

Lewis Carroll's | ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Adapted By | ALICE GERSTENBERG

To the Memory of Lewis Carroll.

A dramatization of Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures in
Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass"

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The Scenes

ACT I

Scene I: Alice's Home.
Scene II: The Room in the Looking Glass.
Scene III: The Hall with Doors.
Scene IV: The Sea Shore.

ACT II

Scene: The March Hare's Garden.

ACT III

Scene I: The Garden of Flowers.
Scene II: The Court of Hearts.
Scene III: Alice's Home.

Miss Gerstenberg's manuscript called for costumes after the illustrations of John Tenniel, and scenery of the simple imaginative type, the "new art" in the theater.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

ACT I

Scene One

Alice's home. Lewis Carroll is discovered, playing chess. Golden-haired Alice, in a little blue dress, a black kitten in her arms, stands watching him.

ALICE. That's a funny game, uncle. What did you do then?

CARROLL. A red pawn took a white pawn; this way. You see, Alice, the chessboard is divided into sixty-four squares, red and white, and the white army tries to win and the red army tries to win. It's like a battle!

ALICE. With soldiers?

CARROLL. Yes, here are the Kings and Queens they are fighting for. That's the Red Queen and here's the White Queen.

ALICE. How funny they look!

CARROLL. See the crowns on their heads and look at their big feet.

ALICE. It's a foot apiece, that's what it is! Do they hump along like this?

CARROLL. Here! You're spoiling the game. I must keep them all in their right squares.

ALICE. I want to be a queen!

CARROLL. Here you are [*he points to a small white pawn*] here you are in your little stiff skirt!

ALICE. How do you do, Alice!

CARROLL. And now you are going to move here.

ALICE. Let me move myself.

CARROLL. When you have traveled all along the board this way and haven't been taken by the enemy you may be a queen.

ALICE. Why do people always play with kings and queens? Mother has

Scene Three

When the curtain rises one sees nothing but odd black lanterns with orange lights, hanging, presumably, from the sky. The scene lights up slowly revealing Alice seated on two large cushions. She has been “dropped behind” by the White Queen and is dazed to find herself in a strange hall with many peculiar doors and knobs too high to reach.

ALICE. Oh! my head! Where am I? Oh dear, Oh dear! [*She staggers up and to her amazement finds herself smaller than the table.*] I’ve never been smaller than any table before! I’ve always been able to reach the knobs! What a curious feeling. Oh! I’m shrinking. It’s the fan—the gloves! [*She throws them away, feels her head and measures herself against table and doors.*] Oh! saved in time! But I never—never—

WHITE RABBIT. Oh! my fan and gloves! Where are my—

ALICE. Oh! Mr. Rabbit—please help me out—I want to go home—I want to go home—

WHITE RABBIT. Oh! the Duchess! Oh! my fur and whiskers! She’ll get me executed, as sure as ferrets are ferrets! Oh! you have them!

ALICE. I’m sorry—you dropped them, you know—

WHITE RABBIT. [*Picks up fan and gloves and patters off.*] She’ll chop off your head!

ALICE. If you please sir—where am I?—won’t you please—tell me how to get out—I want to get out—

WHITE RABBIT. [*Looking at his watch.*] Oh! my ears and whiskers, how late it’s getting. [*A trap door gives way and Rabbit disappears. Alice dashes after only in time to have the trap door bang in her face.*]

ALICE. [*Amazed.*] It’s a rabbit-hole—I’m small enough to fit it too! If I shrink any more it might end in my going out altogether like a candle. I wonder what I would be like then! What does the flame of a candle look like after the candle is blown out? I’ve never seen such a thing!

HUMPTY DUMPTY. [*Sits on the wall.*] Don’t stand chattering to yourself like that, but tell me your name and your business.

ALICE. My name is Alice, but—

HUMPTY DUMPTY. It's a stupid name enough, what does it mean?

ALICE. Must a name mean something?

HUMPTY DUMPTY. Of course, it must; my name means the shape I am—and a good, handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.

ALICE. You're Humpty Dumpty! Just like an egg.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. It's very provoking, to be called an egg—very.

ALICE. I said you looked like an egg, Sir, and some eggs are very pretty, you know.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. Some people have no more sense than a baby.

ALICE. Why do you sit here all alone?

HUMPTY DUMPTY. Why, because there's nobody with me. Did you think I didn't know the answer to that? Ask another.

