

A Deceitful Deed

Lord Carrion,	56, Lord of Beauworth Hall, grandly dressed. Deceased.
Cassandra,	23, his eldest child strong, dedicated, cunning.
Maxwell,	20, his eldest son stern, rash, a fiery nature.
Cedric,	16, his youngest child, naïve, cautious, loyal.
Mr Camberwell,	82, Lord Carrion's solicitor, responsible, loyal, kind.
Nancy Milton,	40, Beauworth's nanny, independent, loyal, wise.
Lucy,	18, Beauworth's maid, curious, obedient, loyal.
The Doctor,	30, Winchester's doctor, weak, uniformed, avoids conflict.

1834, Hampshire.

Scene 1- Lord Carrion's office, Beauworth House

The room is grandly decorated. Bookshelves cover the walls; a large fireplace sits still SL, resting from its flames the night before. A huge Moroccan rug lies on the floor covering the majority of the room. There are chairs all around the room; DR hangs Maxwell's longcoat and a table SR underneath the window supporting several decanters. An orange dusk shines through the window. There is a large ornate desk in the centre of the room; a large red throne sits behind it, above it on the wall rest two swords. This is Lord Carrion's desk; he inherited his estate and home from his father, and from it, used his home to father his three children, all from different mothers. His first born, Cassandra, she is tense and sat on the chaise by the fireplace, his second eldest Maxwell, looks out of the window. His hand is on his mouth and his eyes flicker. And the youngest Cedric, he stands in the centre of the stage leaning on his father's desk. As Lord Carrion, their father, sits in his red throne, deceased.

Cassandra stares at the ground, she is puzzling something over in her head, however physically, she is small. Maxwell remains motionless as Cedric looks out to him.

Cedric	I just can't believe this, father has gone.
Maxwell	We are aware.
Cedric	He, he showed no signs, nothing of sickness or of an absent mind. He was, resolute, strong. Just yesterday I spoke with him about my business in town, and now.
Maxwell	Now he is dead Cedric, we know.
Pause	
Cedric	Why do you show no remorse? He was your father too.

Maxwell turns sharply.

Maxwell	You do not need to remind me, he was my father long before yours.
Cedric	(Startled) I, meant no disrespect Maxwell.
Maxwell	No, of course not. How could you? You couldn't disrespect an urchin. Our father is dead. It is a fact, like it or not, it has happened. It is about time you get a grip Cedric. One day you may inherit something of esteem, and god save you if you greet your responsibilities like you greet death today.
Cedric	You think I'm weak brother?
Maxwell	I know it.
Cedric	I think you're vulgar.
Maxwell	I know that too.
Cedric	How can you be so cruel? Father did not bring you up to be this way.
Maxwell	Father taught me how to be a man, a man others respect. He taught me how to fight Cedric, which is the least I can say for you - he mollycoddled you like you a prized lover.
Cassandra	That is enough!

Cassandra rises from her chaise. Her mind is now clear.

We do not show disrespect to our father whilst his corpse still lies fresh. Now both of you listen to me. Cedric, wash your face. Then come back down here, I'll give you the address of the doctor.

Cedric nods. But remains.

Now!

Cedric scuttles out of the room, SL.

Maxwell.
Maxwell Sister.

Cassandra approaches Maxwell, and dominates him.

Cassandra Put away your pride for at least a day. Our father's death is no competition. There is no need to feel insecure, you are his first son. You are his heir. So you shall inherit his worth. So be an adult! You do not need to tease Cedric so.

Maxwell He needs to learn.

Cassandra He's young, he's inexperienced with life. He could not handle a stable let alone an estate, you are right in this. But never the less, he has no role model. He will look up to you, so do not push him away.

Maxwell Why do you think you have the right to tell me what to do?

Cassandra Because I know better.

Suddenly Maxwell grabs his sister by the throat.

Maxwell Well know this sister, if you dare to speak me like this again, in front of anyone, I will throw you out onto the street. I shall strip you of wealth, of possession and of your name. You will be a common cherry, fucking the scum of the town just for a morsel.

He releases his grasp.

Once I'm rightfully named successor, of course.

Cassandra reaches for air. Then squares up to Maxwell once more.

Cassandra Cedric was right about one thing Maxwell. You are vulgar; there is deceit in your eyes. If I find out our father did not die of naturally, I will know where to look.

Maxwell Look all you like, I want to be the last face you see.

Cedric re-enters, hurriedly.

Cedric How do I look?

Cassandra looks at Maxwell, Maxwell stares at Cassandra.

Maxwell Smart.

Cedric Good, I was afraid I had over scrubbed.

They break from their stare.

Maxwell Cedric.

Cedric Yes?

Maxwell Cassandra will give you the address of the doctor, go to him as fast as you can and pronounce our father's death.

Cassandra hands Cedric a note.

I will to town, I have an arrangement with my father's lawyer. If you will excuse me.

