



In the whole of his entire, actual life, Eric Doomsday had never got anything through the post. No letters, no postcards, no parcels, no nothing. He did get a pizza menu once, although, as it had been addressed to a Mrs Eric Doomsday, he didn't think it counted. And yet here he was, standing in his bedroom, holding a purple envelope that had just been delivered to his house, that had his name written on it.

Eric turned the envelope around in his hands. On the back, someone had drawn beautiful swirls and spirals in silver ink, and it had been sealed with a large red star. Hands trembling, Eric carefully lifted open the flap.

Inside, was a small piece of golden paper. It was an invitation. Eric held his breath and looked again at the front of the envelope, just to make doubly sure that he hadn't accidentally opened something that was addressed to someone else. He had made that mistake once before with a letter that he thought had been for him but that had, in fact, been addressed to his Auntie Elsie. She had been staying with them while her house was being redecorated. Before Eric realized his mistake, he had spent a very worrying twenty minutes thinking he needed to get a rather large boil removed from his bottom.

But this time there was no mistake. He, Eric Doomsday, of number 18 Ottershaw Drive, had been invited to a birthday party. And not just any birthday party either. No, Eric had been invited to Hattie Lavernock's birthday party. He stood there, in his vest, pants and socks, staring at the golden invitation, and lost himself in a daydream of party games and laughter.