

LIGHTS UP on Lady MARY, seated at a piano centre stage. A real piano if possible. A grand piano if we're being ambitious. A Casio if we're not. She's wearing an evening gown and a tiara. The MARQUIS stands next to her, in a formal military uniform. Her accent is posh British, his a muddled German-French cross. MARY plays classy mood music throughout the opening monologue.

MARQUIS

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen; peasants and peons.

MARY

Charmed, I'm sure.

MARQUIS

Allow me to introduce my colleague Lady Mary, daughter of the Duke of Earl, Lady of Upton Abbey, and third in line to inherit a very large hat.

MARY

Actually it's a very small hat, but it's very expensive.

MARQUIS

Lady Mary completed her education at the Oxford Finishing School for Incomplete Women, where she majored in piano performance and pointed looks.

MARY glares at an audience member.

She does good work.

And I am the Marquis van Shyzer, ninth in line to the throne of the small European kingdom of Nostrovia. Our chief exports are chocolate and folksy dancing, and we are renowned for our loosey-goosey international banking laws.

People often mistake my accent for Austrian or German, but in fact my mother tongue is Nostrovian, a language which is quite similar to what you speak here in Montreal in that it is not *quite* French. Together we are Lady Mary and the Marquis van Shyzer.

Piano fanfare.

Our journey as a musical duet began, as many journeys do, in the MIP lounge of the Ljubljana train station, where our trains had been delayed by a winter storm. MIP, of course, stands for Most Important Person - it's like a VIP lounge, but much nicer.

I was weary from travelling with so many bags, so I told Steppan, my underbutler, to tell Mikhail, my valet, to put them down, and I settled in for a nap on the divan. Which is what your type would call a sofa. I was just beginning to drift into my favourite dream - the one where I win the Eurovision song contest - when I heard the most lovely music.

So I wandered over to the extra-grand piano to find Lady Mary tickling the ivories. I joined her for a few bars, and then she joined me at the bar for a few, and before long we were both drunk on Sparklina, which is a liqueur made from distilled *Veuve Clicquot*. Lady Mary told me she had left the UK to avoid the controversy surrounding her newest charity, *Help the Homely*, which assists the clinically unattractive by providing them with makeup and, in extreme cases, paper bags. I confessed to her my secret desire to leave the hurly burly of royal life and try living as an ordinary person - who wins the Eurovision song contest.

It may have been the late hour, or the alcohol, or the fact that neither of us have ever had to face a consequence before, but we resolved to start our new lives immediately, train or no train. After all, if Julie Andrews could cross the alps on foot and still find time to twirl around in the edelweiss, so could we.

We walked all night through the storm. It was a slow and treacherous journey, and frostbite did irreversible damage to both of Lady Mary's hand...maids. So you can imagine how we felt the next morning when the sun came up and we realized Vienna was the other way.

We chose to start our new lives in Canada because we wanted a country that still had some connection to the monarchy. Because thank goodness for the monarchy, ah? Without the monarchy how would you know what size your mattress is? And without the monarchy all the Disney movies would just be about sad poor girls who talk to rats and are desperate to get laid.

Speaking of Disney, this first song answers a question that people have been asking themselves for hundreds of years.

*SONG: WHO IS THE SEXIEST DISNEY MAN? (OR ANIMAL)...*