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Alice in Wonderland

Based on the book by Lewis Carroll

Adapted by Scott Hunter

Characters:

Eight Narrators	The Cheshire Cat
Alice One	The Knave of Hearts
Alice Two	The Mad Hatter
Alice Three	The March Hare
Alice Four	The Dormouse
Alice Five	The Two of Hearts
Alice's Sister/Alice Six	The Three of Hearts
The White Rabbit	The Five of Hearts
Ten Minions	The Seven of Hearts
The Caterpillar	The Queen of Hearts
The Butterfly	The King of Hearts
Snapdragon	Tweedledee
Daisy	Tweedledum
Rose	The White Queen
Violet	Humpty Dumpty
Tiger Lily	The White King
The Red Queen	The White Knight
Conductor	
The Yellow Jacket	
The Cook	
The Duchess	
The Fish Footman	

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I



LESSON ONE - THE RABBIT HOLE

Alice was beginning to get very tired. The hot day was making her feel very sleepy and stupid.

LESSON TWO - THE GREAT HALL

If you drink much from a bottle marked poison it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

LESSON THREE - A CATERPILLAR GIVES ADVICE

Being different beings in one day is very confusing.

LESSON FOUR - THE FLOWERS SPEAK

How is it you all talk so nicely? I've been in many gardens before, but none of the flowers could talk.

LESSON FIVE - THE RED QUEEN PUTS ALICE IN HER PLACE

Where did you come from, and where are you going? Look up. Speak nicely. And don't twiddle your fingers!

LESSON SIX - A TRAIN AND AN INSECT

If you want to get back where you started, buy a return ticket.

LESSON SEVEN - THE LESSONS OF PEPPER

Well, if it had grown up, it would have made a very ugly child.

LESSON EIGHT - THE CHESHIRE CAT VANISHES

We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad. You must be, or you wouldn't have come...here.

LESSON NINE - THE MAD TEA PARTY

I would think you might do something better with your time than waste it thinking up riddles...

LESSON TEN - ALICE PLAYS CROQUET

Croquet? Is that what you call this? I don't think you play fair at all. You don't seem to have any rules and, at least, if there are, nobody attends to them.



INTERMISSION

LESSON ELEVEN - TWEEDLE DEE AND TWEEDLEDUM

Contrary wise, if it is so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic.

LESSON TWELVE - THE WHITE QUEEN LIVES BACKWARDS

In approximately thirty seconds you shall never believe something impossible again.

LESSON THIRTEEN - HUMPTY-DUMPTY

The question is, who is master? The words or you?

LESSON FOURTEEN - THE WHITE KING

Everything has a moral if only you can find it.

LESSON FIFTEEN - THE KNAVE AND THE WHITE KNIGHT

Not very likely, perhaps, but if they do come, I'm ready.

LESSON SIXTEEN - THE TRIAL

Begin at the beginning and go until you come to the end: then stop.

LESSON SEVENTEEN - THE FOUR QUEENS

Queens never make bargains.

LESSON EIGHTEEN - HOME AGAIN

Remember who you are.



ACT I

LESSON ONE

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

(On the apron, ALICE ONE sits dangling her legs over the edge of the stage. Her SISTER sits next to her and reads aloud. Alice's pet cat, Dinah [the CHESHIRE CAT] plays next to her. The EIGHT STORYTELLERS sit at the far edges of the stage and listen, too.)

STORYTELLER 1

Alice was beginning to get very tired.

STORYTELLER 4

The hot day was making her feel very sleepy and stupid.

STORYTELLER 7

And she did not want to pay attention to any lesson.

SISTER

(Reading in flowery, overly dramatic tones.)

"All in the golden afternoon/ Full leisurely we glide; For both our oars, with little skill,/ By little arms ... "

(She notices Alice playing with the cat.)

Pay attention to your lessons, Alice ... Alice!

ALICE ONE

I'm bored.

SISTER

What? Open your mouth wider when you speak.

ALICE ONE

The book doesn't have any pictures in it or conversations.

CHESHIRE CAT *(Agreeing.)*

Meow.

ALICE ONE

And what good is a book without pictures or conversations in it?

SISTER

It is very good for lessons. And your lessons will be very helpful to you –

ALICE ONE

I know, later. That is very good advice, Sister, I suppose.

SISTER

Yes it is. Now where was I?

(Dramatically reading from her book again.)

"All in the golden afternoon/Full leisurely we glide;/For – "

ALICE ONE

Are you saying that something that isn't worth a cent to me now, will become important later?

SISTER *(Annoyed)*

Yes.

ALICE ONE

How can that be if I'm the same person?

SISTER

But you won't be.

ALICE ONE

I won't be the same person?

SISTER

No. Experience changes us.

ALICE ONE

Well, I will never change enough to find books without pictures or conversations interesting.

SISTER

You can't know how you will change from one moment to the next.

ALICE ONE

I know.

SISTER *(Sarcastically)*

I'm sure you do!

ALICE ONE

What!

SISTER *(Rising)*

Nothing!

CHESHIRE CAT

(As in, "claws out and cat fight about to start.)

Meow!

(The SISTER calms herself, sits, and returns to her book.)

"All in the golden afternoon – "

SISTER

It isn't logical.

