

The Daisy Files

By Jamie Campbell

www.jamiecampbell.com.au

Chapter 1: Damn Him!

Somewhere in the distance a rooster crowed, only moments before the alarm clock sounded. Beep! Beep! Beep! Daisy Malone's eyes sprung open as she rolled over to hit the 'Shut Up' button. There was no snooze button option, the waking up was inevitable, why prolong it? It wasn't like you could get back to sleep again anyway after all that noise.

Daisy yawned, stretched and sprung out of the queen sized bed. Like everything in the room, it was covered in purple. Lush blankets and pillows made the act of getting up for the day even harder, but Daisy never thought twice about it - it wasn't in her routine. And if it wasn't in her routine, it didn't happen.

The morning ritual was rather easy, in Daisy's mind anyway. She would step out of bed and head straight for the shower. Next came the make-up and hair. Then would come the hardest decision she had to make all day - what to wear. Standing in front of the closet, the question wasn't what outfit to chose, the problem was what day it was. For Daisy only wore blue on Mondays, pink on Tuesdays, and yellow on Wednesdays. Every other day following had a set colour and it could not be varied. Bad things happened if you strayed from the routine.

Today was a Thursday: green day. Daisy reached in and found a pale green top to match her skirt of a darker shade. At least it was summer; it was much more difficult to find green

trousers. Sometimes she considered relaxing the rules to allow for black or blue jeans but that was quickly dismissed as fanciful. The rules were the rules.

A green headband was secured into her long dark tresses, taming the loose strands. She wasn't wearing her gingham one today, but the one with the little green bow perched on the side. It complemented her dark brown eyes and matched her outfit perfectly. Green, otherwise known as Thursday, was going to be a good day.

Daisy checked the final result in the full length mirror, it met her approval. She hurried downstairs. There wasn't really any reason to rush, it was the school's summer holidays, but there always seemed to be a reason to hurry in Daisy's mind. If you were only walking, then you were wasting far too much time. Life was too short to dawdle.

Hastening through the halls and down the long corridors, Daisy went. The house was large by any scale. A three-storey beige stone mansion, sitting atop a high hill. Turrets circled every corner, old glass windows dotted over the walls. The estate covered acres of land, some parts covered in green grass and some in thick trees. The house was old and had been in the family for too many generations to count. Room after room held history and ghosts of relatives past. You couldn't get away from it if you tried. And some had tried.

The Malone family were renowned in the area. Not just for the grand mansion sitting atop the hill, but for their, well, their *reputation*. It was rumoured that the Malone family has its fair share of nuts sitting in the family tree. While some would see that as an insult, Ernest Elijah Worthington Malone II saw it as a compliment - at least they were unique. Not every family could say that.

Daisy hurtled around the final corner until she reached the kitchen. Laid out on the large wooden table was just one place setting, she took a seat.

“How did you sleep?” Annabelle Malone, otherwise known as Mum, gave her daughter a one-armed hug as she deposited a bowl of cereal on the table. She had been waiting for her eldest daughter to grace them with her presence.

“Okay, I guess. What are you doing today?” With precision, Daisy poured exactly two even teaspoons of sugar onto her breakfast and stirred it through with four complete circles. She could then commence eating.

“I thought I would take Primrose to the aquarium,” Annabelle smiled, wiping down the counters. “You know how much she loves the sharks. Did you want to come with us?”

“As if! I’m not five years old anymore, Mum,” Daisy muttered, even the thought of going to the aquarium embarrassed her.

“Oh I forgot, you’re sixteen now. How silly of me to forgot. If you change your mind, you know where we’ll be,” with that being said, Mumma Malone left her daughter to her breakfast. She knew there would be no changing her mind. Daisy’s decisions were like concrete, once set they would only be broken by a jackhammer.

When breakfast was eaten and the bowl put in the dishwasher, Daisy hurried on to her next step. She would check in with her grandparents and then find a place to curl up with a book for precisely two hours and twenty minutes. That would then take her through to lunchtime.

And that she did. There was nothing more enjoyable than lazing in the summer shade and being immersed in the mystery and intrigue of a good book. Daisy challenged herself by seeking

out novels that weren't popular. She called them hidden treasures and imagined they were written just for her. Anything on the best seller list would just not do.