Cedric exits through the door he came through. Maxwell exits DR after grabbing his longcoat from the chair. Cassandra remains centre stage and airs a sigh of relief. She walks over to her father's body, stares warmly at it. She brings out his handkerchief from his top pocket, and wipes the saliva from his mouth. She folds the handkerchief lovingly, and holds it. She reclaims her father's brandy glass and the decanter from his desk, and exits SL.

Scene 2 – Mr Camberwell's office, Winchester

His office is a much smaller version of Lord Carrions. SL is his desk, his chair, cabinet and a fireplace. Papers are neatly piled upon the desk, as Mr Camberwell proceeds to solicit through them. Maxwell knocks.

Camberwell You may enter.

Maxwell enters the room, he wastes no formality and proceeds to sit on Mr Camberwell's sofa and pours himself a brandy.

Please, make yourself at home.

Maxwell does not say anything; instead, he sits and drinks. He is pleased to be away from the house.

 Mr Carrion, are you well?
Maxwell Not quite, no.
Camberwell Let me get you some more brandy.
Maxwell That would be wise.
Camberwell I have some fine cognac here...somewhere.

Camberwell searches recklessly for the brandy.

Maxwell It's not important, I shan't be here long.

Camberwell stops searching, he has found the cognac. He approaches Maxwell and takes away his current glass, he pours him a drink from the new bottle. And places it on the table, he rests on his desk.

Camberwell I assume this is about your father.
Maxwell You received word?
Camberwell This morning, Lady Cassandra sent a letter as soon as she heard.
Maxwell I was not told of this.
Camberwell I cannot speak on behalf of her actions.
Maxwell So you are aware, my father is dead.
Camberwell Yes, a real travesty. It comes as a shock to us all, my partners and clerks were all very close to Lord Carrion. A lot of other business' in town are grieved to hear the news as well.
Maxwell He was a good man.
Camberwell The best, I, I remember when I first met your father. He was young; he was with the Lady Carrion, your mother and with the young Lady Cassandra. I doubt you were born. He entered my office, and sat, right there, where you are. And he offered me a gift, a bottle of fine cognac. The one you're drinking right now. "There has been a lot of talk in the town, Mr Camberwell" he said to me; "That you are a man who goes above the rest, a man whose integrity and loyalty are a sure thing, not something simply on contract". He had heard of a case I pursued, a few months before. A young woman who had no fortune, no name, nothing, well, she was being persecuted and would not be hired anywhere in the town. She applied for work countlessly but would not get it, simply because she was black. This may sound surprising to you Mr Carrion, but, contrary to popular opinion, I see someone of

strength when I look at a black man or woman. There is something of a proud nature, a raw nature, a nature of fierce devotion. I saw her as a woman, like your mother, like your sister-

Maxwell -Mr Camberwell, do not compare my mother to a negroe.

Camberwell Mr Carrion, to be compared to this fine woman goes above and behold a compliment. She ceased to be considered a slave in this country; she did not put up with unequal treatment or perform tasks in the subject of servitude. She was an independent woman! But those of noble housing did not wish to take her on. So I fought for her, I tried everything in my book to get her work, and a roof for her head. But I failed, so I decided to employ her myself, for two years she was my clerk and she helped raise my children. She was wonderful with them, when they left home in pursuit of the city, she had little to do. Which is why your father came to visit. He employed Miss Milton there on the spot and appointed me his solicitor at the same time. My wife was over the moon! Miss Milton would be going to a wonderful house, where she could once again raise children and do what she did best. And she raised you to be a fiercely strong young man. Just like your father.

Maxwell This is what I came to speak about Mr Camberwell. I saw so much of myself in my father, he was a powerful man, and carried with him such a strong presence. That presence has now passed, and as his first born son – I would wish to see the contents of his will.

Camberwell Eh, perhaps tomorrow?

Maxwell Pardon me?

Camberwell Unfortunately Mr Carrion I cannot reveal to you the contents of the will.

Maxwell Why not?

Camberwell Because all individuals considered in the will must be present.

Maxwell You surely cannot mean my father?

Camberwell Of course not Mr Carrion, of course not! Your brother Cedric has been named.

Maxwell Cedric?

Camberwell Yes. Please return/ tomorrow with Cedric to-

Maxwell /Cedric has been named in my father's will? That worm! That spineless worm! Let me read it now I need to know if this is true.

Camberwell I cannot do that Maxwell, I am sorry that this is the case, but it was not my will to write. Your father has named you and Cedric. You must return to the house and come back tomorrow.

Maxwell Fine, so be it. I'll have his head for this. That urchin! The nerve of the man.

Maxwell swigs the brandy down in one, and leaves his father's bottle. He storms out of the room. Mr Camberwell shakes his head, and returns the bottle of brandy.

Scene 3 – The drawing room, Beauworth House

The drawing room is grandly decorated, much like Lord Carrion's office. A chaise sits centre stage and two chairs are on either side. The fireplace is SL and currently lit, logs fill the fire and some material is engulfed in the flames. There is a window on SR. Cassandra sits in the centre on the chaise, with Miss Milton on the SR chair. Lucy stands at the back, primed and ready.

