

The Knitting Grannies and the Pirate Ship in the birdbath**Episode 3**

I don't know if it was sitting in the warmth of the garden or the gentle rhythm of Gertie's voice as she recounted her tale, or even the shock of her last announcement, but I suddenly felt a bit light-headed and my vision started to do something peculiar! It was just like I was looking down the wrong end of a telescope everything was suddenly so far away and tiny and then, everything went wibbly wobbly, (you know that thing that happens in films or on the television when they are going to go back in time) and I felt myself whizzing backwards at the speed of sound or was it light! When my vision finally cleared, I found myself standing in the kitchen of No 3, Fishing Lane! I had landed smack bang in the middle of Gertie's story! The Grannies didn't seem surprised at all, in fact, I am not sure that I could be seen at all! I was there but only watching the scene unfold!

Time seem to restart! Bluebell and Gertie stared at Petunia standing in the doorway, the hat dangling from her hand. All three of them were shocked because they knew that Midnight NEVER EVER took his hat off! His ears are far too cold for him to go hat-less. Something must have happened to him! Gertie broke the silence first "Have you searched the garden? Is there any sign of him other than the hat? Lumps of fur, teeth, claws, that sort of thing?"

"GERTIE! STOP!" shouted Petunia racing over to Bluebell who had gone extremely pale at Gertie's rather gruesome words and was clutching on to the sink for dear life as her legs turned to jelly.

"Come Bella dear," said Petunia softly, leading Bluebell over to the kitchen table where she sank gratefully onto a waiting kitchen chair.

"Sorry Bella," said Gertie, "I didn't mean to upset you, my brain just sprang into action and went straight to police mode!" She kindly fetched the stricken Granny a glass of cold water and patted her gently on the shoulder as she put it down in front of her. Bluebell took a sip and gave her a weak smile.

"Not your fault Gertie, mine for being so weak!"

"You aren't weak dear, you are the most loving and gentle of us all and feel things deeper than both of us."

"No, I didn't need to search the garden and there were certainly no signs of a feline struggle," started Petunia, joining the others at the table. "But there was this....."

She put her hand in the hat and pulled out a dirty crumpled piece of paper. When she opened it, there was some sort of message scrawled on it in, quite frankly, the worst handwriting I had ever seen! Lots of crossings out, no capital letters or full stops and the finger spaces were only just about there!

I haz the cat fill the hat wiv guld and sifur and put it on the tree you have untill sun up tomoro or the cat gets it (see what I mean about the spelling?!)

It was a good job that Bluebell was already sitting down! "Oh, this is terrible!" she wailed clutching at the neck of her blouse as she is wont to do when she is nervous. "Who would do such a thing! What are we going to do Gertie? We have to do something! My poor Midnight!" She started crying, big heaving sobs.

"Steady on old girl, now get a grip, this isn't going to help Midnight one bit," said Gertie gently, patting Bluebell reassuringly on the hand. "Why don't you put the kettle on and make some tea and then we will sit down and work this one out. Now don't flap Bella, I know it seems stupid to be saying let's have a cup of tea when time is ticking, but we need calm and clear minds and a cup of tea and a deep breath will give us that. Then we can make a plan. Come on old girl, buck up!"

Her words seemed to give the stricken Granny some courage. She got up (on wobbly legs it must be admitted!) and went about putting the kettle on and making the tea.

"Now," began Gertie once they were all settled around the table with their cups of tea and a comforting Hobnob biscuit each. "There is some mighty mischief afoot here I'll be bound and Midnight has somehow got himself well and truly in the middle of it. Don't worry so much about him, he is, after all no ordinary cat, but having said that, getting him back safely is of the utmost priority! First things first, we need to find out who we are dealing with before we can find a way to deal with him and for that we need clues. So, think ladies, what is different about today than yesterday?"

"Well, Midnight is missing, we have a note and his hat!" Petunia said sadly.

"What else is different, and I don't mean the weather!"

The Grannies sat there thinking, until Bluebell jumped up exclaiming "The bird bath! The Pirate ship in the bird bath!"

"Exactly! said Gertie.

"But it's just a child's toy, it's so small, it can't be that!" said Bluebell.

"Don't be so hasty Bella, we have to investigate it and rule it out at the very least and you know, the more I think of it, the more the note sounds like a something a pirate would write, asking for gold and silver and the state of the handwriting and spelling sounds exactly like a pirate, someone who didn't listen at school that is for sure!" It gives us a starting point at least.

"Petunia, can you remember the name that was on the ship?"

"The Yappy Dog" Petunia replied promptly.

Gertie sat and thought for a moment. "Petunia can you pop on the internet and find out all you can about any ship with that name? It's not a common name for a pirate ship, you should find something. I'm going to ring Keeper Bill at the Lighthouse and find out if he knows of any smugglers or pirates round here in the olden days. Bluebell, I want you to pop next door and ask Marigold to come around in say half an hour, I think we need all our heads together in this one and she seems like a handy lady to have around in a crisis! Right ladies, let's get to work, I reckon we should have all the information we need and have a plan in place before lunch and before sun rise tomorrow. We WILL have Midnight back where he belongs with his hat firmly back on his head or I'm not a Knitting Granny! Now come on troops, let's get busy!"

To be continued.....