, many years ago. It is too dangerous to explore so visitors stop and stare. It's quite a spooky place I must admit." "Why is the village called Pebble Sands?" I asked.

"Well, they do say that once upon a time the beach was pure sand, no pebbles to be seen and the place was called Greater Sands with the next village along being Little Sands, but after the Greatest Storm of all, the sand was sucked from the beach! Every last grain! Since then, it's been mainly pebbles, although nowadays some patches of sand are starting to return. People began to laugh at the name and it was decided to change it." said Petunia. "The next village along followed suit so they are now Lesser Pebble Sands"

Gertie continued. "We were on holiday in Devon after a quite hair-raising adventure in Spain when a bull escaped from a bull fight and stampeded through the streets! Petunia was so brave and managed to jump on his back and ride him bucking twisting and turning as he went, holding his horns and steering him away from hurting the people! Eventually she steered him out of the town and into the countryside where we caught up with her. The bull by this time was quiet and told us how he hated being used for fighting and being made to stick his horns in the matadors! He hated how they teased him as well, it made him lose his temper! So, we spent a few weeks trying to hide him and find him a place to live. Eventually we persuaded the people of the town to stop bull fighting and he went back and now gives children rides on his back and is very happy. Anyway, we had visited the Lighthouse earlier and were searching for somewhere to have lunch. Keeper Bill told us about Marigolds pasties and gave us directions to Pebble Sands. Once we had set our eyes on the place, we were in love with it and more so after sampling one of Marigolds Cornish Pasties! So, we decided there and then to look for a house to buy, just like that! Marigold who had been serving us in the cafe put us on to the house next door to her and Bob's your Uncle, we very soon found ourselves owners of No 3 Fishing Lane! We moved in and were very happy making the place shipshape. Midnight was in his element! Early every morning he popped out the cat flap and went down to the beach to do his rounds of all the fishermen as they launched their boats and went off for their days work. Then he would come home and stretch out in the garden and laze the day away until they came back, when he would return to the beach to welcome them home. They often gave him a fish for his tea which he would carry home in his mouth for Bluebell to cook. Even in the winter he still would do the rounds of his friends! Life was delightful! Bluebell was busy in the kitchen cooking up delicious meals, trying out new scone and pasty recipes, Petunia spent her days in the garden weeding and pruning and adding to the profusion of flowers and shrubs and growing vegetables and I spend my days decorating inside the cottage or visiting Keeper Bill at the Lighthouse where he was showing me how to make a ship in a bottle! Now and again we would all go around to Marigolds or she would come to ours and she would tell us tales of shipwrecks and smuggling whilst we all knitted. Oh, the odd mission would come in, now and again, but not many. The world, it seemed, was at peace and rest."

She stopped for a moment to take a sip of her cordial and then continued "I think we had been there six months or just a bit more. Summer was coming to an end. The days were getting shorter and cooler. We woke this particular day to a very sullen looking morning indeed. The sky was grey and sulky and the gusts of wind chased through the plants in the garden. When I looked out of my bedroom window at the sea, there were lots of white capped waves and the little fishing boats were

bobbing about furiously. I guessed it would be hard fishing on that swell! When I got downstairs, Bluebell had cooked some porridge for breakfast and we all sat and ate it, making plans to get on with knitting some warmer cardigans for ourselves and a warmer hat for Midnight. Planning our day, Bluebell said she had to go food shopping, I had to fix a shelf in the sitting room where I planned to display my ship in the bottle and Petunia said she wanted to go in the garden and dig up the last of the vegetables in the veggie patch. Then we would start the knitting. Bluebell cleared the plates and was just putting the washing up liquid in the bowl ready to wash them when she caught sight of something strange out of the window. She couldn't quite make out what it was and called for us to come and look. Well it was no use whatsoever! We just couldn't see it so Petunia popped out for a closer look."

Gertie stopped. "Do you remember Petunia?"

"Do I ever!" replied Petunia. "I thought it would be a leaf or maybe a drowned mouse or bird. What I wasn't expecting was a Pirate ship! You can imagine dear can't you that it wasn't very big, the size of a child's toy, but it was fully rigged with masts and sails and a Jolly Roger flag and it even had a little anchor that was holding on to the stone we put in the bird bath for the birds to stand on when they drink. At the front of the boat....."

"Bow dear" corrected Gertie.

"At the BOW of the boat there was the carving of a dog's head and at the back.....I know Gertie, STERN of the boat, was the name in gold lettering....."The Yappy Dog". It was correct in every detail."

"We thought that a seagull must have picked it up thinking it was a tasty snack and had dropped it as it flew over the garden when it realised it wasn't" put in Bluebell. "So, we thought no more about it, left it in the bird bath as it looked quite funny, I mean, who has a pirate ship in their bird bath!"

"Yes, that was our big mistake", said Gertie picking up the story again. "Off we went to do our various bits and bobs, Petunia to the garden, Bluebell to get ready to go to the shops and me to the sitting room to measure for the shelf. Suddenly Petunia burst in the back door in bit of a state, with Midnight's hat dangling from her hand.

To be continued.