ALICE ONE

What isn't?

SISTER (*Angry*)

That I will change.

ALICE ONE

SISTER

It isn't logical that you won't! Take me for example.
(Taking pride in her example.)

When I was your age I could stand on my hands –

ALICE ONE

Teach me!

SISTER

No. The point is I no longer stand on my hands because it would be –

ALICE ONE

Look!

(ALICE tries to stand on her hands. CHESHIRE CAT tries, too.)

Teach me.

CHESHIRE CAT

Meow?

(SISTER rises, scats the CHESHIRE CAT and stops ALICE from standing on her head.)

SISTER

No! You're missing the point entirely, and we have more important lessons.

ALICE ONE

The point is, I'm entirely able to take care of myself and I don't need lessons from you, Sister.

(SISTER sits and reads again, through gritted teeth, as ALICE pouts.)

SISTER

"All in the golden afternoon/ Full leisurely we glide,/While – "

ALICE ONE

Pardon me, but when am I going to need this? I'll listen if you can tell me.

SISTER

(Suddenly cheerful, happy to explain.)

You see, the boat is a symbol for life –

ALICE ONE

I don't wish to know the meaning, I wish to know one time in my *real* life I will need this lesson. One time.

SISTER (Exploding)

Right now! This is your real life, and you will need this lesson *RIGHT NOW!*

(The CHESHIRE CAT hides among the STORYTELLERS.)

ALICE ONE

Proceed.

(ALICE lays back resigned to listen. SISTER smiles, victorious. The CHESHIRE CAT creeps back out and lies next to ALICE.)

SISTER

“All in the golden afternoon/ Full leisurely we glide;/For both our oars, with little skill,/ By little arms are plied,/Anon to sudden silence won/ In fancy they pursue/The dream-child Moving through a land / Of wonders wild and new ... ”

(ALICE falls asleep. The SISTER and CHESHIRE CAT freeze. Eerie music begins. The MINIONS creep out of the shadows, stealthily making their way through the audience, looking for something. MINIONS are in dressed in black robes and carry swords. They are eager but young.)

MINION 1

’Twas brillig, and the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

MINION 2

All mimsy were the borogoves, and the mome raths outgrabe.

MINION 3

Beware the Jabberwock, my son!

MINION 9

The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!

MINION 4

Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun the frumious Bandersnatch!

MINION 5

He took his vorpal sword in hand.

MINION 10

Long time the manxome foe he sought.

MINION 6

So rested he by the Tumtum tree, and stood awhile in thought.

MINION 7

And, as in uffish thought he stood, the Jabberwock, with eyes of flame.

MINION 8

Came whiffing through the tulgey wood, and burbled as it came!

MINION 2

One, two! One, two! And through and through.

MINION 4

The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!

(War breaks out. Much sword play and killing. The MINIONS chase the STORYTELLERS from their posts into hiding.)

MINION 1

He left it dead.

MINION 10

And with its head, he went galumphing back.

MINION 6

And, has thou slain the Jabberwock?/ Come to my arms, my beamish boy!

MINION 8

O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!/ He chortled in his joy.

MINION 3

`Twas brillig,

MINION 9

And the slithy toves did gyre and gimble in the wabe.;

MINION 7

All mimsy were the borogoves.

MINION 5

And the mome raths outgrabe.

(The MIONIONS have surrounded the sleeping ALICE. They raise their swords to kill her.)

MINION 9

He took his vorpal sword in hand!

(The WHITE RABBIT interrupts them from the back of the auditorium.)

WHITE RABBIT

I'm Late! I'm Late!

(The STORYTELLERS pop out from hiding.)

STORYTELLER 3

Suddenly a white rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her!

(The MINIONS shake with fear.)

WHITE RABBIT

My beard and whiskers!

(The MINIONS drop ALICE and run off stage in terror. ALICE wakes from the fall.)

WHITE RABBIT

Oh, dear! I'm Late! I'm Late! Off with my head. I'm late, I'm late.

(The RABBIT runs down the aisle and crashes into the front of the stage and falls as if dead. ALICE peers over the apron at him. The STORYTELLERS come and peer with her.)

STORYTELLER 4

There was nothing so very remarkable in that.

(The RABBIT pops up so suddenly that all the others jump back.)

WHITE RABBIT

Look at that!

(The RABBIT pulls out his pocket watch and waves it at ALICE.)

Do you see what time it is!

(On stage, the EIGHT STORYTELLERS form a human rabbit hole. Two in front form a circular opening with their arms. The other six are on one knee facing each other and lock their arms so they might catch anyone who jumps in. The WHITE RABBIT rushes up on stage and vaults, head first, into the hole.)

WHITE RABBIT

Ahhhhhhhhhhhh!

(The STORYTELLERS pass him through and the WHITE RABBIT disappears through the main curtain behind them.)

STORYTELLER 8

When she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to Alice that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural.

(ALICE looks deep into the human rabbit hole. The NARRATORS whisper words of encouragement and nod their heads.)

NARRATORS

Go ahead ... jump ... what can it hurt ... try it ... Everybody's doing it ... etc.

ALICE

Sister?

(But SISTER and DINAH are frozen and unable to give advice.)

STORYTELLER 5

You're on your own now.

STORYTELLER 4

Come on.

