

The Knitting Grannies and the Pirate ship in the birdbath

Episode 8

With a final bang of the door behind them, the sound of Jack's mother haranguing him faded and the Grannies and Marigold heaved a sigh of relief!

"Well that went smoothly!" said Gertie.

"Was there a blip when you first waved the Queen Pin though Gertie?" asked Marigold, "Nothing seemed to happen and I thought oh no we are in trouble!"

"Not at all dear, I activated the Pin and then pressed pause so it would be ready just at the right moment" explained Gertie.

"Ah I see! I didn't know it had a pause button, that explains it!" smiled Marigold. "Useful!"

"Very!"

"MEOW!.....ME.....OW! complained Midnight stridently!

"Oh, sorry Midnight!" cried Bluebell contritely, bending down immediately to help the poor cat out of the confines of the knitted parrot suit! She picked him up and gave him a big cuddle and a big kiss. Midnight screwed his face up in disgust at being kissed in public and with his paw rubbed the kiss off his face, rather like you guys do when your Mum's kiss you at school in the mornings! Bluebell set him back down on the deck and reached for the now empty green hat which had been discarded by Jack after he had taken the coins; giving it a shake, she popped it back where it belonged onto the cats' head, taking sure to carefully put his ears into the pockets so they were comfortable and fastening the button under his chin. The sausage dog looked at him in amazement! Truth be told, the two animals had struck up a bit of a friendship during Midnight's captivity. Marigold saw the dog looking longingly at the hat. She went over and picked him up, holding him to her face and looking steadily into his brown eyes.

"Now dear thing, you don't want to stay on this boat, do you? You can come home with me if you like but there are rules! No nipping ankles, no peeing indoors and keep the yapping at a minimum! Grumpiness won't be tolerated and I am in charge! There's plenty of love and snuggles, you will have a full tummy every day and a warm bed to sleep in. There will be as many walks as you want each day. What do you say? The little sausage dog looked steadily back at Marigold's kind face. Truth be told, he had had enough of nasty, smelly, cruel, bully pirates and hated the ship even if it was named after him (well it wasn't but no one had asked his real name!)

In an instant he yearned for all that Marigold had promised and leaned forward and licked her cheek. "OK little man, that's settled then! I wonder what to call you though, I don't want to call you Yappy for the rest of time!"

"Meow, Meow, Meow, Meow!" said Midnight to Bluebell.

"Ah, thank you dear cat, well that solves that! Marigold, meet Cuthbert!"

"Cuthbert?" said Marigold astonished!

"That's what Midnight tells me!"

The little dog wagged his tail to confirm that Cuthbert was indeed his name! "Well, Cuthbert, if that is your name, that is what I will call you!"

"I think we should save conversation for when we are safely back home and having a nice cup of tea" said Petunia. "But before we go, Gertie dear, what about the crew?"

"Oh, don't worry, I think Mother will sort them out! replied Gertie getting out the Queen Pin. "But I think she will spend a while sorting out that son of hers!"

"No need to say much but 'home please Queen Pin!'" she waved the Pin and I had that sense of falling.....you know when you are dreaming and you feel as if you are falling? Next moment we were all back in the garden of No 3 Fishing Lane looking down at the Pirate ship in the birdbath which was now adorned with very attractive candyfloss pink sails and masts lined with chattering red and green parrots. Looking closely at the bird bath, I could see tiny black dots in the water moving quickly away from the ship. Petunia ran indoors and returned carrying a small sieve which she proceeded to use to dredge the bird bath and remove the black dots. (a bit like when you go pond dipping at school). Once she had captured them all she went out through the side gate "Just walking up to the old ruined Village," she called over her shoulder. "I'll let them go there! Put the kettle on, will be back in a tick!"

Marigold looked questioningly at Gertie.

"The crew" said Gertie. "I think they just abandoned ship!"

Without warning, I started to feel very hot and faint and that wibbly wobbly feeling was back! When the world had stopped tumbling about and I finally plucked up the courage to open my eyes, I found

all three Grannies looking at me from their deck chairs and smiling! I was back in their garden in Hamsey. There was Frankie snoring on the rug but now sharing it with a mound of knitted face masks! I felt discombobulated and sat there blinking for a moment and trying to get my mind to catch up with my eyes and stop spinning! Gertie's voice continued:

"We left the Yappy dog in the birdbath and all headed in for a well-deserved cup of tea and a nice piece of ginger cake. Bluebell opened a large tin of sardines for Midnight and gave him the cream from the top of the milk! Marigold didn't stay for tea, needing to take Cuthbert straight home for a much-needed bath before she headed down to the shops for some tins of dog food. I must admit the next time we saw him he looked very smart indeed with his pink collar and dangling silver name tag! He had scrubbed up well too, very handsome once the layers of dirt were out of his fur. She bought him a very natty little pink bandanna to wear in the summer and a blue tartan coat to wear in the colder winter months. He turned out to be the most adorable little scrap and became quite a celebrity with all the school children. Marigold takes him in once a week and he sits on a pink cushion that has his name on it and listens to the children read! Most satisfactory!"

"What happened to Black-Eyed Jack and the ship in the birdbath?" I asked.

"I asked Cyril, one of the fishermen at Pebble Sands to take it on his next trip out to sea and throw it onto the Blackstone Rock on the reef the other side of the Lighthouse. There is one really high rock that sticks up and it's surrounded with cruel jagged reef all round. No escaping that in a hurry!"

"His poor Mother though!" I said "she hadn't done anything wrong so why make her a castaway as well? That isn't very fair!"

"She loved it!" said Petunia "her son couldn't escape her clutches and he was definitely a work in progress so to speak! I am sure that she had him washing, cleaning his teeth and defluffing his belly button!"

"Not to mention his finger nails, hair and beard!" added Bluebell.

"And his clothes!" finished Gertie. "I hope that his feet smelt a lot more fragrant!"

"And then there's the ship! With no crew, it's either her or him to swab the decks! No fear of them starving either for there is plenty of fish and crabs around the reef!"

"I wouldn't be surprised if she didn't get him plaiting his beard and wearing a pink bow!" chortled Gertie! "Oh dear....." she looked down at the mound of knitted face masks and then up at me, "you don't seem to have knitted many do you dear, must be all that snoring you've been doing!" The other Grannies laughed!

"Don't worry dear, let's have another cup of tea and then do another hour on the knitting before you take Frankie for a walk. Plenty of time to catch up" said Bluebell getting up and heading for the kitchen.

The end.