

## Madame Mulligan

I took a step back from scribbling the finishing touches to my final piece, and dared glance about my studio. Sometimes, when my soul was consumed by the fires of inspiration, I tended to let other things go. Ordinary, mundane things that the masses had to contend with: cleaning, scheduling, eating. *Hmph.*

When genius is at work, it's not unheard of to let the trivialities in life slip by, like broken twigs on a rushing stream – insignificant to the deafening rush of what they're lost in. All I required was coffee and yarn.

My oldest friend, Moira O'Deorain shared this perspective, I knew. We studied sciences together, before splitting in to our personal branches – her genetics, and myself technologies and more importantly, *fashion*. Whereas she wasted her time on chemicals, labs and vials, or whatever else she deemed useful for the betterment of humanity, or rather, herself, I- I created *masterpieces*.

My table was an island of swatch-and-neededle detritus. I was helplessly marooned by an ocean of fabric and materials – silk and velvet, cotton and wool, gabardine and corduroy, chiffon and jacquard, sheets and canvasses, torn and cut, patterned and plain, melded and clashing - which all rushed about in a mess of turbulence. The walls adorned with metal casings, tools, panels and pauldrons. Upon the surface of all, the warm light of my work lamp glistened, offering an antidote to the poison of lethargic darkness outside, and creating a vibrant palette of colour that any meek, predictable rainbow would envy.

Glancing out at the night, to see a black sky freckled with stars, I checked my watch, and realised I'd been working well in to the wee hours of the morn'. Common for those with determination such as I. The night was something I despised, ever the natural foe to productivity. Even an hour of sleep would leave me fevered with ennui. Yet, in the moment, I knew couldn't stop now. With this last sketch finished, I'd created the foundation of my final project, and once that was finished- well...

It was dear Moira, actually, who unintentionally segued my talents from the catwalks of Paris and the walkways of Empire City to practical fashion. She, being one who understands that no profession excuses shoddy wear contacted me, commissioning me to create a line of lab coats, and general lab-wear for her, and her staff – a part of me believes the practical element was an excuse so she could have bespoke clothes within the confines of her workspace.

"Mulligan," she sighed over the phone, clearly having weathered a day of sheer stupidity with her dullard little underlings, of which she often complained. "I need your help."

I'd known her long before time stole the youth and colour from our dear ald' mammies, and from nursery to that phone call, I'd never heard the word 'help' in her vocabulary – neither requesting or offering, such a woman as she was. So, as soon as she uttered it, tired and defeated as she sounded, I knew it was serious.

It turned out she'd be working tirelessly, as was to be expected, on classified experiments (which I knew she would divulge unto me on her next trip to Dublin), and that due to the nature of the experiments, she, and her staff, had been subject to severe burns, hospitalisation and even one or two had suffered spills that melted through, flesh, muscle and bone alike.

"They prattle on as if the very thing we're working on won't regenerate what they've lost, the damned langers. They just adore howling at any such woe." She was aware that such occurrences are but 'hazards of the job', but she couldn't, for the life of her, stand another second of snivelling and whining from the others.

She needed, within two months, a collection of outfits that would work in a lab, and reduce the effects of any mishaps and accidents. I asked her to send samples of what she'd been working with, and using my own expertise, I tested this mixture on that fabric. Through trial and error, I deduced which burned through like acid, which resisted like droplets on a rain coat, which stained like Cabernet on a beige carpet of fine wool – until I managed to splice the materials, layer them in such a way until every hazardous material sent to me simply slipped off, leaving neither mark nor singe. *Child's play.*

From there, I created coats and garments, gloves and boots – even face masks and non-fog goggles to combat the hissing tendrils of pungent steams that danced from the chemicals, and thus, I met the deadline. In fact, I had a week to spare.

'Reduce the effect' she requested. I nullified it in totality. Going above and beyond expectations is what we - her and I - did.

Before long, these coats were the standard in any scientific setting that could afford my work – and my renown spread like wildfire, teetering at the lips of near any organisation – scientific or not - who soon began to understand that not only could I have them donned in masterful work – and I mean have them looking not an inch short of *divine* - but also suffuse within elements that would augment their day to day lives.

Kitchens and offices, battlefields and desserts, jungles and oceans – companies working in any biome and vista would approach the famous Madame Mulligan, stating they need a suit, or a uniform, glasses or kneepads, whatever you can think of, that could help with such a problem, or aid them in such a way. Everything from a shirt that masks the scent of body-odour, to diving skins that could withstand frigid arctic waters, or gurgling boiling depths.

