

Tempest In A Teapot

By

Shualee Cook

Characters:

Alice Liddell - brunette, statuesque at age 21

Lewis Carroll - tall, gangly, but not unhandsome at 41

The Cheshire Cat (female)

The Mad Hatter (male)

The March Hare (male)

The Dormouse (female)

Dr. Liddell - Alice's father, dean of Christ's Church, Oxford; played by the actor playing the Mad Hatter

Through the course of the play, the characters act out scenes from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice* book and Alice Liddell's past, with parts as follows:

Alice - Miranda, Ariel

Lewis Carroll - Prospero

The Cheshire Cat - Caliban, Red Queen, Lorina, Edith

The Mad Hatter - Antonio, Gonzalo, Stephano, The Butterfly, The Dodo

The March Hare - Ferdinand, Sebastian, Trinculo, The Duck, Prince Leopold

The Dormouse - Alonso, The White Queen, the Mouse

Time: 1873

Setting: The Liddell Parlor, Oxford, England; A tea table in Wonderland

Note: Dialogue in italics indicates lines from Shakespeare's text.

Act One

SCENE ONE

Parlor of the Liddell residence. Alice Liddell, 21, with dark eyes and long dark brown hair, sits reading from a book of Shakespeare.

ALICE

(reading)

‘Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie,
Which we ascribe to heaven; the fated sky
Gives us free scope; only doth backward pull
Our slow designs when we ourselves are dull.
What power is it which mounts my love so high;
That makes me see, and cannot feed mine eye?
The mightiest space in fortune nature brings
To join like likes and kiss like native things.’

Alice ponders, reads it again, silently, her finger following the words on the page. She sets the book down, thinks.

ALICE

Hmm. Once you stop trying to understand it, it’s really quite pretty. It makes one wonder if understanding isn’t the slightest bit over-rated.

DR. LIDDELL (O.S.)

Alice, dear, are you there?

ALICE

Reading in the parlour, father.

DR. LIDDELL (O.S.)

Reading?

ALICE

“All’s Well That Ends Well”.

Dr. Liddell, a tall, aristocratic man in his 60s, enters.

DR. LIDDELL

Ah. Since you are finished, there is -

ALICE

But I’m only just in Act One.

DR. LIDDELL

Then how do you know it ends well?

ALICE

No, it’s - (resigned to the misunderstanding) I’m feeling optimistic.

DR. LIDDELL

That can wait, Alice. This is important. Your mother has noticed recently that you seem to enjoy quite a warm acquaintance with Prince Leopold?

Dr. Liddell pauses for a response. Alice keeps on reading.

DR. LIDDELL

And she thought we should discuss it.

Another pause. Still no response from Alice.

DR. LIDDELL

Is this true? Has the Prince shown any ... interest?

ALICE

I don't know, I haven't looked for it. He talks with me, if that's what you mean. Most young men just pause for encouragement to go on making asses of themselves. But he actually listens to what I have to say.

DR. LIDDELL

That would be interest, Alice.

ALICE

I had hoped it was human decency. How awfully disappointing.

DR. LIDDELL

Do be serious. This could be quite a promising situation if played correctly, and it requires you to focus.

ALICE

Played correctly? Leo is a person, Father, not a croquet ball.

DR. LIDDELL

He is more than a person. He is royalty. And as such, offers a unique chance for advancement for both yourself and your family. If you find him an appealing suitor, it could be most advantageous for-

ALICE

Suitor? No, but he- he comes to me to get away from that. All those scheming daughters angling for a match. He can be himself with me. And I with him. That is why we talk.

DR. LIDDELL

Exactly. And he's sought you out instead of them, so perhaps that means that he-

ALICE

Why does it have to *mean* something? Why can't it just be what it is?

DR. LIDDELL

And what is it if not a tremendous opportunity for you? Do you wish to stay in Oxford for the rest of your life?

ALICE

Of course not.

DR. LIDDELL

You've been of marriageable age for longer than is often considered prudent. And the future he could offer you as your husband would be a dream for most women.

ALICE

Most women don't have the same dreams I do. And if I use our friendship to escape from-

DR. LIDDELL

Boys and girls have 'friendships,' Alice. But you are a woman now, and it's time for you to face that fact.

The head of the CHESHIRE CAT suddenly hovers over the mantle piece. Dr. Liddell doesn't notice. Alice does, and isn't happy about it.

CHESHIRE CAT

If you do that, it'll merely turn and run. Facts are such cowardly little things.

ALICE

(to the Cheshire Cat)

No no no. Not now, not here.

DR. LIDDELL

Then when, Alice? You are 21 years old. The time for childhood fancy has long since passed.

CHESHIRE CAT

For him, perhaps. But they are waiting for you in Wonderland right now.

DR. LIDDELL

Becoming an adult means taking responsibility.

CHESHIRE CAT

Shall we go?

ALICE

(to Cheshire Cat)

That is not what I need right now!

DR. LIDDELL

I beg to differ.

CHESHIRE CAT

Then why am I here?

ALICE

Oh, how should I know?

DR. LIDDELL

What does the scripture say? “When I was a child, I thought as a child, I acted as a child -

CHESHIRE CAT

That’s difficult to picture -

DR. LIDDELL

“But when I became a man, I put away childish things”.

ALICE

Well, it’s easy for men. With women, the doll houses just get bigger.

DR. LIDDELL

I see you are not in the mood for reasonable conversation.

CHESHIRE CAT

In that case, I know just the place.

DR. LIDDELL

We shall speak more of this later.

ALICE

Father, wait. I’m sorry. It’s just that I’ve been ... distracted of late. I’ll look for the Prince’s interest if you wish me to.

DR. LIDDELL

All I wish for you to do is realize that this is an important time, and your decisions bear more weight than they did before. Think on that.

ALICE

I will, Father.

DR. LIDDELL

Thank you. Now, I have some matters to attend to before I meet with a professor on college business. If he arrives in the next few moments, would you kindly keep him entertained?

ALICE

Yes, Father. Only don’t be too long. (to herself) The air in here is dry enough without a professor’s conversation in it. Who is it this time?

DR. LIDDELL (O.S.)

Reverend Dodgson.

Alice stops in her tracks.

ALICE

Lewis. This is all your doing, isn’t it? Go on, admit it. I’ve barely seen or heard from Lewis Carroll in ten years, and now, quite out of the blue -

CHESHIRE CAT

Oh, you mean Reverend Dodgson, the poor gangly chap who thinks he created us?

ALICE

He is your creator, not mine. I existed a full ten years before he made up that story for me.

CHESHIRE CAT

And I suppose you think you're the only one?

ALICE

Well ... I assumed ...

CHESHIRE CAT

Assumptions are much like mushrooms. They pop up overnight, and most of them are poisonous.

ALICE

Then ... do you feel trapped too?

CHESHIRE CAT

Trapped?

ALICE

Wonderland's a dream I'm growing much too large for, and there's no bottle to drink that can shrink me back down to fit it. I want to ... journey round the world, or have a scandalous love affair! But if I were to break the spell of Wonderland only to be stuck here in Oxford forever - why, I think I'd go mad.

CHESHIRE CAT

I thought you already were.

ALICE

Is there some way to let go of that world he made for me without surrendering to everything that this one demands? Because I don't think I can be what it wants. No without-

A knock at the door. Alice freezes.

ALICE

That's him. Tell me you brought him here. Tell me he's come with the solution.

More knocking. The Cheshire Cat just smiles away.

ALICE

Well, if you're not going to be any help, you can just go away.

CHESHIRE CAT

I might as well. You'll be back to see me soon enough.

ALICE

No, because he's going to tell me! I'll show him I'm not a child anymore. He'll see that I can grasp the deeper truths. And he'll give me the answer!

The Cheshire Cat disappears as Alice opens the door.

Behind it, Rev. C.L. Dodgson, aka LEWIS CARROLL, a tall, slim, very formal man in his 40s. In his surprise at seeing Alice, the formality gives way to whimsy.

CARROLL

I beg your pardon. I thought the Liddell residence lay behind this door, but I see now it is the Hall of Astonishing Coincidences. A very fortunate mistake, wouldn't you say, Alice?

Alice ignores his playfulness, curtseys politely.

ALICE

I believe the proper thing to say is "How do you do, Reverend Dodgson? Won't you come in?"

Dodgson. The name of the man he's expected to be. The wall of formality springs back up.

CARROLL

Ah. Yes. Thank you, Miss Liddell. I believe your father is expecting me?

ALICE

Yes. He'll be down in a moment.

Silence. Alice stares at him intently.

CARROLL

How pleasant to see you again, after so long.

ALICE

It has been a significant length of time.

Carroll spies the copy of *Through The Looking-Glass* on the mantle piece.

CARROLL

Since I presented you with the new volume, was it?

ALICE

Two Christmases ago.

CARROLL

Then I've not had the opportunity to ask your opinion.

ALICE

Oh, it was fine reading for children, I suppose. But I've grown rather too old for that sort of thing.

CARROLL

Yes. I see.

ALICE

Besides, it didn't seem to be ... me anymore. Alice, I mean. Not that she's ever looked like me, with all that blond hair and such. But it was a story you told for me. You only wrote it down because I kept pestering you about it.

CARROLL

Yes.

ALICE

Wonderland felt like my place. This Looking-Glass world felt like someone else's.

CARROLL

I suppose it is.

Another silence.

ALICE

At any rate, I've gone on to more important reading now. Shakespeare, the classics.

Carroll picks the book up off the chair, looks at it.

CARROLL

'All's Well That Ends Well.'

ALICE

I've started alphabetically. A scientific approach is best, don't you think?

CARROLL

In most things... though I must confess, I find this play rather dreary. An intelligent woman going to a great deal of trouble for a man who doesn't deserve her...

ALICE

If my parents have their way, it's a role I'll be well acquainted with quite soon. I might as well study in preparation.

CARROLL

Let us hope, then, that your experience lives up to the play's title.

Awkward silence.

CARROLL

You might try your hand at *The Tempest*. A wizard and his daughter on an enchanted isle -

ALICE

I am 21 years old, Reverend. You think I am only interested in fairy stories?

CARROLL

No, of course not. Merely ... a personal favorite.

ALICE

One cannot go on escaping into fantasy all one's life, can one?

The question comes out sounding less rhetorical than Alice intended. Carroll stammers for an answer, but doesn't find it.

ALICE

I'm a grown woman now. Doesn't that mean accepting responsibility, marrying sensibly and all that?

CARROLL

I have ... very little experience in such things, I'm afraid.

ALICE

Haven't you any sisters?

CARROLL

I sometimes feel as though I've had little else.

ALICE

And what did they do when they came of age?

CARROLL

They mostly became saints and oracles. I vaguely recall one getting married as well, but I can't be certain.

ALICE

(quiet)
Back to fantasy.

But not quiet enough.

CARROLL

Are we?

DR. LIDDELL

(offstage)
Alice, has Reverend Dodgson arrived?

ALICE

Yes, Father.

DR. LIDDELL

Do send him up. I am ready now.

CARROLL

Well then ... it was very kind of you to keep me entertained, Miss Liddell. If you will excuse me -

He turns to leave.

ALICE

Reverend -

He stops, turns back to her.

ALICE

Suppose I were one of those plentiful sisters of yours - would you have any brotherly advice for me?

Carroll thinks for a moment.

CARROLL

Yes. Don't wait to read the Tempest in alphabetical order. It's too good a story. Besides, you'd have to wade through Pericles first, and no one wants that.

He heads out again, but looks back one last time.

CARROLL

It was good to see you again, Alice.

And he is gone. Alice stands there, dejected. Unseen by Alice, the head of the Cheshire Cat appears, quoting "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" to the audience.

CHESHIRE CAT

"Poor Alice! It was as much as she could do, lying down on one side, to look through into the garden with one eye, but to get through was more hopeless than ever: she sat down and began to cry again."

Alice does just that. There is the sound of rain.

CHESHIRE CAT

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself", said Alice, 'a great girl like you to go on crying in this way! Stop this moment, I tell you!' But she went on all the same, shedding gallons of tears, until there was a large pool all around her ... and reaching half down the hall".

The rain becomes a thunderous storm at sea, pictures on the wall leaning this way and that. A MOUSE and a DODO BIRD scramble onstage, fighting wind and rain.

MOUSE

Yare, yare! Take in the topsail! Tend to the master's whistle! Blow, till thou burst thy wind, if room enough!

DODO

Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard!

MOUSE

None that I love more than myself! You are a councillor; if you can command these elements to silence and work the peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap - Cheerly, good hearts- Out of our way, I say!

VOICES (O.S.)

All lost! To prayers, to prayers! All lost!

MOUSE

A plague upon this howling! They are louder than the weather or our office!

Thunder and lightning. The sound of cracking timber as the drawing room wall splits in half. Alice screams, and hides under her chair as a DUCK runs onstage in a panic.

MOUSE

We split! We split!

DUCK

Mercy on us!

DODO

Let's all sink wi' th' king!

DUCK

Farewell, my wife and children!

The Mouse and the Duck are blown off by the storm while the Dodo clutches onto a piece of furniture.

DODO

Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground - long heath, brown furze, anything. The wills above be done, but I would fain die a dry death.

The Dodo and one side of the drawing room blow away. Behind it, Lewis Carroll on a high place, in his Oxford robes, conducting the storm as though it were an orchestra. Alice sees him, and calls out.

ALICE

*If by your Art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
The sky, it seems would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out.*

CARROLL

Be collected.

*No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart
There's no harm done.*

ALICE

O woe the day!

CARROLL

No harm.

I have done nothing but in care of thee -

The last line echoes loudly over the wind and waves.
Blackout.

SCENE TWO

Wonderland. Alice wakes slowly. Her long dress is transformed into the girlish short one of Tenniel's illustrations, which Alice notes with displeasure. Behind her, a long table where the MAD HATTER, and the MARCH HARE partake of their endless tea party while the DORMOUSE dozes.

ALICE

(sighs)

Back in Wonderland and short dresses. Ugh. My petticoats are soaked through. I suppose there's nothing to do but have some tea.

MAD HATTER, MARCH HARE

No room, no room!

ALICE

There's plenty of room.

MARCH HARE

Have some wine.

ALICE

And there's never any wine. Only tea. Remarkably good tea, I must admit.

MARCH HARE

Why must you admit that? I didn't ask you to.

DORMOUSE

(drowsily)

No one's forcing you that I can see.

MARCH HARE

You can't see anything with your eyes closed.

DORMOUSE

I can see it's dark.

MARCH HARE

Touche.

DORMOUSE

(drifting off to sleep again)

Or not touche, that is the question. Whether tis nobler in the mind to snore a bit too loudly, like so - (snore)

MARCH HARE

(poking the Dormouse)

What was the question again? I missed it.

The Mad Hatter stares at Alice, eyes wide, before finally speaking.

MAD HATTER

How is a hawk like a handsaw?

ALICE

I don't want anymore riddles. Not today.

MAD HATTER

Was that a riddle? I was just curious.

ALICE

So was I. And look where it's gotten me - stuck in time with the rest of you.

MARCH HARE

We're stuck without Time, actually.

MAD HATTER

I was never particularly fond of tea to begin with, but now - drinking from cup after cup, day after day, month after month, year after year! It's maddening, I tell you!

DORMOUSE

(drowsily, starting on the Mad Hatter's "never")
And ever and ever and ever and ever and
ever and ever and ever and ever and ever
and ever and ever and ever and ever and
ever and ever and ever and ever and ever...

MARCH HARE

But we're already mad.

MAD HATTER

Then it's sane-ening, how about that? Can you imagine, drinking nothing but tea whilst being horribly, vividly sane?! That same bitter, leafy taste crudely masked with sugar forever penetrating your perfectly unclouded mind? That taste - that taste! It haunts my very dreams!

MARCH HARE

(to Alice)

Personally, I've been leaving the bags out and just drinking water the last few go-arounds.

The Mad Hatter jumps up and points at the March Hare melodramatically.

MAD HATTER

Coward! You'll take your lumps and suffer like the rest of us!

He throttles the March Hare while alternately stuffing lumps of sugar down his throat.

