

## THE TURQUOISE CABINET

Life has always been plain for 16-year old Diana Dot, which she both loves and hates. She's exceedingly paranoid—keeping a large backpack with her at all times, holding emergency materials for any kind of situation—and her crippling anxiety makes her superglued 24/7 inside her comforting house. That's the part she hates: always being inside, never to know anything about the outside world. She felt safe, but also trapped. She thought her life would always be the same, until one fateful day.

"You're still coming over after school, right?" Diana asked her best friend, Clover Campbell, who she sticks to like bubblegum. They've been best friends since childhood, knowing every little thing about each other, like when Diana wrote horrible fanfiction about her old crush on French popstar Bieberrie Justiné. Clover didn't just know about it, she literally read it, and she was Diana's #1 fan because that's what friends—no, *bestfriends*—do. They support each other no matter how embarrassing or downright wrong something is. Clover and Diana have always been, and forever will be, there for each other. Little do they know that forever isn't that long for the two of them. "No, I'm going home because it's just so much fun to rot around my house all alone," Clover replies sarcastically then adds, "Duh, I'm going. I'm not missing this, not even if the vegetables on my plate started talking at me, and pleading with me to eat them."

After a couple of beats of silence, she asked, "Has that happened to you before?" Clover furrowed her brows and tilted her head whilst responding, "What? No." Diana blinked and murmured, "That's a weird example," then replied to what she previously said, "Okay, good, I've been dying to see what my sister hides in that hideous turquoise cabinet. And if she finds out we looked through her stuff, there's no way I'm going down/dying alone." Ah, the notorious, *hideous* turquoise cabinet. Unfortunately for Diana, it has consistently remained untouched by her all her life by the force of her sister, Daniella Dot. Daniella is very possessive with her belongings because she wants to keep her personal life as private as possible, which is hard having a kleptomaniac for a 16-year-old sister.

She steals literally everything her sister owns, all the way from her money to her toothbrush, which she didn't use on her set of teeth. No, she would never do that, but she would use her sister's toothbrush for her art class, to add streaks of green to clover's hair, clean a couple (17) carpet stains, and clean the bottom of her shoes. No harm done, really. And she also steals all of her clothes and shoes because if God didn't want Diana to use her sister's stuff, he wouldn't have made them the same size. Just saying.

It may not seem very much like it, but Diana really cares about her sister. In her top 5 things she cares about the most, being Clover, her mother, pizza, ladybugs, and Daniella, her sister is

somewhere in there. The order is not important, but what is important is that this shows that Diana has a genuine, deep regard for her sister which is why she needs to figure out what is inside that ugly turquoise cabinet. It's for her sister's safety. That's all it is: security. It's not nosiness at all.

"We have to get to class," Clover says begrudgingly since they have no classes together. The only times they get to see each other are break and lunch, but with all of the clubs they're in, they only really see each other during break. It's hard, but they're trying to change up their schedules, so fingers crossed they get at least some classes together.

"I love you," came from both of their mouths, then with both of their arms came a hug, because they are really just that close. And Diana's paranoia causes her to say goodbye like it's her last to every person she meets. At some point, it *will* be her last, and she just wants to be careful that her last words to someone aren't that she hates them. They're practically glued together so a devil named Kevin comes straight from the darkest pits of hell to separate them day after day, and he must be overworked because they truly are inseparable. They both went their separate ways, Diana to English and Clover to art.

A few hours later, school is over, and Diana has to work at the hottest place in all of Maplewood with the unhottest customers. DONUTRITION is the name, and selling healthy, good-for-you donuts is their game! Actually, no, you can't legally say that they're healthy. When this company was first founded, the donuts were actually healthy, but there were no customers. However, consumers started flooding in so vastly that people started needing lifejackets and lifeboats once they started selling "healthy" donuts. They have been selling "healthy" donuts ever since, with one exception being the veggie donut that is made out of broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, and probably a piece of hell itself because of how torturous the taste is, but that could just be the sauerkraut. But when Diana tried it for the first time, she could've sworn that she tasted tortured people's tears from Hell in her first bite. Maybe they had to eat it too.

