

A Springtime of Promises. The next chapters in my continuing Follyfoot story which is really a bridge that you cross over to the next major storyline to follow later in the year.

Dora was disappointed that she didn't immediately fall pregnant after she stopped taking the pill and was rather quiet for a few days. Steve laughingly said they'd just have to practise more and she cheered up. On Valentine's day, as he had promised he took her to dinner at 'Shalimar' -one of Tockwiths most expensive restaurants where her diamond jewellery would not look out of place. She wore a cream jersey dress with a cowl neck and three quarter length sleeves. Steve wore his wedding suit and tie with a new ivory coloured shirt, part of Dora's Christmas gift to him. When she emerged from the bedroom Steve whispered 'Wow-you're gorgeous.' He took her in his arms and said 'Is that a different perfume?' 'Helena Rubenstein's Heaven Scent' she said. 'Christmas present from Cleo and James.' 'Mmm- I like it. Here let me pin this on for you' he said holding out a corsage of bronze silk orchids. When Milly came in to sit with Jeff she said 'Ee you look like a couple of newlyweds.' Steve picked up his car keys. 'Are you not having a taxi tonight luv?' 'No- I've heard they charge extortionate prices for a bottle of wine so I think I'll stick to soft drinks tonight.' Dora smiled a secret smile. 'Me too.' 'Wrap up warm-it's cold enough for snow out there!' 'Oh no! I thought we'd seen the last of it. Don't want any more disruption to the riding classes.' said Dora.

The meal was exquisite and expensive. While they waited for dessert Steve gave Dora her new charm, a gold champagne glass to go with the charm he'd bought for her birthday. Dora laughed. There had been champagne in the gift of drinks that her parents had given them at Christmas. These had been stowed away for special occasions and one now cooled in the refrigerator at home ready for their return. As usual they shared their dessert Tiramisu and Meringue fruit basket. Dora had been disappointed that there was no blackcurrant cheesecake or black forest gâteau on the menu. Steve leaned to kiss the last of the meringue from where it frosted her lips. 'Let's skip coffee' he whispered. 'Oh but the chocolates they're serving with it look delicious- still I'm looking forward to the champagne.' She went to the powder room while Steve paid the bill. When they ate out like this he couldn't help thinking back to the days when Fish and Chips were an occasional treat and a break from Sluggers burnt offerings. Outside in the car he handed Dora a small box. 'They sell the chocolates. Very artful giving free samples with the coffee and casually mentioning boxes of the sweet were available to buy. Don't get too fond of them. I think they work out about £1 each.' 'Well we're not likely to eat there again any time soon- but they will go well with the champagne.' Later, at home it was like a scene from a film. The lights in the bedroom were turned off and candles lit. Soft music came from the cassette player in the corner of the room. The bath was scented and bubbly and the champagne sparkled in crystal glasses on the side with the chocolates in a glass dish. They unwrapped two and fed them to each other before stepping into the warm bubbles. Sipping his champagne, one arm draped lazily round Dora's shoulder Steve had a faraway look in his eye. 'What are you thinking about darling?' she asked. 'Bath night at the orphanage. Two big tin baths in front of a very small fire. All of us, boys and girls standing shivering with rough towels wrapped round our bodies waiting our turn in the tepid water. The oldest went first. Everyone was supposed to 'avert their eyes' but of course we peeped. Got many a clip round the ear for looking at the girls-not that there was much to see because when you reached twelve you got moved on and the food

was so bad you didn't develop quickly.'

'I don't know how you put up with it. I thought boarding school was bad enough. We had showers and one of the prefects used to stand there and make sure we didn't mess about. Some of them were awful and looked you up and down when you came out to get your towel.'

'That's another reason I don't want our son to go to a boarding school. They can get up to some pretty nasty things so I hear.' 'Things have moved on since Tom Brown's schooldays you know.' 'Fagging and the like still goes on . I've read articles about several schools. '

'Let's not talk about this any more. Do you realise that it will soon be three years since uncle died?'