Cassandra There is nothing to worry about Nancy, I'll be fine.

Milton But if you are cast out, if you cannot please him and it doesn't work?

Cassandra Then I am cast out. I have plenty of friends in town. But that won't happen, I assure you.

Milton If that were the case Miss Carrion, I would be by your side the whole way.

Lucy Myself included.

Cassandra and Nancy Milton turn to Lucy; she is embarrassed having spoken up.

Cassandra Lucy my dear, do come here.

Lucy moves over and stands beside Cassandra.

Please, take a seat.

Lucy does so and takes a seat.

You know what we have discussed over the weeks, the three of us?
Lucy I do, m'lady.
Cassandra And you know never to speak of such a thing in front of my brothers.
Lucy Of course, never!
Cassandra Well then, you are welcome by my side for all eternity if you so wish.
Lucy That would be grand Miss Carrion

Lucy smiles and settles into her seat, Miss Milton turns her attention to Cassandra.

Milton What of Lord Carrion? Will the doctor examine him when he arrives?
Cassandra Of course, as is his nature. And we must be prepared for whatever the result may say. Even if it is treasonous.
Milton Your brother?
Cassandra I have no faith in him what so ever. He lacks compassion, empathy and loyalty. He is the perfect murderer of my father.
Lucy Surely you do not wish such a thing.
Cassandra Of course I do not wish it; some people just make it their cause.

A horse and cart arrives outside, the sound of someone rushing in is heard.

Milton Oh, I must see to our guest.

Miss Milton rises and approaches UR to the hallway.

Cassandra He is no guest I assure you.

Maxwell barges past Miss Milton and into the drawing room.

Maxwell Cedric! Cedric! Where are you? You vile creature? Come out of the shadows and face me!
Cassandra Brother.
Maxwell You lying, despicable creature! Where are you?
Cassandra Brother! Cedric has not yet returned.
Maxwell He hasn't?
Cassandra No.
Maxwell Well then, I'll wait.

Maxwell thumps into the seat and pours himself a brandy.

Cassandra Why are/ you so enraged?
Maxwell /Do not speak to me, not yet.

Maxwell takes a large swig, and then pours himself another. Long pause.

Milton Are you well, Mr Carrion, do you wish for me to fetch you some warm clothing?
Maxwell I'm fine.

He takes another swig and pours another.

Cassandra The rate of your drink says otherwise.

Lucy rises; she is uncomfortable and takes position back against the wall. Cassandra pulls the brandy bottle away from Maxwell as he reaches for his third pour.

Cassandra Enough. I need you to tell me your issue, not to drink it away.
 Maxwell *(Through staggered breath)* Cedric has been named.
 Cassandra I beg your pardon?
 Maxwell Cedric has been named as an heir.
 Cassandra Cedric? I don't believe you.
 Maxwell See Mr Camberwell yourself, that old pile of filth. He signed it under our father's orders. Cedric is due to inherit some large part of his will.
 Cassandra Lucy, I think I will need some brandy also.

Lucy responds, she walks over to the table and pours Cassandra a glass; she stands by to fill her glass as soon as it is empty.

(To Lucy) Thank you. *(To Maxwell)* You cannot be serious; Cedric is to receive something?
 Maxwell Yes.. I do not yet know what. What was he thinking, that vile devil!
 Cassandra Mr Camberwell told you this?
 Maxwell All, he told me father insisted on it. The will requires Cedric be there tomorrow.
 Cassandra I'm sorry to hear. But I do not understand, you were his first born.
 Maxwell Do not flatter me Cassandra, I am his first son. You are his first born. Never forget that. But you are right; I do not understand our father's motives. Why give Cedric anything? He loved my mother, with all his heart; after she died he was a broken man. You remember.
 Cassandra Truly.
 Maxwell And so he turned to that weak whore.

Maxwell takes a large swig of his brandy; he is on his way to intoxication.

I, I do not understand. Did father not trust me completely?
 Cassandra No, I fear he trusted you too well. He must be challenging you Maxwell. And for Cedric, he is challenging him too – but his is a test of responsibility.
 Maxwell You have father's temperament.
 Cassandra Thank you.

The sound of a horse and cart can be heard outside, the sound of two footsteps proceed upon the front entrance. The doctor enters, followed by a wide-eyed Cedric.

Doctor Where is he?
 Cassandra Lucy, Nancy, please, show the doctor the way.

Lucy and Miss Milton escort the doctor to Lord Carrion who remains in his office. Cedric enters, holding his hat in his hands. Maxwell is trying to hold in his rage.

Cedric I did as you requested sister, the doctor knows everything.
 Cassandra You did a good job Cedric, father would have been proud.

That triggered Maxwell, he lunges for Cedric and proceeds to pin him up against the door. Cedric is stunned and tries to fight back.