ALICE. Don't you think you'd be safer down on the ground? That wall's so very narrow.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. What tremendously easy riddles you ask! Of course, I don't think so. Take a good look at me! I'm one that has spoken to a king, I am; to show you I'm not proud, you may shake hands with me! [*Leans forward to offer Alice his hand but she is too small to reach it.*] However, this conversation is going on a little too fast; let's go back to the last remark but one.

ALICE. I'm afraid I can't remember it.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. In that case we start fresh, and it's my turn to choose a subject.

ALICE. You talk about it just as if it were a game.

HUMPTY DUMPTY. So here's a question for you. How old did you say you were?

ALICE. Seven years and six months.

eel, that used to come once a week; what he taught us was Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils.

ALICE. What was that like?

MOCK TURTLE. Well, I can't show it you, myself. I'm too stiff. And the Gryphon never learned it.

GRYPHON. Hadn't time; I went to the Classical master, though. He was an old crab, he was.

MOCK TURTLE. I never went to him; he taught Laughing and Grief, they used to say.

GRYPHON. So he did, so he did.

ALICE. And how many hours a day did you do lessons?

MOCK TURTLE. Ten hours the first day, nine the next, and so on.

ALICE. What a curious plan!

GRYPHON. That's the reason they're called lessons, because they lessen from day to day.

ALICE. Then the eleventh day must have been a holiday?

MOCK TURTLE. Of course, it was.

ALICE. And how did you manage on the twelfth?

GRYPHON. That's enough about lessons, tell her something about the games now. [*Mock Turtle sighs deeply, draws back of one flapper across his eyes. He looks at Alice and tries to speak but sobs choke his voice.*]

GRYPHON. [*Punching him in the back.*] Same as if he had a bone in his throat.

MOCK TURTLE. [*With tears running down his cheeks.*] You may not have lived much under the sea—

ALICE. I haven't.

MOCK TURTLE. And perhaps you were never even introduced to a lobster.

MARCH HARE. Then you should say what you mean.

ALICE. I do; at least—at least I mean what I say—that’s the same thing, you know.

HATTER. Not the same thing a bit! Why, you might just as well say that “I see what I eat” is the same thing as, “I eat what I see!”

MARCH HARE. You might just as well say that “I like what I get,” is the same thing as “I get what I like.”

DORMOUSE. You might just as well say that “I breathe when I sleep” is the same thing as “I sleep when I breathe.”

HATTER. It is the same thing with you. [*Takes out his watch, looks at it uneasily, shakes it, holds it to his ear.*] What day of the month is it?

ALICE. The fourth.

HATTER. Two days wrong. I told you butter wouldn’t suit the works!

MARCH HARE. It was the best butter.

HATTER. Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well; you shouldn’t have put it in with the bread-knife—

MARCH HARE. [*Takes the watch, looks at it gloomily, dips it into his cup of tea and looks at it again but doesn’t know what else to say.*] It was the best butter, you know.

ALICE. What a funny watch! It tells the day of the month and doesn’t tell what o’clock it is.

HATTER. Why should it? Does your watch tell you what year it is?

ALICE. Of course not, but that’s because it stays the same year for such a long time together.

HATTER. Which is just the case with mine.

ALICE. I don’t quite understand you. What you said had no sort of meaning in it and yet it was certainly English.

ALICE. [*Rises and walks away.*] You are very rude. It's the stupidest tea party I ever was at in all my life—

White Rabbit enters carrying a huge envelope with a seal and crown on it.

MARCH HARE AND HATTER. No room! no room!

Rabbit pays no attention to them but goes to the house and raps loudly. A footman in livery with a round face and large eyes like a frog and powdered hair opens the door.

WHITE RABBIT. For the Duchess. An invitation from the Queen to play croquet.

FROG. From the Queen. An invitation for the Duchess to play croquet.

White Rabbit bows and goes out.

MARCH HARE AND HATTER. [*To White Rabbit.*] No room! No room! No room!

The Frog disappears into the house but leaves the door open. There is a terrible din and many saucepans fly out.

MARCH HARE. She's at it again.

HATTER. It's perfectly disgusting.

MARCH HARE. Let's move on.

The platform moves off with table, chairs, March Hare, Hatter, and Dormouse. Meanwhile the Frog has come out again and is sitting near the closed door, staring stupidly at the sky. Alice goes to the door timidly and knocks.