(ALICE summons her courage and hurls herself into the rabbit hole void. As she leaves her feet, the NARRATORS join her to scream. Lights strobe and fog fills the stage.)

ALL

Ahhhhhhhhhhh!

(The NARRATORS catch the stretched out ALICE, stand up, and in unison turn her around in big circles, like ALICE is a skydiver waiting for her chute to open. As they revolve SISTER and CHESHIRE CAT twirl off stage. After the second revolution, the spinning and screaming stops momentarily. A spotlight hits ALICE's face. All is motionless. ALICE strains her neck to look down into a bottomless pit. ALICE raises her head and looks at the audience.)

ALICE ONE

Oops.

(The spinning, strobing and screaming resumes.)

ALL

Ahhhhhhhhhhh!

(Once again ALICE stops to face the audience.)

ALICE ONE

Well, after such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs.

(The spinning, strobing and screaming resumes.)

ALL

Ahhhhhhhhhhh!

Down! STORYTELLER 1

Down! STORYTELLER 2

Down! STORYTELLER 6

Thump. STORYTELLER 5

(The STORYTELLERS drop ALICE onto her palms, so she is standing on her hands and sees everything up-side-down. The NARRATORS hold her legs upright and modestly keep her skirt from falling.)

LESSON TWO

THE GREAT HALL

(The strobing stops. The STORYTELLERS form a human hall. At the end of the hall, two STORYTELLERS kneel and face each other and make a little swinging door with their hands. The lights come up slowly.)

STORYTELLER 8

She had fallen a very long way, but Alice was not a bit hurt.

(The WHITE RABBIT runs through.)

WHITE RABBIT

I'm late! Oh, my ears and whiskers. The Queen will have my head.

ALICE ONE

How odd, he's running upside-down. Unless I've fallen all the way through the earth, which would explain it. Mr. Rabbit!

WHITE RABBIT

Don't you get it! I can't stop! I'm late. If I stop to tell you I'm late, I will be later. I just told you I can't stop to tell you I can't stop, which has made me later still. I'm late!

(He starts into the human hallway.)

ALICE ONE

But I followed you here.

(The WHITE RABBIT freezes and turns back to her, confusion on his face.)

WHITE RABBIT

You followed me ... here?

ALICE ONE

Yes.

(The RABBIT bursts into laughter and dives through a little door made by the STORYTELLERS. ALICE sits up.)

STORYTELLER 3

She found herself in a long low hall.

STORYTELLER 8

And there was a curtain she had not noticed before.

STORYTELLER 2

And in front of that curtain was a tiny door.

(The STORYTELLERS toggle their hands back and forth like a tiny swinging bar door. They make squeaking sound effects.)

ALICE ONE

Now, where did that rabbit go?

STORYTELLER 2

And in front of that curtain was a tiny door.

(The STORYTELLERS again swing the tiny door and make sound effects.)

ALICE ONE

Am I to believe that that big, old rabbit went through that little, tiny door?

(The STORYTELLERS nod.)

That's impossible, although not more so than the fact that a rabbit talked. I'll just put my head through the door and see if he's there.

(She tries, but the door slams shut on her.)

STORYTELLER 4

But she could not even get her head through the doorway.

ALICE ONE

Even if my head would go through, it would be very little use without my shoulders...

(A NARRATOR dangles a bottle on a string over ALICE. She takes the bottle and reads the large tag. The STORYTELLERS gather around and read over her shoulder.)

ALICE ONE

Drink me?

STORYTELLER 7

It was all very well to say "drink me," but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry.

ALICE ONE

No, I'll look first, and see whether it's marked poison.

STORYTELLER 1

For she had read several nice stories about children who had got burnt.

STORYTELLER 5

And eaten up by wild beasts.

STORYTELLER 3

And other unpleasant things.

STORYTELLER 1

All because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them.

STORYTELLER 2

Such as, a red hot poker will burn you.

STORYTELLER 6

Or, If you cut your finger with a knife very deeply it usually bleeds.

STORYTELLER 4

And she'd never forgotten.

STORYTELLER 5

If you drink much from a bottle marked poison it is almost certain to disagree with you.

ALL

Sooner or later!

ALICE ONE

It is not marked poison.

(The STORYTELLERS encourage her. She drinks and gags and begins to shrink. The lights begin to strobe and fog fills the stage again.)

ALICE ONE

I must be shutting up like a telescope.

STORYTELLER 7

And so it was indeed.

STORYTELLER 3

She was now only a few inches high.

STORYTELLER 5

The exact, right size for going through the little door and into ... the garden.

(ALICE crawls through the squeaky door and the main curtain behind it. It opens instantly and we see ALICE still crawling. When the strobing stops and the lights come up, ALICE stands. We notice she is in a beautiful garden. We also notice she is someone entirely different, ALICE TWO, whose only similarity to ALICE ONE seems to be that she is wearing the same dress and carrying the bottle marked drink me.)

ALICE TWO

What a beautiful garden.

(Alice's SISTER enters carrying a mirror.)

Sister. Am I glad to see you. If you're here I must be ...

(SISTER hands her the mirror. ALICE TWO looks at herself and screams.)

SISTER

Is something wrong?