Maxwell What have you done Cedric? What did you do to our father? You villain, you bloody boat-licker!
 Cedric Maxwell please stop!
 Maxwell How could you do this to me? How could you betray me in such a way, I am our father's first born son have you forgotten?
 Cedric No, no Maxwell stop!
 Cassandra Maxwell enough!
 Maxwell You have always been weak Cedric, but I never thought you would sink this low.
 Cassandra Let go Maxwell, now!

Maxwell responds, he lets Cedric down and stands on the other side of the room. Cedric weeps, he is clearly distressed.

Cedric What have I done to you to deserve such words? What have I ever done, I have been nothing but kind and loving. And instead you greet me with anger.
Maxwell Do not give me this act Cedric! This pitiful apologetic act that you did father.
Cedric What are you talking about?
Maxwell Father's favour for you. You cannot deny it.
Cedric What favour? The favour he gave us all equally surely?
Maxwell Are you trying to play the diplomat Cedric? Cassandra is not here to play sides so there is no use pleading to her. Take your inheritance and leave this instant.
Cedric Pardon?
Maxwell I said leave! And do not come back.
Cedric What did you say about the inheritance?
Maxwell You know perfectly well.
Cedric How could I?

Maxwell pauses.

Maxwell You are to receive some fortune tomorrow, you must come with me to Mr Camberwell's.

Long pause

Cedric Why?
Cassandra Because father loved you both equally, do you not see?
Cedric But there that is no good reason for this, Maxwell is his first-born.
Cassandra We know this Cedric, but this is father's decision and you must respect it.

The doctor re-enters, he is pale. Lucy stands behind him.

Doctor? What news?

Doctor News of your father, I suggest you all sit down.

All Carrion's take their seat, Maxwell sits SL, Cassandra on the chaise C and Cedric sits nervously SR.

It did not take me long to realise the cause of your father's death. I...I made sure to double check my findings, and I've come to the conclusion that he did not die of natural causes. Your father died in the most unnatural circumstances. His heart suddenly stopped, that is certain, he did not deteriorate. Something or...I'm afraid to say someone has caused him to suffer a trauma to the heart. It is unusual of course, and considering that this is a private matter, I will not inform the law. However, it is important for your own sanity and safety that you settle this matter. I do not wish to return to this house with another body. If you'll excuse me, the body will be taken to my surgery for further study, considering that this may be a homicide. I must depart.

The doctor bows and makes his way back to Lord Carrion's office. All three of the children look at one another, with tears in their eyes. They are frightened of one another. Long pause.

Cassandra ...Who did this?

Pause

Who killed my father?

Scene 4 – Mr Camberwell's office, Winchester

His interior is the same, Maxwell and Cedric however are already sat down. They are sat far apart and wait in silence for Mr Camberwell to finish analysing the papers.

Camberwell Right, very well...Gentleman, may I have your attention.

Both Maxwell and Cedric look up.

It's very clear who gets what. Lord Carrion has even attached his confession to each. I will start with you Cedric. Seeing as you are mentioned first.

Maxwell closes his eyes and turns his head down.

"My dear Cedric, the last of my loves. You hear this in a time of distress, of that I am certain. But I wish to inform you of my love for you. You had a level of kindest and loyalty that even I or your mother did not possess. After she died I was heartbroken, but it was you, you Cedric who made me realise I need not marry again. Because I have the strongest love, three-fold. My children. Your bright eyes and your curiosity made me a kinder man, a more loving man and you made me a better father. I know with traits such as yours you could charm the King! Therefore, I leave you my business, my adviser Laurel will inform you of everything you need to know. I trust you will form new relationships and turn my small investment, into an enterprise. With adoration, William Carrion"

Maxwell is physically shaking. Cedric is gobsmacked.

Maxwell His business? My father left this cretin his business? Was he a fool?

Cedric No, he was brave. I have never had such a responsibility in my life and father knew this, he is challenging me, and this is something I must accept.

Camberwell It appears not Mr Carrion. If you would like me to continue you shall hear of your inheritance.

Maxwell Do it.

Camberwell "To Maxwell, my eldest. There is nothing I can say that can make you a stronger man; you have done that all by yourself. You proved to me at a young age that you could be responsible. You took on the role of teacher to your siblings even whilst I was present. Such confidence only comes from a man with real fire in his heart. I bestow to you our home, Beauworth House, may you find a wife and raise a family of courageous children. May you look after your sister, Cassandra in the hopes she may find a husband as stubborn as her. And may you look after your brother Cedric. You may be surprised to hear I have left him my business, I only do so to give both of my son's a fair path in life. I know you will make me proud. Stay strong, William Carrion"

Cedric That must have been pleasant to hear Maxwell.

Maxwell is silent.

Camberwell Here are your statements gentleman, each providing your rights given down from your father. Now, in regards to his wealth, it is stated on each certificate. You are to receive half, each.

Maxwell looks up, fire reigns in his eyes.

Maxwell Half?

Camberwell Yes, that is what is says.

Maxwell Father is to give me half of the allowance? And the other-

Camberwell To Cedric.