FROG. There's no sort of use in knocking, and that for two reasons: first, because I'm on the same side of the door as you are; secondly, because they're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you.

ALICE. Please then, how am I to get in?

FROG. There might be some sense in your knocking if we had the door

The head of a grinning Cheshire cat appears in a tree above a wall.

ALICE. Oh, what's that?

DUCHESS. Cat, of course.

ALICE. Why does it grin like that?

DUCHESS. It's a Cheshire cat! and that's why. [*To baby.*] Pig!

I speak severely to my boy,
I beat him when he sneezes.

ALICE. I didn't know that Cheshire cats always grinned; in fact, I didn't know that cats could grin.

DUCHESS. They all can and most of 'em do.

DUCHESS. I don't know of any that do. You don't know much and that's a fact. Here, you may nurse it a bit, if you like! [*Flings the baby at Alice.*] I must go and get ready to play croquet with the Queen. [*She goes into the house.*]

ALICE. If I don't take this child away with me, they're sure to kill it in a day or two. Cheshire Puss, would you tell me please, which way I ought to walk from here?

CAT. That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

ALICE. I don't much care where—

CAT. Then it doesn't matter which way you walk.

ALICE. So long as I get somewhere.

CAT. Oh, you're sure to do that, if you only walk long enough.

ALICE. Please, will you tell me what sort of people live about here?

CAT. All mad people.

ALICE. But I don't want to go among mad people.

CAT. Oh, you can't help that; we're all mad here. I'm mad. He's mad. He's dreaming now, and what do you think he's dreaming about?

ALICE. [*Goes to the Frog to scrutinize his face.*] Nobody could guess that.

CAT. Why, about you! And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?

ALICE. Where I am now, of course.

CAT. Not you. You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream; and you're mad too.

ALICE. How do you know I'm mad?

CAT. You must be, or you wouldn't have come here.

ALICE. How do you know that you're mad?

CAT. To begin with, a dog's not mad. You grant that?

ALICE. I suppose so.

CAT. Well then, you see a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore, I'm mad.

ALICE. I call it purring, not growling.

CAT. Call it what you like. Do you play croquet with the Queen today?

ALICE. I should like it very much, but I haven't been invited yet.

CAT. You'll see me there. [*Vanishes.*]

ALICE. [*To squirming baby.*] Oh, dear, it's heavy and so ugly. Don't grunt—Oh—Oh—it's a—pig. Please Mr. Footman take it!

Frog rises with dignity, whistles and disappears into the house; a kettle comes bounding out. Alice puts pig down and it crawls off.

CAT. [*Appearing again.*] By-the-bye, what became of the baby?

ALICE. If it's very long, would you please tell me first which road—

DEE. The moon was shining sulkily.

DUM. The sea was wet as wet could be—

DEE. O Oysters, come and walk with us
The Walrus did beseech—

DUM. [*Looks at Dee.*] A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,
Along the briny beach—

DEE. [*Looks at Dum.*] The eldest Oyster winked his eye
And shook his heavy head—

DUM. [*Looks at Dee.*] Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster bed.

DEE. But four young Oysters hurried up
And yet another four—

DUM. And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more, and more—

DEE. The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,

DUM. And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low,

DEE. And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.

DUM. “A loaf of bread,” the Walrus said,
“Is what we chiefly need.

DEE. Now if you're ready, Oysters dear,
We can begin to feed.”

DUM. “But not on us!” the Oysters cried,
Turning a little blue.

DEE. “The night is fine,” the Walrus said,
“Do you admire the view?”

ALICE. It's a friend of mine—a Cheshire Cat—allow me to introduce it.

KING OF HEARTS. I don't like the look of it at all; however, it may kiss my hand if it likes.

CAT. I'd rather not.

KING OF HEARTS. Don't be impertinent and don't look at me like that.

ALICE. A cat may look at a king. I've read that in some book, but I don't remember where.

KING OF HEARTS. Well, it must be removed. My dear! I wish you would have this cat removed.

QUEEN OF HEARTS. Off with his head!

KNAVE OF HEARTS. But you can't cut off a head unless there's a body to cut it off from.

KING OF HEARTS. Anything that has a head can be beheaded.

QUEEN OF HEARTS. If something isn't done about it in less than no time, I'll have everybody executed, all round.

ALICE. It belongs to the Duchess; you'd better ask her about it.

DUCHESS. It's a lie!