Today's book was called 'The Dark River', by some unknown author who probably didn't get the opportunity to publish a second novel. They probably poured their heart and soul into each word, each page, each chapter, and Daisy got to experience it all. Her own little gem.

At 12:05, Daisy closed her book and returned it to the house. She grabbed her handbag - black, one of only three exceptions to the colour rule (the others were shoes and belts) and set off for a walk. The stroll into town was easy and pleasant, mostly it was downhill. For now, she wouldn't think about the walk back up the hill. That was a problem for later.

The summer weather was beautiful, not a cloud in the sky. Birds were flittering about in the trees and children could be heard in the community playground one block away. You couldn't get a more perfect day. It belied nothing of the tragedy that was coming for Daisy.

Two kilometres from the house on the hill, Daisy reached her destination. Every day that summer she had been having her lunch at the same restaurant. It was only fairly new in town but was definitely a hit with the locals. The Sushi Roll was a happening place. How could a restaurant go wrong when it had a giant plastic prawn on the roof?

Despite the dodgy appearances with the bamboo blinds, the dim lighting, and the horrible orange carpet, the place was decent enough. You had to look through the kitsch décor, but the food couldn't be beaten. Thankfully, tourists usually wrote the place off as a local dive and walked straight on by.

Daisy had a standing reservation at The Sushi Roll; she didn't even need to say her name. All the staff knew her on sight, from the former stripper Maitre de to the underage dishwasher.

People tend to notice you when you do the exact same thing every day for three weeks. Rain or shine, Daisy would be there and insist on having her usual table with her usual waitress. In the end, they would just reserve the table for her, it saved the argument that would surely follow if they didn't.

As she entered the restaurant, the greeter immediately made eye contact. She didn't bother picking up a menu or showing her customer to a table. She just nodded as Daisy walked by and settled herself at the table, the one in the corner closest to the kitchen. From her seat, Daisy could see nothing but the wall and that was the way she liked it. She didn't need anybody watching her eat, she wasn't a voyeur.

Waiting for a few minutes, she hoped the waitress wouldn't be long. People didn't give her the full respect it deserved, after all, it was the most important thing in her life. If only others would understand this simple fact.

Daisy waited and waited, checking her watch openly to ensure people knew she was getting impatient. Looking around the restaurant, there were hardly any servers in sight. It only helped to make her more anxious.

"May I take your order?" A male voice came from the side, making her jump. She hadn't heard anyone approach and definitely hadn't been expecting a male.

"You aren't Laurel," Daisy replied with a flat monotone in her voice. She stared at the guy. He had sandy blonde hair that was threatening to get in his way. His perfect coif wasn't his best feature though, by far it was his dark eyes that were almost black. For a second Daisy forgot what she was supposed to be doing.

“No, I’m not. May I take your order?” He hadn’t noticed the staring, or at least pretended he hadn’t.

Daisy found her words again and remembered the seriousness of the situation. “Where’s Laurel?”

This wasn’t looking good, the routine was at a high risk now.

“Laurel is busy. I will be your waiter for now. What would you like to eat today?”

A moment of panic sent a shockwave through Daisy, should she still stay? Would this guy get her order right? What if he didn’t? There were too many unknowns in the equation for comfort.

She supposed he wouldn’t leave unless she spoke again, so she answered: “Pancakes. A three stack with banana and chocolate sauce on the side, please.”

“Daisy, you come here every single day and order pancakes. You do know we are a sushi restaurant, right?” The waiter, not speaking to be sarcastic, truly interested in the odd young woman.

“I like pancakes.”

“But we specialise in sushi. Don’t you want to try something different?”

“I know I like pancakes and it’s on the menu so you have to serve them to me,” Daisy hoped the conversation would be over soon but seeing the guy’s lips spread into a grin, she softened ever so slightly. “Besides, I don’t know if I’d like sushi and I have no idea what all the names mean.”

“Alright then, one serve of pancakes from the kid’s menu then. Won’t be long,” with that being said, the guy left his customer and headed for the kitchen. At least he had tried. Daisy

watched as he walked, hoping he wouldn't mess up her order. Blondes weren't known for their intellect. Her lunch had to be the same, there had been enough deviation in one day already.