Maxwell's rage suddenly takes over his body, he cannot control himself, he lunges for Mr Camberwell and proceeds to strike him several times.

Maxwell You bastard, you utter bastard! You have ruined me, you have made a mockery of me!
Cedric Maxwell! Stop, stop this now!

Maxwell continues to strike Camberwell until he is pulled off by Cedric.

Enough of this! Enough of this now. You do not need to prove yourself anymore! You are father's eldest, the one he is most proud of, I heard it myself. That you need to take out his decision on this poor man is something quite inexcusable and frankly frightening. You know, last night I spoke with Cassandra, and we spoke about you after the Doctor left. She was frightened Maxwell, frightened that you had done something, something horrific, something criminal to father. And after seeing this, I wouldn't be surprised.

Maxwell And what would you know, you child?

Maxwell thumps past Cedric and out of the room, still clutching his certificate. Cedric goes to help Mr Camberwell. However, he is unconscious.

Scene 5 – The garden, Beauworth House

Maxwell sits on a bench overlooking his estate; he is deeply distressed and upset. Cassandra emerges from the house, and stands next to him.

Cassandra You disgust me. After everything we have been through, you do not change. You are still the same angry, repulsive boy I knew when father married Miss Brown, and when she gave birth to Cedric, your disdain for that child has never gone. I can see it, even today, even before he inherited the business. You were never a good role model Maxwell. You were never a good brother.

Maxwell Why are you here?

Cassandra To label you with what you clearly are, a murderer.

Maxwell Excuse me?

Cassandra Father's death is on your hands we all know it, who else could it have been? You showed no sorrow at his death, anger at his will and now you stink of regret, because it did not work out your way. You got nothing.

Maxwell If I had the energy I would squeeze your throat till it popped.

Cassandra Stop. Stop this. Stop this now! The fact you state you carry on after father disgusts me, you must think of him as a real devil. Because that is what I see. You are nothing more than a bully, with no care, no compassion and no heart!

Maxwell begins to sob.

You have pushed everyone who could love you away, and now look at you, you're pathetic.

Maxwell I'm sorry.

Pause. Cassandra is shocked.

Cassandra Pardon?

Maxwell I'm sorry.

Cassandra You're sorry?

Maxwell For the way I have treated you. For the way I been since father's death, this, this is not me, not me. I'm wrong, so wrong in what I've done. I know looking at me now father would have been ashamed, he always was. Cassandra I tried so hard to get his approval but I could never do it! I craved for it, I fought for it. I became a man for it. But it never came, father never saw me in the same way he saw you and Cedric, he never saw me as his child.

Cassandra Because he was too busy seeing you as his heir.
Maxwell Do you think?
Cassandra I know. You have always been strong Maxwell, and you have always been a fighter, you are vulgar, of course, but not deceitful. That is not your way; you have always been a brutally honest person.
Maxwell I guess that's true. You're right. I've always loved you, you do know that? And I'm sorry, sorry for Cedric, and I'm sorry for Mr Camberwell, I can't take it back. I was just so angry, and I lost control.
Cassandra Maxwell, if you are going to confess something, confess it now.
Maxwell Cassandra. Why do you think I murder our father?
Cassandra Because you have a motive.
Maxwell *(Laughs)* Well I cannot fault you for that. But you do realise, I now have only half a motive? Cedric has the other.
Cassandra True.
Maxwell I cannot help it Cassandra, I despise him. I think him monstrous, I see nothing human in him, is that my fault?
Cassandra I do not know.
Maxwell I never saw him as a brother, only as a burden. And I have tried, and I have been deeply sorry for the way I've treated him but I cannot shake that he is not like us. He is not strong. But, I do not deter the fact that I, at rare times, fear him.
Cassandra In what way?
Maxwell I cannot read him.
Cassandra I have felt the same.
Maxwell You have?
Cassandra Recently, since father's death I find him ever so distracted. Nervous, jumpy, insecure. It is unsettling.
Maxwell You do not think he could have been involved?
Cassandra You think he could have known about the will?
Maxwell It is possible.
Cassandra It is.
Maxwell You cannot still think I am to blame Cassandra?
Cassandra I am beginning to doubt myself.
Maxwell Then someone must be.
Cassandra You sound like you are accusing the most loyal of us.
Maxwell Loyal to whom?
Cassandra Maxwell, I cannot be a part of this.
Maxwell But you already are, you said so yourself, you have found him unsettling, that you find him repulsive.
Cassandra I did not say repulsive, do not tarnish me with this brush.
Maxwell Never mind. We think the same and that is all that matters.
Cassandra What will you do Maxwell?
Maxwell Fight.
Cassandra For father?
Maxwell For him - for the right to carry the full entitlement as heir, for his full love, for my rightful inheritance. This imposter, this fraud of a brother cannot possibly believe he is deserving of half the wealth! If he had any right mind he would hand it over to me. I cannot understand him, and I do not respect him.
Cassandra So you will fight him?
Maxwell I will, and I want you to oversee it.
Cassandra So be it.

