**“Saving Wonderland”**

**1310 words**

I’ve been on the run for a week now. Authorities are searching for me high and low, and I don’t know how much more of this I can take. It all started with that blonde girl, and now I’m paranoid and I have to disappear more than I’ve ever had because of the sentencing.

The room was windowless and dark, the lights needed to be changed. The air was stuffy and I was getting hot. It was the day after the execution, and I had waited in silence, staring at my reflection in the mirror, knowing there was a soldier staring back at me who I couldn’t see, and would enter in a few moments. My mind was tossing and turning, and I didn’t know what else to do. I just did what I thought would be best, what would work out for me in the end. If only I could go back and tell myself to rethink this whole thing.

The door opened and slammed shut, loud enough to hurt my ears. A tall, serious man in uniform walked towards the table.

“In here I have the Cheshire Cat, a supposed accomplice of Alice Walker, a journalist from the real world with plans to expose Wonderland, correct?” The card soldier had asserted without taking a seat.

“Yes, I am the Cheshire Cat.”

“Very well. Sir, we have reason to believe that you were working with Alice as a collaborator with plans to overthrow our government.”

“No! I wasn’t working with her! I swear!” I panicked.

“We have more than enough witnesses from both the Mad Hatter’s tea party and bystanders saying they saw you two together from 2 to 4 pm yesterday, and briefly together again at 6 pm, half an hour before her execution. If you say you weren’t working with her, why have we been informed by so many different people that you two were continuously together?” the soldier probed.

“Well, after we met at the Mad Hatter’s tea party, she wouldn’t leave me alone! I tried to get away from her but she wouldn’t budge!” I bursted out. *Well, no going back now. I wonder if he bought that! That could be quite convincing, plus everyone knows journalists would do anything for their story! I hope witnesses didn’t say they saw us lingering by the Queen’s castle!*

“Interesting, Mr. Cat. But it’s hard to believe that she would stick with you even after treating her so rudely like you say. Wouldn’t anyone sane, anyone who was trying to get answers, want to be around someone more friendly? From what I’ve heard, you’re one of the most welcoming residents in Wonderland!”

“That’s true, I am, but when I get a gut feeling, I follow it!” *Yeah, a gut feeling that leads to execution! It was either me or her, and I chose to save myself!*

“Alright then. What was it like when you first met Alice? No one suspected her as an outsider, I believe yourself included. How did you guys interact from the start?”

“Well, she seemed so normal, so I treated her similar to how I treat everyone at first, I was very talkative and relaxed, I was excited to meet someone new! But I couldn’t shake that gut feeling.” *So talkative that I spilled Wonderland’s secrets!*

“What kinds of things did you find yourselves talking about?”

“Normal things like the weather, the music playing and some of the people at the party.”

“No talking about politics in any sort of way?”

“No! Not at all! I know not to talk badly about the Queen!”

“I never said badly, Mr. Cat. I asked in *any* sort of way.”

*Shoot. I messed that one up. I can’t slip up anymore. I can’t mention how much I talked about the Queen’s cruelty.* “I know, but you were inferring.”

“Did you happen to notice any unusual belongings on her person?”

“Nope, not at all. In fact, I hardly paid attention to her.” *Definitely didn’t see a tape recorder that made me think of this awful plan to begin with! God, if I could only go back in time…*

“If you are saying she only followed you, against your will, for two hours after just meeting you, why would you lead her to the Queen’s castle? It is such an odd place for you to go alone in the first place, and with a stranger following you too?”

*He knows about our time at the castle. I wonder who told him.* “I live near the castle. I was just trying to get home, and when we were there, she began asking me questions about the queen, which I didn’t answer by the way!” *That tape recorder scared me and my chance of living. She had recorded my rantings and if she published that story, the Queen would’ve had* ***me*** *executed!*

“If you didn’t answer them, how did the two of you end up ‘working’ at the Queen’s party that night if she had only arrived in Wonderland, and you were going home?”

“Oh, well, on the way to my house, other servers saw me walking and asked me to cover one of their coworkers who was sick. It was a coincidence really. She joined too because they needed extra hands.” *I hope he doesn’t interview any of those workers and see that we snuck in and weren’t invited. It was just such a fool proof way to end my plan!*

“Hm, I see. In the party, just before the table leg that she unscrewed spilled on the queen, witnesses are saying you two were talking. What could you have been talking about if you say you were still nothing more than strangers?”

“I had been avoiding her and she was upset by it. Nothing new.” *I mean, maybe not upset, but confused. Confused why I would be unscrewing that table leg. Little did she know I was getting the scene ready that would frame her! I knew it would lead her to execution, and that’s why I did it! I couldn’t let people know I was the one to expose Wonderland’s secrets!*

“If only a civilian had seen this problem before and acted. The Queen said that she would’ve rewarded someone for revealing her plans.”

*This could be my chance! I could get the recognition I deserve!* “But you see, I knew about her plans! I made sure that she didn’t see the next day!”

“What do you mean you ‘made sure she didn’t see the next day’? You didn’t kill her, she was executed.”

“Yes, she was executed, but it was my doing! I framed her because I knew she was writing a story! I did it to save Wonderland!” *Save Wonderland, save myself, same thing.*

He paused and walked out of the room. When he returned, he placed a few things on the table. *Wait. I recognize those.*

“Are these familiar, Mr. Cat?”

*Her notebook, camera and, oh no, her tape recorder!* “Oh, um yeah I’ve seen things like those before.”

He picked up the tape recorder, pressed one of the buttons and I heard myself blatantly bash the queen, “She has too many people executed too frequently! I mean, we’re all quite mad here, but no one deserves that! Basically everyone who upsets her is sentenced. If she could have it her way, she wouldn’t even need a reason!”

The recording stopped, and I sat there, unable to speak or even look up from my feet. I heard the soldier speak to me from above, “Now, not only do we have evidence of you being an accomplice, but this may even lead to your own execution.”

*Oh no. I’ve really done it this time! I wonder if they’d be able to catch me if I disappear! I don’t know if I could live on the run.*