Tasked I was, and successful each time.

The best part? The aesthetic was left to *my* eyes.

Not long after my works were dressing near most of the professional world, I had been commissioned with creating martial garb. First, it was the German military who approached me. They had suffered heavy casualties during the Omnic war, even when their ranks were swelled with the sheer steel armour and garish barriers of the Crusaders. The ammunition of those Bastion Siege Automatons tore through their clothing as if they stood before the fusillade naked. Even the thick armour of the Crusaders, screamed and sparked as the bullets pinged, and peeled, and pierced, offering them nothing but pain and death.

*Crying shame.*

Though I won't claim my creations could withstand a full onslaught from those ghastly constructions should there be another direct uprising of that scale, I know for certain they could dull the impact enough, minimising pain for few precious seconds and allow them to dive for cover. Back then, one well-placed bullet meant certain death. Now, with the light-laced steel – modified and manipulated on a fine-tuned level by yours truly - interwoven within the fabric, they can move with ease and withstand more than any of their infantry predecessors.

Soon, world leaders were begging for my craftsmanship. Showering me with gifts, flying out to Dublin to meet me in person, wiring modest fortunes directly to my company to secure my work. They were attending a speech, they'd tell me, or meeting, or event, and after the assassination of Tekharthe Mondatta – "the death that shook the world" – they wished for my talent and hands to deftly weave an outfit that may well save their lives. I was all too happy to oblige, as we clinked our glasses, the liquid swishing within costing more than my childhood home.

Since the murder of the aforementioned Omnic figurehead, outrage and furore has reigned ubiquitous – a plague that cannot be cured in a lab, even by someone as dedicated as my dearest

friend. Instead, people of all experience and qualifications are taking action in to their own hands.

Gangs and pedestrians are out in the street, fighting amongst themselves and law enforcement with reckless abandon. The hardy and resourceful Junkers who survived the catastrophe wrought by the attack on the Australian Omnium's fusion core are beginning to evolve in their efforts, and carrying out attacks more complex than such of their breeding and resources would deem possible. Organisation such as Overwatch have reformed, wanting to put an end to the mess of the world. Though, rather than settling the unrest, it seems this reforming has only been met with further resistance and chaos by counter-groups such as Talon.

They've fought each other endlessly, fought alongside each other sporadically, recruited the assistance of others to aid them in their endless skirmishes; local heroes, renowned weightlifters heaving armaments meant for air warfare, immensely wealthy members of the Shimada Clan, geniuses from the Vishkar Corporation, international celebrities, criminals, renegades, that poor Chinese scientist who lost all her friends – tragic thing, and even a travelling monk who's resorting to juxtaposing violence to convey his message of peace. All over the world they travel, to the irradiated outback, to Universities, to shrines and manufacturing companies – and proceed to point their weapons at one another, hoping to put a stopper to the violence but furthering the death toll.

And all of them - each and every one of them - from collective organisation to lone wolf, who do they come to for battle-wear on the field?

Correct.

Me.

Madame Mulligan.

I've had the majority of them inside my office, taking measurements and discussing the woes of the world. I insist that to create the finest work, I need to have them before me. As they sit here and entertain idle small talk, I ensure they know I'm not the most politically minded, I don't like to get involved in all this mess.

*Me? Little lonely tailor as I am? I just want to create pretty clothes that help people,* is the impression I choose to confer. They don't need to know that only a week before I had been corresponding with their sworn enemy, the head of the opposing faction. That giant talking gorilla would do anything to have intel on Maximillian, I know, and here they both are contacting me freely. Direct line.

The Chinese scientist not long after her story blew up, was standing awkwardly with inward pointed toes, before me. Sent in at the behest of those who took her in, stating that she needs a collection of clothes that can withstand being entombed in ice – a defensive technique she fiddled in to the little toy that helped save her life in Antarctica. She's an adorable thing, I must admit – sweeter than her prowess on the battlefield would ever hint. Not quite one for bold fashion, it must be stated, yet I know what she suits, and thus, I create.

The French assassin. Killed her husband, they say. Started this whole mess, they claim. Pays handsomely, I know. Feisty and sassy, she is – knows how to wear clothes well. Almost too easy to design for. She needed light fabric that would cling to her, even when zipping through the air, and a headpiece comfortable and light enough to secure her beloved thermal imaging goggles.