Scene 6 – Cedric's Quarters, Beauworth House

Cedric's Quarters has a large double bed, it is against the SL wall, he is stood up and Miss Milton is in the room next to him.

Milton I am sure of it Master Carrion.
Cedric But why would he wish to fight me? Is this because of the inheritance? Is he so petty?
Milton I do not know Master Carrion.
Cedric Nancy, you know me to be a good man, is that not so?
Milton The kindest Master Carrion.
Cedric Then why shall my own brother see me as his enemy and challenge me in such a way? He implies that I am no better than a villain!

Miss Milton is silent.

Cedric Why? Why is he doing this? Did I wrong him? Did I embarrass him at Mr Camberwells? Nancy I do not understand? What my brother requests is something of a vile nature, he wishes to fight me, to challenge me. My own brother wishes to harm me, what shall I do? Nancy, what shall I do?
Milton I do not know, Master Carrion.
Cedric Nancy, I see you like a mother, with all your wisdom that you have shown me thus far, I am asking you, pleading you, what should I do?
Milton I cannot say such a thing.
Cedric You have my permission.
Milton Your permission does not change my stance Master Carrion. I raised you both. I saw you grow into men and now I see you tear each other a part. I do not wish to be a part of this.
Cedric Get my sister then.
Milton Of course, Master Carrion.

Miss Milton exits through the SL door.

Cedric His fear in me only heightens his cause. My brother killed my father, and he is after me next. What kind of cruel man would see the wrongdoing of his own family for his own gain? I do not understand, I do not see what he sees. So, am I in the wrong? Am I wrong to so forwardly except my father's will without consulting my elder brother? It's against tradition of course, but at the same time it is my father's will. But I fear in doing so I have fuelled his rage, I have fuelled his desire. First my father and now I am in his way. But I am frightened; I won't be for much longer.

Cassandra enters without knocking, she goes to hug Cedric.

Cassandra Are you well?
Cedric You know I am not.

She steps back unusually far.

Cassandra I am sorry Cedric.
Cedric For what? Our brother?
Cassandra I fear I may have goaded him on.
Cedric Do not blame yourself, you have strong principles sister. Much like Miss Milton! I see that you wish harm for neither of us, but, the way things have gone, we see no other way.
Cassandra You wish to fight?
Cedric No, of course not. That is not my way, it is Maxwell's but I respect it.
Cassandra That cannot be the only reason.
Cedric Why I fight?
Cassandra Yes!
Cedric I do not know Cassandra; I do not desire to fight.
Cassandra But now you do, so what are your other reasons?

Cedric now understands Cassandra is trying to help.

Cedric	Oh I see. For Father, I fight for father.
Cassandra	Why?
Cedric	Because I do not trust Maxwell
Cassandra	So you do believe-
Cedric	-I believe it was him yes. I have no doubt of that. He has always been a selfish man, wanting nothing but for himself. You understand Cassandra; you know to grow up with such a man only made you pity him over time. Each call for attention of each time he would attack it was for show, it was a show for him, to prove himself that he could one day be a man. And I feel sorry for him, I feel sorry that Maxwell has turned out this way, that feels the only way to prosper in life is to snuff the flame of those that stand in his way. I am sorry that I dare call him a brother. I fight him Cassandra, because no one else will, and, I may lose. I may die. I know this, and I accept it. I loved my father, and I will die for his honour, and I will fight for those who seek to disrespect it.
Cassandra	Then we have work to do.
Cedric	Yes, we do.
Cassandra	I will not lie to you, Maxwell is well trained.
Cedric	I know. But I will fight him none the less.
Cassandra	You do have heart Cedric, it is warming to see. I told Maxwell, I would not take sides, it is not my fight. But, I wish it to be a fair one. If you will accept my assistance, I would wish to train you?
Cedric	You, you would?
Cassandra	With all my heart.
Cedric	Of course Cassandra, of course you can!
Cassandra	So be it.

Scene 7 – The apothecary, Winchester

It is a dark dust filled shop with flasks on the shelves and barrels stacked to the ceiling. Miss Milton enters; she is dressed in a brown hood, masking any form of identity. She approaches the counter. Behind it is an old woman; her squinting barely makes Miss Milton visible to her. She is a shell of a woman.

Apothecary	Hmm?
Milton	I need something.
Apothecary	And?
Milton	It's for the home.
Apothecary	You sound distressed.
Milton	Coming to a place like this is not a warming thought.
Apothecary	It never is.
Milton	I have a rat problem.
Apothecary	So?
Milton	I need something to treat it.
Apothecary	They are common you know.
Milton	I know, I've dealt with their kind before.
Apothecary	And yet you come to me for help.
Milton	I come to you for something very specific. Do you want my business or not?
Apothecary	Granted, all business is good business.
Milton	I need something for rats.
Apothecary	How big are they?
Milton	Large enough to turn a house on its head.
Apothecary	How many are there?
Milton	Only one.

Scene 8 – The garden, Beauworth House

It is the next day, Lucy and Miss Milton are busy setting up the men's armour on separate tables.

