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 Liddel'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.

Reading?

DR. LIDDELL (O.S.)

“All’s Well That Ends Well”.

ALICE

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.
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.

And she thought we should discuss it.

Another pause. Still no response from Alice.

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

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.

That would be interest, Alice.

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

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

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

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-

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.

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

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

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?

Reverend Dodgson.

DR. LIDDELL (O.S.)
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.

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
‘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.

Are we?

CARROLL

DR. LIDDELL
(offstage)
Alice, has Reverend Dodgson arrived?

Yes, Father.

ALICE

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_
_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...

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.
Oh, it shows. But carry on.

MARCH HARE

Right.

MAD HATTER

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.

We ran out of biscuits.

MARCH HARE

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.

Two and a half days slow now!

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

It’s getting worse.

Worse, you say?

Try some more butter.

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

What about the preserves?

Your watch is getting slower ...

We tried that too.

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

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

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

Story?

Excellent idea! Tell us one.

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

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.

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.
What is she going on about?

Words, words, words.

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.

A puzzle?

A game?

Something to do besides drink tea?

Or sleeping?

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.

And if it doesn’t?

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

Is there a part for each of us?

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

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

The Mad Hatter springs up and runs off stage.

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 -

You’ll play her, of course.

MARCH HARE

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.

- at sea.

She hands the cup to Alice.

CHESHIRE CAT
Aboard that ship is Prospero’s treacherous brother, Antonio -

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

MAD HATTER
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.

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 hearest 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

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

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

CHESHIRE CAT

Is this what it felt like?

DORMOUSE

On the topmast -

ALICE/ARIEL

The yards,

DORMOUSE

- and bowsprit -

ALICE/ARIEL

would I flame distinctly,

ALICE/ARIEL AND DORMOUSE

Then meet, and join.

CHESHIRE CAT

Ten years old-

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
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?

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’; go; hence with diligence!

The March Hare quickly yanks off Alice’s wings and wig,
and tosses them aside.
And you’re back on as Miranda -

What?

You were sleeping, remember?

But I don’t-

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!

Say ‘awake’ a fourth time.

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.

Did we give out the part of Caliban?

I don’t think so.

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

But as ‘tis,
We cannot miss him.

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 -

(unsupported)

CHESHIRE CAT/CALIBAN

*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 -

Or steal.

MAD HATTER
Why that one, exactly?

ALICE
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

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.

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.

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?
Ariel, a bit later on.

CHESHIRE CAT

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.

That sort was well fished for.

MAD HATTER/ANTONIO

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!

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.
But that’s what I said in the first place!

Did you?

Yes!

(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.

Ahem! That’s your cue!

What?

To enter as Ariel.

Alice consults the script.

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.

(yawning)
Seven lines in, and I already get a nap. This play isn’t so bad after all.

She goes to sleep.

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...

But for your conscience.

MARCH HARE/SEBASTIAN

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?!

To being free.

CHESHIRE CAT

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: didn’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 curioser, 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 calendar 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.

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, Caroll 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?

CHESHERICE 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

But there seems to be some debate about the costuming.

DORMOUSE

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!

MAD HATTER

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:

ALICE

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

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

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 liguor: 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 Triculo, 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 chose 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 1. 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*

But what?

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 skilless 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!
I’ll take that as a no, then.

DORMOUSE

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.
Alice!

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

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.

Thank you.

MARCH HARE/LEOPOLD

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

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

See? Enter Ariel, invisible.

MARCH HARE/TRINCULO
Servant-monster! The folly of this island!

Alice sighs and starts to put on her Ariel gear.

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

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

Why, I said nothing.

Mum, then, and no more. Proceed.

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, -

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

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

Thou liest; thou canst not.

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.


Didst thou not say he lied?

Thou liest.

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

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 viceroyds. 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 twangling 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!

Marvellous sweet music!

MAD HATTER/GONZALO

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 muddied.

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-

ALICE
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.

Thank you.

MARCH HARE
It wasn’t a compliment.

CHESHIRE CAT
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.
I certainly wouldn’t complain.

People like you seldom do.

The Cheshire Cat exits.

Now, where were we?

*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 Ferdininand 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?

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
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**

*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

*As dreams are made on; We are such stuff*

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.

This ...

CARROLL/PROSPERO

And ‘twixt the green sea and the azured 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

\begin{quote}
Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies:
\end{quote}

To this?

CARROLL/PROSPERO

\begin{quote}
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason ‘gainst my fury
Do I take part:
\end{quote}

ALICE

It was Ariel. The moment itself was small. I said the lines and I still didn’t catch it at first. She says-

\begin{quote}
if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.
\end{quote}

CARROLL/PROSPERO

\begin{quote}
Dost thou think so, spirit?
\end{quote}

ALICE/ARIEL

Mine would, sir, were I human.

CARROLL/PROSPERO

\begin{quote}
And mine shall.
\end{quote}

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.

CHESIRE 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

“There’s 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.

Says who?

DORMOUSE

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.

What riddle?

MAD HATTER

“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.
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

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.

It’s. Four. O. Three! And counting! Do you know what this means?

It means supper!

Dessert!

Late night snacks!

It means I can finally clean the dishes!

The Dormouse gathers a pile of dishes into her arms.

So very, very dirty. O, just look at them all!

The March Hare and Mad Hatter dance away with glee.

Plum pudding!

Steak Tartar!

Soup a la Reine!

Lobster Newberg! Over toast!

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
‘till 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.