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This fanfiction is based on *The Beautifull Cassandra*, a piece of juvenalia that Austen wrote for her sister. I was inspired by the seemingly nonsensical nature of this story, and was surprised to find that it was so short. My fanfiction explores what might have been left out of the original story, and the motives Cassandra had behind all of her seemingly pointless actions. However, my goal was never to make the story less fantastical. I was inspired by Alice's *Adventures in Wonderland*, in which the Queen of Hearts accuses Alice of stealing her tarts. Carroll's story also has a Duchess, and the story as a whole captures the whimsical feel of *The Beautifull Cassandra*. My Cassandra is an assassin, giving new meaning to her frolic around town. She is still in the nineteenth century, and she and her mother hide their assassin business under the guise of a milliner's shop. Every chapter in the original has a dark backstory as Cassandra attempts to find out who stole the Duchess's ices by dressing as the Countess and gathering undercover information. I wanted to explore the relationship between Maria and Cassandra, and I rethought the introductory letter from the original. I love that the women are the prime focus of the story, and that Cassandra is able to confuse every man that comes along. This idea was central to my story as well, as Cassandra and her mother do all of the dirty work, and are often hired by a noble woman. I used most of the original text of the story, added in bold italics, as well as the original chapter divisions, and I tried to make my story fit within the original descriptions.

Works Consulted

Carroll, Lewis, et al. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Special ed., New York, N.Y. : Random House, 1946.

Austen, Jane, et al. *Jane Austen's Manuscript Works*. Peterborough, Ontario, Canada : Broadview Press, 2013.

CHAPTER THE FIRST

“Cassandra was the Daughter and the only Daughter of a celebrated Millener in Bond Street. Her father was of noble Birth, being the near relation of the Dutchess of ---- 's Butler.”

Her father was a Milliner, sure, but few knew that he and his family were in direct service of the Dutchess. She was well-liked by all, and if she found this to be untrue, she would mention the name of her foe off-handedly to her dear butler. Butler knew that her Grace loved hats more than almost anything, so he was often sent to see about acquiring new ones. At the Millener, Butler would often mention, off-handedly, the Dutchess' new enemy, and the Hatter would smile and wish something could be done, before sending Butler away with a hat for her Grace, along with his condolences. Strangely enough, within a few weeks, these enemies always seemed to turn up dead. Yes, a hat always made the Dutchess feel better, but nothing in the world delighted her more than ices. She would kill for ices.

CHAPTER THE 2D

“When Cassandra had attained her 16th year, she was lovely and amiable and chancing to fall in love with an elegant Bonnet, her Mother had just compleated bespoke by the Countess of ----- she placed it on her gentle Head and walked from her Mother's shop to make her Fortune.”

The real mastermind behind the shop was Cassandra's dear mother. She was known for her elegant hat designs, and she seemed to always be wearing a new creation. She was an expert at clothes making in general, with a fine eye for detail. She could make them so well that it seemed she could disguise herself as anyone and no one would be the wiser. With such talented parents, it was no wonder that Cassandra, as the only daughter, would be trained in their ways.

Today, she was sixteen, and it was time for all of their work to pay off. Today, she would prove herself. Her mother placed a beautiful bonnet on her head, straightened Cassandra's elaborate dress, and twisted one last ringlet into her hair. "You look just like her," she mused, "Good luck today, Countess, remember your training." Cassandra gave a slight curtsy and gave one last look into the shop. Her two brothers sat opposite either other by the fire, adding the finishing ribbons to two new bonnets. Her father stitched on a hatband. It was time. Cassandra took a heavy pair of fabric scissors from her mother's hand and slid them carefully into the front of her own dress. Cassandra could feel the weight of them against her chest as she strolled into the street as the Countess.

CHAPTER THE 3RD

"The first person she met, was the Viscount of-----a young man, no less celebrated for his Accomplishments and Virtues, than for his Elegance and Beauty. She curtsayed and walked on."

It was not long before Cassandra began to attract the attention of the townspeople, who even on Bond street were not so haughty as to ignore a Countess as she walked by. She smiled and curtsayed when required, keeping her face as hidden as possible and trying not to stay in one place for very long. She had to play the part, but she most importantly had to focus on her assignment. It was simple enough: kill the pastry chef and get back before her identity was discovered. The Duchess had ordered him dead after a nasty dealing with the Countess. As told by the Butler, The Duchess had ordered ices made for all of her guests at a large banquet. She called on the pastry chef and arranged to have them made and then transported to her manor the day of the banquet. At dessert time, no ices came, and it was soon discovered that the Countess,

mad about not having been invited (Because she was such an airhead, and having her would have made an odd number of guests at the table) had paid the cook to have them delivered to her instead, where it is rumored she ate six of them herself before throwing the rest away. The Duchess was appalled, and had instantly sent to have a hat made. Believing the Countess was too stupid to have arranged it herself, she requested the immediate offing of the malevolent cook. Cassandra's mother had thought there was no better way than to have the Countess confront him herself.

