



Sleepover Club at the Carnival



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Sue Mongredien

The Sleepover Club at the Carnival

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Join the Sleepover Club: Frankie, Kenny, Felicity, Rosie and Lyndsey, five girls who want to have fun – but who always end up in mischief! Carnival is coming to Cuddington! There'll be music, costumes, and even a part for Alfie the horse, if Lyndz has her way. Frankie and her mates do loads of research for their carnival float – and things get seriously interesting when they stumble on some old wartime photos of the village. Who's that girl, the one who looks exactly like Kenny? Is it coincidence, or could they be related? Dress yourself up and groove on over! AGE 7-9

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at the Carnival



by Sue Mongredien

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CHAPTER ONE



Howdy, fans, Kenny here. You know, the quiet, shy, retiring, polite one! What do you mean, you don't believe me? Oh, OK, then – I'm the loud, rude one who's always getting us into trouble. Satisfied?

Hey, what are you doing upside-down like that anyway? What? You're NOT upside-down? Oh – silly me! You just LOOK upside-down, that's all. In fact, everything looks upside-down – because *I'm* upside-down! Derrr! I've been practising for the world record in standing on your head, you see. The only thing is, after a while, you forget you're the wrong way round and it seems perfectly normal to be staring at people's feet. My dad keeps saying that being upside-down all the time means my brain is getting squashed, and it's only a matter of time before it turns to mush. I don't THINK I believe him, but then he IS a doctor, so maybe he knows something I don't?

Hang on a second while I turn the right way again. There, that's better! Let's go and sit out in the garden, shall we? I hate staying indoors when the weather's nice. Why stay inside four boring walls when you can practise your cartwheels up and down the lawn?

Anyway, I'm glad I saw you, because the others voted for me to tell you all about the Cuddington Carnival and what we did for it. "Kenny," they said, "as the best, funniest, cleverest and most entertaining storyteller of all of us, you MUST tell all the Sleepover Club fans what happened at the carnival. We're begging you!"

OK, OK, so the others didn't *quite* say all of that. But as Frankie pointed out, a lot of what I'm about to tell you is MY story. And as animal-mad Lyndz would say – you might as well hear it straight from the horse's mouth! (Not that I'm a horse, but... Oh, you know what I mean.)

Have you ever been to a carnival? Believe it or not, I HADN'T until last week. Now I've been to one, I want to go to lots more – they are so megatastically awesome! And the only thing that's keeping me from being completely gutted that this year's carnival is all over, is the fact that it's half term now. We're off school for a week, yippee! But if the carnival had just finished and we still had to go back to school – that would just be too traumatic for words!

Anyway, I'd better get on with the story. The rest of the Sleepover Club is coming over for lunch in a bit, and you know what a load of blabbermouths they are – they'll just want to interrupt me all the time. And we don't want that, do we?

Well, the first I heard about the Cuddington Carnival was from my mum. She's a pretty good source for juicy gossip, and always knows what's going on around Cuddington. She helps out as a receptionist at my dad's surgery and also does some hairdressing from home, so one way or another,

people are always telling her their news – which she then tells to my grandma on the phone. That’s when I start earwiggling.

Over the years, I’ve built up quite a good gossip radar in my ears. There are certain words that my radar always picks up on, however boring the rest of the talk is. For example, here’s a typical conversation between Mum and Grandma on the phone. Mum tends to do most of the talking so this is what I hear:

“Recipe for lemon cake... drone, drone... Alison Parker’s new baby... drone, drone-Mrs Ellis’s sciatica... drone, drone... Emma’s boyfriend...”

PING! That’s where my ears prick up. Emma’s my oldest sister and she never tells me anything about her love life, even though I’m always trying to find out the gory details. Excellent blackmailing material, you see – not to mention all the fun I can have winding her up! But although Emma won’t tell ME anything, she often confides in Mum, and that’s where the gossip radar comes in handy. It means that once Mum starts yakking on to Grandma about it, yours truly gets to find out what’s going on, too!

So a couple of weeks ago, I was sitting in my favourite eavesdropping position – at the kitchen table, pretending to flick through one of Emma’s magazines, with one ear firmly tuned to Mum. This time, I heard:

“Cathy Clayton’s new hairdo... drone, drone... Jim’s working too hard... drone, drone... Molly’s piano exam... drone, drone... plans for the carnival...”

PING! Carnival? What carnival? What was she talking about? I immediately tuned in fully to hear more.

“Yes, Sheila Adams told me about it,” Mum was saying. “At the end of the month... Oh, you know, floats and dressing up and bouncy castles, I should think... Mmm, well, she’s asked me to help out with some baking, as there are going to be stalls in the main street. I was wondering if I could get your chocolate cheesecake recipe off you... Yes...”