'Yes-then a few weeks later our third wedding anniversary- and they said it wouldn't last!'

'But it has-and it's getting better isn't it?'

'Absolutely.' He put their champagne glasses back on the side and took her in his arms. 'It's been a lovely Valentine's day-and the night will be even better.'

The following weekend the weather turned considerably milder and they were busy at the pony centre. Jeff went to spend Saturday morning with Teri and Rikki while Ron and George looked after Follyfoot. Milly spent the morning in her heated greenhouse at the bungalow and in the afternoon looked after Jeff after he had been given a riding lesson. When Dora and Steve got back they were both tired but happy that at last their pupils had had a fine day for their lessons. After the evening meal as they began Jeff's bedtime routine Dora began massaging her temples. 'You okay?' asked Steve

'I've got a raging headache.' Steve lifted Jeff from the bath.

I think mummy had better listen to the story and go to bed like you Jeff'. A relaxing bath and two tablets did nothing to alleviate the pain. Dora tossed and turned and felt really ill. Steve looked in to see if she wanted a hot drink and tried massaging her neck and shoulders but that didn't help either. He gave her more tablets with juice. There was a spare bed in Jeff's room and Dora suggested Steve sleep there as she didn't want to keep him awake but he wouldn't leave her. She was very hot and threw off the covers. Steve had to rummage about and find his one and only pair of pyjamas . Finally Dora slept but it was an uneasy sleep punctuated she said later by unpleasant dreams. She woke in the early hours of the morning burning hot with a sore throat and streaming eyes. Steve took her temperature, it was a bit high so he gave her more juice and tablets and began to sponge her hot skin. 'I think you've got Vi's flu.' he said. Vi had been quite ill for a couple of days the week before. 'You'd better stay in bed today.'

'But I've got lessons booked this morning.'

'No worries- I'll do them.'

'Milly's got a special church service this morning so she can't look after Jeff.'

'Don't worry. I'll take him with me and see if Ben will look after him. I'll go do our horses early before Jeff wakes up.'

Unfortunately Dora's illness turned out to be more than a cold and she was ill for several weeks with bronchitis needing care from the doctor. As the end of March approached her strength returned and she began working again. One afternoon she told Steve she needed to have a long ride on Copper to finally blow the cobwebs away. Teri said she would look after Jeff if Steve needed to work and he agreed because Milly was now feeling under the weather. He insisted that Dora told him exactly where she intended to ride and seeing the sense in it Dora did so and resolved to keep to her planned route. She rode and rode and came at last to a favourite spot by a stream. She dismounted and tied Copper to a tree where he could graze. She was more tired than she thought she'd be so sat down for a rest with her back against the trunk of a willow tree and soon fell asleep. When she woke up it had turned cold. She looked at her watch and saw that it was 4 o'clock. She knew a short cut home and was sure she could make it back in half an hour. Before she had time to untether Copper Steve came galloping up on Fandango the fastest of their horses. 'Dora- what's got into you- we were expecting you back an hour ago.'

'Sorry- I've been enjoying myself. I must have dozed off for a few minutes'

'I was worried about you. Teri said Jeff was asking for you and ..'

'Oh Steve- I'm a big girl now. Don't go all over protective of me after all it's only just gone 4 o'clock.'

'I think your watch must have stopped- it's after 5. ' Realisation dawned and Dora's hand flew to her mouth. 'Oh no! When the clocks went forward I had my other watch on. I must have forgotten to reset this one - I don't wear it very often.' Steve helped her to her feet. 'Come on, let's get back.'

'Alright- I wouldn't have been longer than another half an hour. I was about to set off back when you turned up. It's been good to be off the leash for a while.'

'Is it that bad living with me?'

'Don't be so b-----y ridiculous. That's not what I meant and you damn well know it. ' She mounted Copper and set him off home the short way. Copper as ever enjoyed the gallop and tried to outrun Fandango but the other horse was a match for him and they reached the stables together. Dora could tell Steve was still a bit steamed up so she didn't talk to him as they rubbed down the horses but spoke softly to Copper instead. 'I'm going to fetch Jeff ' said Steve and Dora, thinking he would not hear said to her horse

'Doesn't he make a lot of fuss over nothing sometimes?' The outer door of the stable was banged shut and Dora sighed.

