

## Trying Times

by Judith Horth

“I really don’t know why we’ve come here,” Marguerite sniffed, surveying the frothing white gowns on display in the bridal shop. “You know that there is a perfectly good dress at home which you should wear. Why go to the expense of buying another?”

Daisy raised a thin, plucked eyebrow at her mother and Marguerite could not help shaking her head. Why did her daughter think that looked attractive? And all that make up – the blue eyeshadow, the winged eyeliner – what was that all about? Daisy was a perfectly pretty girl without all that muck on her face.

“Mum, I’ve told you, I’m not wearing that bloody dress. And this is just for fun. I don’t imagine for a moment that there will be anything in here that I’d be seen dead in. I mean, look at this!” She took a high-necked, lace-fronted gown from the rail and held it up against her, pulling out one of the lacy, frilled sleeves to show it off. “Isn’t it ghastly? So bloody virginal – yuk.” She made a vomiting noise as she replaced the dress on the rail, and Marguerite winced.

“So you’re not going to try it on?”

Daisy laughed. “I may do – but it’s not the worst one here. I want to try on the ghastliest dresses in the shop, so that when I show you what I really want to wear for my wedding it will be a relief! Sort of reverse psychology.”

At that moment the sales lady appeared and she and Daisy began riffling through the rails. Marguerite sat back and watched them, thinking back to her own wedding. She had had no choice in what she wore, nor in the fact of the wedding itself, but that was what she expected. Greta had never allowed her daughter to choose any of her own clothes. “Mother knows best,” she would say, and there was no arguing with her, despite the old-fashioned and hideous garments that Greta always chose for her. She flushed as she remembered how her schoolmates laughed at her when they saw her in anything other than her school uniform, calling her “Frumpy Freda” and “Old Lady La-di-Da”. The old familiar flush of pain and embarrassment rose in her as she watched her own daughter picking out dresses.

Difficult as it was, she knew she must bite her lip and allow Daisy this little bit of fun – after all, she was not Greta. Still, the thought of the daisy-patterned lace dress in its box at home would not go away.

“What do you think of this one, Mum?” Daisy emerged from the changing room in a dress so covered in flounces and frills that Marguerite could not suppress a giggle. “Isn’t it just me?”

“No, Daisy, I really don’t think so!”

“There’s an even worse one. Just you wait and see!” Daisy picked up her skirts, gave another twirl and vanished back into the changing room, accompanied by a slightly disapproving sales assistant.

When Daisy had tried on enough dresses and veils, she thanked the assistant. “You’ve been brilliant, but I really don’t think I’d be seen dead in any of those creations. Come on, Mum, let’s go and have a pot of tea and I’ll show you some pics of what I think I’ll wear.” Together they left the shop, Marguerite casting an apologetic glance at the affronted sales lady, and headed for the little café on the corner which Daisy loved.

As Marguerite poured the tea and buttered her scone, Daisy rummaged in her bag and pulled out a magazine. “Look, Mum. Isn’t this dress just perfect for me?” She folded the magazine open and pushed it across the table to her mother.

“But these are mini dresses!” Marguerite exclaimed. “You can’t wear anything like that!”

“I bloody well can, Mother – it’s my wedding and I’ll wear what I like. And I like these.”

Marguerite pushed the magazine back to her daughter. “You can’t, Daisy. You simply can’t – they’re so undignified!”

Daisy picked up the magazine and put it back in her bag with a laugh. “Oh Mother,” she said, “you sound just like Gran, so concerned with being dignified and ladylike. Well, I’m neither, but I’m happy. I know what I want and I’m going to have it – I would always rather be happy than dignified, and I hope that you will be happy for me too.”