(ALICE cuts off her emotion and thinks. She examines herself with the mirror, finding some things she likes, a few more curves, a little sexier, a little more mature.)

ALICE TWO

I don't know... That's not bad ... Like that ... I've ... I'm not going to say, "changed."

(SISTER smiles, takes the mirror, and turns to leave.)

Wait!

SISTER

You're on your own. You don't need my lessons.

ALICE TWO

Wait ...

(SISTER exits.)

This is impossible.

(ALICE reads the small print on the bottle label.)

Possible side effects: impossible things start to happen. Oh, dear. They should really put better warning labels on these things.

LESSON THREE

A CATERPILLAR GIVES ADVICE

(The STORYTELLERS wheel on a mushroom with a huge, hooka smoking CATERPILLAR sitting atop it. The STORYTELLERS sit at the base of the mushroom as if the CATERPILLAR is their guru. They speak like groovy hippies.)

STORYTELLER 2

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for a very long time.

STORYTELLER 6

At last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of his mouth

STORYTELLER 4

And addressed her.

CATERPILLAR

Who are you?

(The STORYTELLERS strike a Yoga pose and chant a Mantra.)

STORYTELLERS

Aum.

ALICE TWO

I hardly know, sir, just at the present - at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed since then.

CATERPILLAR

What do you mean by that? Explain yourself!

ALICE TWO

I'm afraid I can't explain myself, because I'm not myself, you see.

CATERPILLAR

I don't see.

ALICE TWO

I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly, for I cannot understand it myself, to begin with; and being different beings in one day is very confusing.

CATERPILLAR

It isn't.

ALICE TWO

Well, maybe it will be when, one day, you wake up and find out you're a butterfly –

CATERPILLAR

Why should I want to be a butterfly?

ALICE TWO

Butterflies are beautiful, delicate creatures and you're a big, old, ugly --

CATERPILLAR

I'm what?

(The STORYTELLERS rise up to protect their leader.)

ALICE TWO

I didn't say ...

CATERPILLAR

I prefer to stay as I am, thank you, but if I change I shan't find it a bit strange.

ALICE TWO

All I know is this is very confusing to me.

CATERPILLAR

You? Who are you?

STORYTELLERS

Aum.

(The STORYTELLERS resume the position. ALICE starts to answer. Stops. Starts again and then stops.)

ALICE TWO

I forget.

CATERPILLAR

Recite something. Perhaps it will help you remember.

ALICE TWO

What shall I recite?

CATERPILLAR

Try "How Doth the Little Busy Bee."

ALICE TWO

Oh good. I know that one. "How doth the little crocodile – "

CATERPILLAR

Wrong.

ALICE TWO

What?

CATERPILLAR

It begins, "How doth the little busy bee ..." Try it again.

ALICE TWO

"How doth the little crocodile improve – "

CATERPILLAR

Wrong!

ALICE TWO

Again?

CATERPILLAR

Worse than the first time. "How doth the little busy bee ..."

ALICE TWO

"How doth the little crocodile improve his shining tail ..."

CATERPILLAR

Stop!

ALICE TWO

(Without pausing to listen to the CATERPILLAR.)

And pour the waters of the Nile on every golden scale ...

CATERPILLAR

I will not hear this!

ALICE TWO

How cheerfully he seems to grin, how neatly spreads his claws ...

CATERPILLAR *(to STORYTELLERS)*

Who is this girl?

ALICE TWO

And welcomes little fishes in, with gently smiling jaws. There. I'm finished.

CATERPILLAR

And every word wrong.

ALICE TWO

The purpose wasn't to get it right it was to help me remember.

CATERPILLAR

And did it help you?

(ALICE Thinks.)

ALICE TWO

No.

CATERPILLAR

Things done wrong seldom help.

STORYTELLERS

(Restriking the pose.)

Aum.

CATERPILLAR

Try "Old Father Williams."

ALICE TWO

"You're old, Father Williams," the Young Man said, / "And your hair it has turned very white. /
And yet you continually stand on your head, / Do you think at your age it is right?"

CATERPILLAR

Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!

ALICE TWO

I said it wrong again?

CATERPILLAR

No. It is wrong for an old man to stand on his head. Beings should be who they are.

ALICE TWO

What if the kind of being you are is the kind of being who stands on his head when you're really,
really old?

CATERPILLAR

No such thing.

ALICE TWO

Well, I'm not the kind of being who is going to stand here and be insulted.

(She turns to leave.)

CATERPILLAR

Come back. I have something important to say.

(ALICE grudgingly returns.)

Keep your temper.

STORYTELLERS

Aum.

ALICE TWO

Is that it?

CATERPILLAR

No. So, what size do you want to be?

ALICE TWO

A little larger, for one thing, you know?

CATERPILLAR

I don't know.

ALICE TWO

Three inches is such a wretched height.

CATERPILLAR

It's a very good height indeed!

(The CATERPILLAR and STORYTELLERS rise up to threaten ALICE, insulted.)

ALICE TWO

But I'm not used to it.

(The STORYTELLERS calm, grumbling aum's under their breath.)

CATERPILLAR

One will make you grow larger and one will make you grow shorter.

ALICE TWO

One of what.

STORYTELLER 3

Suddenly, something strange began to happen.

(The CATERPILLAR sinks down into his body and behind the mushroom, as if it were a shell.)