'Oh dear- I think Steve heard me!' she said giving Copper a last pat . She stopped to talk to the other horses too before going indoors to change out of her riding clothes.

Dora's mouth dropped open as she saw the table beautifully laid with linen napkins and the lead crystal wine glasses which had been a wedding gift. There was a delicious smell coming from the oven and Milly was in the kitchen. No wonder Steve had been cross. They always celebrated the anniversary of his

return from Liverpool and obviously when she had said earlier in the week that she wanted a long ride he had made sure that it was today so he could carry out his surprise-and now she had spoiled it! She wondered whether she had time to shower and change before he got back. Milly said she was just going to put on the vegetables and the beef bourginion would keep as it was on a low heat. When Dora emerged from the bedroom in her silver grey jersey dress Steve was still not back. He arrived 10 minutes later.He had calmed down a lot and the sight of Dora in one of his favourite outfits made him want to put the quarrel behind him.

'Jeff was asleep and I wanted to get a bottle of wine and some ice cream so I left him with Teri and Ron a while longer. I think this little chap is too tired for a bath . He's had his tea so maybe you can get him into bed and read him a story while I shower and change.'

'I'll be serving up shortly' said Milly.

'Ok- shan't be long.'

Dora had just finished the story when Steve entered the bedroom. Jeff's eyes were already closing as they kissed him goodnight.

'Love you Mummy and Daddy'

'Love you Jeff' they chorused and Dora felt the tears running down her cheeks.

'I'm so sorry Steve. I've spoiled your lovely surprise! April sort of crept up on me because I lost so much of March feeling ill.'

He took her in his arms. 'Come on, sweetheart. It's ok. It's not spoiled- just a bit later than planned. You look amazing. Come and let's eat.'

Milly wanted to take her food next door but they insisted after all her hard work that she eat with them and afterwards they all shared in the clearing away and washing up before she went home.She was tired and did not stay to have coffee with them. Steve handed Dora a chemist's bag. 'I thought you might need this' he said. The tears came again as Dora nodded. It was a pregnancy testing kit.

'Hey- what are you crying for- it's what we wanted isn't it?'

'Mmmn. I was going to say something last month but as I'd been ill I didn't dare hope but now there are other signs as well and I'm pretty sure but I'll do the test tomorrow . No morning sickness yet thank goodness!'

'Well I must admit I've had my suspicions but like you I didn't dare hope yet.' He put his hand in his trouser pocket and pulled out a small jeweller's box. 'Here- your charm for our special day. '

Dora opened the box and smiled at the stork carrying a baby.

'When did you buy this Steve?'

'The same day as I bought the champagne glass.I was going to keep it till we had another baby but then I couldn't see anything else I liked for today and when I was pretty sure you were expecting I decided I'd give it to you now.'

'You spoil me. '

'You've been working so hard getting the pony centre off the ground- you know I'm going to get protective again don't you?. That was what this afternoon was about. I was scared something had happened to you and thought about the baby we lost. We need to think about getting someone in to help Hazel as soon as possible. We need them trained up before the summer. We've already got two weddings on this month and there's bound to be more.'

'Actually one of the students we've got at the moment really likes the work. He's very good with the children and an excellent rider.'

'Do you mean Sam? I've noticed him. When does he finish his course?'

'At the end of June. We've got him for three more weeks so if you're agreeable from now on he could help us when we give lessons.

'Good idea.' Then perhaps we can offer him a job for the summer at least.

'Talking about Hazel- you know her 19th birthday is coming up soon- Ben wants to take her away for the weekend. Do you think we can manage?'

'Well it's Spring bank holiday weekend so Callie should be around. We could ask Ellie too. We'll just have to refuse any functions which would clash. There's a film I want to watch on in a few minutes but I don't think you'll like it.'

