

Didi's Story

Chapter 1

Didi stared out the window as the rain tracked down the glass like tears. It was the fourth day of rain and she was bored out of her mind. Her sister, Dodo, was galivanting around the country solving crimes and she missed her terribly.

She turned back to her glossy, white desk and lifted the gold-embossed invitation. It was to the twenty-first birthday party of Lady Poppy Weatherington, a girl she knew from school who was a few years older. Normally, she would have no desire to go, since she didn't really know the girl, but this awful, early winter weather had got her down. Perhaps she would call a few close friends and see if they would go with her.

She heard her mother come into the grand entry complaining about the rain and ran out to the balcony.

"Are you very wet, Mummy?" she asked over the banister.

Her mother looked up, crystal blue eyes full of exasperation. At age forty-five she was still a lovely woman by any standard, even if her sister thought her clothes were a bit old-fashioned.

"Yes, I bally am!" she cried, rubbing water from her sleeves and letting it drip onto the checkerboard tile. "The roof on the Bentley got stuck and I had to sit with an umbrella for protection the whole way home."

Didi ran down the stairs to help her mother out of her coat and give her a hug.

“Now, that is much better,” said Guinevere Dorchester, returning the hug with a big squeeze as a maid appeared to take the wet coat and mop the floor. “Dora, can you organize some tea and cakes in my parlor and set a fire.”

“The fire has been set for an hour now, m’lady. The housekeeper thought it a good idea to warm it up for when you got back.”

“Tell her she is a magical mind reader,” declared Lady Guinevere over her shoulder as she hurried Didi up the stairs.

Her mother’s parlor was a feminine room, full of flowered, chintz furniture, floral wallpaper and jolly pillows. A gramophone player sat in one corner next to a box chock full of vinyl records.

“Oh, Dora was right! It is so cozy in here.” Guinevere grabbed a plush lap rug, sat in a chair by the fire and curled her legs up.

“Where have you been?” asked Didi.

“There was a board meeting for the widows and orphans’ charity in Little Puddleton. We had to decide what to do with the money we made at the summer fête. It ran long and the weather went from bad to worse and poor Brownly couldn’t get the roof up. He got more wet than me as he had to drive without an umbrella for protection.” She wrapped the blanket around her shoulders. “Still, I’m home now.”

Dora entered with the tea tray and several fairy cakes.

“Thank you, Dora,” she said, reaching to pour but finding the blanket cumbersome. “Can you do it, darling?”

Didi came over and poured the tea, splashing cream in it for her mother and two cubes of sugar.

“What have you been doing this afternoon? Anything fun?”

“No!” declared Didi. “This infernal rain is making me stir-crazy and without Dodo around I have nothing to do.”

“Come and sit by me,” her mother said opening her arm.

Didi slid into her mother’s embrace.

“I did get an invitation to Poppy Weatherington’s twenty first.”

“Is that the awful one who was head girl when Dodo was in the lower sixth?”

“You have a good memory, Mummy. Yes, it is her. Normally I wouldn’t even think of going but I have been so bored, and the weather is only going to get worse. I think I might try to rustle up a gang of us to go. Then it might be fun.”

“How about Dodo?”

“When will she be back? The party is on Saturday.”

“I don’t know. She didn’t even tell me she was going to Blackwood. Did she tell you?”

“No! I might have gone with her.”

“She has been rather glum and secretive recently. I think something happened while you were in York. Has she talked to you about it?”

“No,” said Didi feeling a bit hurt. Usually, she and Dodo shared everything.

“I think she must have had her heart broken or something. Well, I daresay she will tell us when she’s ready.” Her mother bit into a fairy cake and groaned. “Simply delicious.”