

Didi's Story – Installment 3

"Didi!"

She felt a rush of energy in front of her and turning her head, saw Gerald Thorndike, a boy she disliked, but with whom she had danced at her coming out--and who she knew had a sizeable crush on her. Relieved to be rescued, she placed her plate and glass on the floor and lifted her hand to Gerald.

"Please excuse me," she said to Juniper, pushing Gerald toward the dance floor.

"You don't know how glad I am to see you!" she said.

Gerald placed a possessive arm around her waist as he swung her to the rhythm.

"Likewise!" he slurred, his round, tanned face shining with anticipation.

"Oh, no, I mean..." She glanced back over her shoulder. "I was in deep water and in danger of drowning."

Crestfallen, Gerald said, "Oh."

She stopped herself from rolling her eyes. So far, the evening was a bit of a bust.

"Not that I don't want to dance with you," she said, in an effort to salvage the conversation.

He produced a crooked smile and pulled her sharply against him. He reeked of whiskey, and she pulled back a little. His hair was styled in the latest cut and his jaw had sharpened but he was still not her type.

The popular dance was fast and took all her concentration but as soon as it was over the band changed gears and slowed the pace considerably.

"Shall we?"

"Of course," she said, though slow dancing with him was not on the top of her wish list.

He yanked her much closer than was comfortable, a cloud of alcohol landing on her skin. Tensing her stomach muscles, she tried to pull away but oblivious, he laid a damp cheek on hers. She suppressed a shudder.

"I often think of you," he confessed too loudly, his voice tipsy. "I couldn't believe it when I saw you there, sitting alone."

She tried to think of something appropriate to say but came up blank as she focused on wrestling herself away from him. "Oh?"

Feeling damp spots on her thin dress as his clammy hands clenched her narrow waist, he confessed, "Yes, you are pretty much the girl of my dreams, Didi. How is a glorious girl like you not seeing anyone?"

"Well..." It was time to invent an impossibly perfect boyfriend.

"You are?" He pulled back his unsteady head, relieving her from his cloying for a moment, as he looked around the room. "Where is he then?"

The stress of his unwanted advances was interfering with her creative juices. Her mind was blank when she most needed a colorful lie. If she didn't come up with a believable ruse soon, she was going to be clamped to this clown for the duration.

"He uh, well, he's coming later," she said, in a lame attempt to pour water on his intentions.

"Lucky fella," he said, his unremarkable eyes, narrowing. "Whasshe like? Taller than me? More handsome?" She knew it was mostly the drink talking but his questions were far too personal.

"I'll introduce you when he gets here," she said, tensing again as he crushed her to him.

His hot mouth near her ear, he droned on and on through the interminable song until she thought she would scream.

After what seemed like the longest three minutes of her life, the tune ended and she wrenched herself away, but he caught her wrist.

"I'll keep you company until he arrives," Gerald mumbled, clasping her to him.

This was a mistake. I shall have to leave the party and I've only just arrived.

Just as all hope seemed lost, she heard a familiar voice behind her say, "Darling! Sorry I'm late!"

She almost melted to the floor with relief.

Charlie!