'Never mind. I'll get into practice and put my feet up!'

She swung her legs up and put her head in Steve's lap closing her eyes and making plans in her head while Steve stroked her hair. The next thing she knew Steve was gently shaking her and saying 'Wake up, sleepyhead. It's bedtime.'

'Oh I don't want to move' but nevertheless she sat up slowly. Without a word Steve picked her up and carried her into the bedroom setting her down on the bed.

'I'll go and make us a hot drink- need any help to undress before I go?'

'I'll manage!'

Much later, as they settled down to sleep Dora said

'Do you realise that I have never given you anything for this anniversary?'

'I don't expect you to- after all what do I need? I've got you and Jeff and Milly and now another little one on the way- and it's lovely to be able to afford to give you presents without scrimping and saving like I had to before we were married.'

'Before uncle died you mean.'

'I'm sorry girl- I didn't mean it like that!'

'I know-but do you know why the bracelet means so much to me? It's because of what you did to buy it for me-giving up buying the books you loved so much.'

'After all we went through- quarelling- first one rejecting the other then vice versa I just had to show you how much I loved you and I still do.'

The test was positive and later in the week Steve and Dora went to the doctor's surgery leaving Jeff with Milly who was much better. When they pulled into the surgery car park they saw Teri's car and she was sitting in the waiting room. Dora sat down beside her and saw she was reading a 'Mum and Babe' magazine. 'Are you pregnant she whispered and

Teri nodded, 'I am too!' They smiled at each other. 'Shame we didn't know you were coming. Ron could have come too and we could have looked after Rikki while you went in.' said Steve. 'To tell you the truth Ron's a bit embarrassed about me getting pregnant again so soon so he didn't really want to come.'

'We're going to the cafe for lunch afterwards if you want to join us' said Dora.

'Actually I'm feeling a bit nauseous so I won't thanks.' Teri was called in to see the doctor a few minutes later and when Steve and Dora emerged with a prescription and happy smiles her car was gone from the car park.

Dora now found that she tired very easily and had to finish work early in the afternoon. She and Milly both worked at the pony centre in the mornings. Milly was mainly in the greenhouse and Jeff loved watching her and 'helping.' The young shop assistant would ring a bell if she needed Milly's help with plants. Lunch was soup, sandwiches or omelettes and Steve would come and join them. Afterwards, before Dora and Milly went

home Jeff would be given his riding lesson with Sam watching closely. Steve would supervise the children coming after school for lessons while Dora, Jeff and Milly rested the latter usually cooking the evening meal for them all. Milly didn't go to the pony centre at the weekends spending time relaxing, tending plants in the greenhouse at the bungalow or cooking cakes for various functions and meals for

the freezer. To give her a break they often went to one of the nearby pubs for Sunday lunch after Dora and Steve had given lessons together for most of the morning as they did on Saturdays which was a sort of copy of Slugger's Saturday circus. Ben did not work in the insurance company at weekends and he made himself useful where he was needed most. Sam who was not required to do any work for the college came voluntarily and supervised Jeff riding his pony away from the main group of children. Often Gyp would come over too and ride 'Raz' for a while then play with Jeff after his lesson while Sam cared for Dynamite. The children in the class were taught how to groom and generally care for their ponies after the riding lesson. Some of them complained about this saying their parents took care of the ponies well-being but Dora and Steve insisted that they all knew the basic routine that a pony needed. Fresh air and exercise, good food and plenty of rest and tlc meant Dora sailed through the early weeks of pregnancy. Teri was due a few weeks before her in September and she too stayed healthy. Easter was the latest it could possibly be. Callie came home and immediately launched herself into helping at the pony centre which was very useful as there was a wedding on Easter Saturday. It was a relatively small reception for 40 guests Ellie again accompanied Tony and helped out as did Vi but Milly was involved in a Womens Institute tea afternoon. It was a relief when both Gyp and Sam turned up early to help Dora and Steve. Rikki was teething and had been giving Teri restless nights so Ron walked her to the centre in her buggy and as that lulled her to sleep he helped out in the shop. Several parents stayed around while the children had their lessons so the shop was busy. When Hazel was not occupied with weddings she would often serve them refreshments asking only for donations to cover the cost. She was secretly hoping that one day they would be able to add a small cafe to the centre but as yet had not broached the subject with Dora.