MARCH HARE

You're just - ack - jealous you didn't - uff - think of it first! Excellent sugar, by the way.

MAD HATTER

(pausing mid-strangle)

Why thank you. I only buy the best.

MARCH HARE

Oh, it shows. But carry on.

MAD HATTER

Right.

The Mad Hatter goes back to throttling the March Hare. Alice gets between them, while the Dormouse regains consciousness just in time to see Lewis Carroll enter, wearing a grand robe made from giant illustrated pages of his Alice books. He stands to the side, watching, viewed only by the Dormouse.

ALICE

Come now, there will be no strangling guests at the table. Honestly, where are your manners?

MAD HATTER

Don't look at me. (points to the March Hare) He ate them all.

MARCH HARE

We ran out of biscuits.

ALICE

(to Mad Hatter)

Still, you'll just have to wait until after dessert, and strangle him on the veranda with everyone else.

DORMOUSE

(pointing at Carroll)

He's back.

ALICE

Who?

DORMOUSE

Time. Which you'd know if you paid any atten...

She falls asleep again, arm still pointing out at Carroll. Alice stares at Carroll in disbelief.

MAD HATTER

Time! Have you come to forgive us?

Carroll says nothing.

ALICE

That's the man who's kept you trapped at tea? That's Time?!

MARCH HARE

Don't you recognize Him? It's no wonder he hasn't been kind to you.

ALICE

What?

MAD HATTER

(to Carroll)

We're dreadfully sorry about everything. And we've been going around this table for so terribly long -

MARCH HARE

Without a moment to wash up. It's getting downright unsanitary.

MAD HATTER

What do you say? Shall we let bygones be bygones

DORMOUSE

(talking in her sleep)
Tarry ... tarry ... tarry ... tarry ... tarry.

DORMOUSE

Tarry a little, there is something else. This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood.

MAD HATTER

You do heal all wounds, after all. So really, no harm done!

Carroll turns to go.

MAD HATTER

Don't go! Please! I beg you, just another moment!

Carroll stops, whispers something in the Dormouse's ear, then exits. The Mad Hatter sinks into his chair dejectedly.

MAD HATTER

Accursed Time, never waiting for any man.

ALICE

Do you see him often?

MAD HATTER

Only occasionally, and then he goes skulking off again.

ALICE

Why haven't I seen him here before?

MARCH HARE

You just keep missing his Sneering Days, is all.

MAD HATTER

Ah!

The Mad Hatter takes out his pocket watch.

MAD HATTER

And what day is it?

The 21st, I believe.

ALICE

Two and a half days slow now!

MAD HATTER

The Mad Hatter shakes his watch up and down, listens intently.

MAD HATTER

It's getting worse.

ALICE

Worse, you say?

MARCH HARE

Try some more butter.

MAD HATTER

I told you, butter doesn't suit the works.

MARCH HARE

What about the preserves?

ALICE

Your watch is getting slower ...

MAD HATTER

We tried that too.

ALICE

... and he's suddenly appearing inside his own creation ...

MARCH HARE

Only the blackberry. I think the fig would work much better.

ALICE

... perhaps this isn't just the same old story.

MARCH HARE

Story?

MAD HATTER

Excellent idea! Tell us one.

ALICE

There's only one story on my mind at the moment, and it doesn't have an ending yet.

MARCH HARE

Then wake up the Dormouse. She knows loads of them.

The Mad Hatter and the March Hare pinch the Dormouse on both sides at once. The Dormouse slowly opens her eyes.

DORMOUSE

I wasn't asleep. I heard every word you fellows were saying.

MAD HATTER

Then tell the story about all the treacle. And be quick about it, or you'll be asleep again before it's done.

DORMOUSE

Hmm. How does it go? Ah yes. *O, for a muse of treacle that would ascend the brightest heaven of invention -*

MAD HATTER

That's not it. The other one.

DORMOUSE

Two households, both alike and treacle-y -

MARCH HARE

Wrong!

MAD HATTER

I know what this is!

He reaches for the Dormouse's seat, pulls out a large book she's been sitting on, and tosses it on the table.

MAD HATTER

You've been soaking up classical verse by osmosis again!

MARCH HARE

Honestly, if we've told you once, we've told you a thousand times -

DORMOUSE

A thousand times the worse, to want thy light.

Alice picks the book up off the table.

ALICE

"The Tempest and other plays by William Shakespeare". This is what he told me to do. "Don't wait to read The Tempest in alphabetical order". That was his advice.

MARCH HARE

Whose advice?

ALICE

Lewis Car- ah, Time's. I thought it meant he had no answers for me, but he told me something. I'd just forgotten the language.

MAD HATTER

What is she going on about?

DORMOUSE

Words, words, words.

ALICE

It was dreadfully hard for him to talk to anybody, much less adults! So he made up games for them instead, and for a few brief moments, everyone tried very hard to think like he did, and enjoyed themselves immensely. Of course he couldn't tell me directly! He had to put it into a riddle, one last game for me to puzzle out.

MAD HATTER

A puzzle?

MARCH HARE

A game?

MAD HATTER

Something to do besides drink tea?

DORMOUSE

Or sleeping?

ALICE

Yes. Inside this play, there may be a secret message for me - perhaps for all of us. All we have to do is act it out, and discover the meaning of this riddle, if it has one.

MARCH HARE

And if it doesn't?

ALICE

Then you've at least spent a few rounds of four o'clock doing something new for once.

DORMOUSE

Is there a part for each of us?

ALICE

(flipping through pages)

There looks to be quite a bit more than one a piece. Do you mind?

MAD HATTER

Mind?! That's excellent! I'll get the hats!

The Mad Hatter springs up and runs off stage.

MARCH HARE

Oh! Well, if the wearing of hats is involved, I shall be delighted!

ALICE
(to the Dormouse)

And you?

DORMOUSE
I suppose, so long as it's not a play about a mouse trap.

The Dormouse shivers.

ALICE
I believe we'll be safe on that account.

The Cheshire Cat appears from out of nowhere.

CHESHIRE CAT
You may be surprised.

ALICE
Have you read it before, or are you just trying to sound cryptic?

The Cheshire Cat keeps on smiling as the Mad Hatter enters with a tower of hat boxes.

MAD HATTER
Hats have arrived! The play can begin now!

He begins unpacking boxes and placing hats on the table.

CHESHIRE CAT
It took you long enough to start. I was beginning to wonder if we'd get to it at all.

ALICE
Start it yourself if you're so clever.

CHESHIRE CAT
It would be my pleasure. We begin on an uncharted island, inhabited by Prospero, a powerful magician -

The Mad Hatter produces a pointy magician's hat out of one of the hat boxes, and puts it on.

MAD HATTER
And what do you know? A perfect fit!

CHESHIRE CAT
- Prospero's daughter, the beautiful virgin Miranda -

MARCH HARE
You'll play her, of course.

ALICE
Will I?

MARCH HARE

It's rather obvious. I mean, look at you.

Alice looks down at herself, not sure how to feel about this.

CHESHIRE CAT

(gestures to the Dormouse)

- and Ariel, an airy spirit under Prospero's command.

MAD HATTER

I don't have a hat for an airy spirit.

MARCH HARE

I don't think spirits wear hats. They go in more for wings, I believe. And I have just the thing..

The March Hare grabs two tea trays and some twine, loops the twine between the handles, and starts tying it around the Dormouse.

CHESHIRE CAT

From different places on the island, Prospero and Miranda both spot a ship -

The Cheshire Cat brings out a tiny paper sailboat, then grabs a teacup from the table, sets the boat afloat in the teacup.

CHESHIRE CAT

- at sea.

She hands the cup to Alice.

CHESHIRE CAT

Aboard that ship is Prospero's treacherous brother, Antonio -

MAD HATTER

Oooh! An evil twin? I can play them both!

He quickly switches hats.

CHESHIRE CAT

(picks up two crowns from the table, places one on the Dormouse)

Alonso, the king of Naples, (places the other crown on the March Hare's head) and his son, Ferdinand, a handsome prince, along with various councillors, jesters and servants. Prospero then calls up Ariel, (the Dormouse quickly takes the crown back off) to summon a great storm to capsize the ship as Miranda watches from the shore.

The Dormouse grabs a teapot, and pours water on top of the ship, drowning it.

ALICE/MIRANDA
(watching the ship sink)

*Oh! I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer: a brave Vessel,
Dash'd all to pieces. O the Cry did knock
Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perish'd.
Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere
It should the good ship so have swallow'd and
The fraughting souls within her.*

Behind everyone, Lewis Carroll enters.

CARROLL/PROSPERO
Lend thy hand

*And pluck my magic garment from me. So:
Lie there, my art.*

MAD HATTER
Magic garment - wait, I'm playing the magician.

CARROLL/PROSPERO
Wipe thou thine eyes. Have comfort.

MAD HATTER
That's my part!

MARCH HARE
Shhhh! Do you want to make him angry again?

CARROLL/PROSPERO
*The direful Spectacle of the Wreck which touch'd
The very virtue of compassion in thee
I have with such provision in mine art
So safely ordered that there is no soul,
No, not so much perdition as an hair
Betid to any creature in the vessel
which thou heardst cry, which thou saw'st sink. Sit down;
For thou must now know farther.*

ALICE/MIRANDA
*You have often
Begun to tell me what I am, but stopp'd
And left me to a bootless inquisition,
Concluding 'Stay; not yet.'*

CARROLL/PROSPERO
The hour's now come.

CHESHIRE CAT
And from there, he takes over a hundred and fifty lines of poetry to tell a very simple story, so I'm sure even Time won't mind if we skim a bit.

ALICE

Yes, please!

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Twelve year since, Miranda, twelve year since,
Thy father was the duke of Millaine, and
A prince of power.*

CHESHIRE CAT

But a duke that preferred study to politics -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies, all dedicated
To closeness and the bettering of my mind -*

CHESHIRE CAT

And while Prospero is off with his nose in a book, his brother Antonio - (gestures to the Mad Hatter)

CARROLL/PROSPERO

- he whom, next thyself, of all the world I loved -

CHESHIRE CAT

- gets tired of handling all the responsibility without the power and title that usually go with it -

MAD HATTER

I did claim the role first, after all...

CHESHIRE CAT

- and decides to overthrow his brother and take the dukedom for himself.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Mark his condition, and th' event; then tell me
If this might be a brother.*

The Cheshire Cat leads the Mad Hatter over to the Dormouse.

CHESHIRE CAT

But Prospero is still too popular with the people for Antonio to kill outright, so he plots with the King of Naples -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

An Enemy to me inveterate -

MAD HATTER AND DORMOUSE

Plot plot plot plot plot!

CHESHIRE CAT

- to let the king's army through the gates to kidnap Prospero and his infant daughter and, so they can sell it to the people as banishment, not murder, set them adrift at sea on-

The Mad Hatter and the Dormouse push Carrol and Alice up onto the table.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*A rotten carcass of a boat, not rigg'd,
Nor tackle, sail, nor mast - the very rats
Instinctively have quit it.*

MAD HATTER

Some rats should quit stealing parts, then.

MARCH HARE

Stop being sulky, and start being the sea.

The Mad Hatter and March Hare extend the tablecloth, and make it billow like the ocean. The Dormouse grabs a fan off the table and fans at Carroll and Alice furiously.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*There they hoist us
To cry to th' sea that roar'd to us, to sigh
To th' winds, whose pity, sighing back again
Did us but loving wrong.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*Alack, what trouble
Was I then to you?*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*O, a cherubin
Thou wast, that did preserve me. Thou didst smile
Infused with a fortitude from heaven,
When I have deck'd the sea with drops full salt,
Under my burthen groan'd, which rais'd in me
And undergoing stomach, to bear up
Against what should ensue.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

How came we ashore?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

By Providence divine.

ALICE/MIRANDA

*I pray you, sir,
For still 'tis beating in my mind, your reason
For raising this sea-storm?*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Know thus far forth:
By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune
(Now, my dear Lady) hath mine enemies
Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence,
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop. Here cease more questions:
Thou art inclin'd to sleep: 'Tis a good dullness,
And give it way. I know thou canst not choose.*

Carroll/Prospero waves his hand, and Alice/Miranda falls asleep next to the already sleeping Dormouse.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

- Come away, Servant, come; I am ready now;

Carroll/Prospero steals offstage in search of someone. The Cheshire Cat approaches Alice, still "sleeping" at the table.

CHESHIRE CAT

So tell me, what does Miranda dream about?

DORMOUSE

(in her sleep)

Dreams ...

MAD HATTER

Shoes?

MARCH HARE

Ships?

MAD HATTER

Sealing wax?

ALICE

Not sealing wax so much, but ships ... definitely ships.

DORMOUSE

(in her sleep)

And why the sea is boiling hot and whether ... whether ...

MARCH HARE

The weather already happened, remember? The storm -

ALICE

It's the first time Miranda has seen one since she was a baby.

MAD HATTER

A storm?

ALICE

No, a ship. It's sailing now across the surface of her mind. Herald of another world, with precious cargo in its hold. Miranda can smell it - a bountiful crop of fresh -

MARCH HARE

Cabbages!

ALICE

- possibilities. The promise of something beyond what she's known. Outside her tiny world of island trees and fruits and wild beasts. Outside her towering father, who is All and everyone. Outside this stern, monotonous sea that keeps her trapped with them. As Miranda watches that ship glide through her subconscious, she does something entirely new. She begins to hope. Before this moment, she didn't know what to want. And if she did, there was no way to get it. But now. Now there are ships. Great big wooden things that carry gifts across oceans. So she hopes carefully, trying it out. She hopes this ship was sent to bring her a life that is more than surviving. She thinks she's getting the knack of it. But then it dawns on her - to hope is to risk disappointment. She hadn't counted on that. The waters of her mind whip into a frenzy, toss the ship, capsize it, break it to pieces. Possible calamities pour down on her, plentiful as raindrops. Still, she tries to hold on, hopes for calmer seas, sturdy ship planks, seasoned veterans in the rigging. It makes for difficult work, this believing in something you've never experienced. But then, that's why I'm still here, isn't it?

MARCH HARE

I don't know. Do you mean Miranda-you, or you-you?

MAD HATTER

Is there really a difference?

Carroll/Prospero enters again, still looking off in search of someone. Alice quickly goes back to "being asleep".

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*- Come away, Servant, come; I am ready now;
Approach, my Ariel. Come.*

Carroll/Prospero looks for Ariel, but finds nothing. The March Hare nudges the Dormouse.

MARCH HARE

Psssst. That's your cue.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

- Come away, Servant, come;

Still nothing. Alice opens one eye.

ALICE
(whispering)
What's going on?

MARCH HARE
(whispering)
She's asleep and won't wake up.

The March Hare nudges the Dormouse some more, to no avail.

CARROLL/PROSPERO
I am ready now;

The Dormouse keeps snoring.

CARROLL/PROSPERO
Approach, my Ariel. Come!

ALICE
Oh, just give me the wings. I'll do it.

The March Hare pulls the tea-tray wings off the Dormouse's back.

MAD HATTER
But you have a part. Let me.

Alice takes the wings, starts to put them on.

ALICE
You aren't quite the spirit type.

MAD HATTER
And why not?

ALICE
You wear hats.

MARCH HARE
She has a point.

CARROLL/PROSPERO
(furious)
Come away, Servant, come!

Alice has the wings mostly on, starts to go, but the Mad Hatter holds her back.

MAD HATTER

You can't go like that. Still far too Miranda-like.

ALICE

We don't have time.

MARCH HARE

Of course we do - He's right there.

MAD HATTER

And I have just the thing.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

I am ready. Now!

The Mad Hatter takes the lid off a large teapot, and pulls out a long, blond "Alice in Wonderland" wig.

MAD HATTER

See? Most certainly not a hat.

He rams it on Alice's head, and sends her off.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Approach, my Ariel, come!

ALICE/ARIEL

*All hail, great Master, grave sir, hail! I come
To answer thy best pleasure, be't to fly,
To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride
On the curl'd clouds. To thy strong bidding task
Ariel and all his - ah, her - quality.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Hast thou, Spirit,
Perform'd to point the tempest that I bad thee?*

ALICE/ARIEL

To every article.