Cassandra had become so lost in her mission that she almost forgot to act as the Countess when she was addressed by a handsome young gentleman.

“My Lady, how unexpected it is to see you here, and what a fine bonnet that is. Have you just come from the Millener?” The gentleman eyed Cassandra, and she gracefully turned her eyes to the ground, looking at him through her long eyelashes.

“Why thank you, my Lord, but I have just come into town for the morning and really must be going, good day.” Cassandra said, turning from him to leave.

He grabbed her arm, forcing her to turn back around. “I beg your pardon, but something looks different about you, my Lady.”

Cassandra's heartbeat quickened, and she ripped from his grasp, walking quickly into an abandoned side street to be rid of him. He was not deterred, and followed her, matching her pace easily as she struggled in her heavy gown.

"I did not mean to offen--" was all he was able to say as he rounded the corner and she buried the point of her scissors into his chest. Cassandra laid him down slowly, wiping off her scissors on his jacket, before tucking them back away and giving him a little curtsy as she hurried on to the Pastry Cook's.

CHAPTER THE 4TH

"She then proceeded to a Pastry-cooks where she devoured six ices, refused to pay for them, knocked down the Pastry Cook and walked away."

The Pastry Cook barely looked up from his work as Cassandra entered, but upon noticing that she was the Countess, immediately bowed and hurried to her assistance. The store was completely empty, and the Pastry Cook seemed excited by the idea of a patron. He was a tall, wide sort of man, with thinning hair and an oily grin. Every woman around town was cautious of him, and none so much as his wife.

"I would like an ice please," Cassandra said, looking into the Pastry Chef's eyes for any sign of discomfort.

He gave a small grin, eyeing her up and down, and headed to fetch one from the ice. "5 shillings." He did not seem to understand the irony of her request. She requested another.

“10 shillings then. You must really like these, my Lady, the only other person that orders this many ices is the Duchess herself. I just sent her loads of them for a feast. Were you there?”

Cassandra was confused. He seemed to be telling the truth, but then how did the Countess end up with the Duchess’ ices?

“You had them sent to me, good sir,” Cassandra said, spooning another bite of the ice to her mouth. The Cook looked confused .

“I beg your pardon, my Lady, but I had them sent by hackney-coach. Her Grace sent one to pick them up.”

Perhaps the coach driver had been working for the Countess?

“It was driven by a man I had never seen, but he had a scar on his right eye. He said he’d be back today for more. I will have to tell him I only have four left.”

Cassandra eyed the Cook, and deciding he had nothing to do with the Duchess’ ice theft, she decided to spare him. She scanned the room, and noticed a large candlestick holder on one of the tables nearby. With a sharp intake of breath, she lunged for the candlestick and struck the Cook hard on his head, causing him to fall into a mass on the floor. Maybe a bit too hard, she

thought, but it was best not to dwell on such things. With nothing to do but wait for this mysterious carriage to show up, Cassandra helped herself to the rest of the ices.

CHAPTER THE 5TH

“She next ascended a Hackney Coach and ordered it to Hampstead, where she was no sooner arrived than she ordered the Coachman to turn round and drive her back again.”

The Coachman arrived within the hour, and Cassandra had managed to devise a plan. It was simple really, she would have him drive her around to gather information, and when he was no longer useful, she would stab him. She had only just finished coming up with it when the coach appeared outside. She hurried out. The coachman greeted her with a tip of his hat, and Cassandra could clearly see the long scar from his eyebrow to his cheek.

“All of the ices are gone,” she told him “you must deliver me to Hampstead at once, where I have arranged to meet with another cook.”

The driver nodded, and helped Cassandra into the coach gently. She tried to question him along the way, but all of his answers were short and unhelpful, and after the two hour ride, Cassandra felt that maybe the driver was starting to suspect her of being someone other than the Countess.

“Pardon me!” She called from the carriage’s window, ‘but I think I may have dropped something from my window, could we turn back?’”

The driver nodded again, and turned the horses around.

“What was it, my lady?”

Cassandra looked around, and quickly stuffed one of her gloves into the seat of the coach.

“A glove, good sir, a glove. You know I love nothing more than my gloves, sir.”

He smirked and whispered, “nothing except revenge, no?”

CHAPTER THE 6TH

“Being returned to the same spot of the same Street she had set out from, the Coachman demanded his Pay.”

Cassandra stepped from the carriage and re-settled her hat on her head. This would be too easy, she would just need to keep him out of the view of the rest of the street.