My radar switched itself off at the recipe word. Dull City! Then I had to wait impatiently while Mum finished chatting before I could find out any more about the carnival.

Click! The second that I heard her put the phone down, I swung round in my chair. “Mum, what were you saying about a carnival?” I said at once. “I couldn’t help overhearing...”

She grinned at me. “I thought I could feel the breeze of a pair of ears flapping behind me,” she said. She was pretending to be cross, but I knew she didn’t mind. Let’s face it, we both know where I get my nosiness from. “I was just telling Grandma that Cuddington is going to have a carnival at the end of the month. Something to do with Cuddington being one hundred years old. I’m going to be doing some baking for it, and—”

“But what IS a carnival exactly?” I burst out, not wanting to hear another word about Mum’s baking plans. “I mean, what’s going to be happening? Is it just a load of sappy dancing and stuff?”

She thought for a moment. “I think it’s all a bit up in the air still,” she said. “Yes, there’ll be dancing and music and bands playing, I should think. Then there’s probably going to be a parade with different floats, and people all dressed up. There’s going to be a funfair on the green with lots of rides and a bouncy castle. And stalls and sideshows up and down the high street. That sort of thing.”

I bounced off my chair and jumped up and down with excitement. “Excellent!” I said. “Wait till I tell the others!”

I was just about to get on the phone and ring round the rest of the Sleepover Club to tell them the news but Mum looked at her watch. “Not so fast,” she said. “I promised Emma she could use the phone after I’d finished. And by the time SHE’s done with it, it’ll be your bedtime.”

“Oh, Mu-um!” I moaned. Emma’s sixteen and spends HOURS on the phone. It must be a weird teenage thing because Rosie’s big sister Tiffany is exactly the same. Never mind my bedtime, it would practically be *breakfast* time by the time Emma had finished gassing away to her mates.

“I’m sure it can wait until school tomorrow,” Mum said briskly. “And anyway, it’s high time you had a bath, young lady. Look at the colour of your neck! What have you been doing – rolling around in mud or something?”

“Of course not!” I said grumpily, going up to the bathroom. Well, I wasn’t about to tell her I’d been timing myself doing circuits of forward and backward rolls around the garden, was I? Especially as I’d managed to kick quite a lot of her flowers in the process.

So even though I was bursting to tell everyone about the carnival, I wasn’t able to say anything until the next day at school. And even THEN, it didn’t go according to plan.

I went up to school extra fast the next morning. Yeah, I know – that’s not like me at all! Even though I’m pretty speedy on my feet most of the time, the journey to school somehow takes me a lot longer than if I’m going to the swimming baths or to a footy match or something. Strange, isn’t it? It’s as if my feet just can’t bear to take me to such a boring place. Well, that’s my theory anyway.

The others were already in the playground when I got there. “Hi!” I said excitedly, rushing over to them. “Guess what? I’ve got some wicked news to tell you!”

“What?” Frankie, Lyndz and Rosie said at once, but Fliss just frowned. “I was actually in the middle of telling everyone what the twins did last night,” she said huffily. “So let me finish first!”

Frankie rolled her eyes at me, and Rosie bit her lip, trying not to giggle at the cross look on my face. Lyndz, who’s definitely the most patient one of us five, was the only one listening to Fliss’s boring story about what her baby sister and brother had been up to now.

“And you’ll never guess where I found Hannah’s rattle in the end,” Fliss said at long last, building up to a dramatic climax. “In the fridge!”

“Really? In the fridge?” Lyndz asked. “How had it got in there?”

“Well,” Fliss began – but Frankie was just a smidgen too quick for her.

“C’mon, Kenz – what’s your news? You look like you’re about to burst with it!” she said.

“Get a load of this,” I said importantly, “Mum told me last night that—”

PEEEEEPPPP!

Curses! Now it was Mrs Poole our headteacher’s turn to interrupt me, blowing the whistle to get us to line up and go into school.

“What is it?” hissed Frankie as we lined up in front of Mrs Weaver.

“Tell you later,” I muttered out of the corner of my mouth. The Cuddington carnival wasn’t something I wanted to whisper to the others just before we went into class. I needed time to tell them about it *properly*.

But then, wouldn’t you know it? It just wasn’t going to be my day for breaking the news. As soon as we’d had the register, Mrs Weaver smiled a big smile at us and said she had something exciting to tell us about. Then she pulled down the blackboard to show one word: CARNIVAL.