When Dora went home on Easter Saturday afternoon she was feeling a bit dizzy and immediately sat on the sofa with her feet up. The wedding party was in full swing and there was lots of noise. She was dozing when a very worried looking Hazel emerged from the barn and rang the doorbell. Sighing Dora got up unsteadily and opened the door.

'There's an argument going on in there. A former boyfriend of the bride is trying to pick a fight with the bridegroom. I'm worried they might do some serious damage. Ben and Tony are trying to help the best man calm things down. Dora didn't stop to think but rushed to the barn door. Fortunately between them the male wedding guests had managed to get the angry young man outside and away from the bridegroom before any punches were thrown. 'I think you'd better go home' said Dora amazed to see that the troublemaker was Brian Foley. 'Mrs Ross is right.' said Tim the best man.

'I don't think he's in a fit state to drive!' She said. Brian broke free of the men who held him and lunged towards her. Suddenly she felt faint and swayed, if Tony hadn't acted quickly she would have fallen. 'I never touched her' shouted Brian concerned as the landrover came in sight. Steve had been alerted by a phone call from Hazel and had driven back from the pony centre. 'Keep him off me!' cried Brian knowing that Steve would be angry. Steve gave him a long hard stare then disappeared into the bungalow. Tony had laid Dora on the bed where she slowly opened her eyes. 'She fainted Steve.' said Tony. Dora tried to sit up.

'No you don't' said Steve. 'I'm calling the doctor.'

'No Steve-don't disturb him today. I've got an appointment for next week. I'm fine now- I just woke up with a start and got up too quickly.'

'Okay, we'll see how you go. Now you stay there and rest. I'll make you a cup of tea then check that young hothead has been taken home.'

'Where's Jeff?'

'With Ron and Rikki at the pony centre. Sam's there too so don't worry. I'll pick him up in a bit.'

When Dora went for her appointment her blood pressure was rather high and the doctor told her to rest for a few days then the midwife would call on her at home to check it again.

It was a sunny April morning after the children had gone back to school and the pony centre

was not very busy Dora decided that she would clean the patio furniture. Milly and Jeff went outside with her and that was where Steve found them. 'Dora-what on earth are you doing out here? Leave that to me, you shouldn't be doing it.'

'There you go again telling me what to do. The sun is lovely and the fresh air is doing me good. It's not hard work.'

'I think it's too hard for you. We don't want any mishaps like last time.' Dora put her hand to her head. Steve did not want to cause an argument like they'd had before the wedding so he said quietly. 'Are you hungry Jeff?'

'I starving. Is auntie Hazel making us soup?'

'Not today-we're having bacon sandwiches.'

'Yummy. Let's go daddy!' Steve didn't miss Dora's grimace as she stood up and rubbed her back. He was worried about her but kept his thoughts to himself. They had just finished lunch when a car pulled up outside and answering the knock on the door which followed Steve was relieved to see someone in a nurses uniform- a community midwife who introduced herself as Vicky Maxwell. She refused the offer of a cup of tea and asked if she could see Dora in the bedroom. She was not pleased with the latest blood pressure reading. 'You need to take things very easy Dora or you'll be confined to bed or even have to go into hospital for a while.'

'I've been taking it easy!' Dora protested.

'Not this morning you weren't.' said Steve and told Vicky what she'd been up to.

'I understand you want a home delivery again- well if you carry on like this it won't be possible- I'll have to refuse it.' At Dora's stricken face she went on 'I'll come back in a couple of days and see you again so in the meantime no more cleaning. The next few weeks are crucial but try not to worry as that won't help either. ' It was another 10 minutes before Dora heard Vicky's car drive away. Steve came to tell her he was going to Follyfoot for an hour then he would return to pick Jeff up and take him for a riding lesson before the children booked in for after school turned up.