ALICE TWO

Wait! One of what!

(From the CATERPILLAR shell emerges the most beautiful BUTTERFLY. She stands atop the mushroom, head high, triumphant. All the STORYTELLERS ooh and ah.)

STORYTELLER 1

It was a butterfly. A beautiful, delicate butterfly.

(The smile suddenly falls from the BUTTERFLY'S Face. She looks down at her new self and is shocked. Whenever she speaks, the BUTTERFLY moves her lips, but the voice is the deep voice of the CATERPILLAR.)

BUTTERFLY

This is unacceptable! It will never do!

(The BUTTERFLY waves her arm in disgust and accidentally notices there is now a wing there. She flaps the wing a little and seems to like it. She flaps her other wing. The STORYTELLERS encourage her to flap them both at the same time.)

BUTTERFLY

I'm flying I can fly!

(The STORYTELLERS Carry her around as she exuberantly flaps those wings. She is about to leave when she crashes into the proscenium.)

BUTTERFLY

I'll get the hang of it. Just watch.

(She flies off stage.)

ALICE TWO

One will make me grow larger? One what?

STORYTELLER 5

The shroom. One side of the shroom.

(STORYTELLER 5 holds out a bit of the mushroom for ALICE.)

ALICE TWO

The mushroom?

STORYTELLER 3

One side will make you larger. One side will make you smaller.

ALICE TWO

I'm not supposed to eat wild mushrooms? You think I'm stupid? I listened to you guys last time.

(ALICE grabs the hookah and takes a quick puff.)

STORYTELLERS

No! THE MUSHROOM!

(ALICE coughs and gags and shrinks. The lights strobe and fog fills the stage. The STORYTELLERS surround her, blocking the audiences view.)

STORYTELLER 6

The next moment she felt a violent blow beneath her!

STORYTELLER 4

There was no time to be lost. She was shrinking so rapidly.

STORYTELLER 7

Her chin was pressed closely against her foot!

STORYTELLER 8

There was hardly room to open her mouth!

STORYTELLER 1

The mushroom! Try the mushroom!

(ALICE rises out of the pile of STORYTELLERS to eat a mushroom. She shrinks down behind the mushroom and immediately rises up again but as a new and equally diverse Alice, ALICE THREE. The STORYTELLERS scatter. ALICE THREE holds her head as if she has a horrible headache. Her SISTER enters with a mirror.)

Alice ... Alice?

SISTER

Dude, I've got such a headache.

ALICE THREE

Maybe this will sober you up.

SISTER

(SISTER gives ALICE the mirror. ALICE looks deep into the glass. She sobers immediately.)

Whoa! Whoooo arrrrre yooou?

ALICE THREE

Good.

SISTER

What?

ALICE THREE

You learned something from the caterpillar's lesson.

SISTER

Caterpillars don't give lessons.

ALICE THREE

Caterpillars don't give lessons?

SISTER

It's not likely. The silly thing didn't even realize how much better it was as a butterfly.

ALICE THREE

You mean after he ...

SISTER

I get it! He changed!

ALICE THREE *(Angry)*

I see. *He* changed.

SISTER

(The SISTER leaves as ALICE Studies herself in the mirror.)

Who are you? Who are you? Who are you?

ALICE THREE

LESSON FOUR

THE FLOWERS SPEAK

(A garden full of flowers hop in. Among them is a VIOLET, TIGER-LILY, ROSE, and DAISY. There is also a male SNAPDRAGON, whose only purpose is to flirt with ALICE. ALICE puts the mirror into her pocket and looks around at the garden.)

ALICE THREE

I was so hoping to be big again.

(She leans against the VIOLET.)

If only you could talk, I could ask you how to get home.

VIOLET

But we can talk.

TIGER-LILY

When there's anybody worth talking to.

(ALICE Is startled and jumps back, landing on the ROSE.)

ROSE

Oooohhh! That's my root, you know.

DAISY

Awkward bud.

VIOLET

Plant yourself, girl.

ALICE THREE

Can all flowers talk?

TIGER-LILY

As well as you can.

DAISY

And a great deal louder.

ROSE

I speak seven languages.

DAISY

Show off.

VIOLET

But It isn't good manners for us to begin.

TIGER-LILY

And we were really wondering when you'd speak.

(The flowers lean close to inspect the new arrival. The SNAPDRAGON likes what he sees. The other flowers are less impressed. They gossip right in front of ALICE without acknowledging her.)

DAISY

Not much of a flower is she?

ROSE

Her color's all right. That goes a long way.

VIOLET

All the best flowers are purple, you know.

DAISY

Yellow and white. That's what a flower should be.

ROSE

Red is good.

VIOLET

I don't know many blue flowers.

DAISY

Not many I like, anyway.

TIGER-LILY

I don't care what her color is. But her petals should curl more.

SNAPDRAGON

I like her.

(The SNAPDRAGON gives a "Call me" signal to ALICE.)

DAISY

Watch out for him.

ROSE

He's a stalker.

ALICE THREE

Excuse me. How is it you all talk so nicely? I've been in many gardens before, but none of the flowers could talk.

TIGER-LILY

Feel the ground.

DAISY

Then you'll know.