Aaaaarggghhh! So all in all, I’d been scuppered by:

Emma – using the phone

Mum – who’d made me go to bed

Fliss – who wouldn’t let me interrupt her boring story

Mrs Poole – blowing the whistle just at the crucial moment

And Mrs Weaver – telling everyone about the carnival before I could. Gutted!



CHAPTER TWO



I wasn't gutted for *too* long, of course. First, because I never stay in a mood for longer than about five minutes, and second, because Mrs Weaver had a lot more information about the carnival than my mum had.

For starters, she told us all about how *we* were going to get involved. "As well as bands, fairground rides and stalls, there will be a procession of floats along the high street," she said. "Each float has a particular theme. There'll be lots of people wearing costumes, and all the floats will be decorated differently. Best of all, Cuddington Primary School is going to have its own float – and it's going to be designed and decorated by YOU!"

Everyone looked excited at that. This sounded like fun!

"I haven't finished yet," she said, smiling. "The top classes – that's ours and Mr Phillips' class – are responsible for actually putting together the float. The younger classes are going to put together a display of pictures for the library. So I want you all to come up with a good theme for us to have for the float. Now..."

"Football!" Simon Graham said at once.

I grinned at him and gave him the thumbs-up. I'd be on for that one!

"Horse rising!" Lyndz blurted out eagerly.

"Harry Potter!" someone else shouted.

Mrs Weaver banged on the desk with her ruler. "Whoa, whoa, whoa!" she said. "There'll be plenty of time for your ideas later. Don't you think it would be a good idea to find out more about the carnival before you all start shouting things out?"

The classroom went quiet.

"Now," Mrs Weaver continued, "do you remember when it was the millennium and the whole world looked back over the last thousand years? Well, this year marks one HUNDRED years of Cuddington – as far as we can tell. Lots of the old buildings in the village were built in 1901 – for example, the main bank on the high street, the library, the old grammar school and most importantly, the big stone cross in the marketplace. 1901 also saw the beginning of the weekly farmers' market where local people could buy and sell pigs, sheep and cows, as well as fruit and vegetables. The market's a bit different these days, but it's still going strong, after all this time."

I looked at Lyndz, who had this dead wistful expression on her face. I just *knew* she was wishing that you could still buy piglets and lambs at Cuddington market. Lyndz is totally soppy about baby animals. Unfortunately, the market only sells things like tea towels and big granny pants these days.

“So that’s the main reason for the carnival – it’s to celebrate one hundred years of Cuddington’s history,” Mrs Weaver said.

A few people pulled faces at that – me and Frankie included.

“So bearing in mind this historical theme, has anyone got any ideas for the float now?” Mrs Weaver said.

“Grannies,” Frankie said under her breath.

Unfortunately, Mrs Weaver has ear radar of her own. “What was that, Francesca?” she asked, raising her eyebrows.

Frankie had to think quickly. “Er... grannies,” she said. “We could all dress up as old grannies, and play bingo, and...”

“I don’t think so, thank you, Francesca,” Mrs Weaver said in her scariest no-nonsense voice. “Anyone else got any brilliant ideas?”

The M&Ms both smirked nastily at Frankie. Creeps! They’re our enemies, if you didn’t know. Emma Hughes and Emily Berryman, to be precise – but we don’t like to waste our breath on their yucky names, so we call them the M&Ms instead. Ever seen *Star Wars*? I always expect that creepy Darth Vader music to start up whenever they walk into the room. One of these days, I swear they’re going to say to us, “Turn to the dark side, Sleepover Club!”

Emma put her hand up, all sickly-sweet smiles. “Miss, how about a tribute to all the famous people of Cuddington?” she said.

Mrs Weaver frowned. “Who were you thinking of, Emma?” she asked.

That stumped her! “Er... Well, my aunt was on Blind Date last year...” she said lamely.

All the boys – and all of us Sleepover girls, of course – started sniggering loudly. “Desperation and ugliness must run in the family,” I said, loud enough for Emma to hear me. She went bright red and scowled at me. Ha! Got you back, Hughesy!

“We could do something about all the interesting sights of Cuddington,” said Alan Baxter, class boffin. Like, *yeah!* ’Cos there are just *sooo* many, aren’t there?

“That’s a good idea, Alan,” Mrs Weaver said, writing it up on the board. She was the only one who thought so, though, judging by the amount of people who were wrinkling up their noses in boredom. “Come on, the rest of you – use your brains!”

“Sport through the ages?” Simon Graham suggested. He’s like me – a real sports nut.

I was just about to agree loudly with this idea – any excuse to dress up in my football kit! – when I heard an excited squeak come from next to me. Fliss!