CAT. You'd better ask me. Do it if you can.

Cat grins away. The Duchess and Frog escape into the house.

QUEEN OF HEARTS. Cut it off!

KING OF HEARTS. It's gone.

EVERYBODY. It's gone! It's gone! Where, where, where—

QUEEN OF HEARTS. Cut it off. Cut them all off!

EVERYBODY. No, no, no!

ALICE. Save me, save me!

ACT III

Scene One

Is a garden of high, very conventional and artificial looking flowers. On a large mushroom sits the Caterpillar smoking a hookah. Alice is whirling about trying to get her equilibrium after her fall. She goes to the mushroom timidly and, conscious of her size, for her chin reaches the top of the mushroom, she gazes at the Caterpillar wonderingly. He looks at her lazily and speaks in a languid voice.

CATERPILLAR. Who are you?

ALICE. I—I hardly know, sir, just at present. The Queen frightened me so and I've had an awfully funny fall down a tunnel or a sort of well. At least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.

CATERPILLAR. What do you mean by that? Explain yourself.

ALICE. I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir, because I'm not myself, you see. Being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.

CATERPILLAR. You! Who are you?

ALICE. I think you ought to tell me who you are, first.

CATERPILLAR. Why? [*As Alice turns away.*] Come back. I've something important to say. [*Alice comes back.*] Keep your temper.

ALICE. Is that all?

CATERPILLAR. No. [*He puffs at the hookah in silence; finally takes it out of his mouth and unfolds his arms.*] So you think you're changed, do you?

ALICE. I'm afraid I am, Sir; I don't keep the same size.

CATERPILLAR. What size do you want to be?

ALICE. I don't know. At least I've never been so small as a caterpillar.

CATERPILLAR. [*Rears angrily.*] It is a very good height indeed.

ALICE. But I'm not used to it; I wish you wouldn't all be so easily offended.

CATERPILLAR. You'll get used to it in time.

ALICE. Are you too big or am I too small? [*She compares her height wonderingly with the tall flowers.*]

CATERPILLAR. [*Looks at her sleepily, yawns, shakes himself, slides down from the mushroom and crawls slowly away.*] One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter.

ALICE. One side of what? The other side of what?

CATERPILLAR. Of the mushroom.

Alice hesitates, then embraces mushroom and picks bit from each side. Three gardeners representing spades enter carrying brushes and red paint cans.

TWO-SPOT. Look out now, Five. Don't go splashing paint over me like that.

FIVE-SPOT. I couldn't help it. Seven jogged my elbow.

SEVEN-SPOT. That's right, Five, always lay the blame on others.

FIVE-SPOT. You'd better not talk. I heard the Queen say only yesterday you deserved to be beheaded.

TWO-SPOT. What for?

SEVEN-SPOT. That's none of your business, Two.

FIVE-SPOT. Yes, it is his business, and I'll tell him. It was for bringing the cook tulip roots instead of onions.

SEVEN-SPOT. Well, of all the unjust things— [*Sees Alice; others look around, all bow.*]

ALICE. Could you please tell me what side to eat?

Five and Seven look at Two.

ALICE. I suppose—

RED QUEEN. [*Answers for her.*] Bread and butter, of course. Try another subtraction sum. Take a bone from a dog; what remains?

ALICE. The bone wouldn't remain, of course, if I took it—and the dog wouldn't remain; it would come to bite me—and I'm sure I shouldn't remain.

RED QUEEN. Then you think nothing would remain?

ALICE. I think that's the answer.

RED QUEEN. Wrong as usual; the dog's temper would remain.

ALICE. But I don't see how—

RED QUEEN. Why, look here; the dog would lose its temper, wouldn't it?

ALICE. Perhaps it would.

RED QUEEN. Then if the dog went away, its temper would remain!

ALICE. They might go different ways! What dreadful nonsense we are talking.

BOTH QUEENS. She can't do sums a bit!

ALICE. Can you do sums?

WHITE QUEEN. I can do addition, if you give me time—but I can't do subtraction under any circumstances.

RED QUEEN. Of course you know your A, B, C?

ALICE. To be sure I do.

WHITE QUEEN. So do I; we'll often say it over together, dear. And I'll tell you a secret—I can read words of one letter. Isn't that grand? However, don't be discouraged. You'll come to it in time.

RED QUEEN. Can you answer useful questions? How is bread made?