Alice/Ariel jumps onto the table, terrorizing the Mad Hatter and the March Hare.

ALICE/ARIEL

*I boarded the king's ship; now on the beak,
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin,
I flamed amazement. Sometime I'd divide -*

The Dormouse starts talking in her sleep.

- *And burn in many places;*

ALICE/ARIEL AND DORMOUSE

Is this what it felt like?

CHESHIRE CAT

DORMOUSE
On the topmast -

The yards,

ALICE/ARIEL

DORMOUSE
- and bowsprit -

ALICE/ARIEL
would I flame distinctly,

Then meet, and join.

ALICE/ARIEL AND DORMOUSE

Ten years old-

CHESHIRE CAT

CARROLL/PROSPERO
My brave spirit!

CHESHIRE CAT

Possessed of some unnamable quality that ignited the imaginations of others?

Alice/Ariel's havoc drives the Mad Hatter and the Dormouse from the table, leaving the March Hare, who she sets on next.

ALICE/ARIEL
*Then all afire with me: the king's son, Ferdinand,
Was the first man that leapt;*

CHESHIRE CAT

The power of Ariel-

ALICE/ARIEL
Cried-

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND
Hell is empty

And all the devils are here!

The March Hare dives off the table and sinks behind it.

CHESHIRE CAT

Is that what you felt as he made up stories for you on the spot?

ALICE

Yes. Oh, I've missed it.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

But are they, Ariel, safe?

Alice/Ariel reaches below the table, and pulls the March Hare up by the ears.

ALICE/ARIEL

*Not a hair perish'd;
On their sustaining garments not a blemish,
But fresher than before;*

She leads the Dormouse and Mad Hatter to one side of the stage -

ALICE/ARIEL

*and as thou badst me,
In troops I have disper'd them 'bout the isle.*

- and the March Hare to the other.

ALICE/ARIEL

*The King's son have I landed by himself;
Whom I left cooling of the air with sighs
In an odd angle of the isle, and sitting,
His arms in this sad knot.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Ariel, thy charge
Exactly is perform'd; but there's more work.*

CHESHIRE CAT

Ah, that's the trouble, isn't it?

ALICE/ARIEL

*Let me remember thee what thou hast promis'd
Which is not yet perform'd me.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*How now? Moody?
What is't thou canst demand?*

CHESHIRE CAT

Once you're someone's inspiration-

ALICE/ARIEL

My liberty.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Before the time be out? No more.

CHESHIRE CAT

You don't get to decide when that inspiration ends.

The Cheshire Cat disappears.

ALICE/ARIEL

I prithee,

*Remember I have done thee worthy service,
Told thee no lies, made thee no mistakings, serv'd
Without or grudge or grumblings; thou did promise
To bate me a full year.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Dost thou forget

From what a Torment I did free thee?

ALICE/ARIEL

No.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Thou liest, malignant thing. Hast thou forgot
The foul witch Sycorax, who did confine thee
Into a cloven pine, within which rift
Imprison'd thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years, within which space she died
And left thee there, where thou didst vent thy groans
As fast as mill-wheels strike; it was mine art,
When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape
The pine, and let thee out.*

ALICE/ARIEL

I thank thee, master.

*I will be correspondent to command,
And do my spriting gently.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Do so; and after two days

I will discharge thee.

ALICE/ARIEL

That's my noble master!

What shall I do? Say what? What shall I do?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Go make thyself like a nymph o'the sea;
And hither come in't: go; hence with diligence!*

The March Hare quickly yanks off Alice's wings and wig,
and tosses them aside.

MARCH HARE

And you're back on as Miranda -

ALICE

What?

MAD HATTER

You were sleeping, remember?

ALICE

But I don't-

MAD HATTER

Sleep!

The Mad Hatter pushes Alice's head down onto the table just as Carroll/Prospero approaches.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Awake, dear heart, awake! Thou hast slept well;
Awake!*

MARCH HARE

Say 'awake' a fourth time.

ALICE/MIRANDA

*The strangeness of your story put
Heaviness in me.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Shake it off. Come on;
We'll visit Caliban, my slave, who never
Yields us kind answer.*

MAD HATTER

Did we give out the part of Caliban?

MARCH HARE

I don't think so.

ALICE/MIRANDA

*'Tis a villain, sir,
I do not love to look upon.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*But as 'tis,
We cannot miss him.*

MAD HATTER

Then I finally get to play!

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*He does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
That profit us. - What ho; slave! Caliban,*

The Mad Hatter assumes a grand shakespearean pose.

MAD HATTER

(to March Hare)

Is this a good starting pose?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Thou earth, thou: speak.

The Mad Hatter goes through a series of elaborate, dramatic preparations, then opens his mouth to speak -

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

(unseen)

There's wood enough within.

MAD HATTER

Who said that?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Come forth, I say, there's other business for thee:

MAD HATTER

Business that does not involve saying my lines!

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Come, thou tortoise when?
Thou poisonous slave, got by the devil himself
Upon thy wicked dam, come forth.*

The Cheshire Cat crawls out from under the table.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*As wicked dew as ere my mother brush'd
With raven's feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you both: a Southwest blow on ye,
and blister you all o'er.*

The Mad Hatter sits back down, defeated.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*For this, be sure, to-night thou shalt have cramps,
Side-stitches that shall pen thy breath up; urchins
Shall, for that vast of night that they may work,
All exercise on thee;*

MAD HATTER

And you'll deserve it, too!

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

I must eat my dinner.

*This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou takest from me. When thou camest first,
Thou strokedst me, and made much of me; wouldst give me
Water with berries in't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I loved thee,
And show'd thee all the qualities o' the isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile:
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats, light on you!
For I am all the subjects that you have,
Which first was mine own king: and here you sty me
In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me
The rest o' the island.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness! I have used thee,
Filth as thou art, with human care, and lodged thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honor of my child.*

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*Oh ho, O ho! Would't had been done!
Thou didst prevent me; I had peopled else
This isle with Calibans.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Abhorred slave,
Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
With words that made them known.*

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Hag-seed, hence!
Fetch us in fuel;

*and be quick, thou'rt best,
To answer other business. Shrug'st thou, Malice?
If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly
What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar
that beasts shall tremble at thy din.*

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

No, 'pray thee.

*I must obey; his Art is of such pow'r
It would control my dam's god Setebos
And make a vassal of him.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

So, slave, hence.

Carroll/Prospero pushes Caliban one way, and exits the other.

ALICE

That seems an odd role to choose for yourself -

MAD HATTER

Or steal.

ALICE

Why that one, exactly?

CHESHIRE CAT

Because I happen to agree with many of his sentiments. Don't you?

ALICE

No!

CHESHIRE CAT

You don't value freedom, then? That is what he's demanding.

ALICE

Yes, but the freedom to do what? What he tried to do to Miranda was -

CHESHIRE CAT

Understandable, given the circumstances.

ALICE

You can't be serious!

MARCH HARE

I think she's quite good at being serious. Though the constant grin does throw one off a bit

-

ALICE

But he was going to - to violate her.

CHESHIRE CAT

He's a feral child on an island, alone. No people to watch or to learn from. And he is male. Then one single female enters that world, with no other men but her father in existence. He starts to feel certain urges. His only context for them comes from the animals he grew up among. I'm not saying it was right. But to a mind that knows nothing of society or courtship, it was a rather natural conclusion to make. And what will he do now? Punished with slavery, and no other living being with which to realize his desires? To finally, perhaps, understand them?

ALICE

And what do you know about such desires?

CHESHIRE CAT

Not nearly so much as you, I imagine.

DORMOUSE

(to the Mad Hatter)

What are they talking about? I was asleep.

MAD HATTER

I was awake, and I haven't the faintest idea.

The Cheshire Cat looks over at the Mad Hatter, then back at Alice.

CHESHIRE CAT

This place wasn't exactly built to accommodate sexual desire, as I'm sure you've noticed.

ALICE

The world I come from isn't much better at the moment.

CHESHIRE CAT

So, as civilized as you are, you still know something of Caliban's frustration?

ALICE

I'd rather not speak of that.

CHESHIRE CAT

Why not?

ALICE

Because there's nothing to be done about it.

CHESHIRE CAT

But if there were -

ALICE

Where I'm from, there are penalties for even trying.

CHESHIRE CAT

And here?

ALICE

You said yourself, it's not built for that sort of thing.

CHESHIRE CAT

And you're content to let it stay that way? What did Caliban say? "*For I am all the subjects that you have, which first was mine own king; and here you sty me in this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me the rest o' the island.*" He rages against such treatment, refuses to settle for it. Tell me again why you don't do the same?

ALICE

Just what are you getting at?

CHESHIRE CAT

The possibility that you have more power over this place than you think. (points to the March Hare) Why, look at him. You're starting to think amorous thoughts, and he's getting more attractive by the second. Charming, as a prince, some might say. That is your type, isn't it?

Alice doesn't respond. The Chesire Cat places the princely crown back on the March Hare's head.

CHESHIRE CAT

Well then ... *re-enter Ariel, invisible, playing and singing; Ferdinand following.*

The Dormouse starts singing in her sleep. March Hare/Ferdinand wanders, trying to pinpoint where the music is coming from. Alice/Miranda watches him from a distance, and doesn't notice when Carroll/Prospero appears at her side.

DORMOUSE/ARIEL

*Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands;
Curtsied when you have, and kiss 'd,
The wild waves whist.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*This music crept by me upon the waters,
Allaying both their fury and my passion
With its sweet air: thence I have follow'd it.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*The fringed curtains of thine eye advance,
And say what thou seest yond.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*I might call him
A thing divine; for nothing natural
I ever saw so noble.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*It goes on, I see,
As my soul prompts it.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*(seeing Miranda)
Most sure, the goddess
On who these airs attend! Vouchsafe my prayer
May know if you remain upon this island;
And that you will some good instruction give
How I may bear me here. My prime request,
Which I do last pronounce, is, (O you wonder!)
If you be maid or no?*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*No wonder, sir,
But certainly a maid.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*My language? Heavens,
I am the best of them that speak this speech,
Were I but where 'tis spoken.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*How? The best?
What wert thou if the King of Naples heard thee?*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*A single thing, as I am now, that wonders
To hear thee speak of Naples. He does hear me,
And that he does, I weep. My self am Naples,
Who with mine eyes (never since at ebb) beheld
The King my Father wrecked. (to Miranda) O, if a virgin,
And your affection not gone forth, I'll make you
The Queen of Naples.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*(aside)
They are both in either's pow'rs. But this swift business
I must uneasy make, least too light winning
Make the prize light (to Ferdinand) One word more: I charge thee
That thou attend me. Thou dost here usurp
The name thou ow'st not, and hast put thy self
Upon this island as a spy, to win it
From me, the Lord on 't.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

No, as I am a man.

ALICE/MIRANDA

*There's nothing ill can dwell in such a temple:
If the ill spirit have so fair a house,
Good things will strive to dwell with 't.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Thou think'st there is no more such shapes as he,
Having seen but him and Caliban. Foolish wench,
To th' most of men this is a Caliban,
And they to him are angels.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*My affections
Are then most humble: I have no ambition
To see a goodlier man.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*(to Ferdinand)
Come on, obey:
I'll manacle thy neck and feet together.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*I will resist such entertainment till
Mine enemy has more pow'r.*

He draws his sword, but Prospero puts a spell on him that keeps him from moving.

ALICE/MIRANDA

*O dear Father,
Make not too rash a trial of him, for
He's gentle and not fearful.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*(to Ferdinand)
Follow me,
Thy nerves are in their infancy again,
And have no vigour in them.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*So they are:
My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.
MY father's loss, the weakness which I feel,
The wreck of all my friends, nor this man's threats,
To whom I am subdued, are but light to me,
Might I but through my prison once a day
Behold this maid: all corners else o' th' earth
Let liberty make use of; space enough
Have I in such a prison.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*(aside)
It works. (to Ferdinand) Come on.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*(to Ferdinand)
My father's of a better nature, sir,*

*Than he appears by speech: this is unwonted
Which now came from him.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Come, follow. (to Miranda) Speak not for him.

Prospero exits with Ferdinand. Alice stands there,
watching them go.

ALICE

I must admit, I envy Miranda - to just look at someone, and fall in love, without a pause for any other consideration.

MAD HATTER

Falling in love - sounds dangerous. Is it very deep?

ALICE

That depends on the person, I suppose. I often wonder at my own supply of it. Do I only have a small amount, or is there some vast reservoir that's difficult to get at? I've never felt the way Miranda does. Not yet.

CHESHIRE CAT

Not even your own personal prince?

ALICE

His name is Leopold, and it's not like that. What we share is ... an understanding.

The March Hare re-enters from the wings.

ALICE

You are right about one thing, though. The March Hare does look more and more like him.

MARCH HARE

What was that?

MAD HATTER

She said you reminded her of a prince.

MARCH HARE

Ah! Well, I was trying very hard to appear princely.

ALICE

You did quite well. A stirring mixture of tenderness and nobility. Very much like the one prince I've had the pleasure of knowing. We talk a great deal. Granted, none of our conversations go quite like that.

MARCH HARE

How do they go?

ALICE

It's ... rather hard to describe.

MARCH HARE

Is it more like, oh I don't know -

The March Hare dodges around to her other side. The lights around them change suddenly.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Alice! What luck to find you here!

And Alice is back in an old conversation with Leopold, a bit mystified to find herself there.

ALICE

Yes, more like that.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Might I ask a favor of you?

ALICE

I don't have any objections.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Wonderful. Pretend like we're talking.

ALICE

Are we ... not talking?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

I mean, having a serious conversation. One that it's best not to interrupt.

ALICE

Ah. More unwelcome admirers off the starboard bow?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Just to your left, yes. Always the same questions - "How is the family? Is your health improving? What's it like to be royalty?" From everyone here. Except you, for which I'm eternally grateful.

ALICE

It's a fair trade. You never ask me what it's like to be Alice In Wonderland.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Hmm. I suppose I don't. I may get around to it someday, but for now, there are more interesting questions to ask. And you're one of the few around here that supplies interesting answers.

ALICE

You're one of the few that actually listens to them when I do.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Well in that case, tell me. What's it like to be Alice in Oxford?

ALICE

(laughs)

The answer to that would require a real serious conversation, not just a pretend one. You're asking me to describe a far stranger world than the ones in Reverend Dodgson's books.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

I have the time for it if you do, and no small amount of people I'd like to avoid.

ALICE

Very well then. It's a much different place than where you are. You're at Oxford the institution, where if you learn a specific set of facts, they let you go after a few years. I'm in Oxford the town, which is a much more difficult place to escape from.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Is that the goal, then? To escape?

ALICE

Well, not THE goal. The first of many. At least, I hope.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

What makes you so eager to leave?

ALICE

For the same reason you left and came here, I imagine. To not be defined as "the Dean's daughter", or that girl someone wrote a book for once. Oxford has a particular idea of who I am, and doesn't like to be contradicted. But I want to know what I'd be without them, if I were just defined by myself.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Of course. Strange, isn't it? How so much of what people find interesting about us are the things we have the least control over.

ALICE

Yes.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

So how do you plan to do it?

ALICE

What?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Make your escape?

ALICE

Still working on that, I'm afraid.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Well, I wouldn't be too worried, if I were you. From where I stand, (he leans in close, conspiratorial) it seems like you've gotten past the most dangerous part already.

ALICE

What part is that?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Believing that you are what they say you are.

The lights suddenly change again, back to the Tea Party, the March Hare completely himself again. The Mad Hatter flips through their copy of *The Tempest*.

MAD HATTER

So Act Two, scene one. "*Another part of the island. Enter Alonso, Antonio, Sebastian, Gonzalo, and others.*" Alonso?

CHESHIRE CAT

That's the King of Naples.

MARCH HARE

Oh, right. The Dormouse is playing him.

DORMOUSE

(waking with a start)

What?

MAD HATTER

You're playing the King of Naples.

