

“...2 large handfuls of walnuts, finely chopped, mixed together with some ground cinnamon, a dash of nutmeg, and enough honey to coat the nuts.”

Elizabeth shook her head and smiled. She loved the way her grandmother wrote recipes. Forget about measurements and weights and just go with your gut. That's what grandmother always said to her. Fortunately, Elizabeth had made this particular recipe many times with her grandmother, so she wasn't worried at all about how the final product would taste. Which was a good thing, since today was grandmother's birthday and everything had to be just right.

Once she mixed up the walnut filling, Elizabeth set about rolling out the shortbread dough. Ladyfingers were a time-consuming cookie to make, but they were her family's favorite, so Liz didn't mind. Working quickly, Liz's skilled hands cut the dough into elongated ovals, then she carefully placed a spoonful of filling onto each cookie. Next she pinched the dough together around the filling, creating the familiar finger-shaped cookie.

“Now to finish them...” Liz said to herself. She walked over to the kitchen counter to grab a pair of scissors. She looked briefly out the window, catching a glimpse of an owl in the distance.

“Hmm, mail's a bit early today.” Without paying it too much mind, Liz went back to her cookies. Finishing the ladyfingers was her favorite part. The trick was to use the tips of the scissors to make tiny incisions into the dough, without cutting all the way down to the filling.

Once she was done, Liz stood back and surveyed her work. “Lovely,” she said. She wiped her hands across her apron, then carried the pans of cookies over to the oven. As she placed them into the oven, Liz heard the mail slide through the front door. A few minutes later, after she had cleaned up the kitchen, Liz walked into the front hall and saw her mother standing there, holding a single piece of parchment.

“Hey mum, anything good in there?” Liz asked cheerfully. Her mother slowly turned around, her face pale and wet with tears.

“There's been an incident...an attack on a Muggle shopping center in Kent. The Ministry believes it to be a random attack by some former Death Eaters...” Liz's heart beat rapidly as her mother took a shaky breath.

“Liz, sweetie...your grandmother...”