Lucy What is this?
Milton For the elbow.
Lucy Which one?
Milton Let me see?

Lucy holds up the piece of armour.

Milton Left.
Lucy So this is the right.
Milton To see them like this Lucy, it is frightening.
Lucy The boys?
Milton All of them.
Lucy Including Miss Carrion?
Milton Especially Miss Carrion, I support her, you know I do. I just wish there was an easier way.
Lucy But you still did it? Last night?
Milton Yes.
Lucy I despise this Nancy.
Milton It will all be over soon.
Lucy Why does it have to be in the first place? Did Miss Carrion know of the will?
Milton Of course not, how could she?
Lucy Then it is such a shame to see these two brothers so easily torn apart by money. It's vulgar
 Nancy, utterly vulgar.
Milton You do not have brothers?
Lucy No.
Milton Then you cannot understand. It is more than money, it is pride.

Maxwell arrives on the lawn and approaches Lucy at the table.

Maxwell Move.

Lucy quickly moves next to Miss Milton. Maxwell begins to don all of his armour in silence, except the parts he cannot do by himself, with that, he beckons Lucy over once again.

Maxwell Excuse me. These.

Lucy does the armour up as quick as possible. Once donned Maxwell prepares mentally for the fight. Whilst doing so, Cedric arrives; he is chipper and seems ready. He approaches the table with Miss Milton.

Cedric (To Miss Milton) Good morning, may I?

He is assisted by both Lucy and Miss Milton with regards to putting on his armour. He then proceeds to stretch.

Maxwell (Awakening from his preparation) Where is our sister?
Lucy Preparing the swords sir.
Cedric (Walks over to Maxwell) Brother, let us be fair/ in our fight today.
Maxwell /Do not speak to me! Do not even look at me, you cretin. I will show no mercy for you today.
 Not even if you beg.
Cedric Brother, we are to fight honourably no?
Maxwell Whilst our father died like a lamb for the slaughter? No, no we do not fight honourably.
Cedric Do not speak about him. You do not get to. Not anymore.
Maxwell You think you are so high and mighty.
Cedric No, but I know I follow the light, and when the day comes that I die, heaven will open its
 doors for me. As with you, I fear that your soul will already be burned before it leaves your
 body.
Maxwell Where is she?

Milton She will be here shortly, Lord Carrion.
Maxwell Did you here that worm? Did you hear what she called me? I am afraid all of your scheming and your deceit has gone to waste. I am my father's first born son and there is no amount of trickery that you can do to change that!

Cassandra enters with the swords; they are the same swords from the late Lord Carrion's office. She stands in the centre of the two, and hold out both of the swords. Maxwell approaches the sword and grabs it, whilst Cedric is more tentative.

Cassandra I have sharpened both swords, and each is equal for combat. The rules are as follows; you must keep good form and aim for the chest. Cuts to the face or below the waist shall automatically disqualify the fighter. This is a fair fight, but due to the terms, it is until bloodshed, do you understand?

Maxwell/Cedric Perfectly/I do.

Cassandra Good. May the best man win.

Cassandra steps back towards Miss Milton and Lucy and prepare to watch the fight. Throughout the following Miss Milton cannot bear to watch, Lucy flinches at every hit, and Cassandra does not take her eyes off of it, not even once.

Maxwell begins the fight and proceeds to attack Cedric with everything, he wants this over quickly. Cedric clearly has been taught by Cassandra all about defence, as oppose to attack. The onslaught goes on for a while. Maxwell manages to make a cut at Cedric but draws no blood.

The fight continues, Maxwell attacks again only to be startled by an effective counter by Cedric, it is quick and sharp, but does not land. Maxwell attacks again and Cedric's counter fails. Maxwell now attacks for the third time, Cedric's counter lands successfully and he cuts him, blood is drawn.

Maxwell, in blind fury sees this. Cedric cannot believe he has won; he turns to Cassandra to see to confirm his victory, just as Maxwell moves in for an attack. His sword pieces under and up through his chestplate, straight through his ribs. The shock of the wound steals all of Cedric's breath away. Maxwell removes the sword. Cedric falls to the floor, shaking violently. Maxwell drops his sword, and returns in the direction of the house.

Maxwell This is over.

Cedric continues to shake as all three women gather round him, Miss Milton soothes Cedric, and she strokes his hair, and gently hums the song she used to sing to him as a child. Lucy and Cassandra join in. It is a touching moment.

After Cedric passes. Cassandra stands, she stares in the direction Maxwell went. Pauses for a moment. And then exits in the same direction.

Scene 9 – Cassandra's Quarters, Beauworth House

It is evening, Cassandra is sat in her room, a very similar layout to Cedric's. She sat staring into the distance drinking brandy from the glass. Whilst screams can be heard offstage. They are from Maxwell.

She does not seem disturbed by the shrieks, instead she refills her glass and drinks some more.

After a while, a knock is heard at the door, it is small and urgent.

Cassandra Come in.