DORMOUSE

Oh. I suppose I can wake up for that.

MAD HATTER

I've been playing Antonio - and no one had better try and change that this time!

The Cheshire Cat takes a handsome cap off the table.

CHESHIRE CAT

There's also Sebastian, the King's brother - (hands the cap to the March Hare) and the March Hare's been doing quite well at people related to royalty, don't you think?

The Cheshire Cat picks up another hat, goes to put it on.

CHESHIRE CAT

Then, Gonzalo, a wise councillor.

The Mad Hatter grabs it away from her.

MAD HATTER

That one's mine, too!

ALICE

But you'll be playing two parts at the same time -

MAD HATTER

I've had two stolen from me. It's only fair.

ALICE

Very well. Is there anyone else?

CHESHIRE CAT

Ariel, a bit later on.

ALICE

(sighs)

Back to the wings and wig again. Act Two, Scene One had better be worth it.

The Cheshire Cat helps Alice back into her Ariel gear while The March Hare, the Dormouse and the Mad Hatter take their places stage right. The Mad Hatter wears his “Gonzalo” hat on his head, while wearing his “Antonio” hat on one of his hands. He quickly and seamlessly switches hats throughout the scene.

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

*Beseech you, sir, be merry; you have cause,
So have we all, of joy; for our escape
Is much beyond our loss. Our hint of woe
Is common; every day, some sailor's wife,
Has just our theme of woe; but for the miracle,
I mean our preservation, few in millions
Can speak like us: then wisely, good sir, weigh
Our sorrow with our comfort.*

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

Prithee, peace.

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

He receives comfort like cold porridge.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

(gesturing to the Gonzalo hat)

The visitor will not give him o'er so.

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

(to Alonso)

Is not, sir, my doublet as fresh as the first day I wore it? I mean in a sort.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

That sort was well fished for.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*You cram these words into mine ears against
The stomach of my sense. My son is lost.
O thou mine heir of Naples, what strange fish
Hath made his meal on thee?*

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN
Milan and Naples have

*More widows in them of this business' making
 Than we bring men to comfort them:
 The fault's your own.*

DORMOUSE/ALONSO
So is the dear'st o' the loss.

ALICE
 Is this going to be the whole scene?

MAD HATTER/GONZALO
*My lord Sebastian,
 The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness-*

ALICE
 Four men arguing after surviving a shipwreck?

MAD HATTER/GONZALO
*Had I plantation of this isle, my lord,
 And were the king on't, what would I do?
 I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
 Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
 Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
 No occupation; all men idle, all;
 And women too, but innocent and pure;*

ALICE
 Wait - there's something familiar ...

MAD HATTER/GONZALO
*All things in common nature should produce
 Without sweat or endeavour: treason, felony,
 Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine,
 Would I not have;*

ALICE
 A tragedy occurs -

MAD HATTER/GONZALO
*but nature should bring forth,
 of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,
 To feed my innocent people.*

ALICE
 They're all soaked to the bone -

MAD HATTER/GONZALO
*I would with such perfection govern, sir,
 To excel the golden age.*

ALICE

- and in a foul temper -

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

- do you mark me, sir?

ALICE

So someone starts talking nonsense -

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

Prithee, no more: thou dost talk nothing to me.

ALICE

- as a distraction -

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

I do well believe your highness;

ALICE

- as a kind of cure -

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

- and did it to minister occasion to these gentlemen, who are of such sensible and nimble lungs that they always use to laugh at nothing.

ALICE

- so that you forget -

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

'Twas you we laughed at.

ALICE

- just what it was that ailed you in the first place.

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

Who in this kind of merry fooling am nothing to you: so you may continue, and laugh at nothing still.

The lights dim on the scene from *The Tempest* as Alice starts to remember something.

ALICE

Yes ... that's what it was - that day in June. The picnic at Nuneham. We'd just set up on the river bank, when it began pouring down rain.

A crack of thunder. Rain. Alice is back in that moment.

ALICE

The tea is overwhelmed, the cakes ruined, my skirts growing heavier as the water colonizes them. So he tips the rowboat over for a makeshift shelter -

The table cloth is suddenly thrown up and over the table to reveal Lewis Carroll underneath, beckoning to her.

CARROLL

Quickly, Alice. Under here.

ALICE

-and my sisters and I scamper beneath it.

Alice dives under the table. The Cheshire Cat appears, suddenly looking very much like Alice's sister LORINA, 13. By her side, a porcelain doll the Cheshire Cat operates, puppet-like, standing in for Alice's sister, EDITH, 8.

ALICE

Ugh. I'm soaked right through.

CHESHIRE CAT/EDITH

So am I! I'm soaked right through too, aren't I, Mr. Dodgson?

CARROLL

We each have our own share of sogginess, to be sure.

CHESHIRE CAT/LORINA

Will it rain all day, do you think?

ALICE

It can't rain all day. I shall never feel dry again!

CHESHIRE CAT/EDITH

Me neither!

CARROLL

But you're all three such clever girls, you must know the best and quickest way to dry off.

CHESHIRE CAT/LORINA

Sitting by the fire, wrapped in blankets?

CARROLL

Not quite. The best thing to get us dry would be a Caucus-race.

ALICE

A what?

CARROLL

You've never heard of a Caucus-race?

CHESHIRE CAT/LORINA

A Caucus is a sort of committee, isn't it? But I've never heard of racing in one.

CARROLL

Well, it's rather an easier thing to do than explain, but I shall try my best. First, you mark out a race-course, in a sort of circle, or oval if you like. The exact shape doesn't matter, so long as you all agree upon it.

ALICE

And then everyone lines up at the starting line, and -?

CARROLL

Oh no! It would take far too long to decide on just one place to start. The party is placed all about the course, some here, some there, a few in the middle. Wherever is convenient, really.

ALICE

So who shouts 'one, two, three, and away'?

CARROLL

No one. You begin running whenever you like.

CHESHIRE CAT/LORINA

But if everyone starts at different places, how do you know who crosses the finish line first?

CARROLL

There is no finish line. You stop when you are quite dry and ready to stop.

ALICE

But then how do you know who has won?

CARROLL

Everybody has won. And they all must have prizes, which I trust you have brought with you.

ALICE

Me?!

CARROLL

Well, I certainly didn't bring them. Edith? No? Lorina?

CHESHIRE CAT/LORINA

I ... think I have a thimble in my apron pocket?

CARROLL

One thimble to split between the four of us?! No, that will never do. I'm afraid we shan't have a Caucus-race after all. We'll just have to dry off the *next* best way.

ALICE

And what's that?

CARROLL

Sitting by a fire, wrapped in blankets, of course.

Exasperated laughter from the girls.

CHESHIRE CAT/LORINA

But that's what I said in the first place!

CARROLL

Did you?

CHESHIRE CAT/LORINA AND
ALICE

Yes!

CARROLL

(trying hard to keep a straight face)

Are you sure? Because I don't know that I recall -

Lights back up on the scene from the Tempest as the
tablecloth falls back down just behind Alice.

DORMOUSE

Ahem! That's your cue!

ALICE

What?

DORMOUSE

To enter as Ariel.

Alice consults the script.

ALICE

Oh. So I come in and put the King and Gonzalo to sleep? All right.

Alice/Ariel grabs a teapot off the table, and sprinkles
sparkly fairy dust over Mad Hatter/Gonzalo and
Dormouse/Alonso, who get instantly sleepy and lie down.

DORMOUSE

(yawning)

Seven lines in, and I already get a nap. This play isn't so bad after all.

She goes to sleep.

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

*What a strange drowsiness possesses them! Why
Doth it not then our eyelids sink? I find not
Myself disposed to sleep.*

The Mad Hatter leaves the Gonzalo hat on the ground,
then springs up, wearing the Antonio hat.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

*Nor I; my spirits are nimble.
They dropp'd, as by a thunder-stroke. What might,
Worthy Sebastian? - O, what might? - No more: -
And yet methinks I see it in thy face,
What thou shouldst be: the occasion speaks thee; and
My strong imagination sees a crown
Dropping upon thy head.*

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

What, art thou waking?

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

*I am more serious than my custom: you
Must be so too, if heed me; which to do
Trebles thee o'er. And how does your content
Tender your own good fortune?*

ALICE

(to the Cheshire Cat)

Is this scene headed where I think it is?

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

I remember

You did supplant your brother Prospero.

CHESHIRE CAT

(to Alice)

Why do you ask?

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

True;

*And look how well my garments sit upon me;
Much feater than before:*

ALICE

The first act felt significant.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

my brother's servants

Were then my fellows; now they are my men.

ALICE

The dutiful daughter, the trapped spirit, it was ...

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

But for your conscience.

ALICE

... personal somehow.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

*Ay, sir; where lies that? Twenty consciences,
That stand 'twixt me and Milan, candied be they,
And melt, ere they molest!*

ALICE

But this scene has nothing to do with me.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

*Here lies your brother,
No better than the earth he lies upon,
If he were that which now he's like, that's dead;*

CHESHIRE CAT

(to Alice)

You're quite sure of that?

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

*Whom I, with this obedient steel, three inches of it,
Can lay to bed for ever;*

ALICE

Do I look like a traitorous assassin to you?

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

*Thy case, dear friend,
Shall be my precedent; as thou got'st Milan,
I'll come by Naples.*

CHESHIRE CAT

Not at the moment -

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

*Draw thy sword: one stroke
Shall free thee from the tribute which thou payest;
And I the king shall love thee.*

CHESHIRE CAT

- but who knows what you could achieve if you applied yourself?

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

*Draw together;
And when I rear my hand, do you the like,
To fall it on Gonzalo.*

ALICE

Applied myself - to murder?!

CHESHIRE CAT

To being free.

They raise their weapons, prepare to strike.

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

O, but one word.

March Hare/Sebastian takes Mad Hatter/Antonio aside, debating in low tones.

CHESHIRE CAT

Was it Sebastian's fault he was born second instead of first? Yet because of it, he's left stranded with no higher ambition than a political marriage, or playing lackey to a more powerful man. But I'm sure you know nothing about that.

ALICE

So you're saying Sebastian isn't just a villain, he's a victim, too?

CHESHIRE CAT

You're saying that. I merely implied it.

ALICE

But he consents to the killing of his own brother!

CHESHIRE CAT

That is the prison he's confined in. He is always the king's brother. He is never simply himself. Imagine that - being defined by someone else long before you had any say in the matter.

Alice takes the wig off, looks at it.

ALICE

It gets exhausting, being his 'Alice in Wonderland' to everyone I meet. A host of strangers, all wanting things from me I haven't had since I was ten. They demand to be enchanted. So things I say quite severely are suddenly droll, or, god forbid, *whimsical*. The words come out of my mouth, but the meaning is entirely out of my control.

DORMOUSE

The meaning gets out of everyone's control eventually, if only for a moment. Why, if the king's ship hadn't just happened to sail by, impressive Mr. Prospero would have nothing to do for the whole play. It's not until something out of his control happens that he has a chance to put his power to any real use.

ALICE

You're awfully lucid all of a sudden.

DORMOUSE

I had a very good nap. Slept like a king!

ALICE

And speaking of Prospero, I have to do his bidding in this scene now, so if you'll excuse me -

CHESHIRE CAT

You have to?

ALICE

Yes. (consulting the script) Prospero sends Ariel to sing to Gonzalo to wake him up before he and the King are stabbed to death.

CHESHIRE CAT

She does. But what if you didn't?

ALICE

What?

CHESHIRE CAT

Trapped inside the script, Ariel must do as she's told. But when brought to life by an actor - well, actors have a choice. Which is probably why writers dislike them so much.

ALICE

So ... I could choose not to be Shakespeare's Ariel at all. MY Ariel could disobey Prospero and let Gonzalo and the king snore all the way to their deaths.

DORMOUSE

But then Prospero's plans would all be ruined -

ALICE

And?

DORMOUSE

- and the play wouldn't go on as it's supposed to. It may not continue to go on at all.

CHESHIRE CAT

If you were looking for a moment where the meaning was in your control -

ALICE

I could change what the entire play is about just by standing still.

DORMOUSE

If it's all the same to you, I'd rather not do a death scene today -

ALICE

Confound everyone's expectations, all the words written about me -

DORMOUSE

The stage blood would get matted in my fur for a start.

ALICE

- turn it all on its head by doing nothing at all.

DORMOUSE

Have you tried getting that stuff out? It's a grooming nightmare!

ALICE

But the only reason I started this play was because I thought it was a riddle. If I changed it would I change the answer too? And into what? A better one? Or worse?

Mad Hatter/Antonio and March Hare/Sebastian clasp hands.

CHESHIRE CAT

So what shall it be?

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

Then let us both be sudden.

Mad Hatter/Antonio and March Hare/Sebastian head for the sleepers. Alice looks between them, unsure. Then kneels down next to the Gonzalo hat on the ground, sings.

ALICE/ARIEL

*If of life you keep a care,
Shake off slumber, and beware:
Awake, awake!*

Mad Hatter/Antonio and March Hare/Sebastian raise their weapons. Alice throws on the Gonzalo hat, and bolts up.

ALICE/GONZALO

*Now, good angels
Preserve the king!*

She slams the Gonzalo hat on Mad Hatter's head, steps back.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*Why, how now? Ho, awake! - Why are you drawn?
Wherefore this ghastly looking?*

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

What's the matter?

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

*Whiles we stood here securing your repose,
Even now, we heard a hollow burst of bellowing
Like bulls, or rather lions: did't not wake you?
It struck mine ear most terribly.*

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*Lead off this ground; and let's make further search
For my poor son.*

The Dormouse, Mad Hatter and March Hare exit.

CHESHIRE CAT

Congratulations. You've spared the king, the scales of power won't swing.

ALICE

I have to see this to the end. I must puzzle out the message he's left for me.

CHESHIRE CAT

You're so sure it's for you?

ALICE

I beg your pardon?

CHESHIRE CAT

That story about the Caucus Race. Who was it for?

ALICE

My sisters and I, to cheer us up.

CHESHIRE CAT

At first. But then a year later, he put it in his book. Not even the version he gave to you at Christmas. The one he published. The one that made him famous.

ALICE

Yes, but -

CHESHIRE CAT

The Alice in the book. She has long blonde hair, yes? But you've always been a brunette. And as a child, you kept it short.

ALICE

So?

CHESHIRE CAT

So how can you be certain this was ever really about you at all?

The Cheshire Cat smiles and exits.

ALICE

Of course it was! I was the one who made him write it down! Wasn't I? (louder) Wasn't I? (to herself) Curiouser and curiouser, ad infinitum. (one last yell after the Cheshire Cat) And really, how *is* a hawk like a handsaw?!

She stands there, alone. With no answer.

Act Two

SCENE ONE

Darkness onstage, except for Alice, alone, pacing back and forth.

ALICE

I've been avoiding it. Trying not to look too closely at how it all happened. But that question - "can you be certain this was ever really about you at all?" I have to know. So here I go again.

She steps forward. And suddenly, Alice is floating, the sides of a rabbit-hole visible behind her, full of cupboards and oddities rolling upwards as she plummets.

ALICE

Down, down, down. Deep into old memories. Hoping for something to stand on.

She sees a calender floating by, grabs it, and reads.

ALICE

"November 1862. Ten years old." I saw him in the dining hall, while waiting for my father.

Carroll floats up beside her in his Oxford robes.

CARROLL

Alice. I hadn't expected to see you this afternoon.

Some tea things go by in the upward soaring cupboards. Carroll grabs some of them, pours a cup.

CARROLL

Have some tea.

ALICE

I don't know that I'm in the mood for tea.

Carroll notices a stray biscuit on a saucer, nudges it toward Alice.

CARROLL

A biscuit, then?

ALICE

(taking the biscuit)

What I really want is my story. It's been months since I asked you to write that story down for me, and you still haven't done it.

CARROLL

I did say I would write it down, didn't I? Yes, that was quite neglectful of me. And this is certainly the time of year for it. November in England - all fog and mist and bitter winds.

I can't think of a better way to spend it than staying indoors and writing down a tale from a pleasant summer's day. I shall begin at once. Perhaps even with pictures.