That one with a penchant for the west... the cowboy one, who always fugs up my office with smoke. McCallister? McCreedy? McCreed? He's a steely faced man – handsome, in an unconventional rugged manner. I thought he had managed to build muscle during his forays in to the unnecessary battlefields. On his last fitting in my studio, just over a month ago, I decided

that I could retrofit all his outfits with my trademark woven steel, to add an extra layer of protection - not by much, perhaps a fifth of what he already wore. Poor western soul could barely slump for his lighter... I quickly went back on that change. Shame, that extra protection may have been the difference between life and death.

All of them. They come, they ask, I make.

The things I've constructed; all their shoes, boots and high heels consisting of sustaining suspension technologies unrivalled by any of my poor 'competitors'. They can jump from a hovering aircraft at impressive heights, and, upon landing, feel not even a jolt of pain stab through them.

Clothes that can deconstruct and reconstruct with matter. Teleport successfully. I have infused fabric with chameleon DNA which at first, allowed temporary invisibility, before I toyed around with it and achieved indefinite cloaking, so long as the wearer didn't take any hits, nor divert the energy sustaining it by jolting it suddenly – which unfortunately a gunshot will do... *for now.*

Armour fitted with propellants, such as the Crusaders had – yet no longer crude and prone to backfiring. Prosthetic legs with supple, and comfortable cupping that won't burn, scorch or shatter directly above the impact of landmines. Incorporated speakers so as to allow that cereal-box DJ boy to play his silly little music as he fights.

I even go as far as taking the dimensions of the weaponry so as to develop effortless casing, allowing them to meld congruously with the costumes.

To keep face with their respective homes and cultures – I suppose in a forced, desperate attempt to secure the support and love of those they fight for, I'm asked multiples times every year to create thematic outfits. Winter holidays are coming! Day of the dead. Halloween. Chinese New Year. Even sports-wear for in case a fight storms up during events. Anything you can name or think of, I have made. And so, they fight, decked out in Madame Mulligan's work.

And looking back at my desk, taking in the mess of ingredients of which I craft my art, I know this pales in comparison to the mess that is going on out there. And a long time ago, thus realisation dawned on me, and I knew I had to take a stand.

And doing what I do best, going above and beyond and expectations, I did just that.

I've taken action in two separate ways.

First, I added deep within the fabrics, woven so expertly within seams or encased within buttons – no matter how skimpy or light – devices so miniature and unrecognisable, that no technology to date can detect them. These devices? Communication bugs. Every single plan that is spoken out loud, I know. Madame Mulligan, the unsuspecting tailor, knows of events and targets before even those delegated to execute the missions know. From Overwatch, to Talon, to Vishkar, to the when the next album will be released, or when a company is wanting to merge, or lay off its staff. I know.

*I know.*

Second? Each and every costume I have made, I've produced a replica. Identical on the surface, but completely altered on the interior. From the French assassin to the talking Gorilla, all of these replicas hang in the next room - and they'll all fit, snug and to perfection, one very determined tailor. The bulkier ones laden with pockets of helium, meaning that even the Crusader's steel is easy for me to don and move in.

I've began studying their movements, their mannerisms. When they're in my office, I record their voices, and note their character, their views, their stance. Everything. I just need to remember their damned names, or at least silly code names.

Once this final costume has been made, I will begin on the creation and installation of my next personal product: Mulligan's Voice Morpher™, and program all of their voices within, down to nuance and intonation. A simple procedure. And finally, swift prosthetic masks – easy to apply and remove. Not even worth pre-planning in their simplicity.

Once all are complete, I will control infallible disguises, and I will successfully stand dressed as any of them, with their innermost knowledge, their views, their personality and character; their ranking, their power. I can sit at the head of a board meeting, and demand anything my heart desires. I could stand at the head of a nation, and give a speech to subjects who will not know the difference.

I could stroll on the battlefield, and convince enemies and allies alike that I'm anyone I decide. And when I'm ready, and certain? Then, I can fix this mess.

I have a lot of work to do.

I have a lot of testing to execute.

But, as I've always done... I will go above and beyond any expectations.

Even my own.

Tracer, out. Genji, out. Mercy, out. Moira, out. Anyone I wish, out.

Mulligan, out.