"If you wanna be slim, get really thin, lose all your double chins, well I know the answer: it's DONUTRITION," Diana sang unenthusiastically to a customer, who didn't acknowledge Diana at all until asking, "Can I get a rainbow taffy surprise donut with 2 surprises and a bucket at the end of the gummy rainbow with gold chocolate?" Diana knowingly responds with, "Sorry, we're all out, but we've got a lot of veggie donuts that really need a home in peoples mouths." She ended awkwardly because she's tried for so long to get people to at least try the veggie donut, but even then, they only try it so that they can sue the company for food poisoning. And they always win, every single time.

“Gross,” says the customer who walked away immediately, looking and feeling completely offended. Diana annoyedly checks the time, and realizes that she’s off the clock. She starts heading out, waiting for Clover to come pick her up, which they had previously agreed to. Clover drives a neon green Volkswagen Beetle—neon green because she’s obsessed with *Brat* by Charli Xcx and a Volkswagen Beetle because she’s also obsessed with *Once Upon a Time* and Emma Swan has that same car—so she’s ridiculously easy to spot. Diana is afraid she’s going colorblind because it’s been 40 minutes past the time Clover said that she’d pick Diana up, and there’s no neon green car in sight.

She starts tearing up because, again, she’s incredibly anxious. Clover never called or texted her to let her know that she was running late, so is she okay? What if she’s in trouble? What if she’s already dead? These are the only thoughts Diana is capable of having in her head at that moment. However, they were thankfully interrupted by a loud horn which played the song, “La Cucaracha.” Diana looked around to see none other than Clover driving to her in that neon green car, who said, “Let’s go, it’s almost 6:20, and your sister gets home at 7.”

“So you’re just gonna ignore the fact that you’re here 40 minutes late? Also, what happened to your horn? Why is it playing a song? Did someone hack into it? I told you to put security locks on everything.” Diana said angrily as she got into her best friend’s car and put on her 18-year old, brown helmet which was passed down to her from her sister. It used to be bright pink, and she really doesn’t know what happened. She always wears helmets in cars because if Formula 1 drivers wear helmets, so should she. Clover responded with, “That’s literally why I’m here late. I got it installed before coming.” She smiled as she pressed the horn again, feeling prideful. “And you couldn’t have said anything beforehand?”

Clover’s smile faltered because she knows better than to not text Diana in advance. She knows how it can get inside Diana’s mind. It’s really not pretty, and she can’t control it either. “It slipped my mind, I’m sorry.” Diana turned to face her window, and said, “Whatever, it doesn’t even matter anymore. Let’s just go.” Clover reluctantly started driving to Diana’s house, and she could’ve sworn a light bulb went off above her head at that exact moment because she remembered that she got Diana’s Christmas present early. Like 4 months early. She has a tendency to forget pretty much anything and everything. “You can act as mad as you want, but then it’ll only take longer for you to get your present,” Clover said with a smug look on her face because she knows her best friend very well, so she knows exactly what will make her give in. “What present?” Diana said, turning to look at Clover curiously.

Clover reached a red light, and from the back seat, pulled out a red helmet with black polka dots, being ladybug themed. Diana squealed and reached out for it, but Clover moved it out of the

way. Clover knew to get the helmet because, again, Diana is big on safety. It's her whole brand. And ladybugs are her whole life. She's obsessed with them. "You didn't." She said excitedly, completely forgetting about her friend picking her up exactly 48 minutes late.

"Okay, sure, I didn't." Clover said, putting the masterpiece of a helmet to Diana in the back seat again, when Diana grasped her wrist and stopped her. She snatched the helmet out of Clover's hands and stared at it as if it was a lottery ticket that won her a billion dollars. She ripped her threadbare, pine cone-colored helmet off of her head immediately, and carefully placed the red helmet onto her head like it was a \$2 million tiara, which also happens to be her favorite color. It reminds her of her late mother, who was a natural red-head and a beautiful person inside and out.

