

**The Knitting Grannies and the Pirate ship in the birdbath****Episode 5**

Marigold leapt smartly into action! Reaching into her dungaree bib, she whipped out a bottle of smelling salts and wafted them under the stricken Granny's nose.

"I had a feeling something like this would happen, she didn't look great when she came to tell me about Midnight.....ah, there you are Bella dear, back with us again, now just stay where you are and get your bearings again."

Whilst Marigold continued to tend to Bluebell, Gertie turned to the pink haired Granny waiting in the doorway for the fuss to die down, "Let's hear it then Petunia!"

"This, is the infamous Black-Eyed Jack and as you can see, he wouldn't make the top 10 most handsome men!"

Petunia was right! The picture showed a giant of a man. Even though he was taller than the average fellow, he also seemed to be trying to spread outwards for he had a big pot belly that hung over his belt just like a blob of butter hanging on the edge of a knife! It was his face that held the attention though. Framed as it was with a mass of wild, frizzy, black matted hair that seemed to be in competition with the equally tangled, bushy hairy mass that adorned his chin and cheeks. I had never seen a beard quite like it for it was also peppered with bits of food! Hairy black caterpillar like eyebrows were forced into an angry V shape above one sludgy green eye, the other being hidden by a black eye patch. He looked as if he was angrily shouting at someone in the picture for his nostrils were flared and his mouth wide open, affording a rather unfortunate view of his yellowing and rotten teeth. I could almost smell the bad breath from just looking at them! No dentist had been near them for a good few years that is for sure! I had a feeling that you would want to give him a very wide berth as his clothes looked dirty and I am sure that his feet probably smelled as bad as his breath if he removed those scruffy black boots!

"He looks bad enough from this picture" went on Petunia "but there is something else I need to tell you. Bella dear, brace yourself, Marigold, get the smelling salts ready.....The worst thing about him, the very worst thing is.....he doesn't love his Mum!!!"

There was stunned silence! Marigold cast a glance at Bluebell but she was just sitting there staring at Petunia.

"He doesn't love his Mum?" repeated Gertie

"That's right, you heard it correctly, never mind not washing, the bad teeth and all the rest, this scabby, scoundrel does not love his Mum! I would say did not of course, as he and his crew were presumed to have perished in a shipwreck but now we know differently don't we, for this.....this apology for a man is currently residing in our birdbath and has had the cheek to catnap our Midnight!"

"Doesn't love his Mum! Well, that is the absolute limit!" said Gertie angrily. "We need to get Midnight back where he belongs AND sort this, this, scurvy dog out once and for all! Action ladies. It's time for The Key!!"

Now you all know by now how it works dear readers. All three Grannies have a piece of metal in their pockets which they click together like jigsaw pieces. Once together, they glow and when the glow fades, they make the most extraordinarily ornate key. At this point, at home in Hamsey, one of the Grannies would go to a door in the wall, where there wasn't a door before and open it with the key and descend to a basement where there are shelves and shelves of boxes containing wool. Well, we weren't at Hamsey, we were in their cottage in Fishing Lane. What would happen here? I waited.

The Grannies fitted their pieces together, the key was formed and.....well, nothing here in the kitchen! Gertie gave the key to Bluebell who got up, moved her chair and revealed a trap door in the floor. The door had a keyhole in it and she bent down and inserted the key and turned it with a loud click. Lifting the door up she revealed a set of stone steps leading down to the darkness.

"Torch please Gertie" she said. Suddenly she had lost the shocked pale look she had had since Midnight had gone missing and she looked set and determined. "Which boxes do you suggest?" "I'll be guided by you dear" replied Gertie, "you are the most knowledgeable regarding the wool and the boxes. We need gold and silver for the coins, we also need the pinkest wool you have and.....she thought for a moment, ah, yes, most of all we need as much green feathered wool as you can or, failing that, red feathered wool will do. I have just had the most brilliant idea! Oh, and bring the portable Great Knitting Needle, you know, the one that folds up and we can put in our pocket. We will need that to get on the ship and activate the wool."

There was a lot of muffled sounds from below our feet and then Bluebell emerged from the cellar clutching several boxes kicking the trap door shut with her foot.

"We really must sort the lighting out down there, it is very difficult to find the boxes using just a torch!" she moaned. "Now, I have got box 100/A for the gold and silver, Box 2 for the pink and Boxes 833 and 834 for the feathered wool."

"Excellent!" said Gertie cheerfully. "Whilst you were down there, Petunia gathered up our Knitting bags.....Marigold do you knit dear?"

Marigold grinned and reaching in to the bib of her dungarees (which I was discovering is a place of wonder!.....I wonder what else is in there!) she produced a pair of beautifully carved wooden needles.

"Do I knit? Well maids, just a little!! My Grandpa made me these when I was a nipper learning at my Grandmas knee and I have knitted ever since!" The Grannies were about to discover that Marigold was a Champion Knitter with phenomenal speed and accuracy for she dropped not one stitch!

"Petunia will you start on the coins please, we need a mix to fill Midnight's hat, that shouldn't take too long and then can you help with the pink wool" Gertie lent over and whispered in her ear. Petunia smiled.

"Marigold, will you start with the green feathered wool?" Again, Gertie leaned over and whispered. Marigold let out a hoot of laughter and reached for the yarn.

"Bluebell, you and I have lots of parrots to knit! I want to adorn The Yappy Dog with a flock of them! Start with the red as Marigold will need a lot of the green."

Silence filled the kitchen, only broken by the sound of the needles clicking furiously and in no time at all, growing mounds of knitting filled the kitchen table and cascaded down onto the floor. Petunia finished her job first and asked Gertie if she should start on the pink.

"Could you put your needles down for a moment and do something for me instead" replied Gertie.

"Sitting here knitting, I have just had an extra idea! We will need to use the Granny transportation freeway but I think we can manage it as I have the feeling that Marigold is one of us, aren't you dear?" Marigold smiled back at Gertie. "So, we have extra power!"

"Petunia, go and use the network and see if you can locate his mother. Time for them to be reunited don't you think?"

"Excellent!" laughed Petunia, "I'll do that and cue it all up ready for when you need it! and then I will come back and get started on the pink. Will you help me please Gertie, it's a little behind schedule on that front!"

"Of course dear" said Gertie, casting off with the green and reaching for the pink yarn.

Half an hour later, they had everything they needed and yet, to look at them all there in the kitchen they looked like four sweet, dear little old Grannies, (if you count Marigold) all sitting having a nice morning knit and natter around the table! Looks can be deceptive as Black-Eyed Jack was about to discover!

*To be continued.....*