'Have a nice time chatting up my midwife did you? She's very pretty isn't she?'

'She's also married with a little boy a couple of years older than Jeff. She spoke to Jeff on the way out and said what a lovely child he is- you know how Jeff could charm the birds off the trees. Then when we went outside I was telling her how concerned I am for you and the baby and she's promised to keep a special eye on you.'

'That'll mean she'll see a lot of you too! That'll keep you happy. I didn't hear you mention a husband.'

'Her husband is Terry Maxwell who works in our dental practice- I asked because it's not that common a surname round here. Come on girl- you know you're the only one for me. I love you and I need you to calm down before you make yourself ill. Lie down for a bit. ' He brushed her lips gently. 'See you later.' After he'd gone Dora bitterly regretted her behaviour -she knew Steve loved her and wished she'd said sorry before he went back to work. She lay down, buried her face in the pillow and cried herself to sleep. When she woke up Jeff was asleep on the bed beside her. She stayed where she was until he stirred and put his arms round her neck.

'Daddy brought me home and said I was to look after you.'

'That's lovely Jeff. Did you have a good lesson?'

'Mmmn- guess what daddy and ucle Won are going to do?'

'Is it something nice?'

'Yes. First of all they're going to make some tree trunk seats near the sand fmg, then daddy's going to order swings and things from the cats log and they're going to put them up behind the shop for me to play on.' Steve had mentioned something about this to Dora when she'd been ill and they'd looked through some catalogues together marking the things they liked. 'It won't just be for you Jeff- you know you'll need to share it with other children'

'Yes s'ok.'

Dora's pregnancy now began causing all kinds of symptoms, some of which she'd experienced with Jeff others she hadn't. The blood pressure refused to settle down and at the end of April, despite her protests she was hospitalised for complete bed rest. In contrast Teri was the picture of health and energy gladly helping with the care of Jeff. Steve would arrive for evening visiting tired out and sometimes would drop off to sleep in the chair. Dora would sit watching him knowing how hard he was working and only waking him when visiting was almost over so they could have a few precious minutes together. She assured him that it was fine and he was not to worry. Only when he'd gone did loneliness and sadness claim her and she would cry into her pillow when the lights went out. After a week of enforced rest she was ready to climb the ward wall in frustration. One night the recurring dream came back. This time in the morning she could remember a person lying on the floor and a baby crying in the background. When Steve came in he had a worried expression on his face. Gip had been knocked off his bike on the way home from school and was in St. James's hospital. He had been hurrying because Willie's wife Julie had been in labour with her second baby when he had left home that morning. 'How is Gip now?'

'He'll be okay but it's going to be a long job.'

'And the baby?'

'A lovely healthy little girl.'

She told Steve about the dream. It must be what the prediction that Eddie's wife gave me was all about.'

'Not very likely' said Steve who was unconvinced that predictions and dreams had any real significance but it satisfied Dora. From then on Dora's blood pressure began to settle and she was told that if all stayed well for a few days more she would be allowed home. She was so pleased on the day that Steve came to pick her up just after lunch. 'You okay love?' she asked as he seemed rather quiet

'I'm fine.'

Back at home when she was enjoying a cup of tea he said. 'I heard today that Slugger's sister has died.'

'Oh that's sad- her husband hasn't been dead very long.' said Dora.

'I dunno what's going to happen about the bungalow.'

'I expect it'll be sold. I think I'd like to go to the funeral-we went to her husbands after all.'

'There was nothing in the paper about arrangements. I'll ring round the funeral directors and see if I can find anything out.' said Steve.

'Let me-it will give me something to do. Where's Jeff?'

Tony's giving him a riding lesson. He's fine. Tony's been a great help at the centre and we've got a couple of new students on placement. These are in their first year so they need more supervision but Sam is still going to come over at the weekends.'