“We could do... CLOTHES through the ages!” she burst out. “Fashion! What people wore a hundred years ago, right through to what people wear today!”

Everyone started shouting things out.

“Mini-skirts in the Sixties!”

“Flares in the Seventies!”

“Teddy boys!”

Even Mrs Weaver looked impressed by this. “I think that’s a very good idea, Felicity,” she said warmly. “Hands up if you agree.”

A forest of hands shot up at once. A few boys’ hands hung back – and I have to confess, I didn’t put mine up STRAIGHT away, as I secretly fancied Simon’s sports idea instead. But when Rosie gave me a fierce look, I decided I really should support Fliss. I’d never be forgiven otherwise.

Mrs Weaver was smiling now. I think she was just relieved that someone had come up with something sensible. “Good thinking, Felicity,” she said. “Everyone seems to like your idea.”

Fliss blushed and looked down at her desk modestly, even though I knew that secretly she was practically wetting her pants with pride.

“Now, it’s just about time for break,” Mrs Weaver said, looking at her watch. “But keep thinking up ideas, everyone! I’ll see what Mr Phillips thinks of ‘fashion through the ages’. If he likes it, we’ll start putting together materials for you to get working on tomorrow.”

There was an excited buzz of chatter as we all went out into the playground. Fliss was beaming. Mrs Weaver often gets a bit impatient with her for day-dreaming or sneaking peeks in her little mirror to check her hair’s OK all the time. But today she was the golden girl! And the thought of doing a whole project on her favourite thing – CLOTHES – was a dream come true.

As soon as we got outside, Frankie put her hands on her hips and practically screamed, “So what’s the news, Kenny? I’ve been dying to find out!”

I started to laugh. “You already HAVE found out, you nana. The carnival! That’s what I was going to tell you about, but eager-beaver Weaver beat me to it.”

Frankie’s face fell. “Oh, phooey!” she moaned. “I thought it was going to be an idea for the next sleepover or something REALLY exciting.”

“Talking of which…” Rosie said. “Anyone thought of anything?”

“Well, we’ve got to do some sort of carnival sleepover now,” Lyndz said at once.

“Agreed!” I said. “If we have it at mine, we could use Molly the Monster as the bouncy castle!” Me and Molly – my middle sister – are about as friendly as Red Riding Hood and the big bad wolf.

“We could have a sort of hundred-years sleepover,” Fliss said, chewing on her bottom lip thoughtfully.

Frankie felt Fliss’s forehead, looking concerned. “Blimey, Fliss, that’s two ideas you’ve had already this morning! No wonder you feel hot – your brain’s probably about to explode!”

“And a hundred years is quite a long time for a sleepover, Fliss,” I teased. “I don’t think my mum and dad would be very keen on having us in the house for so long!”

“Yeah, do you fancy yourself as Sleeping Beauty or something?” Rosie quipped. “Falling asleep for a hundred years, only to be woken by a kiss from… Ryan Scott!”

Fliss tossed her long hair. “I didn’t mean it has to LAST one hundred years, you derr-brains,” she said scathingly as everyone else cracked up. “I meant, we could imagine what a sleepover would have been like one hundred years ago!”

“Like a 1901 sleepover?” Rosie said. Then she frowned. “I don’t think they had telly then, though, did they?”

“What about sweets?” Lyndz asked anxiously.

“We had enough historical stuff when we stayed in that Blitz house,” Frankie said with a shudder. “And there’s no way I’m going without an inside toilet again, whatever you say!”

“Oh… Er… Well, we don’t have to be that strict,” Fliss said hurriedly. I could tell she didn’t like the idea of not having a toilet either. “But maybe we could play old-fashioned games and eat old-fashioned sweets – like humbugs and toffee, that sort of thing – and maybe dress up, or… I don’t know what they used to do in those days. Make love potions or something?”

Everyone pulled faces at the love potions idea. Fliss is the only one of us who’s remotely interested in boys and lurve and all that soppy stuff.

“Is that your final answer?” I said in the end, leaning forward and shoving a pretend microphone under her nose.

“It’s not a bad idea,” Lyndz said, still sounding rather doubtful.

“Well, no-one’s got any better ideas, have they?” Fliss pointed out. “So shall we do it?”

“Mmmm,” “Yeah,” “I suppose so,” we all said at once – some of us less enthusiastically than others.

“Granny sleepover it is!” Frankie said with a wink.



CHAPTER THREE



The next day, we started work on our “fashion float”. Mrs Weaver told us that the float would be divided up into ten sections – one for each decade. Our class was going to be split up into five groups. One group would work on the Fifties, one would do the Sixties, one the Seventies, and so on. In the meantime, Mr Phillips’ class was going to work on the *first* five decades of the century.

