

Knitting Needles

by Christy Noel

There was once an old woman named Harriet Tucker, though everyone called her Grandma. She missed her grandkids dearly after they moved to California.

“Why don’t you fly out?” asked her daughter, Kim, sounding slightly flippant.

“Couldn’t you have stayed in Florida?” countered Grandma.

Grandma talked to her cute mailman. “Why did they have to take my darling baby boos ‘cross the whole country? It’s all Kim’s husband’s fault. I always knew he was a lemon.”

Freddy replied, “Flying’s easy. You oughta go.”

“If Gawd had meant for us to fly he’d have given us wings!”

Grandma got up in the night to go pee and suddenly thought Freddy was right.

“Are you going to be okay?” asked Gus, the neighbor who took her to the airport.

“You want a wheel chair?”

“I’m no cripple!” she cried, gripping her brand new rolling suitcase, a present from Gus and his wife.

“Okay then. You’re all checked in. Just go through security and head to Gate 17.” Gus waved and left.

Grandma puffed herself up and stood in line. “Why is it taking so long?” she asked a stranger behind her. The woman shrugged and turned away.

“Your I.D. and ticket, ma’am.” The national guardsman waited politely.

“What?” She looked about, bewildered.

He repeated himself four times until she finally understood and peered into her rainbow-colored tote bag. People behind her muttered impatiently when it took her five minutes to find the requested items.

“Thanks, ma’am. Pro-ceed.” A clean cut youth, he spoke with Southern emphasis.

“What a nice young man!” She didn’t hear the alarm beep as she walked through the metal detector, bag in tow.

“Place your bags on the x-ray belt!” shouted the security guard on the other side, stopping her.

The national guardsman aided her while she glared at the guard. “Nasty immigrants,” she grumbled. She didn’t like the way they stared at her.

The security guards clustered around the x-ray monitor while they examined and re-examined her carry-ons.

“We have to search your bags, ma’am,” said a swarthy, intimidating man.

“Whatever for?!” cried Grandma. She clutched at her sweater.

“You may have prohibited materials.”

“That’s ridiculous.”

They horrified her by spilling the entire contents of her bags on a side table. She fretted like a ruffled parakeet as they sifted through her yarn, throat lozenges, panty liners, lipstick, and heart medicine.

“You can’t take these on the plane.” The evil guard held up her twelve inch knitting needles in triumph.

“How’m I going to survive the long flight?” Her voice twittered. “I have to knit. If I can’t knit, I can’t fly. If I can’t fly, I can’t see my grandkids!”

“You can’t have them,” he barked, glowering at her. He lifted his walkie-talkie. “I think we have a security problem here...” He dumped her needles into a large bucket full of fingernail clippers and mini-pocket knives.

“I need to see your I.D.” he added. He jotted her full name on a clipboard.

She paced helplessly, getting in everyone’s way.

“Is there a problem?” A black police officer stepped over. Soft, crinkly lines surrounded his eyes as he listened to the complaints.

“Maybe we can get you something else at the magazine shop—would that be okay?” suggested the policeman. “I bet you could play solitaire.”

Grandma reflected. He treated her respectfully. Finally, she said, “I guess that’s okay.”

She stuck out her tongue at the security guards as the officer guided her away.