'Oh so you're managing fine without me then?'

'The business might be-but I can never manage long without you. I can't sleep when you're not here. Anyway I'm going to do a couple of hours at the pony centre. There's a few lessons booked. Tony'll drop Jeff off later and Milly will be in soon to get tea ready. Now you just take it easy ok?'

The funeral service for Slugger's sister Amy Lansdon was not held until the second week of May. Not many people attended but Dora gave a muffled gasp when a tall tanned man accompanied by a very attractive brunette walked in behind the coffin. There was something very familiar about him and at the small gathering at the Lansdown's bungalow afterwards she found out why. Slugger's sister had resembled him in quite a few ways and Grant, her son did too. Of course he didn't speak like Slugger having been in Canada for over 20 years. When his father died he had been winding up his business affairs in Canada having decided to come back to England permanently. His wife still had family in Yorkshire but they had no children of their own. His mother's funeral had been postponed until he could attend. 'Will you be living in the bungalow?' asked Dora.

'Not permanently. We'll be looking for a place with a bit of land so in the end we'll sell it. My mother wrote and told me all about your place and how much uncle had loved working there. I'd love to come over and take a look around.'

'You'd be most welcome any time.' said Steve and turning to Grant's wife Jodie he asked 'Do you like horses?'

'Oh I certainly do. We used to ride all the time back home.' Long after the other mourners had departed Dora was still talking to Grant and Steve finally persuaded her to leave by reminding her that Jeff would be missing them. Later she said 'It's wonderful to have Grant here isn't it Steve. It's like having part of Slugger back.'

'Mmn' said Steve thinking that 50 year old Grant was still a very attractive man. Still he was married and his wife was quite a looker. He hadn't missed the way she looked at her husband as he chatted to Dora and gave a little sigh. He had the feeling that Grant liked the ladies! As signs of summer began to appear Dora's health problems faded and her blood pressure stabilised mainly because she followed Vicky's advice. The two of them had now become firm friends and she sometimes brought her son over to play with Jeff when she was off duty. The play area had been completed and the boys enjoyed using it together. Mikey started to have riding lessons. Dora was content and pleased to see that Gip had fully recovered from his accident. One evening she was dozing on the sofa with her head on Steve's shoulder when there was a loud hammering on the door and she woke with a start. Steve got up to answer it and there stood Jodie Lansdon. 'I need somewhere to stay' she pleaded. 'Grant has been gambling. He's lost a lot of money and he's trashed the kitchen. What's more I'm sure he's up to his old tricks.' 'What do you mean?' asked Dora.

'Surely you knew he was trying to chat you up after the funeral. Well anyway he's been coming home late at night smelling of perfume. It's got back to me he's been seen with the blonde barmaid from 'The Wheatsheaf.' I've had enough and I want out of his way at least for tonight'

'Of course you can stay.' said Dora.

'I'll find you some bedlinen and show you your room' said Steve.

That night his peaceful much needed sleep was interrupted by Dora sitting up in bed and sobbing. The dream had come back together with a strong feeling that something really bad

was going to happen in the not too distant future.

Early next morning there was a loud knocking on the door. Steve had just finished washing after dealing with their horses and was about to take Dora a cup of tea. He opened the door and there stood Grant.

'Is my wife here?' He looked in a foul mood and Steve thought it pointless to lie. He was saved the trouble when Jodie appeared fully dressed. 'It's okay Grant- no need to get annoyed. I just needed a night away to think. I'll come back with you now.'

Steve looked from one to the other and frowned.

'You sure you'll be alright, Jodie?'

'Course she will. We have our little ups and downs like any other couple but they soon blow over don't they love?' She smiled and nodded. Grant seemed a lot calmer now and Steve hoped everything would be alright. Later in the day when Steve was working and Dora was resting on the sofa while Jeff played happily on the floor the telephone rang.

'Is that Dora?'

'Yes- who's that.'

'It's Juliet Sanders. I bumped into Cleo in Oxford Street and she told me you hired out holiday accommodation.'