ALICE

You can draw pictures?!

CARROLL

Not especially. But I've always wanted to try.

ALICE

Well, if there are pictures involved, I suppose it shall be worth the wait.

CARROLL

How very kind of you.

ALICE

It's quite all right.

CARROLL

Then I shall be at it. If you will excuse me -

Carroll sees his cumbersome Victorian camera hovering some ways ahead of him. He makes a dive for it, grabs on, and spins about a few times before wrestling it into submission.

Alice tears off a page of the calendar, which flies upwards, reads the next one.

ALICE

"1860. Eight years old."

CARROLL

One more time, then, Alice.

ALICE

But we've taken four photographs already.

CARROLL

The light wasn't quite right. It's better now. (looks through the camera) Also, something about the composition ...

He looks around him, sees a potted fern going by on one of the rabbit-hole shelves.

ALICE

I don't think mother and father would even notice if the light isn't "quite right".

He takes it down and lobs it into the air, so that it floats next to her.

CARROLL

Yes. There we are.

ALICE

Or care too much about the composition.

CARROLL

And?

ALICE

And this photograph is for them, isn't it?

CARROLL

Hands in your lap, perhaps? Good. The print is for them, yes. But the process, the crafting of each element as both art and science, the satisfaction of that - (he takes the photograph) is for me.

The sides of the rabbit-hole drift away, Carroll drifts off with them ...

SCENE TWO: A TEA TABLE IN WONDERLAND

... and Alice slams down into a chair, hard, back at the table again. The Cheshire Cat and Dormouse watch as the Mad Hatter and March hare fight over one of two identical striped caps straight out of Tenniel's Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum illustrations.

ALICE

So ... which is it, then?

MAD HATTER

Give it to me!

MARCH HARE

No, you've got your own.

MAD HATTER

But it's completely wrong for my character!

MARCH HARE

I don't think so.

MAD HATTER

Well, I do, and I'm the resident expert on hats - it's in my name, for heaven's sake!

ALICE

What's going on?

CHESHIRE CAT

We were casting for the next scene -

MAD HATTER

It's mine!

It's not!

MARCH HARE

Is too!

MAD HATTER

Let go!

MARCH HARE

DORMOUSE

But there seems to be some debate about the costuming.

MAD HATTER

But I'm playing Stephano, butler to the king! You're playing Trinculo, the jester. So I should get the fancy one.

ALICE

But they both look the same.

MAD HATTER

No, they don't!

MARCH HARE

This one is much grander.

MAD HATTER

And therefore should be mine!

Alice grabs both hats away from them, and hides them behind her back.

ALICE

Now that is enough of that! If you're going to act Shakespeare, you have to be civilized! So you'll take what you get, and like it. Do you hear me? Now then:

She brings one hat from behind her back and hands it to the Mad Hatter.

ALICE

Here is the one you wanted.

MAD HATTER

Ha ha!

She hands the other to the March Hare.

ALICE

And here is the one you wanted.

MARCH HARE

Why, so it is!

They both look at their hats, then back at her.

MAD HATTER

It's a miracle!

MARCH HARE

How did you DO that?

ALICE

(rolls her eyes)

Where were we, again?

DORMOUSE

(consulting the script)

Act Two, Scene two. Another part of the island. Enter Caliban with a burden of wood.

The Cheshire Cat takes center stage, hauling one of the many chairs from around the table on her back.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flat, on Prosper fall, and make him
By inch-meal a disease! His spirits hear me,
And yet I needs must curse. But they'll nor pinch,
Nor lead me, like a firebrand, in the dark
Out of my way, unless he bid 'em: but
For every trifle are they set upon me;
Sometime like apes, that mow and chatter at me,
And after bite me; then like hedgehogs, which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way, and mount
Their pricks at my footfall; sometime am I
All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues
Do hiss me into madness.*

Enter the March Hare as Trinculo.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

Lo, now, lo!

*Here comes a spirit of his, and to torment me
For bringing wood in slowly. I'll fall flat;
Perchance he will not mind me.*

Cheshire Cat/Caliban crouches under the chair.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Here's neither bush nor shrub, to bear off any weather at all, and another storm brewing;

ALICE

Oh. Should there be thunder, then?

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

I hear it sing i' the wind:

DORMOUSE

I think that means "yes."

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Yond same black cloud, yond huge one, cannot choose but fall by pailfuls.

DORMOUSE

How does one make thunder, exactly?

ALICE

That's what I'm trying to figure out.

Alice looks through the things on the table, while the March Hare/Trinculo stumbles over Cheshire Cat/Caliban.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

What have we here? A man or a fish? Dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-like smell. A strange fish! Legged like a man! And his fins like arms! Warm o' my troth! I do now let loose my opinion; hold it no longer: this is no fish, but an islander that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt.

Alice finds two more tea trays, and crashes them together for thunder.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Alas, the storm is come again! My best way is to creep under his gaberdine; there is no other shelter hereabout.

ALICE

That doesn't make much sense.

DORMOUSE

Why start now?

March Hare/Trinculo takes the chair off Cheshire Cat/Caliban, hides underneath it on top of him. Enter Mad Hatter/STEPHANO, singing, a tea pot in his hand.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

*I shall no more to sea, to sea,
Here shall I die a-shore - (spoken)
This is a very scurvy tune to sing at a man's funeral: well here's my comfort.*

He drinks from the teapot.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

Do not torment me: - o!

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

What's the matter? Have we devils here? (examines the Trinculo/Caliban/chair dogpile) This is some monster of the isle with four legs, who hath got, as I take it, an ague. Where the devil should he learn our language?

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

Do not torment me, prithee; I'll bring my wood home faster.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

If I can recover him, and keep him tame, and get to Naples with him, he's a present for any emperor that ever trod on neat's-leather.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

Thou dost me yet but little hurt; thou wilt anon, I know it by thy trembling: now Prosper works upon thee.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Come on your ways; open your mouth; here is that which will give language to you, cat: open your mouth; you cannot tell who's your friend: open your chaps again.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Stephano!

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Doth thy other mouth call me? Mercy, mercy! This is a devil, and no monster.

ALICE

Could this scene get any more ridiculous?

DORMOUSE

I think it's going to try...

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Stephano! - be not afeard - for I am Trinculo, thy good friend Trinculo.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

I'll pull thee by the lesser legs: if any be Trinculo's legs, these are they.

Mad Hatter/Stephano tries to pull March Hare/Trinculo out from under Cheshire Cat/Caliban. It takes some effort.

ALICE

(to Cheshire Cat)

You're going to have to explain how any of this relates to me, because I have no earthly idea.

CHESHIRE CAT

I'm rather busy at the moment.

Thou art very Trinculo indeed! How camest thou to be the siege of this moon-calf? Can he vent Trinculos?

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

I took him to be killed with a thunder-stroke. I hid me under the dead moon-calf's gaberdine for fear of the storm. And art thou living, Stephano? O Stephano, two Neapolitans scaped!

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Prithee, do not turn me about; my stomach is not constant.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*These be fine things, an if they be not sprites.
That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor:
I will kneel to him.*

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

(takes a swig of the teapot) O Stephano, hast any more of this?

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

The whole butt, man: my cellar is in a rock by the sea-side, where my wine is hid. How now, moon-calf! How does thine ague?

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

Hast thou not dropp'd from heaven?

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Out o' the moon, I do assure thee: I was the man i' the moon when time was.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee.

ALICE

(to the Cheshire Cat)

You chose this role for yourself.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

By this good light, this is a very shallow monster! I afeard of him!

ALICE

You were quite impressive at first.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*I'll show thee every fertile inch o' th' island;
And I will kiss thy foot: I prithee, be my god.*

ALICE

But now-

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

I'll show thee the best springs; I'll pluck thee berries;

ALICE

He turns out to be a simpleton-

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough.

ALICE

- taken in by a common drunk.

MAD HATTER

How dare you?! I am an exceptional drunk!

CHESHIRE CAT

(to Alice)

Not to mention an ally. The first one Caliban has ever met in his life.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*A plague upon the tyrant that I serve!
I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee,
Thou wondrous man.*

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

*Trinculo, the king and all our company else being drowned, we will inherit here: Here;
bear my bottle: fellow Trinculo, we'll fill him by and by again.*

ALICE

But it's obvious these two are no match for Prospero.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

(sings drunkenly)

Farewell, master; farewell, farewell!

ALICE

It's foolishness to think otherwise.

CHESHIRE CAT

The hope of freedom can lead one to do all sorts of foolish things.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

A howling monster; a drunken monster!

ALICE

So this is the part you choose to play?

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

(singing)

*'Ban, 'Ban, Cacaliban
Has a new master: - get a new man.*

ALICE

A gullible rebel doomed to fail?

CHESHIRE CAT

At least I made a choice. One of your roles was selected for you, and the other was dropped in your lap. So what's better, to choose your own doom or settle for what's handed to you?

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

Freedom, hey-day! Hey-day, freedom! Freedom, hey-day, freedom!

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

O brave monster! Lead the way.

Cheshire Cat/Caliban leads Mad Hatter/Stephano offstage.

ALICE

Fine. Leave me with more riddles, like everyone else does.

DORMOUSE

You might at least like the riddle you're left with better. (reading from the script) "*Act Three, scene I. Before Prospero's cell. Enter Ferdinand, bearing a log.*

The March Hare carries a chair on his back over to the chair Cheshire Cat/Caliban abandoned, and piles his on top of it.

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*There be some sports are painful, and their labour
Delight in them sets off: some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone, and most poor matters
Point to rich ends.*

ALICE

Then being forced into a position that is beneath you can be rewarding?

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*This my mean task
Would be as heavy to me as odious, but*

ALICE

But what?

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*The mistress which I serve quickens what's dead,
And makes my labours pleasures:*

ALICE

The mistress which you serve? But it's Prospero forcing you to do this.

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*I must remove
Some thousands of these logs, and pile them up,
Upon a sore injunction: my sweet mistress
Weeps when she sees me work, and says, such baseness
Had never like executor. I forget:
But these sweet thoughts do even refresh my labours,
Most busy lest, when I do it.*

ALICE

What Prospero forces you to do, you'd willingly do for Miranda. So you dedicate your labors to her, and just like that, slavery becomes freedom, and pain becomes joy. Could the things I dread be so transformed by love?

Alice enters the scene as Miranda. Carroll/Prospero watches from a distance.

ALICE/MIRANDA

*Alas, now, pray you,
Work not so hard: I would the lightning had
Burnt up those logs that you are enjoin'd to pile!
Pray, set it down, and rest you: when this burns,
'Twill weep for having wearied you. My father
Is hard at study; pray, now, rest yourself;
He's safe for these three hours.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*O most dear mistress,
The sun will set before I shall discharge
What I must strive to do.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*If you'll sit down,
I'll bear your logs the while: pray, give me that;
I'll carry it to the pile.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*No, precious creature;
I had rather crack my sinews, break my back,
Than you should such dishonour undergo,
While I sit lazy by.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*It would become me
As well as it does you: and I should do it
With much more ease; for my good will is to it,
And yours it is against. You look wearily.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*No, noble mistress; 'tis fresh morning with me
When you are by at night. I do beseech you, -
Chiefly that I might set it in my prayers, -
What is your name?*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*Miranda. - O my father,
I have broke your hest to say so!*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*Admired Miranda!
Indeed the top of admiration! worth
What's dearest to the world!*

*For several virtues
Have I liked several women; but you, O you,
So perfect and so peerless, are created
Of every creature's best!*

DORMOUSE

Oh my. This is going to get "romantic", isn't it?

ALICE/MIRANDA

*I do not know
One of my sex; how features are abroad,
I am skillless of; but by my modesty,
The jewel in my dower, I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you;
Nor can imagination form a shape,
Besides yourself, to like of. But I prattle
Something too wildly, and my father's precepts
I therein do forget.*

The Dormouse gets up from the table.

DORMOUSE

You'll have to excuse me. Love scenes give me a queasy stomach.

She exits.

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*Hear my soul speak:
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service; there resides,
To make me slave to it; and for your sake
Am I this patient log-man.*

ALICE

(to herself)

Is this what I'm missing? Someone to do it all for?

ALICE/MIRANDA

Do you love me?

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
And crown what I profess with kind event,
If I speak true! if hollowly, invert
What best is boded me to mischief! I,
Beyond all limit of what else i' the world,
Do love, prize, honour you.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

*I am a fool
To weep at what I am glad of.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO
Fair encounter

Of two most rare affections!

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND
Wherefore weep you?

ALICE/MIRANDA
*At mine unworthiness, that dare not offer
 What I desire to give; and much less take
 What I shall die to want. Hence, bashful cunning!
 And prompt me, plain and holy innocence!
 I am your wife, if you will marry me;
 If not, I'll die your maid: to be your fellow
 You may deny me; but I'll be your servant,
 Whether you will or no.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND
*My mistress, dearest;
 And I thus humble ever.*

ALICE/MIRANDA
My husband then?

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND
*Ay, with a heart as willing
 As bondage e'er of freedom: here's my hand.*

ALICE/MIRANDA
*And mine, with my heart in't: and now farewell
 Till half an hour hence.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND
A thousand thousand!

The March Hare exits. Alice twirls out of the scene, still giddy with Miranda's emotion.

ALICE
 Yes. Oh, yes. That's it. That's the answer.

The Dormouse pokes her head in from offstage.

DORMOUSE
 Are the mushy bits over yet?

ALICE
 (to the Dormouse, triumphant)
 Love can transform everything!

DORMOUSE

I'll take that as a no, then.

She starts to leave again, but Alice pulls her back on, unaware of Carroll/Prospero, who moves forward from his hiding place.

ALICE

But don't you see? All the commands I've heard shouted at me - to be a good girl, behave like a proper lady, make a good impression on the gentleman - they were hateful to me because they were demanded. But what if they were gifts to a lover instead? Why then, I'd give them freely, day after day, and be glad I did!

Not noticing Carroll/Prospero behind her, Alice has been dragging the Dormouse and herself on a collision course with him, so the Dormouse pulls back.

DORMOUSE

Still a bit of scene going on here!

ALICE

What?

Alice turns to find Carroll/Prospero right behind her, looking off in the direction of the March Hare/Ferdinand's exit.

ALICE

Oh.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*So glad of this as they I cannot be,
Who are surprised withal; but my rejoicing
At nothing can be more. I'll to my book;
For yet, ere supper-time, must I perform
Much business appertaining.*

Carroll/Prospero exits. The Dormouse sits and pours herself a cup of tea. Alice's eyes are still glued to where Carroll/Prospero just left.

ALICE

Why did he have to say that? Why did he have to make it- no. I felt what I felt. The life waiting for me back home can be a paradise with the right person to give it to. It's that simple. And who the person is. Maybe that's simple too.

She sits down.

ALICE

There was that moment. Not even a week since. He found me in the park.

The March Hare/Prince Leopold enters.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Alice!

ALICE

Looking so very tired.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

You don't know what it means for me to have found you.

ALICE

Perhaps I do.

He takes the chair next to hers. The process of sitting down is slow, flashes of pain crossing his face.

ALICE

Your joints?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Yes.

ALICE

Father said the winters were hard for you.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Thank you.

ALICE

For what?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Actually discussing it. Everyone is so afraid to say something, as though I don't know that I'm diseased. Instead they just look, eyes brimming with pity and English embarrassment. Hours, days full of that ghastly looking. There are times when I just want to scream, "Haemophilia!" in the middle of the dining hall and be done with it. Is it that hard to say, for god's sake?

ALICE

There's a good number of syllables to it, yes. But it flows off the tongue rather trippingly. Haemophilia. Poetic, really. Like the heroine of a pastoral romance.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

(laughs)

"Quoth the shepherd Arcite to his beloved Haemophilia?"

ALICE

I'd certainly read it.

Warm laughter, shared.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

How do you do that? Transform things just by looking at them differently.

ALICE

Do I? I haven't been trying.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Perhaps that's why it works.

ALICE

Do you feel any different when I look at you?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

A little.