But I don't see –
ALICE THREE

Feel the ground!
ROSE

Stubborn child!
VIOLET

(SNAPDRAGON encourages ALICE to feel the ground.)

It's very hard.
ALICE THREE

TIGER-LILY
In most gardens they make the beds too soft, so the flowers are always asleep.

ALICE THREE
I never thought of that before.

ROSE
It's my opinion that you never think at all.

VIOLET
I never saw anyone who looked stupider.

DAISY
Dumb as a rock.

VIOLET
A blue rock!

(The female flowers erupt into laughter except for the TIGER-LILY. SNAPDRAGON sidles up to ALICE and looks sad in sympathy.)

TIGER-LILY
Hold your tongue.

(The flowers laugh more. TIGER-LILY hops after them, but they are younger and quicker than she is and hop just out of her reach.)

TIGER-LILY
They know I can't get to them or they wouldn't dare speak like that.

(The females giggle.)

TIGER-LILY
I try to teach them respect, and in return I get this.

(TIGER-LILY hops over and takes ALICE aside. ROSE, VIOLET and DAISY figure something is up and hop up behind her to eavesdrop.)

TIGER-LILY

The Daisies are the worst of all. Worse than the buds. They'll grow anywhere. The VIOLETs gossip all day, And the roses think they're soooo special.

ROSE

She's just jealous. My relatives live at the palace.

TIGER-LILY

So does moat scum.

DAISY *(aside to ALICE)*

Her nectar's getting sour.

TIGER-LILY

What was that?

DAISY

Your stems are getting a bit brown around the edges.

VIOLET

Tell me, Tiger-lily, when was the last time a bee landed on you?

(TIGER-LILY goes into a rage and hops after VIOLET. They slap at each other's petals with their leaves. The other flowers urge them on to fight. SNAPDRAGON sidles over to flirt with ALICE.)

ALICE THREE

Are there any other people in the garden besides me.

(When she mentions people, all the flowers freeze.)

TIGER-LILY

What kind of flower did you say you were?

ALICE THREE

I didn't.

(The flowers hop over to inspect her again.)

ROSE

What kind of flower can move around like that?

DAISY

Look at her petals, all tumbled about.

VIOLET

Her face should be in the middle of the petals, not at the top.

That's not natural.

ROSE

Perhaps she's a bug.

DAISY

You're not ... a weed, are you?

VIOLET

(The flowers are sickened.. The SNAPDRAGON faints.)

You're not like us!

TIGER-LILY

If it's any consolation, I'm not like myself either.

ALICE THREE

Get her!

TIGER-LILY

(The flowers hop toward her yelling like pirates.)

Nonsense!

ALICE THREE

(The flowers freeze.)

What? What did she say?

ALL FLOWERS

How are you going to get me? You are nearly stuck in one place. You're lucky I'm not my real size or I'd cut your stems and put you in a vase.

ALICE THREE

(The flowers recoil in fear. SNAPDRAGON wakes up and crawls off the stage yelping.)

M ... m ... m ... Murderer!

TIGER-LILY

Are you all with us!

ROSE

Yes!

ALL FLOWERS

Load your pollen!

DAISY

Get her!

ALL FLOWERS

(They pelt ALICE with pollen. She begins to cough. The lights strobe and fog fills the stage. ALICE disappears, screened from the audience by the flowers. The STORYTELLERS enter.)

STORYTELLER 2

Suddenly the ground flew away beneath her.

STORYTELLER 8

Her head seemed to float up into the air.

(ALICE THREE rises up out of the huddle of flowers, lifted by unseen hands. She sinks back down into the scrum and when she rises up again, she is a completely different Alice, ALICE FOUR.)

STORYTELLER 4

Her neck was stretching like a rubber band.

STORYTELLER 5

Her arms grew to twice their length.

STORYTELLER 7

Her legs looked like trunks of trees.

STORYTELLER 6

And she hoped that when it was all over her body had caught up with the rest of her.

TIGER-LILY

She's a giant!

(The flowers scream and run off in all directions. When the fog clears and the lights come up we see ALICE FOUR, still sneezing. A small house has been rolled on stage behind her. ALICE pulls out her mirror and looks at her new self. The SISTER enters.)

SISTER

Interesting. At least you're more like your normal size.

ALICE FOUR

I used to be quite sure what normal was, and to be as I am now, would not have been normal then.

SISTER

I think I understand.

ALICE FOUR

Here, I won't need this again.

(ALICE hands the SISTER the mirror.)

I think I've figured it all out. If I don't smoke, or inhale particles or eat or drink. I think I will be able to stay this size a long time. And at least, no one will mistake me for a bug or a flower.

SISTER

By the way, how were the flowers?

ALICE FOUR

Awful.

(Stepping out, soap opera style.)

They judged me by the color of my petals.

SISTER

Then I imagine there's no use trying to learn a lesson from a flower.

ALICE FOUR

I see what you're doing, Sister. You are twisting my own words against me.

(She pantomimes locking her mouth shut.)

Now I'm swallowing the key.

(She pantomimes swallowing the key.)

SISTER

You can't swallow the key after you've locked your mouth.

ALICE FOUR

Well you can't lock your mouth after you've swallowed the key ... I mean.

(She poses, nose in air. To indicate she will not talk again.)

SISTER

I see.