“The whole way and it was in the seat the whole time! Silly me!” Cassandra chuckled, pulling her glove back on.

The driver frowned, fiddling with the reins on one of his horses. “Countess, should we go back? The Duchess will be having her banquet tonight, and she has likely already bought all of the ices in the area. Perhaps we could poison them somehow?”

Cassandra smiled, knowing this was her chance, while he was turned to his horse.

Wasting no time, she reached down her bodice and pulled forth her heavy fabric scissors. He

turned back to her just as she lunged forward, scissors grasped in her fist. Cassandra pushed them into his scarred eye, and blood immediately sprang forth, splattering her dress and gloves.

“You will pay for this,” the driver sputtered, droplets of blood falling from his lips even as he spoke. His hands went to his throat as he choked, before he dropped slowly to his knees and fell forward, the scissors pushing further into his head.

CHAPTER THE 7TH

“She searched her pockets over again & again; but every search was unsuccessfull. No money could she find. The man grew peremptory. She placed her bonnet on his head & ran away.”

Cassandra set to work right away trying to get him into the carriage so no one would see, but his body was extremely heavy when limp. She searched her pockets over and over for something, anything, her mother might have given her for a time like this. If only she had a bit of rope, or some money to buy some rope, she could pull him in. It was no use, and after a few minutes of fumbling around, a carriage was coming up the road. Cassandra eyed the stabbed driver, whose blood was beginning to puddle under his head. Someone would definitely notice. It seemed her best option was to get away from the scene of the crime, so she dislodged her scissors, placed the Countess’s hat on his gushing head, and ran down a side street and out of sight.

CHAPTER THE 8TH

“Thro' many a street she then proceeded & met in none the least Adventure, till on turning a Corner of Bloomsbury Square, she met Maria.”

Cassandra stayed clear of main streets, fully aware that there had been two stabbings and an assault today, and she was currently covered in blood. Without her hat, her hair was a mess,

and the bottom of her dress was brown with mud. She looked nothing like a countess anymore. It was no matter, she had been training in stealth since she was young, and no one seemed to be around, until Cassandra almost ran into Maria, who was carrying a basket full of fabrics.

CHAPTER THE 9TH

“Cassandra started & Maria seemed surprised; they trembled, blushed, turned pale & passed each other in a mutual silence.”

Cassandra froze, and Maria looked equally as shocked, looking at the bloodstained dress. Maria was just as beautiful as Cassandra remembered. They had met in Bath two summers ago, and Cassandra had been unable to forget her since. Maria had lovely pale blue eyes, delicate features, and a wild imagination. The two girls were inseparable, and chose to spend their time together instead of going to balls or flirting with men.

The longing in Cassandra’s chest welled up, but she forced her feelings down. She could never get close to Maria, or to anyone, because it was too dangerous to the mission.

Maria blushed, bring a delicate hand to her mouth in shock. Cassandra tried not to focus too hard on her mouth. They could not stop staring at each other, but after a painfully long silence, Cassandra lifted a finger to her own lips, before hurrying away down the alley, and away from the woman she loved.

CHAPTER THE 10TH

“Cassandra was next accosted by her freind the Widow, who squeezing out her little Head thro' her less window, asked her how she did? Cassandra curtseyed & went on.”

Cassandra passed through another street, only a few blocks from her home, when the Pastry Cook’s wife stuck her head out of her small window.

“Have you heard? The Pastry Cook is dead! Struck down in his shop for flirting with a lady, no doubt. Serves him right. And how are you on this fine day, girl, I do believe it is the greatest day of my life!” She called, paying no mind to whomever might be listening.

Cassandra fought back a smile, curtsayed, and continued on her way.

CHAPTER THE 11TH

“A quarter of a mile brought her to her paternal roof in Bond Street, from which she had now been absent nearly 7 hours.”

She was still winded from her walk, and her mind was still flustered as she pushed open the heavy door of the Milliner's shop.

CHAPTER THE 12TH

“She entered it & was pressed to her Mother's bosom by that worthy Woman. Cassandra smiled & whispered to herself "This is a day well spent."”

Her mother greeted her at the door, pulling Cassandra in tight hug.

“You’ve done it?” She whispered. Cassandra nodded, “This is a day well spent.”

Cassandra smiled, handing her mother the blood caked scissors and hurrying to her room to change. Upon entering, she noticed a letter on her dressing table. On it was written her name in the most lovely handwriting, and Cassandra wasted no time breaking open the wax seal. Her heart was racing.

Cassandra,

You are a Phoenix. Your taste is refined, your Sentiments are noble, & your Virtues innumerable. Your Person is lovely, your Figure, elegant, & your Form, magestic. Your Manners are polished, your Conversation is rational & your appearance singular.

Yours,

Maria

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