Waiting for the order to come was painful. Daisy watched as the minutes ticked by, each one going slower than the one before. She went to The Sushi Roll every day because she knew what to expect. Laurel would be there and say "The Usual?", Daisy would nod and politely thank her. A few minutes later she would deliver said pancakes and then the world would spin for another day. It was such a simple concept.

Daisy looked around nervously, watching as the other patrons munched away happily on their rice and fish rolls. The little green and white rolls didn't look horrible, she supposed, but pancakes would be much safer. What would happen if she did chose something different and it was awful? It would be a meal wasted. Not to mention the consequences of ignoring the routine.

Finally, her meal was put in front of her. Perched on top of the white, round ceramic plate were three pancakes. To the side was sliced banana and on the other side was a little container of chocolate sauce. It was almost like usual, with the exception of a little frangipani flower by the sauce. It was something different, but it wouldn't be a disaster. A flower was only a big deal if she made it into one, she told herself.

"Thank you," she said politely. The guy just smiled and left her to the meal. Relief flooded through her as she picked up the knife and fork. Maybe she wouldn't have to find somewhere else to eat after all. Perhaps tomorrow Laurel would be back and it would be like today didn't happen.

The meal was delicious. Despite its recent shortcoming, The Sushi Roll really did have the best food in town. There was a lightness in the pancakes that were like eating a cloud. And the

chocolate sauce, you could eat it in bucket loads if they served it. For a moment, this was all Daisy could think about. Everything else went away while she savoured each bite.

The other restaurant patrons didn't matter, the annoying kid whining about eating raw fish went away, and the constant swishing from the opening and closing door was silenced. The moment of eating the delicious meal was all there was.

Then the eyes popped into her mind again, not for the first time since she was burdened with a new server. They were so dark, so sparkly, so beautiful. There was a depth there that could never be measured. Daisy could honestly say they were the most intriguing eyes she had ever experienced. Maybe it wouldn't be so bad if Laurel wasn't there tomorrow. Or perhaps it was the pancake high that was talking.

The blissful moment was broken by a girl taking a seat across the table. Daisy's head shot up to see who the intruder was. She soon relaxed again.

"Jess, what are going here?"

"Looking for you, duh," the girl, her shockingly blue eyes rolling in sarcasm, replied.

"How'd you know I was here?" Daisy asked, a second later thinking it through. The two best friends laughed together. Everyone who knew Daisy *always* knew where to find her. They only had to recall her routine and they could instantly pinpoint her location. She was easier to keep track of than the Mars rover.

"So Miss Daisy, have you got any crazy outrageous plans for tonight?" Jess Sands, her brown hair matching her very fashionable brown handbag perfectly, asked expectantly. She could almost guess the answer but sometimes Daisy did surprise her. Having a best friend who

bordered on obsessive compulsive was challenging sometimes but she wouldn't change her for the world. It was far too entertaining.

"My plans for tonight? Well, let's see," Daisy pretended to flick through the diary in her mind. "I have a family dinner, as usual. Then I will probably watch some television. Lastly, for an encore, I'll go to bed. In some cultures that might be classified as 'outrageous'."

"Not in this culture, honey. How does a party at Kelly's house sound? She's invited everyone from school," Jess asked with hope, she was tired of going to these things alone. "What do you say?"

"I can't. I don't do parties, you know that," slightly annoyed, Daisy couldn't even entertain the idea of attending. Jess knew she didn't like parties, she shouldn't even have asked.

"It might be fun. You don't have to stay long. We could just stay for an hour and then leave. Come on Daisy, its just a little party."

"I can't. I told you, I have plans for tonight. I'm sure you'll have a great time without me anyway."

Jess gave up, she knew pressing the issue would only make her more stubborn. "Fine then. Promise you'll let me tell you all about it tomorrow?"

"Definitely. I will want to hear all the gossip," finishing her pancakes, Daisy turned her full attention to her friend. "What are you going to wear?"

"I have no idea. I don't have any 'going out' clothes. You want to go shopping with me?"

Daisy thought it through. Her afternoon routine wasn't as strict as her morning one. She could spare a few hours. "Sure, I'd love to."