(The SISTER leaves. ALICE notices there is a small flower box next to the house with normal sized flowers. ALICE inspects them closely.)

ALICE FOUR

Remember me? Tiger-Lily? You're not so brave now!

(Suddenly a small TIGER-LILY jumps out of the flower box and attacks ALICE'S neck. ALICE reels around the stage trying to free herself.)

LESSON FIVE

THE RED QUEEN PUTS ALICE IN HER PLACE

(The RED QUEEN prances in from the wings doing a wild aerobic dance. ALICE, still struggling with the lily, bumps blindly into the QUEEN and knocks her off her feet. The RED QUEEN stares up at the girl struggling with the lily, stands, grabs the flower away from ALICE and throws it off stage.)

ALICE FOUR

Thank you. It was after me.

(The QUEEN looks at her suspiciously.)

The flower.

RED QUEEN

I saw what you were doing, child.

ALICE FOUR

Well, where I come from, if you see a person in trouble you generally help.

QUEEN

Silence. Where did you come from? Where are you going? Look up. Speak nicely. And don't twiddle your fingers all the time.

ALICE FOUR

I've lost my way.

RED QUEEN

I don't know what you mean by your way, all ways about here belong to me -- But why did you come here at all. Curtsy while you're thinking what to say. It's time for you to answer now. Open your mouth a little wider when you speak and always say, "your majesty!"

ALICE FOUR

I only wanted to see where the rabbit went and what this garden was like but then I started to change from one ...

(The RED QUEEN signals her great disapproval at ALICE'S actions by clearing her throat. ALICE make a long, low curtsy and over pronounces her words.)

Your majesty.

RED QUEEN

That's better. Though when you say garden, I've seen gardens, compared with which this would be a wilderness.

ALICE FOUR

You know, I ought to be getting home. You think I might find my way home over that hill ...?
Your majesty.

RED QUEEN

When you say hill, I could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd say call that a valley.

ALICE FOUR

A hill can't be a valley. That would be nonsense.

RED QUEEN

You say nonsense, but I've heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary.

ALICE FOUR

You're not making any ...

(The RED QUEEN snaps her head away in disapproval. ALICE curtsies.)

Your Maaaaajjjjessssttttyyyy.

RED QUEEN

That's better. Now let's go.

(She leads ALICE out into the audience, moving aerobically as she leads.)

ALICE FOUR

You'll help me get home?

RED QUEEN

Heavens no. But you can be a pawn if you like.

ALICE FOUR

A pawn?

RED QUEEN

You can't have expected to start higher. You see, It's laid out like a chess board.

(ALICE pauses and looks around at the hills which are in vaguely checker board patterns.)

ALICE FOUR

It isn't at all like a –

(The RED QUEEN clears her throat.)

I declare. It is marked out like a chess board, your majesty.

RED QUEEN

And on this great chessboard, you may be ... a pawn.

(The QUEEN leads on.)

ALICE FOUR

Wait. Queens may move as far as they want in any direction.

RED QUEEN

Of course I may. All ways belong to me.

ALICE FOUR

Then if I was a queen, I could go home.

RED QUEEN

Instantly.

ALICE FOUR

Then I want to be a queen.

You may be a pawn.

RED QUEEN

Queen.

ALICE FOUR

(The QUEEN stops and turns back on ALICE.)

Pawn.

RED QUEEN

Queen!

ALICE FOUR

Pawn!

RED QUEEN

Queen!!

ALICE FOUR

Pawn!!

RED QUEEN

Queen!!!

ALICE FOUR

Curtsey!!!!

RED QUEEN

(ALICE does.)

Your Majesty.

ALICE FOUR

RED QUEEN

Like all pawns, you are in the second square to begin with and if ... if you get to the eighth square on the chess board, then you'll be promoted to a queen.

I like that.

ALICE FOUR

(The QUEEN leads on.)

RED QUEEN

It is an unlikely journey! Rooks and Bishops will need to help you, and even another pawn can block your way. To step to the side is cheating, but you don't look like the sort who would mind that. And then at the end, as you cross that threshold and claim your crown, a knight comes out of nowhere and knocks you into oblivion. So it's best you give up these wild notions and follow me. Let's go!

(The RED QUEEN speeds up, double time. A wild, contorted dance.)

ALICE FOUR

What are you doing?

RED QUEEN

Where I come from, this is the way we get around.

ALICE FOUR

I can't do that.

RED QUEEN

Spoken like a pawn.

(ALICE grits her teeth and tries.)

You see? You'd be surprised at what you could do if you only tried. Faster! Faster!

ALICE FOUR

Are we nearly there?

RED QUEEN

Nearly there? Why we passed it minutes ago. Faster!

(As they dance, ALICE gets better and better. Soon she can dance better than the QUEEN and is adding in new, fancy steps. The QUEEN is getting very jealous. They dance back up onto stage.)

ALICE FOUR

Faster. Faster.

(The RED QUEEN trips ALICE.)

RED QUEEN

You may rest a little now.

ALICE FOUR

Why I do believe we're in the same place as we started.

RED QUEEN

Of course. How would you have it?

ALICE FOUR

Well, in our country, you generally get to somewhere else if you went very fast for a long time as we've been doing.

