



Losing one's Parents

*An excerpt from DOTTY and the Calendar House Key,
Chapter 1: 'New Beginnings'*

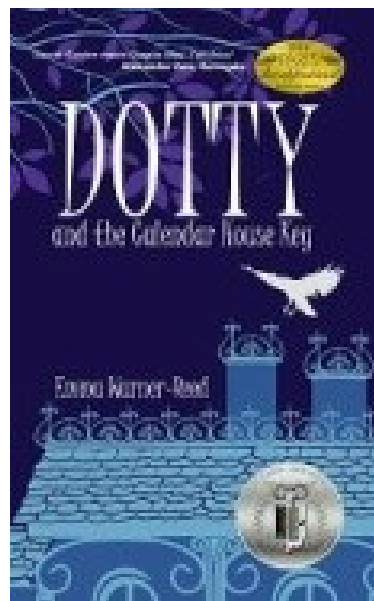
It hadn't been easy for Dotty since the fire. Concerned smiles seemed to fly at her from all angles, making her want to run and hide. The grown-ups all kept sighing and tutting, and saying "nine is too young to lose your parents." Dotty could not think of any age when losing one's parents was appropriate but, nevertheless, she definitely agreed that nine and a half was not it. And as if this tragic loss wasn't enough, it seemed the grown-ups were intent on making Dotty's life more miserable still by moving her away from her home in Cardiff to go and live with her mother's uncle in deepest, darkest

Yorkshire: an area of the country she had no knowledge of, nor ever wished to discover.

Dotty had been given a brief reprieve from her Yorkshire sentence. As the winter term had not yet ended, the grown-ups thought it would be less disruptive if Dotty continued at school until then. So it had been agreed with Sylv's Dad that she would stay with them until the start of the Christmas holidays. Dotty found it difficult coming home from school every day to see the burnt-out shell that had been her family home since she was born. The scene of the fire served as a stark reminder of the accident that had so cruelly taken her parents from her, but Dotty told herself that at least she was in a familiar place with her best friend, and she found some strange sort of comfort in being close to home.

But now the holidays were about to start and there was no further room for delay. Sylv had to go and stay with her mum in Bristol, leaving Dotty with no choice but to make the move up to Yorkshire to start her new life there. Sylv had promised to write. "We can Skype all the time," she said. "And 'phone. And email. And my dad says you can visit any time." But it wouldn't be the same. Dotty was devastated. The adults insisted it was a good thing, that it would give

her time to settle in over Christmas before she started a new school in January. Dotty did not agree. As far as she was concerned she was being moved to what might as well be the other side of the world forever and no amount of good timing could fix that.



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