“On the float, we want two people – a boy and a girl – representing each decade,” Mrs Weaver said. “You can either just dress up in the typical fashion of that time, or you can dress up as a famous person from that decade. So, for example, if you were in the Sixties group, you could dress up in Sixties fashion – mini-skirts for example, or the hippy look. Or you could dress up as one of the Beatles, Neil Armstrong – you know, the first man on the moon, or... well, you get the idea.”

“Do you think I’d look good in a miniskirt?” Simon Graham shouted out, batting his eyelashes and making everyone giggle.

Mrs Weaver gave him one of her stern looks. “You’d look even better with your mouth closed, Simon,” she said witheringly.

Then she split us up into groups of five or six people. Five people – perfect for the Sleepover Club! But then she said there had to be at least two boys and two girls in each group. Typical – boys always have to spoil everything.

In the end, we weren’t TOO badly split up. Me and Frankie got to be in a group together, which was cool. We were with Simon, Neil and Maria Fonseca. I was pleased about that – at least we were guaranteed some laughs.

Rosie, Fliss and Lyndz were in a group with the twins, Alex and Joe Dunmore, who are pretty all right, too. At least Mrs Weaver hadn’t put us with the M&Ms this time. She has a nasty habit of putting us in groups with them because she seems to think we’ll make friends if we spend time together. In her dreams! I’d sooner be in a group with a man-eating crocodile and a dozen piranha fish, thanks!

Anyway, we were picked to do the Seventies’ part of the float. Mrs Weaver handed round sheets with suggestions for famous people and events, and piles of library books she’d put together.

Our group started looking through some of the library books. “Look at those boots!” Frankie screeched, pointing at a picture excitedly. The soles were about six inches high and they were silver and glittery. “I want them!”

“Wow – punks!” Simon and Neil were saying. “Look – this one’s got a safety pin through his cheek!”

“Glam rockers,” Maria read aloud. “Look at their trousers – they’re so tight! And is that a wig he’s wearing? That can’t be his real hair!”

We all started snorting with laughter as we flicked our way through the rest of the books. There were lots of pictures of men wearing big, open-necked shirts with huge collars and gold medallions. “I wonder if our dads ever dressed like this?” I said, sniggering. “I know my mum used to have some gold hot-pants!”

“I wonder if Mrs Weaver ever dressed like THIS?” Simon whispered, holding up a picture of a punk girl with bright blue hair and three earrings in her nose.

That just set us all off in fits of giggles. The thought of a punk Mrs Weaver was totally crazy!

“I wouldn’t mind dressing up as a glam rocker,” Frankie said, once we’d all calmed down. “I just want to wear some of these funky boots! Unless one of you two fancy going on the float?”

I shook my head firmly. “I’m not dressing up in stoopid clothes,” I said at once.

“Count me out,” Maria said. “I’d break my neck if I had to wear those things on my feet!”

Simon was quite keen to be Pele, the footballing star of the Seventies, but Maria and Frankie said they thought football was WAY too boring (as if!). In the end, Frankie persuaded him to be a punk by telling him they could dye his hair green with food colouring. “Wicked,” he said, rubbing his hands together. “Mum’ll KILL me!”

So that was that – one punk and one glam rocker. This was going to be *sooo* hilarious!

It was a humungously busy week. We had ‘team meetings’ on Wednesday and Friday morning to discuss our designs and give each other progress reports. Each team had to make some sort of sign or banner which said what their decade was. As all five of us were pretty useless at sewing, we went for a joint team effort to make a collage on card, rather than try anything with a needle and thread.

By the end of the week, it was starting to look pretty good. Maria had painted **The ‘70s** in big purple letters in the middle, and Frankie had added silver glitter around the edges. Then we’d all brought in pictures of famous people and even some old photos of our mums and dads in outrageous Seventies gear!

Simon had brought in lots of pictures of footballers. Frankie had persuaded her mum to cut out pictures of pop stars from a collection of old magazines she had, and Neil had tracked down some pictures of old film stars. Me and Maria spent ages going through the library books, and made colour photocopies of all the weird Seventies fashions we could find. Our banner was starting to look truly faberoonie!

Fliss, Rosie and Lyndz had been hard at work, too. They were doing the Sixties, and Fliss – who else? – was going to be their ‘model’ on the float. Lyndz had found a great outfit for her in her mum’s dressing-up box – a psychedelic swirly-patterned mini dress, knee boots and a wicked beehive wig.

“Loads of black eyeliner, and I’ll be sorted,” Fliss beamed. “One Sixties chick coming up!”

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