'Yes that's right.'

'Dahling how divine. Have you got something vacant for a month from Saturday? I've not been well and the doctor says some fresh air and exercise would do me good. I haven't ridden a horse since I left finishing school so I thought what better way of killing two birds with one stone than to come up to you and get re-acquainted with horses. You can give me a few pointers can't you?'

'Well I can't ride at the moment. I'm expecting our second baby in October you see.'

'There will be *somebody* who can help though?'

'Er yes of course.' said Dora and confirming that accommodation was available named her price.

'Yes- that's ok. I'll see you on Saturday. Do you provide food by the way?'

'We do breakfast in the farmhouse for anyone who needs it and we can provide a packed lunch but that's all I'm afraid.'

'No problem. I can soon drive into Leeds. I'm so looking forward to seeing you and er- Steve is it?'

'That's right. We'll see you at the weekend then.'

'Is a cheque okay to pay you?'

'Fine.'

Dora had to explain to Steve that Juliet was the girl they'd met when they'd gone to Marlingford on her birthday.

'Oh yeah- I remember now. You don't like her much do you?'

'She's a bit of a snob that's all. She was Cleo's friend more than mine. They went on to finishing school but I refused to go. Mummy was furious. She wanted to show off a beautifully refined daughter to her friends and instead she got down to earth old me.'

'Married to a Yorkshire coal miner's son who smells of horse a lot of the time.'

'Not now he doesn't!' Steve had not long come out of the shower and smelt of the pine soap he favoured and aftershave.

She sighed contentedly as he drew her onto his lap.

'Now that the weather has turned things are looking up.' she said 'The accommodation is booking well, the pony centre is starting to take on, bookings for weddings and parties in the barn are good and soon we'll have two more babies on the scene. Life is good.'

Again that night the dream returned. This time she clearly heard Eddie's wife's voice repeating the words she'd used when she looked into her crystal

ball. 'Although you will have a long and happy life you will encounter difficulties and there will be a tragedy that affects people really close to you.'

Next day she took Jeff down to Follyfoot to tell Vi about Juliet's arrival and tell her that she would like breakfast each day and packed lunch more often than not. Leaving Jeff happily playing with Vi and George's new labrador puppy she went outside to put a bucket of water on the lightning tree. In fact she put two on as the tree was now blooming quite well and thrived on being watered. The sun had been shining brightly but suddenly it went behind the cloud. A cold wind sprung up seemingly from nowhere and the sky over the farmhouse turned black as if someone had turned out a light. Ron appeared from the barn. He'd obviously seen her watering the tree. 'Looks like you needn't have bothered with those buckets girl. I'd get inside if I were you.'

'Take her inside Ron' Steve's words before his fight with Johnny Clegg came into her mind but there was something else trying to fight it's way through. Raindrops began to fall and Vi came out to get her washing from the metal drier that was spinning wildly in the wind. 'Dora-love, come on in' she pleaded because Dora seemed rooted to the spot staring blankly ahead of her. Running footsteps heralded the arrival of Steve who propelled her inside. 'You okay girl?' She didn't answer at first. He sat her down and Vi held out a cup of tea to her. 'Dora- sweetheart- is anything wrong?'

'No-yes- I don't know. There's just something threatening out there today.'

A sudden flash of lightning made her cry out and sent Jeff scurrying in alarm to cling onto Steve's legs.'

'This was all forecast for today.' said Vi.

'Something's definitely been forecast' said Dora 'but not for today I believe.'

'The suns come out again' said George looking out of the window.

'Yes- whatever was threatening has passed for today but one day, in the not too distant future it will be back.'

'Look Dora-Steve said pointing to the sky- a rainbow the sign of promise.'

'Springtime was a time of promise but it will soon be summer and who knows what that will bring.'

'Sunshine and flowers.' said Steve.

Dora put her hands protectively over her stomach.

'Oh I hope so' she said. Fortunately none of them knew what did lie ahead in the coming months-it was to be A Summer of Shadows.