

on the tedium of kidnap

Lady Kathryn looks slightly nonplussed. "Why! A maze is rarely a difficult task! Whilst tedious (and potentially slimy), one can always find one's way through by simply placing a palm on the wall and following it around and around. And around."

She furrows her brow as she remembers. "I believe it was on the fourth or fifth occasion that the Cardinal kidnapped me aid his brother at 'Eurovision'. I remember that my first abduction occurred because the Cardinal wanted to learn of the Spanish Fly, which I was researching at the time. Since then I have been kidnapped to (amongst other things) aid him in overturning the Belgian government, help infiltrate a sect of warrior nuns that live high in the Pyrenes, serve as ransom for Cook's secret Yorkshire Pudding recipe, and even once just because he felt like it. Like Miss Thimblebelly, I wasted some days during my first abduction being shunted into different cells between Questionings. In my case these chiefly consisted of rather obtuse enquiries into the possible effects that swallowing a Spanish Fly might have on impressionable young girls. (I never did find out which young lady had the misfortune of accidentally ingesting one). However, I eventually found myself in Dungeon Three and availed myself of its facilities - namely, the trap door. A few hours in the maze lead me first to the Cardinal's bedroom and, after liberating a few sheep, my freedom. After that I simply bribed the guards to place me in Dungeon Three immediately (I always keep a few gold pieces about my person for just such an emergency) and thus I am generally free from the Cardinal's clutches within a matter of hours."

"At the time in question, I was making my way to Luxemburg (where the contest was to be held) when the Cardinal's guards waylaid me yet again. I greeted the appearance of these much moustachioed men with a rather weary resignation, but did not attempt to fight. With me was my constant companion Fabian, a handsome turtledove of quite succulent proportions and rather sensitive disposition. I did not wish to distress him with any unnecessary violence." Patting the sleeping form on her bosom she adds, "Of course, Gerald and I were yet to meet."

Upon arrival at Castillo Flamenco, the Cardinal explained his brother's positively ludicrous plan for world domination using the Eurovision carving contest and how Russell's possession of some... ahem... rather sensitive information obliged the Cardinal to assist. He assured me that even if I did escape I would not reach Luxemburg in time to compete. After rolling my eyes, I modestly protested that my absence would not necessarily clear the way to Russell's triumph. As Miss T has alluded, the Finnish Faction (who - as far as I can tell - base their decision on how much sawdust is produced rather than any whittling prowess) alone have caused several upsets. One can never be sure of success until the final votes are in. (Best Chorography, incidentally, is a relatively new award designed to appeal to the younger set. I won it last year after accidentally tripping over another contestants discarded entry. My superior gymnastic skills allowed me to execute a perfect somersault, which went down very well with even the Finnish.)"

"But I digress. I was determined to thwart Russell's plan and was in the maze within the hour. I completed it in record time but was a little surprised to find a lion (cunningly added as an further impediment) blocking the exit. Although I have since brushed up on my wrestling skills, I hesitated a moment. We sized each other up for several seconds and I was just about to set at the beast with my hairpin when Fabian unexpectedly launched himself into a heroic and very final flight. He flew directly into the lion's jaw and, whilst devoured in but a few gulps, gained me enough time to scoot by and reach the Cardinal's bedroom unharmed. After freeing his most recent menagerie, I was on my way to Luxemburg - very much resolved on avenging poor Fabian's death. After brushing a tear from her eye, Lady Kathryn continues. "Alas I arrived too late to compete myself, but witnessed the second half of a

masterful performance by the young Miss Bennet, who had taken my place in the program. (Miss Bennet, by the by, came to my attention during an amateur event that I judged in Lower Codswallop. As an infant she had been found on the doorstep of the local butcher and her early acquaintance with knives and other sharp objects helped develop her natural flair for whittling. She has positively blossomed under my tutelage and I rather suspect the she is descended of noble blood. Despite the upbringing of a commoner, her carriage and deportment are positively **aristocratic**.) Russel Flamenco was visibly dispirited after Miss Bennet's 'Heliopolis', but it was my withering glance and sharp words that deflated any remaining aspirations he might have held of world domination. Indeed, his hands shook so much during his performance, that it is a wonder that he did not lose more fingers than he did!"

Back to [lady_kathryn_of_basingstoke](#)

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