ALICE

Is there something in my eyes that does it?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

What isn't there, I think. No secret motives. No judgments. It's stunning, how much room for more important things there is in your eyes. I feel as though I could throw every part of myself into them, and there'd be space for each one to be understood.

ALICE

You may try if you like. They've been looking at Oxford for quite some time, and are quite eager to see something new.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Something new. How about a prince who's ... afraid?

ALICE

Afraid of what?

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

Everything. Dying, which the doctors say could happen any moment. Living, under my mother's thumb forever. Being seen as weak. Having to pretend I'm strong. I'm afraid of all of it, of how difficult it is for me to imagine a future beyond those things. I'm so tired, Alice. But there's no room for me to be. I have to carry on, play the man, when I'd give anything to be free to just be ... tired.

ALICE

Well, there seems to be no one else about, so if that's what you need, you're allowed.

He looks at her, then sighs, and collapses deeper into his chair. His head falls back, unintentionally near her shoulder. Alice looks to make sure no one's watching, then moves in to let him rest there.

ALICE

There you are. Time. Space. Just as you said. With no judgment. No other motives. No...

The Mad Hatter appears, hatless, looking very much like Alice's father.

MAD HATTER/DR. LIDDELL

This could be quite a promising situation if played correctly, and it requires you to focus.

ALICE

(looks over at him)

Wait -

MAD HATTER/DR. LIDDELL

He is more than a person. He is royalty. And as such, offers a unique chance for advancement for both yourself and your family.

ALICE

(to her father)

What are you doing?

MAD HATTER/DR. LIDDELL

If you find him an appealing suitor, it could be most advantageous for-

ALICE

You can't be here. Not in this moment. It's mine.

Carroll/Prospero appears on the other side of the stage.

CARROLL/PROSPERO AND MAD
HATTER/DR. LIDDELL

*So glad of this as they I cannot be,
Who are surprised withal; but my rejoicing
At nothing can be more.*

Alice jumps to her feet, sending the March Hare toppling out of his chair.

ALICE

(to her father and Carroll)

Stop it!

Carroll/Prospero and Mad Hatter/Dr. Liddell exit from where they came. Alice runs after her father, and pulls him back onstage. But he is just the Mad Hatter again, top hat back on his head.

ALICE

Why did you have to go and ruin it?!

MAD HATTER

Unhand me, girl!

DORMOUSE

Who ruined what?

The March Hare is back to himself as well, puzzled to find himself sprawled half on a chair, half on the ground.

ALICE

Why couldn't you leave well enough alone?!

The Mad Hatter fights himself free of her.

MAD HATTER

I don't know what you're talking about!

DORMOUSE

Why couldn't who leave what well enough a-something?

ALICE

Love.

DORMOUSE

Are Love and Time both people now? I know I'm not one to talk, but all this anthropomorphism seems to be getting out of hand.

ALICE

Love isn't the who, it's the what.

DORMOUSE

Oh. Well, that's some consolation.

ALICE

But is it enough?

DORMOUSE

Is what enough?

ALICE

Is love enough?

DORMOUSE

Of what?

ALICE

A consolation.

DORMOUSE

For who?

ALICE

For me.

DORMOUSE

Oh. I haven't the slightest idea.

ALICE

I thought I did, for a moment. It felt so clear when I was Miranda. But Prospero created the whole situation to make them feel how he wants them to.

It's he who is in control, not them. So what is their love, really? A transfiguring miracle, or just bait the adult world sets its traps with?

DORMOUSE

You make it sound as if it can only be one of those things at a time. Perhaps it is the second thing precisely because it is the first one too.

Alice stares at the Dormouse.

ALICE

I think I liked you better when you were sleeping all the time.

DORMOUSE

Just because the thought may be unpleasant doesn't mean you have to be.

ALICE

You're right. I'm sorry. Shall we move on?

DORMOUSE

Please. If I have to be awake, I'd prefer to be entertained.

ALICE

(reading)

"Scene II. Another part of the island. Enter Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo. (sighs)
These character again.

At the name Caliban, the Cheshire Cat appears, while the March Hare and Mad Hatter put on their Trinculo and Stephano hats.

ALICE

I'd just as soon skip them, if you don't mind.

MAD HATTER

I certainly do mind! It's a chance to inhabit one character, delve in deep! These are the only scenes where I don't get acting whiplash the whole time.

ALICE

But their last scene felt so pointless.

DORMOUSE

It's a shame you feel that way, because you're in this one.

The Mad Hatter/Stephano grabs a teapot, and drinks from it freely.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Tell not me;- when the butt is out, we will drink water; not a drop before:

ALICE

What? Where?

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Therefore bear up, and board 'em. Servant-monster, drink to me.

The Dormouse points out Alice's entrance in the script.

DORMOUSE

See? Enter Ariel, invisible.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Servant-monster! The folly of this island!

Alice sighs and starts to put on her Ariel gear.

ALICE

Wonderful.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

They say there's but five upon this isle; we are three of them; if th' other two be brained like us, the state totters.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

How does thy honour? Let me lick thy shoe. I'll not serve him, he is not valiant.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Why, thou debauched fish, thou, was there ever man a coward that hath drunk so much sack as I to-day? Wilt thou tell a monstrous lie, being but half a fish and half a monster?

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

Lo, how he mocks me! Wilt thou let him, my lord?

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Trinculo, keep a good tongue in your head: The poor monster's my subject, and he shall not suffer indignity.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

I thank my noble lord. Wilt thou be pleased to hearken once again to the suit I made to thee?

Alice/Ariel enters, unseen by the others.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

As I told thee before, I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, that by his cunning hath cheated me of the island.

ALICE/ARIEL

(impersonating Trinculo's voice)

Thou liest.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

(to Trinculo)

*Thou liest, thou jesting monkey, thou:
I would my valiant master would destroy thee!
I do not lie.*

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Trinculo, if you trouble him any more in's tale, by this hand, I will supplant some of your teeth.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Why, I said nothing.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Mum, then, and no more. Proceed.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*I say, by sorcery he got this isle;
From me he got it. If thy greatness will
Revenge it on him, - for I know thou darest,
But this thing dare not, -*

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

How now shall this be compassed? Canst thou bring me to the party?

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*Yea, yea, my lord: I'll yield him thee asleep,
Where thou mayst knock a nail into his head.*

ALICE/ARIEL

Thou liest; thou canst not.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Trinculo, interrupt the monster one word further, and, by this hand, I'll turn my mercy out o' doors, and make a stock-fish of thee.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Why, what did I? I did nothing. I'll go farther off.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Didst thou not say he lied?

ALICE/ARIEL

Thou liest.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Do I so? Take thou that! (Beats Trinculo) As you like this, give me the lie another time.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

I did not give the lie. Out o' your wits, and hearing too? A pox o' your bottle, and the devil take your fingers!

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

(to Caliban)

Now forward with your tale. (to Trinculo) Prithee, stand farther off.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*Why, as I told thee, 'tis a custom with him
I' th' afternoon to sleep: there thou mayst brain him,
Having first seized his books; or with a log
Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,
Or cut his wezand with thy knife.*

The Cheshire Cat looks over at Alice.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

Remember

*First to possess his books; for without them
He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
One spirit to command: they all do hate him
As rootedly as I. Burn but his books.*

The Cheshire Cat turns back to the Mad Hatter/Stephano.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*And that most deeply to consider is
The beauty of his daughter; he himself
Calls her a nonpareil:*

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Is it so brave a lass?

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*Ay, lord; she will become thy bed, I warrant,
And bring thee forth brave brood.*

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

*Monster, I will kill this man: his daughter and I will be king and queen, - save our Graces!
- and Trinculo and thyself shall be viceroys. Dost thou like the plot, Trinculo?*

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

Excellent.

ALICE/ARIEL

This will I tell my master.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

Come on. Trinculo, let us sing.

ALICE/ARIEL

(singing)

*Flout 'em and scout 'em, and scout 'em and flout 'em;
Thought is free.*

Alice/Ariel picks up the tune.

MAD HATTER/STEPHANO

What is this same?

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

This is the tune or our catch, played by the picture of Nobody.

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twanging instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.*

ALICE

Caliban's previous line was plotting rape and murder-

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO

The sound is going away; let's follow it, and after do our work.

March Hare/Trinculo and Mad Hatter/Stephano exit.

ALICE

But what he hears in that music is so...

CHESHIRE CAT

Beautiful? Perhaps a glimpse of his true nature, before his mother's death left him stranded, before years of slavery to a cruel master with tormenting spirits at command taught him hate. Perhaps left to his own devices, he listened and imagined and was at peace with the island. Perhaps he will be again.

ALICE

When?

CHESHIRE CAT

When he is free.

ALICE

And how do you expect that to happen? By following those two?

CHESHIRE CAT

No. By following you.

ALICE

What?

CHESHIRE CAT

I know what you really want. And you can have it, if you'll just get rid of Him.

ALICE

I don't know what you're talking about.

CHESHIRE CAT

You're afraid of it, but you know. You want to stay here.

ALICE

It's tempting. To shed gravity and consequences altogether, and just float here forever. But I'm a woman now, with a woman's desires. Wonderland isn't built for that sort of thing.

CHESHIRE CAT

So change it.

ALICE

I can't.

CHESHIRE CAT

You've already started. The rabbit grows more handsome and princely with each passing moment. Did you think that was a coincidence? This story was started for you. You've always had some power over it. You could take it from him, once and for all, and make of it whatever you like.

DORMOUSE

Thou liest!

ALICE

Just abandon the world I came from?

CHESHIRE CAT

Which world are you more likely to change, this one or that? Up there, you'll only ever be Miranda.

ALICE

That's not so terrible. Miranda is in love.

CHESHIRE CAT

In it, yes. She was placed there by her father. But it doesn't belong to her. It's a consolation prize for wanting what she is supposed to.

ALICE

Why did he have to do that? Why can't the world simply let us feel? Why must they always try to use those feelings for something else?

DORMOUSE

(flipping through *The Tempest*)

Oh dear oh dear oh dear oh dear.

ALICE

There's nowhere I can go and simply be myself. Not up there, not in here. Everywhere I look, I am used by someone! In my own home, I am a burden and a bartering tool. Here, I am a symbol of childhood innocence for people to comfort themselves with. I am so ... so

...

CHESHIRE CAT

What?

ALICE

Tired. Of men and their plots. Of being *useful*. I just want to be me. But I've spent so long being tricked and steered, and prodded, I don't know if I'd recognize 'me' when I finally got to be it.

DORMOUSE

(reading)

Scene III. Another part of the island. Enter Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, and others.

Enter March Hare as Sebastian, Mad Hatter enters with his Gonzalo and Antonio hats. The Dormouse grabs her crown and joins them. Alice sees them, and goes for the copy of *The Tempest* the Dormouse set down, reads quickly.

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

*By'r lakin, I can go no further, sir;
My old bones ache: here's a maze trod, indeed,
Through forth-rights and meanders!*

CHESHIRE CAT

(to Alice)

What are you looking for?

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

*By your patience,**I needs must rest me.*

ALICE

(gestures to Alonso, Sebastian)

What happens to them - these important, plotting men. I want to see if they get what they deserve.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

Old lord, I cannot blame thee,

*Who am myself attach'd with weariness,
To the dulling of my spirits: sit down, and rest.*

ALICE

(reading)

Oh, that's good. Yes.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*Even here I will put off my hope, and keep it
No longer for my flatterer: he is drown'd
Whom thus we stray to find; and the sea mocks
Our frustrate search on land. Well, let him go.*

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

(aside to Sebastian)

*I am right glad that he's so out of hope.
Do not, for one repulse, forego the purpose
That you resolved to effect.*

Something in one of the Mad Hatter's hat boxes catches Alice's eye.

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

(aside to Antonio)

The next advantage

Will we take throughly.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

(aside to Sebastian)

Let it be to-night.

ALICE

Sebastian and Antonio would use the king's weariness and grief to their own advantage.

Alice reaches into a hat box, brings out a crown with an odd two-dimensional quality to it.

ALICE

The king used Antonio's jealousy of Prospero to get what he wanted. Cruel manipulations that cry out for justice. And in this scene, they get a taste of it. (To Cheshire Cat) Will you help me play it?

The Cheshire Cat nods. The two of them disappear under the table. *Strange and solemn music. Enter Carroll/Prospero above, invisible.*

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

What harmony is this? - My good friends, hark!

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

Marvellous sweet music!

The Cheshire Cat emerges, dressed in the hood and livery of the playing card servants the Wonderland books, setting up a banquet on the table. He bows graciously to the others.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

Give us kind keepers, heavens! - What were these?

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

*A living drollery. Now I will believe
That there are unicorns; that in Arabia
There is one tree, the phoenix' throne; one phoenix
At this hour reigning there.*

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

*I'll believe both;
And what does else want credit, come to me,
And I'll be sworn 'tis true: travellers ne'er did lie,
Though fools at home condemn 'em.*

The Cheshire Cat gestures for the King and company to come and eat at the table.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*I cannot too much muse
Such shapes, such gesture, and such sound, expressing -
Although they want the use of a tongue - a kind
Of excellent dumb discourse.*

The Cheshire Cat ducks back under the table.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

They vanish'd.

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

*They have left their viands behind; for we have stomachs
Will't please you taste of what is here?*

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*I will,
Although my last: no matter, since I feel
The best is past. Brother, my lord the duke,
Stand to, and do as we.*

They sit down at the table, start to dig in. *Thunder and lightning.* Alice/Ariel grows out of the center of the table, wearing the strange crown, an elaborate playing-card gown, and brandishing a scepter with a large red heart on the top of it, rising up to a spectacular height. Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio draw their swords.

ALICE/ARIEL

*You fools! I and my fellows
Are ministers of Fate: But remember, -
For that's my business to you, - that you three
From Milan did supplant good Prospero;*

*Exposed unto the sea, which hath requit it,
Him and his innocent child: for which foul deed
The powers, delaying, not forgetting, have
Incensed the seas and shores, yea, all the creatures,
Against your peace. Thee of thy son, Alonso,
They have bereft; and do pronounce by me:
Lingering perdition - worse than any death
Can be at once - shall step by step attend
You and your ways; whose wraths to guard you from, -
Which here, in this most desolate isle, else falls
Upon your heads, - is nothing but heart-sorrow
And a clear life ensuing.*

She sinks back into the table.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Bravely the figure of this harpy hast thou
Perform'd, my Ariel; they now are in my power;
And in these fits I leave them-*

He exits.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*O monstrous!
Methought the billows spoke, and told me of it;
The winds did sing it to me; and the thunder,
That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounced
The name of Prosper: it did bass my trespass.
Therefore my son i' th' ooze is bedded; and
I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded,
And with him there lie mudded.*

Dormouse/Alonso runs off.

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

*But one fiend at a time,
I'll fight their legions o'er.*

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

I'll be thy second.

March Hare/Sebastian exits, Mad Hatter/Antonio goes to follow, stops quickly, puts the Gonzalo hat on.

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

*All three of them are desperate: their great guilt,
Like poison given to work a great time after
now 'gins to bite the spirits. Follow them swiftly
And hinder them from what this ecstasy
May now provoke them to.*

He holds the Antonio hat out before him, and chases it offstage. Alice and the Cheshire Cat emerge from under the table.

ALICE

That was the most fun I've had in quite some time.

CHESHIRE CAT

You did seem to be enjoying yourself.

ALICE

Oh, to have that power all the time! Able to awaken the consciences of men, force them to look their deeds squarely in the face? Holding every wicked person accountable for their actions?

CHESHIRE CAT

I daresay you'd be very busy.

ALICE

Yes, but it would be worth it.

CHESHIRE CAT

Alice Liddell, righteous judge of all mankind?

ALICE

It does have a certain ring to it.

CHESHIRE CAT

And when would you deal with Prospero? He scripted that whole spectacle to torment his abusers, and benefit from their pangs of guilt. If it's your mission to deal with men who use others' feelings for their own purposes, when do you deal with him?

ALICE

You just have to ruin everything, don't you?

CHESHIRE CAT

Or with Lewis Carroll? He took a story you inspired, that he only wrote down because you asked him to, and used it as a catapult to fame and fortune. When will you take it back?

