

# Kidnapped

Ellen Hoe aged 13, 2nd prize

"Let me go!" I screamed 'Get off, you're hurting me, I -  
' The burlier man slapped  
my cheek and I screamed again, feeling it tear against my raw throat. They  
dragged me struggling down a flight of stairs, and as the bone-  
chilling cold hit me I gasped, stumbling over my numb feet. The men laugh  
ed at this, then with a blow to my stomach I was thrown backwards into  
a wet cell: the heavy wooden door slammed shut. Raucous laughter cam  
e from outside and with a furious  
vengeance I began to pummel the door, enraged sobs ripping their way out  
as my  
kidnappers ambled back up the stairs. I whirled around and began to pace a  
nd  
stamp until I was totally exhausted, and threw myself down on the dingy st  
raw. A breath of air from my eighteenth birthday party was all I'd wanted,  
but instead  
I'd ended up kidnapped. Shuddering, I rolled into a ball, trying to keep out  
the cold - but failing miserably.

Eventually sleep came, but it brought no peaceful oblivion, only fitful drea  
ms that  
tortured me, again and again, until I woke up weeping, tears streaming dow  
n my cheeks.

Edward, Edward, Edward...

He was all I could think about as I sat up and wrapped my arms around m  
y knees, feeling myself shaking violently under the thin grey silk -  
a shade painfully close to his eyes.

The first time we'd met... his warm hand enclosing mine... slowly circling i  
n the  
Assembly Rooms, eyes locked, deaf to the music... that night and every ni  
ght  
afterwards... whispering in corners... finally, the furious shouting match with  
my  
father... "inexcusable behaviour"... "third son of a common landowner"... m  
y heart  
breaking as I promised never to talk to him again... struggling to keep my  
word... my father's cold stare always boring into my back... unable to mee  
t

Edward's eyes in The Pump Rooms before leaving Bath, terrified I would break  
down... his letter, back home at Otley Palace... my tears smudging the ink  
...  
his confusion and guilt as to my cold behaviour... "If you never want to see  
me again"... "  
just let me know why"... "for the love of God, tell me what I  
have done"... my desperate, pleading reply... our secret letters... how  
he'd ridden hundreds of miles to be there for my eighteenth birthday... hid  
ing in  
the stables, waiting for me... his lips touching mine... I moaned softly into  
my knees with grief at the memory. What if I never saw him again -  
or what if no-  
one ever saw me again? What if I was left here to die... A voice reasoned  
with me inside my head not to be so ridiculous -  
as the Duke of Suffolk's eldest  
daughter and his heir, they'd demand a ransom, not kill me in cold blood.  
There'd be no point... would there?

Startled I looked up. My skin came out in goose-  
bumps. There it was again - a  
crash, followed by shouting and two loud gunshots. I scrambled to my feet,  
heart  
thumping, and backed into the shadows at the back of the cell to flatten  
myself  
against the cold, dripping wall. Thundering footsteps echoed from the stairs  
and I began to tremble; but then I heard him. His was voice full of fear  
and panic, but it was there and real!  
'Rosalie?' he yelled. "Rose? Where are you? Where are you?"  
Just his voice made my head swim!  
'Edward!' I screamed 'I'm here -  
here at the end!' His feet pounded down the  
corridor then he slid the key into the lock, turned  
it, and finally, finally I was tight in his arms once more. The walls began to  
shake, but as Edward stroked my hair, and made shushing noises, I realise  
d it was me and the keening noises  
were my hysterics. He held me close, rocking, soothing me, repeating over  
and  
over 'I'm sorry Rose, I'm so sorry I took so long, I'm sorry, I'm sorry' But  
I couldn't answer, except to hold him more tightly.

Eventually I calmed, and he wound his fingers into my cold ones and gently  
pulled me upstairs. I breathed shallowly, terrified my guards would hear -  
but as

we passed through the empty entrance hall, they lay still and crumpled on the floor. My eyes widened and I opened my mouth but he clamped his free hand over it to stop me, and pulled me out the open door and towards his horse, lifted me up, swung himself behind me then kicked him into motion and we began to race down the drive. His arms tightened around me, and neither of us looked back.

Soon we were a safe distance from the ruined manor and as the horse began to walk, I judged it safe to talk.

'What happened?' I asked him. 'How did you find me?'

He shifted in the saddle, then said,

'I knew something was wrong. When you left the hall, I waited and waited for

you to come back, but you didn't. I began to look for you, and I saw the deep wheel marks in the drive, next to your dropped wrap, and a patch of scuffed gravel, as though there'd been a struggle.'

'So you followed me?'

'There were two roads. I took the wrong one first, but realised it quickly, and galloped the other way. I had to change horses twice, that's why I

was so long. It's six o'clock in the evening now. You won't be home till at least this time tomorrow'

I smiled. 'I don't mind'

'What will your father say?'

"Well, my father is hardly likely to refuse marriage to a man who rescued his

missing daughter from his enemy's sons is he?" Edward stopped the horse sharply.

"Are you serious?" he demanded, as I twisted to look up at him. "You - you want to marry me?"

"I do," I said, and smiled again as he took my face in his hands and kissed me full on the lips.

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