It is Lucy; she enters the room and stands to attention.

Lucy Miss Carrion, it is your brother.

Cassandra	What is his state?
Lucy	Past repair.
Cassandra	Send for the doctor now.
Lucy	Of course, madam.

Lucy exits and closes the door behind her. Cassandra stays still and continues to drink. The screams continue.

Scene 10 – Maxwell’s Quarters, Beauworth House

Maxwell is lying in the bed centre stage, he is on top of the covers and is wearing the same clothes from the fight, his armour is scattered on the floor. He is very pale, and he is sweating a substantial amount. Maxwell looks horrifically unwell and is very weak. Around him is Lucy and Miss Milton, who tend to him, they secure each bead of sweat. The Doctor stands to the side, packing up his case, with Cassandra next to him

Doctor	I’ve seen to everything I can Lord Carrion, I’ll need to speak to your sister just before I go.
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The doctor pulls Cassandra aside.

It’s conclusive I’m afraid Miss Carrion, he is going to die.

Cassandra	How so? He was cut with a rapier that’s all? It was a cut.
Doctor	The blade did some damage yes, but it was the poison on the sword that has had the most effective result.
Cassandra	What?
Doctor	This challenge they had, this duel. Something went wrong, and your brother, Cedric, had a foul part to play in it.
Cassandra	Doctor, you do not understand, I prepared the swords myself.
Doctor	You did?
Cassandra	Yes of course, I wanted to ensure a fair contest.
Doctor	Then perhaps Cedric was more quick and cunning than you thought. I wouldn’t have been surprised if he had a cloth to hand during the fight.
Cassandra	You think my dear Cedric a killer?
Doctor	It explains your father too my dear, the same chemical was found in his stomach.
Cassandra	I, I need to sit down.

Cassandra rests up the chair by Maxwell’s bed and orders Lucy to pour her a brandy

	Doctor, thank you for your service, it won’t be forgotten. I will need time to contemplate this.
Doctor	Of course, call for me in the morning won’t you.
Cassandra	Certainly.

The doctor bows, and then takes his leaves. Maxwell groans in pain.

Maxwell	I...heard him...Cedric...
Cassandra	Poison, yes.
Maxwell	...But...I...I had my eye on him...the...whole fight.
Cassandra	You do not believe the Doctor?
Maxwell	I know...what...I...didn’t see.
Cassandra	Ladies, if you will excuse us.

Miss Milton and Lucy bow, they exit the room quickly.

Maxwell	Why did you...send...them...away?
Cassandra	I did not want to bore them. I did not want to repeat to them the same story they have heard for the last few weeks. It pains for me to see you in this state brother Maxwell, dear brother.

Cassandra grabs the hand mirror from the dresser and holds it in front of Maxwell.

It pains me to see you so weak, so defenceless. Lord knows how much it must pain you to see yourself in such a state. Look at your eyes, right now, almost lifeless, the complexion of your skin is pale and the sweat, my lord the sweat. I cannot even be sure what I am drinking is fully Brandy!

Maxwell What are you doing?

Cassandra Showing you what I have seen all my life. You painted the picture Maxwell, of you a proud, courageous young man, who would one day rule us all, not with an iron fist, but with respect. You fantasised yourself as King George, or mighty Caesar! But look at you, look at you now. This is what I have always seen. A scared, poor, young fool.

Cassandra removes the mirror.

Everything worked out perfectly because of you, I did not anticipate you striking Mr Camberwell, no, that was a lovely touch. But I anticipated your rage, and how easy it would be to shift it onto Cedric. I saw through Cedric like a block of ice. One thing I did respect you for was your hindsight of Cedric, you were right in every way, he was a failure. I practiced him to fight by only teaching him how to defend. But it paid off to know him too well; I poisoned the tip of his sword, just in case he had a bit of fire in him.

Poking Maxwell as she says this.

And, so, he had.

Maxwell is trying to produce tears, he is deeply distressed

Maxwell Why did you do this sweet Cassandra?

Cassandra smiles.

Cassandra Because I am father's first born. And I knew once he died I would get nothing. He saw no match for me; he did not even try to marry me off. I sat with him the other day in his office, and he told me he planned to send me to a nunnery. He had run out of ideas of what to do, and this seemed the best way. He wanted me to rot away in some chapel? I'd have none of that. Curious, that he treats his maids with more charity than his own daughter. So, I took control. Miss Milton and Lucy had their part to play too, doing the tasks that I couldn't be seen to. But I poisoned father, I gave Cedric the letter – it was a finalised will, hand –crafted by me. Cedric told Mr Camberwell of father's death, and then received the doctor. The will was a forge, brother. For all I know you probably got the whole lot, but what a drag that would have been. Next I saw to your desires, I encouraged you both to fight, I poisoned Cedric's sword and finally, I delayed the Doctor. And now, my dear brother, now I enjoy this fine cognac, a gift from our father! Cheers.

Cassandra toasts to Maxwell, he is on the edge of death. Cassandra drinks. Lights fade.

-End-