ALICE

You want to turn me into one of them - a plotter, a trap-setter!

CHESHIRE CAT

I want us to be free to be ourselves, to be at peace with the island.

ALICE

At peace, with murder in our hearts.

CHESHIRE CAT

He'd have that world you don't want anymore. He could go on writing his dusty lectures on mathematics and taking his beloved photographs. Not murder. Merely banishment.

ALICE

I can't banish him from my memories, from that day on the river when it all began. He's there in the boat, rowing three little girls, wilting in the noonday sun. Uninterrupted blue above and below us, a clear glistening world. But the heat is relentless. The sweat has soaked through my wool stockings and is starting to cling to my petticoats. I've been taught a lady doesn't mention such things, but there is no need to. He's noticed, and is already rowing toward shore. No trees in sight, so we take refuge in the shade of a haystack. The light caress of the grass is enough to occupy us at first but I sense something is missing. "Tell us a story," I say. Edith lives to repeat my every word, so she joins in the cry. Lorina pretends to be too old for such things, but she still leans forward in expectation. He puts us off for a moment, but then there is that twinge at the corner of his mouth, his long legs unfold across the grass, and the story starts to flow, and there's that rabbit with the pocket-watch, and there's that hole in the ground, and I feel my fingers slip beneath the grass into the soil below as I sink with the story, underground, where there is no sun and no heat and no endless sky, only the sound of his voice and the cool, cool earth. That is how I first came to Wonderland - because a kind man wanted to help me keep out of the sun. To take that world away from him now would murder that moment.

CHESHIRE CAT

You're only remembering the parts you want to. It was he that took this world away from you.

ALICE

No, it was-

CHESHIRE CAT

He even said as much. That Christmas party? 1864. You weren't paying attention at the time, but surely, now, you see it. You were sulking in the corner, remember?

ALICE

I'm sure I-

CHESHIRE CAT

You'd given up on ever coming to Wonderland again, when suddenly -

A book suddenly falls into her hands. Carroll appears, looking younger. Alice is quickly 12 again.

CARROLL

It was the pictures that took longest. I can only hope you still think them worth the wait.

ALICE

You did it.

CARROLL

I said that I would.

ALICE

It's been over a year since we've spoken. I assumed you'd forgot.

CARROLL

Ah. Yes. Now that your sister is of an eligible age, it was decided that an unmarried gentleman escorting you ladies might be seen -

ALICE

But that's Ina's problem. It should have nothing to do with me.

CARROLL

Your mother did not see it that way, I'm afraid.

ALICE

She always says that I'll understand when I'm older. I'm not certain I believe her. But then, I wasn't certain I believed in this, and here it is.

She flips through it, only half paying attention to Carroll.

CARROLL

I do apologize that it took so long. As I went, other ideas began to insert themselves.

Still in the book, Alice smiles.

ALICE

It still begins as I remember it.

CARROLL

I showed bits and pieces to some friends as I went on, and they seemed quite excited by it -

ALICE

(reading)

"Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do:"

CARROLL

- so I went along a touch more carefully.

ALICE

(delighted)

Oh yes, and this bit - "but when the rabbit actually *took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket*, looked at it, then hurried on, Alice started to her feet -

CARROLL

Mr. McDonald seems particularly pleased, and thinks I should publish it.

ALICE

"- for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket or a watch to take out of it -"

CARROLL

He read that portion to his son Granville, who was most enthusiastic -

Carroll begins to fade into the background as Alice loses herself in reading.

ALICE

“- and, full of curiosity, she hurried across the field after it -”

CARROLL

(faintly, in the distance)

It seems that I may have written for a larger audience than I first thought -

ALICE

“-and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. In a moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.”

She turns around to thank him, but he is gone.

CHESHIRE CAT

You asked him to write this world down for you so you could keep it.

ALICE

But he gave it away.

CHESHIRE CAT

To everyone.

ALICE

It was our moment. Ours.

CHESHIRE CAT

But fame and fortune called.

ALICE

And he answered.

CHESHIRE CAT

So, which of you truly deserves Wonderland, do you think?

ALICE

That depends. How would I get it?

CHESHIRE CAT

You'd stop being Ariel-

She pulls Sebastian's hat from behind her back, as the March Hare wanders back on.

CHESHIRE CAT

And start being someone else.

ALICE

You keep posing choices to me. I never like any of the options.

MARCH HARE

Did you ever think that the real dilemma is not what you should choose, but why you are so intent on choosing in the first place?

ALICE

I don't follow you.

MARCH HARE

You can't while I'm just standing here.

ALICE

In that case, go on with what you were saying.

MARCH HARE

Well, your mother and sisters don't seem to be in such turmoil about their place in the world. Your friends, either. They're able to accept what is there. I was just curious why you don't.

ALICE

I ... I really don't know.

MARCH HARE

Then perhaps that is what you need to find out. There is a lot to be said for acceptance. This whole being eternally stuck at tea-time is driving the Mad Hatter even madder than usual. He keeps thinking of how things were. I try to enjoy how they are, which isn't so bad when you look at it. The supplies never seem to run out, there's very little work involved, and I wake up each day knowing what to expect, and what is expected of me. It's quite relaxing when you get the hang of it.

ALICE

It doesn't bother you that Ferdinand and Miranda are set up by Prospero to fall in love because of what he stands to gain?

MARCH HARE

Not particularly. Their reasons for being in love are pure. I don't see how Prospero's motives have any bearing on them.

CHESHIRE CAT

That is because you have no ambition, content to take whatever life hands to you.

MARCH HARE

Thank you.

CHESHIRE CAT

It wasn't a compliment.

MARCH HARE

But if I receive it as one, there's not much you can do about it, is there?

CHESHIRE CAT

I can walk away in disgust, leaving you to your dreary little life.

MARCH HARE

I certainly wouldn't complain.

CHESHIRE CAT

People like you seldom do.

The Cheshire Cat exits.

MARCH HARE

Now, where were we?

ALICE

Act IV, Scene I. Before Prospero's cell.

Enter Carroll/Prospero.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

(to March Hare/Ferdinand)

*If I have too austerely punish'd you,
Your compensation makes amends; for I
Have given you here a third of mine own life,
Or that for which I live; who once again
I tender to thy hand: all thy vexations
Were but trials of thy love, and thou
Hast strangely stood the test: here, afore Heaven,
I ratify this my rich gift. O Ferdinand,
Look thou be true; do not give dalliance
Too much the rein: the strongest oaths are straw
To the fire i' the blood: be more abstemious,
Or else, good night your vow!*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

I warrant you, sir;

*The white cold virgin snow upon my heart
Abates the ardour of my liver.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Well.

Sit then, and talk with her; she is thine own.

Alice and the March Hare go to sit down at the table.

ALICE

If I am your own now, are you mine?

MARCH HARE

I suppose so.

ALICE

That isn't how it sounded. All this talk of Miranda being a gift, of giving her to Ferdinand because he passed some test, like a payment for services rendered - and meanwhile, she doesn't say a thing.

MARCH HARE

Perhaps that's how she gets what she wants.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

What, Ariel! My industrious servant, Ariel!

ALICE

Oh! That's me!

She grabs the wig off the table, and runs over to Carroll/Prospero.

ALICE/ARIEL

What would my potent master? Here I am.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Thou and thy meaner fellows your last service
Did worthily perform; and I must use you
In such another trick; for now I must
Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple
Some vanity of mine art: it is my promise,
And they expect it from me.*

Alice/Ariel nods, throws the wig back on the table, and resumes her seat as Miranda.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

(to Ferdinand and Miranda)

No tongue! All eyes! Be silent.

Soft music. A butterfly appears, bearing a very strong resemblance to the Caterpillar from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Hail, many-colour'd messenger, that ne'er
Dost disobey the wife of Jupiter;
Who, with thy saffron wings, upon my flowers
Diffusest honey-drops, refreshing showers.*

BUTTERFLY

(to Alice)

Who are you?

Alice finds herself alone in a spotlight.

ALICE

I - I hardly know, Sir, just at present - 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.

BUTTERFLY

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.

BUTTERFLY

I don't see.

ALICE

Right now, I'm Miranda, and before that I was Ariel. I was even Gonzalo for one very brief moment. Being so many people in a day is very confusing.

BUTTERFLY

It isn't.

ALICE

Well, perhaps your feelings may be different. All I know is, it feels very odd to me.

BUTTERFLY

You! Who are you?

ALICE

I'm a woman. I'm a daughter. I'm the inspiration for a very popular children's book. (to herself) Why don't any of those sound like the answer to the question?

BUTTERFLY

Are you content now?

ALICE

Which me? Miranda is content. She's conveniently fallen in love with the first man she's ever seen. Ariel is not content with servitude, but is making the best of it in hopes of being free one day. I am not content with the life that waits for me at home, but I don't know why. Was the March Hare right? Is finding that out the answer to the riddle?

The Butterfly drifts off toward the exit.

BUTTERFLY

One side will make you grow. The other side will leave you exactly the same.

ALICE

One side of what? The other side of what?

But the Butterfly is gone. In his place, on either side of Alice, are The Red Queen and the White Queen from Through The Looking-Glass. Carroll/Prospero and March Hare/Ferdinand stand off to the side.

WHITE QUEEN

*How does my bounteous sister? Go with me
To bless this twain, that they may prosperous be
And honour'd in their issue.*

ALICE

Our issue?

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*This is a most majestic vision, and
Harmonious charmingly. May I be bold
To think these spirits?*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Spirits, which by mine art
I have from their confines call'd to enact
My present fancies.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*Let me live here ever;
So rare a wonder'd father and a wife
Makes this place Paradise.*

ALICE

It's not quite so nice as you might think.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Sweet, now, silence!
Juno and Ceres whisper seriously;
There's something else to do: hush and be mute,
Or else our spell is marr'd.*

ALICE

Now wait a minute - if I really am going to be his wife -

RED QUEEN

What right have you to call yourself so? You can't be a wife, you know, til you've passed the proper examination. And the sooner we begin it, the better.

ALICE

I'm sure I didn't mean -

RED QUEEN

That's just what I complain of! You should have meant! What do you suppose is the use of a woman without any meaning? Even a joke should have some meaning - and a woman's more important than a joke, I hope! You couldn't deny that, even if you tried with both hands.

ALICE

I don't deny things with my hands.

RED QUEEN

Nobody said you did. I said you couldn't if you tried.

WHITE QUEEN

Can you do addition? What's one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one?

ALICE

I don't know. I lost count.

RED QUEEN

She can't do addition. Can you do subtraction? Take a marriage proposal from a man: what remains?

ALICE

Our lives together?

RED QUEEN

Wrong! In marriage, the two become one flesh, which leaves a single life to spend between you.

RED QUEEN AND WHITE QUEEN

She can't do sums a bit!

RED QUEEN

Do you know languages? What's the French for fiddle-de-dee?

ALICE

There is no French for fiddle-de-dee! It's just nonsense, which is all we've been talking!

WHITE QUEEN

Let's not quarrel. What's the cause of lightning?

ALICE

What's the cause of these questions? Or their purpose?

RED QUEEN

One does not ask when being examined. One only answers.

ALICE

Because you don't know, do you? These rules make as little sense to you as they do to me, and yet you keep repeating them. Why?

RED QUEEN

Do you know your ABCs?

WHITE QUEEN

Can you do Division? Divide a loaf by a knife. What's the answer to that?

RED QUEEN

Try another subtraction sum. Take nine from eight.

Alice jumps up, in a passion.

ALICE

Stop! I can't stand this any longer!

At the same time, Carroll/Prospero jumps up in a passion.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

(aside)

*I had forgot that foul conspiracy
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates
Against my life: the minute of their plot
Is almost come. (to the Red and White Queens) Well done! Avoid; no more!*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*This is strange: your father's in some passion
That works him strongly.*

ALICE/MIRANDA

(still regaining her composure)

*Never till this day
Saw I him touch'd with anger so distemper'd.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*You do look, my son, in a moved sort,
As if you were dismay'd: be cheerful, sir.
Our revels now are ended.*

ALICE

And I think I begin to see.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits,*

ALICE

The characters you created -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*and
Are melted into air,*

ALICE

They taught me something.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

-into thin air:

ALICE

Did you mean for them to, or was it an accident?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,*

ALICE

What adults call society -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,

ALICE

- all their precious rules and codes of conduct -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,

ALICE

- they make no more sense than the ones in Wonderland -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.*

ALICE

- and have only as much power as I allow them to.

ALICE AND CARROLL/PROSPERO

We are such stuff

As dreams are made on;

CARROLL/PROSPERO

-and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep.

ALICE

Their version of life was too small for you.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Sir, I am vex'd;

ALICE

You tried to shrink down to fit it on the outside -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Bear with my weakness;

ALICE

- but your imagination grew and grew -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

-my old brain is troubled:

ALICE

You saw the absurdity of the world around you, and it came out in your writing. Did you realize -

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Be not disturb'd with my infirmity:

ALICE

- that I would see it too?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*If you be pleased, retire into my cell,
And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,
To still my beating mind.*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

We wish you peace.

March Hare/Ferdinand exits as the Mad Hatter enters.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Come with a thought. I thank thee, Ariel: come.

Alice quickly puts the Ariel wig back on.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*We must prepare to meet with Caliban.
Say again, where didst thou leave these varlets?*

ALICE/ARIEL

I' the filthy-mantled pool beyond your cell.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Go charge my goblins that they grind their joints
With dry convulsions; shorten up their sinews
With aged cramps; and more pinch-spotted make them
Than pard or cat o' mountain.*

ALICE/ARIEL

Hark, they roar!

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies:
Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou
Shalt have the air at freedom: for a little
Follow, and do me service.*

Carroll/Prospero exits. Alice stares into the distance, trying to process everything she just discovered.

MAD HATTER

Such an unconvincing performance. That's a fearsome sorcerer? I do wish he'd have let me play it. I'd give you a sorcerer so fierce and mysterious, the audience would shiver in its boots! *Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies-*

ALICE

(turning on him)

I'm trying to figure out what all of this means, and I can't even hear myself think!

MAD HATTER

Well, if I emoted any quieter, it would be the same lackluster rendition we just saw, and-

ALICE

You're not playing Prospero! Face facts and be done with it!

MAD HATTER

I called the role first, remember, and that should-

Furious, Alice advances on the Mad Hatter, backing him into the tea table.

ALICE

You think you're the only one who's disappointed? That I asked to be someone's spirit of inspiration? Up there, they all call me a muse, as though it's the highest honor a woman can aspire to, stoking creative fires in other men's heads! Is it an honor to be candle wax?! A privilege to be the log on the fireplace? Because that's all I've been - fuel for the light and heat of someone else's imagination! And all I want is just one sliver of power for myself. One chance to take control of my own life for a change! And you talk of unconvincing performances? That's all I've been giving since I was twelve, and I don't know how to stop!

The Cheshire Cat appears.

CHESHIRE CAT

*Pray you, tread softly, that the blind mole may not
Hear a foot fall: we now are near his cell.*

ALICE

What?

CHESHIRE CAT

Caliban's first line in the next scene. But I'd just as soon not play it.

MAD HATTER

Why is everyone so intent on skipping my parts?

CHESHIRE CAT

(ignoring him)

His plan fails because his compatriots get distracted. I think we can do better, don't you?

ALICE

Caliban's plan was doomed from the beginning - Prospero knew of it the whole time.

CHESHIRE CAT

Then why was Prospero so disturbed when he realized he had forgotten about them?

MAD HATTER

Another in a long line of miscalculated performance moments?

ALICE

Because he knows he has a weakness.

MAD HATTER

(walking off dejectedly)

I could have done that speech so much better.

CHESHIRE CAT

During that show he put on for his daughter, he forgot the world around him, lost amidst his own fancies brought to life.

ALICE

The same fault that lost him Milan to begin with.

CHESHIRE CAT

The same fault in the character-

ALICE

As in the man playing him.

CHESHIRE CAT

It's because of him you're in this dilemma in the first place, isn't it?

