

When the Stuff Hits the Fan

By Joan Black

No, no, NO! All that misinformation about Gremlins being horrid little Gnome-like creatures with hook noses and beady eyes is SO wrong. In actual fact, Gremlins are more ... Pixie-like with sweet smiles and kind eyes. Their sole purpose in life is to cheerfully take the blame for all those annoying, stupid mistakes and accidents that occur without warning to leave us frustrated and vulnerable to criticism. When your spouse or the boss or the General or the President gets mad and yells, "What the flippin' hell happened here? WHO is freakin' responsible?" And everyone answers, "Not me." "Not I." "Not us." Then who takes one step forward and volunteers to take the blame? The GREMLINS of course!

Gremlins are descended from the notorious Tommy Knockers who inhabited the tin mines in Cornwall, England. In return for a bit of Cornish Pasty from the miners' lunch buckets, the Tommy Knockers would warn of impending disasters and cave-ins and were invariably blamed by the mine owners for all the structural and safety mishaps. The Tommy Knockers emigrated to the New World in the 1820s along with the Cornishmen who came to work the Pennsylvania mines, and in subsequent years were taken to the Middle East in WWII by the Royal Air Force which had discovered that they were the perfect foil to blame for every kind of plane engine problem. The Gremlins were proud to do their patriotic duty of shielding ground and crew mechanics from the wrath of assorted squadron leaders and air marshals when Hurricanes and Spitfires acted up. The United States Army Air Corps was quick to take advantage of hosting scores of friendly Gremlins and wholeheartedly adopted the concept.

Airmen returning home to both the UK and the USA at war's end brought along puppy dogs, war brides and Gremlins, and the little darlings have thrived in the domestic and political environment with long suffering acceptance of the fact that they will get blamed for everything.

We really should proclaim an annual National Gremlin Day with maybe a marathon race or a BBQ or a fancy ball. Remember, if "the devil makes you do it" you can receive absolution by blaming your misdeed on the Gremlins.