

The Knitting Grannies and the disappearing dog. Chapter 5

As the wool thread snaked slowly away from my head and face, images began to flicker on the wall. A jogger running towards us and puffing out a thank you as we moved out of the way so that he could pass at a safe distance and not have to break his running stride, a dog walker on the other side of the road, Frankie barking at the pooch and then sniffing around in the grass, stopping at the kerb to cross the road.

"Now I think we are coming to it" murmured Gertie as the images showed an empty pavement ahead, but in the distance, was the slowly emerging figure of an old lady. With the wool now clear from my eyes, I also could watch.

As the figure drew closer I could clearly see that the lady was very thin, slightly stooped (bent over a bit) and looked a little unkempt, (as if she needed a little wash and brush up).

"Oh yes, I remember her now!" I said.

"She looks very sad" remarked Bluebell. I had to agree she did. Her mouth was turned down and her forehead furrowed (she was frowning) and instead of looking around her, she kept her eyes on the ground in front of her, only glancing up occasionally to look a little way ahead. It was with one of those glances that she seemed to spot us, Frankie in particular I think. Her eyes seem to come alive and a smile spread on her face. She stops and starts talking to us. The conversation was much as I remembered it and had recounted to the Grannies. She asks if he is a guide dog in training and I explain about the warning sign on his lead saying he needs space and tell her a bit about Frankie and how he came to live with us and about his walking issue. All the while the old lady is stroking and fussing Frankie who is, of course, lapping the attention up! Actually, hang on a minute! She is actually stroking and fussing more than I remembered. She is making a real fuss of around his ears and under his chin and, wait.....what is she doing now.....reaching down and playing with his collar.... and now she is twizzling it round and putting her face nearer to Frankie's'and

"She's reading his name tag!" declared Petunia grimly, "on which of course is his address!"

Now Frankie has pushed his nose up her sleeve...she laughs pushes it playfully away, says goodbye and begins to walk away but not before we all notice the colour of her jumper sleeve under her coat which has been revealed by Frankie's nose.

"RED!" we all exclaimed in unison.

But what's this? She is looking so sad again that I am saying something else to her which makes her stop again. I'm offering her something to give to Frankie! No way! I didn't remember I had done that! The old lady is wreathed in smiles once again, accepts it and offers it to Frankie who gently takes it from her (that's a first!) which makes her laugh in delight! Now she is walking away but still smiling.

"You gave her a piece of carrot!" said Bluebell accusingly.

"I always carry bits of carrot with me on a walk!" I answered. "When Frankie passes a dog nicely or walks nicely he gets a piece as a reward!"

"Quiet you two!" ordered Gertie, "that's not right, not right at all!"

We focused back onto the images which now showed the old lady walking away.

"Yes, it is right, she said goodbye, seemed much happier and went on her way." I said.

"Looks closely dear, yes she is walking away but look again, she was walking towards you when you first saw her, that is, towards Hamsey Green. Now she is walking away from you but she has turned around and is walking back the way she had already come, towards Warlingham!"

"You didn't remember that dear, did you?" said Bluebell, "but your mind did, it's still showing us. Let's see if we can work out where she is going."

I was about to point out that maybe the lady had just reached the point where she always turned around and then walked home, that maybe she never intended to walk all the way to Hamsey Green in the first place, but the three colourful heads were together watching carefully as the images continued to unfold.

"She's turning into Crewes Lane and.....oh botheration! She's disappeared!"

The memory images faded as the tail end of the wool wrapped itself around the cage of the machine and it slowed to a halt.

"Well that was a very useful exercise!" declared Gertie who was very pleased with all the detail they had managed to unearth. "I think that there is no doubt that we have found our prime suspect and we know the general area she might live in."

"Unless she was generally just walking a route she does every day." I said.

"Yes, that is a possibility of course but I have the feeling that we have struck lucky and it is as Gertie said. When she was walking away from you at the end, it was with more energy and purpose than when she was walking towards you at the beginning. As if she had suddenly remembered something or had a change of plan."

"I tend to agree with you Petunia" said Gertie. "we need to narrow it down a bit and for this we need Midnight! Now dear puss, I want you to pop up to Crewes Lane and hang about there for a bit. Talk to the other pets and find out if anyone knows this old lady and, if so, which house is hers. Petunia, can you extract an image of the old dear and print it on paper for him?"

"Be 5 minutes" said Petunia, picking up the machine and heading to her laboratory. True to her word, exactly 5 minutes later she returned with a rolled up piece of paper which she tucked into Midnight's green hat.

"Good luck dear thing!" Bluebell trilled as she held the front door open for him and he swept importantly past her. "Come back in through the cat flap in the back door!" she reminded him.

"Come on Bella, whilst Midnight's gone, let's see what that piece of wool can tell us!" said Petunia and with that, both Grannies disappeared upstairs.

"Why don't you pop home and let Mr. R know what's going on dear" suggested Gertie. "Come back in half an hour and whilst you are at it, it might be an idea to suggest to him changing your back gate for something less easy to open!"

With that she sat back in her chair and closed her eyes.

"Are you going to sleep?" I asked.

"Certainly not!" she snapped. "I'm going over all the information we have and making a plan! Sleep indeed! Now shoo!"

Having been dismissed I headed home, hoping that Midnight would come up trumps and quickly so that we could get Frankie home where he belonged.

To be continued.....