ALICE

His books opened my eyes to the ridiculousness of the world up there without my even realizing it. That's why I don't fit in, why I can't just bow to the naked emperor along with everyone else.

CHESHIRE CAT

He spoiled an entire reality for you.

ALICE

Yes.

Long pause.

ALICE

What should I do?

CHESHIRE CAT

In the next scene, he will take off that cloak - the one made from the pages of his books - and lay down his staff when he asks Ariel to dress him in the robes of his dukedom. Take the staff and cloak for yourself, and you will have the power to do, well, whatever you like.

The Cheshire Cat slinks off as Carroll/Prospero enters.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Now does my project gather to a head:
My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and time
Goes upright with his carriage. How's the day?
How fares the king and's followers?*

ALICE/ARIEL

The king,

*His brother, and yours, abide all three distracted,
And the remainder mourning over them,
Him that you term 'd, sir, "The good old lord, Gonzalo;"
His tears run down his beard, like winter's drops
From eaves of reeds. Your charm so strongly works 'em,
That if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Dost thou think so, spirit?

ALICE/ARIEL

Mine would, sir, were I human.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

And mine shall.

*Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,
Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part: the rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel:
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves.*

Alice is taken aback, moved in spite of herself.

ALICE/ARIEL

I'll fetch them, sir.

She steps out of the scene as Carroll/Prospero bangs his staff on the ground rhythmically. Something in the air changes.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves;

The March Hare, Dormouse, Mad Hatter and Cheshire Cat enter and stand at attention, staring straight at Carroll/Prospero as though in a trance.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him
When he comes back;*

Alice prods the Mad Hatter, but he doesn't respond, eyes still on Carroll/Prospero.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew;*

She examines the others, and finds them as mesmerized, unmovable.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*by whose aid -
Weak masters though ye be - I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds.*

ALICE

This ...

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*And 'twixt the green sea and the azure vault
Set roaring war:*

ALICE

This sort of power ...

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire;*

ALICE

To taste it for myself, just once ...

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art.*

ALICE

Would it be worth-

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*But this rough magic
I here abjure;*

ALICE

(whirling back around to Carroll)

What?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*-and when I have required
Some heavenly music, - which even now I do, -
To work mine end upon their senses, that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,*

ALICE

You'd give it up? All this control?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,

ALICE

When did Prospero decide that?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book.*

ALICE

When did you decide that?

Another bang from Carroll/Prospero's staff leads Dormouse/Alonso, March Hare/Sebastian and Mad Hatter/Antonio to the circle which Carroll/Prospero has made, and there stand charmed.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Ariel,
I will discase me, and myself present
As I was sometime Milan:*

He hands Alice his staff. She stares at it, then notices the Cheshire Cat looking at her intently.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

-quickly, spirit;

Thou shalt ere long be free.

Alice sets the staff down, takes the cloak off of him, and stares at it while Carroll puts on his Professor robes.

CHESHIRE CAT

(to Alice)

*Do that good mischief which may make this island
Thine own for ever!*

DORMOUSE/ARIEL

(singing)

*Where the bee sucks, there suck I;
In a Cowslip's bell I lie;*

*There I couch when owls do cry,
On the bat's back I do fly*

ALICE

(overlapping the song)

Wait - what's that?

CHESHIRE CAT

(overlapping the song)

Just a song Ariel sings as she helps dress him. Supposed to be in a powerful trance, and she gets her parts mixed up. Now go on.

Alice picks the staff back up.

DORMOUSE/ARIEL

(singing)

*After summer merrily,
Merrily, merrily shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bow.*

Something in the lyric catches Alice.

CHESHIRE CAT

Let it alone, thou fool; it is but trash.

DORMOUSE/ARIEL

(singing)

Merrily, merrily shall I live now-

CHESHIRE CAT

All you have to do is put on the cloak. What are you waiting for?

DORMOUSE/ARIEL

(singing)

Under the blossom that hangs on the bow.

CHESHIRE CAT

Do it!

Finished dressing, Carroll heads over to the group. Alice raises the staff in a panic.

ALICE

Stop!

Everything and everyone freezes in place.

ALICE

Go back.

Carroll/Prospero quickly goes backwards through the paces of his last monologue as though being rewound.

CHESHIRE CAT

What are you doing?

ALICE

How do you deal with a Prospero? Someone with that much control of your past? Miranda wants what she is supposed to want. I can't be her. We both know that. The magic of this story has already done its work in me. Caliban wants to overthrow his control by force.

She points the staff at the Cheshire Cat.

ALICE

You keep telling me it's the only way to not be Miranda. But we're both forgetting someone.

She turns back to Carroll/Prospero, still frozen in place.

ALICE

(to the Cheshire Cat)

Tell me, what made Prospero go from this-

She points the staff at Carroll/Prospero.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies:*

ALICE

To this?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part:*

ALICE

It was Ariel. The moment itself was small. I said the lines and I still didn't catch it at first. She says-
*if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Dost thou think so, spirit?

ALICE/ARIEL

Mine would, sir, were I human.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

And mine shall.

ALICE

She reminds him to be human.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions-*

ALICE

To feel the pain of others-

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*-and shall not myself,
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,*

ALICE

Try to understand them.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Passion as they, be kindlier moved than thou art?

ALICE

It's then that Prospero decides to be kind, not before. Ferdinand doesn't know his father is alive. Prospero could bring the prince and Miranda to the ships that he preserved. He could sail away, reclaim his power, watch his daughter become Queen, all while leaving his enemies to the same cruel fate they designed for him. It might even be justice. But Ariel has a say in the spell she and Prospero have made together, and she wants their work to add up to an act of grace. She pushes him toward mercy because she understand that, in the end...

A long look at Carroll.

ALICE

These wonders we've performed aren't about us at all.

She walks over to him, though he remains frozen.

ALICE

Perhaps you used me, without knowing it. Took something I didn't realize I was giving. But seeing you now, so tall and out of place in those robes, I think maybe you needed this story more than I did. So. If it was a mercy to you, if it helps others to see with new eyes, now and always, if that's the magic we've done together, then I accept it. Promise me mercy and journeys to new worlds, and I'll play Ariel one last time.

She sets the cloak and staff back down. Prospero springs back to life as she does so.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*A solemn air, and the best comforter
To an unsettled fancy, cure thy brains,
Now useless, boil'd within thy skull! There stand,
For you are spell-stopp'd. Most cruelly
Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter:
Thy brother was a furtherer in the act.
Thou are pinch'd for't now, Sebastian.*

*Flesh and blood,
 You, brother mine, that entertain'd ambition,
 Expell'd remorse and nature; who, with Sebastian, -
 Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong, -
 Would here have kill'd your king; I do forgive thee,
 Unnatural though thou art. Their understanding
 Begins to swell;*

ALICE

I think mine does too.

Alice picks up the copy of *The Tempest*, reads.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*-and the approaching tide
 Will shortly fill the reasonable shore,
 That now lies foul and muddy.*

ALICE

And so, Prospero releases them from the spell.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*Behold, sir king,
 The wronged Duke of Milan, Prospero:*

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*The affliction of my mind amends, with which,
 I fear, a madness held me:*

ALICE

Prospero and Alonso are reconciled-

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat
 Thou pardon me my wrongs.*

ALICE

And even to the men who plotted so much harm-

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*(Aside to Sebastian and Antonio)
 But you, my brace of lords, were I so minded,
 I here could pluck his Highness' frown upon you,
 And justify you traitors: at this time
 I will tell no tales.*

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

The devil speaks in him.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

No.

*For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother
Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive
Thy rankest fault, - all of them;*

ALICE

He shows mercy. Prospero reunites Alonso with his son, Ferdinand.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*My dukedom since you have given me again,
I will requite you with as good a thing;*

Carroll/Prospero replaces March Hare's Sebastian hat with Ferdinand's crown. Dormouse/Alonso and Mad Hatter/Antonio gasp. Alice takes the Ariel wig off, and joins March Hare/Ferdinand.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

A most high miracle!

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

*Though the seas threaten, they are merciful;
I have cursed them without cause.*

ALICE

Miranda begins to see just how much might lay beyond her island-

ALICE/MIRANDA

*How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in 't!*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

'Tis new to thee.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*What is this maid with whom thou wast at play?
Is she the goddess that hath sever'd us,
And brought us thus together?*

MARCH HARE/FERDINAND

Sir, she is mortal;

But by immortal Providence she's mine:

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

I am hers:

Alice slips out of the scene, and back into her Ariel wig.

ALICE

And so, the king and his company discover their ships did not wreck, but were miraculously preserved-

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod;

ALICE

Prospero commands Ariel to set Caliban and his companions free from her torments.

Alice/Ariel picks up the Stephano and Trinculo hats, and brings them over to the scene.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*There are yet missing of your company
Some few odd lads that you remember not.*

She knocks the hats off of the March Hare and Mad Hatter's heads, slams the Stephano and Trinculo hats onto them. They stagger about drunkenly while Alice/Ariel prods Cheshire Cat/Caliban from under the table.

DORMOUSE/ALONSO

*Is not this Stephano, my drunken butler?
And Trinculo is reeling ripe: where should they
Find this grand liquor that hath gilded 'em? -*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

*These three have robb'd me; Two of these fellows you
Must know and own; this thing of darkness I
Acknowledge mine. Go, sirrah, to my cell;
Take with you your companions; as you look
To have my pardon, trim it handsomely.*

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I, to take this drunkard for a god,
(pointing to Alice) And worship this dull fool!*

CARROLL/PROSPERO

Go to, away!

Exit Cheshire Cat/Caliban, March Hare/Trinculo, and Mad Hatter/Stephano.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

(to Dormouse/Alonso)

*Sir, I invite your Highness and your train
To my poor cell, where you shall take your rest
For this one night;*

*and in the morn
I'll bring you to your ship, and so to Naples,
Where I have hope to see the nuptial
Of these our dear-beloved solemnized;
And thence retire me to my Milan, where
Every third thought shall be my grave.*

Carroll/Prospero leads Dormouse/Alonso off. The
Cheshire Cat's head appears next to Alice.

CHESHIRE CAT

You didn't follow through with the plan.

ALICE

I wasn't quite sure you truly wanted me to. Everything Prospero did was a step toward getting back his dukedom in Milan. Caliban just wanted to be left alone and free where he was born. So it stood to reason that if Prospero ever got what he wanted, Caliban would too, and without a murder on his conscience. He can now be at peace with the island. And hopefully, with himself. So there you are. Or did you know that the whole time, and just played the game to get me to see it?

The Cheshire Cat just smiles.

ALICE

You're not going to tell me, are you?

CHESHIRE CAT

I'm not the one who has something that still needs saying.

Her head disappears. Alice turns to find Lewis Carroll
standing across from her.

CARROLL

There it is. The Tempest. Did you like it? A much more satisfying conclusion than "All's Well That Ends Well".

ALICE

Is that the end, then?

CARROLL

Almost.

ALICE

So Miranda goes off without the slightest idea of the world she's walking into, or the role she's already stuck in.

CARROLL

Yes.

ALICE

I don't know whether to pity or envy her.

CARROLL

Why is that?

ALICE

Because of your stories. They gave me a new way of seeing things. And sometimes it's lovely, but sometimes ...

CARROLL

Sometimes it's a pain in the center of your chest.

ALICE

Yes. Because it hurts to be the one who sees the absurdity of what everyone else thinks is so important. It hurts to have to pretend to be Miranda without feeling as blissfully, naively in love. But it was there in that last scene - you have to forgive them. The shocked looks and the ridiculous expectations don't come from malice -

ALICE AND CARROLL

- but from fear.

A quiet moment of recognition.

ALICE

So you forgive. And it ceases to have power over you.

CARROLL

Do you forgive me?

ALICE

What for?

CARROLL

For creating another ridiculous expectation that people have of you. For enshrining the ten year old version of yourself in people's minds. For trapping a moment, one tea time that goes on forever.

ALICE

You told me a very good story on a very hot day. And you wrote it down when I asked you to. It's a magic book, just like the ones Prospero had. It shows people things, and makes them grow bigger. I got to help with that.

CARROLL

Still, to live in the shadow of someone else's creation. I don't envy you the added burden. How hard it must make it for you to forge your own path from here. Which brings us to the very end of *The Tempest*. And what I really wanted to say to you.

ALICE

There's more?

CARROLL

Not very much more. Only two sentences. But they are very hard for Prospero to say. If he hadn't found Ariel, hadn't learned to harness her magic into words, he may not have survived on that hostile shore. He certainly would not have been able to write such a happy end to the tale. He owes her so much. He knows it.

But his affections make the words stick in his throat. Two sentences. All it takes to let her be herself. Not what others wish her to be. Not what he needs her to be. Just her own. Well, they must be spoken. *“My Ariel, chick, that is thy charge.”*

He reaches down, and lovingly takes the blond wig from off her head.

CARROLL

“Then to the elements be free, and fare thou well!”

Alice watches him go in silence. After a moment, the March Hare, Mad Hatter, and Dormouse enter. Alice’s eyes don’t leave the place that Carroll just vacated.

MARCH HARE

Well, that was diverting. (to Alice) Did you learn anything?

MAD HATTER

Of course not! Things can’t be diverting and educational at the same time.

DORMOUSE

Says who?

MAD HATTER

All sorts of people you’ve never heard of because they’re not at all interesting to listen to.

MARCH HARE

At any rate, it was quite a pleasant way to spent part of an infinite afternoon. Although I’m sorry you didn’t find the answer to your riddle.

MAD HATTER

What riddle?

MARCH HARE

“How is a hawk like a handsaw?”

MAD HATTER

Is that a riddle?

MARCH HARE

You were the one who asked it.

MAD HATTER

Did I? Well, what’s the answer?

MARCH HARE

We went through a whole Shakespeare play, and we still don’t know. Would you like some more tea?

The Mad Hatter shivers, but still offers up his cup.

DORMOUSE

A hawk flies against the wind. A handsaw flies against the grain. Both cut against things for their mutual benefit.

The Mad Hatter and March Hare both stop, and look at the Dormouse. Then, a sudden ticking sound

MAD HATTER

What's that?

They rifle through the tea things, holding up cups, pots, to listen to. The sound leads to the Mad Hatter's vest pocket. Quiet descends as the Mad Hatter draws his pocket watch out of his pocket.

MAD HATTER

It's. Four. O. Three! And counting! Do you know what this means?

MARCH HARE

It means supper!

DORMOUSE

Dessert!

MARCH HARE

Late night snacks!

DORMOUSE

It means I can finally clean the dishes!

The Dormouse gathers a pile of dishes into her arms.

DORMOUSE

So very, very dirty. O, just look at them all!

The March Hare and Mad Hatter dance away with glee.

MARCH HARE

Plum pudding!

MAD HATTER

Steak Tartar!

MARCH HARE

Soup a la Reine!

MAD HATTER

Lobster Newberg! Over toast!

MARCH HARE

Cigars!

MAD HATTER

Nightcaps!

They trot off, leaving Alice alone. As she speaks, she slowly undoes her apron, removes it, then begins to take off the “Alice dress” she wears.

ALICE

*Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
- which is not so faint as Shakespeare might think -
This much that he wrote is true,
I must be here confined by you,
Or live my own life. Let me not,
Since I have my freedom got,
And pardon'd the deceivers, dwell
In Wonderland now by your spell;
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands:
To travel the world and wait
'til the age of twenty eight,
Before I enter wedding season,
With love as my only reason.
A cricket player, quite adept
Proposes to me, I accept.
That dear boy shall stand by me
Until death's final liberty.
Our romance, once it's begun
Gives birth to three gallant sons.
Times of peace are soon undone
War takes two, I'm left with one,
Whose marriage I forbid outright
Defying me brings him delight.
I'll come 'round eventually,
Just proves he takes after me.
Eighty-two full years of life,
Spent as woman, mother, wife -
This I'll do if you'll allow
Me to grow past eleven now,
And shed my past for something new,
Which I hope you all shall do.
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,
Let your indulgence set me free.*

Down to her Victorian undergarments, she extends her hands to the audience, child's dress -and past -in a pile at her feet.