

Didi's Story

Installment 7

Lord Dorchester lifted his utensils as the scent of the thick, rich sauce wafted through the air, indicating that it was time to eat.

“Did you have a lovely time in town?” asked her mother, tucking into the succulent, lamb chops drenched in the red wine sauce.

“I did!” Did she sound overly hearty?

“Who were you with again?”

“Charlie Chadwick.” Didi kept her eyes on the moussed potatoes. The truth was she felt unsettled about the whole thing. After the kiss on the cheek, they had continued walking and chatting and then he had taken her to her mother's hidey hole in town. She had suggested he come up for a nightcap, but he had begged off, saying he had business to attend to early in the morning. Didi couldn't help feeling it was just an excuse to leave.

“Charlie? I simply love that boy. He is so charming and not bad to look at either.” Her mother winked.

“He is lovely,” Didi said and then stopped.

Her mother put down her cutlery making a bridge with her hands that she rested her chin on. “You like him.”

Didi looked up at her mother through her lashes. “I think I do but I don't think he feels the same about me.”

Her mother's eyes softened. “What makes you say that?”

“We have been out twice and he has not kissed me. Surely that’s an indication that he doesn’t feel attracted to me. I think he can’t see me as anything but Dodo’s kid sister.”

Lady Georgiana reached a hand across the table. “Have you considered that he is nervous to mess things up? Things did not work out the way he hoped in the spring...and I would say things like that tend to make a man gun-shy. Don’t you agree, Alfred?”

“What?” Her father’s bushy eyebrows wrinkled up like grouchy caterpillars. Didi could tell by the lack of focus in his eyes that he had not been paying attention to their conversation.

“Didi thinks Charlie does not like her because he hasn’t kissed her yet. What is your opinion on the topic?”

Lord Dorchester scrunched up one eye, his lengthy mustache curling into a smile. “How many times have you been out together?”

“Technically once, but we met up at a party last week and we spent most of the evening together.”

Her father patted the air. “Once! Nothing to worry about. I don’t think I kissed your mother until our fourth date. Isn’t that true, Georgie?” Her mother nodded and her father continued.

“You seem to think all young men are confident Romeo’s. You couldn’t be further from the truth. I was so terrified of bungling things with your mother, I was a trembling fool. She was the catch of the London scene, and I didn’t think I stood a chance. It made me very slow.”

“It’s true, darling,” agreed her mother. “It was actually refreshing. Your father was such a gentleman, and I knew by his behavior he respected me.”

“Thank you,” Didi said with a sigh. “It’s just that I’ve had a crush on Charlie for years and he was all about Dodo. It was like I was invisible. I thought perhaps he was still hung up on her.”

Her mother's fingers patted hers. "I would say that his experience with your sister has wounded him and he doesn't want to get hurt the same way again. And you are everyone's crush, my darling. You have blossomed so much over the last year. Breathtaking. He'd be an idiot not to be interested."

There was a faint tinkling in the background followed by the dour appearance of Sanderson.

"The telephone for Lady Diantha," he announced.

Dinner was sacrosanct to her father and telephone callers were usually told that they would be called back. Didi glanced at her Lord Dorchester with resignation.

"Who is it?" asked Lord Dorchester.

"A Mr. Charles Chadwick." Sanderson could make any announcement sound like an obituary. Didi's heart skipped. Her father's eyes made a slow track to her own then crinkled at the edges.

"I think I can make an exception to the rules today. Tell him she will be right there."

Sanderson disappeared like an apparition and Didi squealed.

"Thank you, Daddy." She wiped her lips with the serviette and followed Sanderson from the room her chest hammering like an obsessed woodpecker.