They shortly arrived at Diana's house, to which she immediately sprung out of her seat as if there were snakes on it, tearing it apart, to take a million selfies of herself—not herself, the helmet—as Clover watched and waited very impatiently, despite knowing this would happen. "Diana, you can obsess and drool over the helmet all you want later, but you can't open the turquoise cabinet later. Come on, let's go already," Clover said, pulling on Diana's arm, which was ineffective because Diana was in a trance. Specifically, a love trance, with a helmet, but a pretty helmet, though. How perfectly sane and normal of her. It's truly very healthy behavior.

At some point, Clover just carried Diana bridal-style and headed on to Daniella's room. "Get your head in the game already, Dot. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, we need to savor it like you're savoring that dumb helmet," Clover said, which also proved to be unsuccessful. Clover decided to pull out the big guns, and set her down just to rip off (carefully remove) the helmet off of Diana's head. "I'm sorry, do you want to die? What do you think you're doing?" Diana said aggressively reaching for the (romantically loveable?) helmet that Clover is holding high above her head, which always works. Clover is 5'8 and Diana is 4'11 but she says she's "5'3 on a good day." Cor-ny.

"You're not getting it back until you focus on the cabinet, already." It's already 6:40, they barely have any time for this argument before Daniella gets home and hurts them. Diana realized how crazy she was being, and said "Okay, you're right. Fine." Clover and Diana have discussed this exact moment thoroughly, and previously agreed that they would open it together, and also prepared speeches. Clover took Daniella's turquoise (it's a thing) hairbrush off of her desk, and used it as a microphone. "I've thought about this day for a long time, and this is truly such a full-circle moment for me—"

She was interrupted by Diana saying, "No, we don't have time for the speeches or the cabinet anthem, we need to just open it already, she gets home in 6 minutes." Daniella actually gets home in 15

minutes, but Clover was *not* about to listen to Diana drone on and on about nothing. They both knelt in front of the sacred cabinet, wondering what could possibly be lying in there: a shrine of one/all of Daniella's crushes? The entire Twilight book series? Animal costumes? A collection of people's hair? Bones? The options are terrifyingly endless.

They both reached for the handle, and synchronically said, "1, 2, 3," and finally opened the legendary, turquoise cabinet. They discovered a black book with dark purple and red lace decorating it, with the title being in a language neither of them could even attempt to understand. Next to this mysterious book was a gold-stringed dream catcher. They both reached out for these items, and blacked out instantly once they touched them. After losing consciousness, they appeared in a white void, with a gold glowing figure in front of them, who looked like a star in a human-like form. "Are you an angel? Are we in Heaven?" Clover asked as she stood up since Diana couldn't get any words out of her overly anxious mind. She's so confused, and if she's confused then she's out of control. Diana really doesn't know what to do.

"No, I'm a dreamweaver. You're in the dreamworld." The mysterious person answered, growing closer to them, which did not mean anything to either of them. Maybe they're both having the same dream right now? Or hallucination? "What did you just say?" Diana bewilderedly asked, as she finally stood up on her feet as Clover already did, even though it didn't feel like standing. It felt like she was levitating, like her feet's magnetic forces were of the south pole and the ground's is also of the south pole. They do not attract, not allowing them to make contact, and Diana does not know how to feel. "I said that I'm not an angel, I'm a dreamweaver. And this isn't heaven, it's the dreamworld."

"What does that even mean?" Diana asks, desperately trying to pull herself together. Though he was able to keep his polite manner, he finally faltered as he rolled his eyes and said, "It means that I'm stuck in an eternal dream, and that you're in the place where dreams happen. You need to go back home, before you get recruited," the glowing figure said dreamily, with a slight hint of annoyance. "How are we supposed to do tha-" Clover was interrupted by the unknown figure, apparently called a "dreamweaver," whatever that means, sending them back into reality by pushing them into the portal they stumbled upon through the turquoise cabinet.

After returning to their own world, they didn't wake up, they stayed blacked out. Because of this, Daniella returned home, seeing them both unconscious and the turquoise cabinet open, realizing what had happened. Irritation bubbled within herself like a pot of boiling water, but she forced the feeling away. She instead, maturely decided to carry them one by one to Diana's bed, and make them

believe that this was all a dream, and never actually happened. They can't get involved, they can't know anything. Or they'll be recruited, just like she was.