RED QUEEN

Here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. I will give you some advice and then I shall go ... And yet you make no remark.

ALICE FOUR

I didn't know I had to make one just then.

RED QUEEN

You should have said, "It's extremely kind of you to tell me all this." However, we'll suppose it said. Here is my advice. Speak in French when you can't think of the English for a thing, turn out your toes when you walk, and remember who you are.

(The QUEEN dances off stage. A STORYTELLER brings ALICE a bottle of water and a towel.)

ALICE FOUR

Thank you. That was a workout.

(ALICE towels herself off and then drinks. She notices the STORYTELLER holding back her laughter. Fog and lights start.)

Oh, no. I forgot my own advice!

(When the fog clears she is ALICE THREE again. The STORYTELLER exits laughing. ALICE sits down and sighs, defeated. SISTER enters and sits next to her.)

ALICE THREE

Sister.

SISTER

Sister.

ALICE THREE

You seem to arrive at the moment of my greatest humiliations ... Coincidence?

SISTER

No, I'm watching. Over there behind that curtain. I brought you this.

(SISTER offers ALICE a mirror.)

Go ahead. You might be surprised.

ALICE THREE

Nothing surprises me any –

(ALICE looks in mirror)

That is surprising. I am what I was, but not who I was.

SISTER

At least now you have a goal.

ALICE THREE

Do I?

SISTER

The Eighth square.

ALICE THREE

(Rising. Energized again.)

Yes. If I can somehow get to the eighth square, I become queen, and I can surely get home.

SISTER

Look! Here comes a train. Perhaps you can ride the train to the eighth square.

LESSON SIX
A TRAIN AND AN INSECT

(ALICE Turns to see a child's wagon, the train, being pulled by chorus of the NARRATORS. The only passenger is the CONDUCTOR who whips the NARRATORS like slaves.)

CONDUCTOR

Get along now! Mush! Mush!

ALICE THREE

I don't think that's a train. A train –

(When ALICE turns back, the SISTER Is gone. The weary NARRATORS pull the train to the front of the stage. At the edge of the apron they encounter a cliff. The NARRATORS rear up and whinny like horses and bark like sled dogs and act like animals.)

CONDUCTOR

Whoa!

(The CONDUCTOR gets out and inspects the edge of the stage.)

CONDUCTOR

We'll have to go around.

(The NARRATORS howl. The CONDUCTOR raises his whip and they cower)

CONDUCTOR

Take a rest.

(The NARRATORS fall to the floor, exhausted. The CONDUCTOR takes out a canteen and begins to drink. The NARRATORS look up at him, mouths watering. ALICE goes and inspects the train which is only the size of a child's wagon. The CONDUCTOR sneaks up behind her.)

CONDUCTOR

Ticket please! Show your ticket! Show it, Child!

(The NARRATORS Speak in unison and as if she is in grave danger.)

NARRATORS

Don't keep him waiting. His time is worth a thousand dollars a minute!

ALICE THREE

I'm afraid I haven't got one.

CONDUCTOR

Haven't got a ticket?

NARRATORS

Haven't got a ticket?!

ALICE THREE

There wasn't a ticket office where I came from.

NARRATORS

Wasn't room for one where she came from. The land there is worth a thousand dollars an inch.

CONDUCTOR (*To NARRATORS*)

Don't make excuses!

(The NARRATORS Cower.)

CONDUCTOR (*To ALICE*)

Well?

ALICE THREE

There's no use saying anything.

NARRATORS

Exactly. Better say nothing at all. Language is worth a thousand dollars a word.

ALICE THREE

See here, I want to go to the eighth square where I shall be made a queen. If you could take me, I will reward you handsomely, but right now I don't have a ticket and I don't have any means to buy one.

CONDUCTOR

Let me get this straight, Child, you want to go with us anyway?

ALICE THREE

Yes.

CONDUCTOR

I see... Then, with no ticket, you must pull the train yourself.

(All the NARRATORS jump up and run to get into the back of the tiny train. The CONDUCTOR leads ALICE to the front and hands her the ropes.)

ALICE THREE

No!

(The NARRATORS Freeze and stare, shocked, at ALICE.)

NARRATORS

No? But you haven't got a ticket.

CONDUCTOR

Logically, you must pull the train yourself.

(He again forces the ropes on her.)

ALICE THREE

Indeed I shan't.

(She drops the ropes.)

CONDUCTOR

Change Engines!

(The NARRATORS Reluctantly trudge back to their ropes, howling and oinking at ALICE. They come to attention as they pick up their ropes.)

CONDUCTOR

Can I give you some advice, Child.

ALICE

I suppose, everyone else has.

CONDUCTOR

If you want to get back where you started, buy a return ticket at every stop.

(A buzzing insect comes on stage, distracting the NARRATORS and causing them to act like animals. The insect, a YELLOW JACKET, is represented by a laser beam that flits around the stage and lands periodically on peoples' shoulders or heads. The CONDUCTOR swats at the insect as it flies over his head.)

CONDUCTOR

Be careful, Child. These woods are full of dangerous creatures.

(The insect lands on the CONDUCTOR'S shoulder. Its voice is high pitched like, well, like an insect's.)

YELLOW JACKET

I might make a joke out of that, something about "I woods, w-o-o-d-s, if I could." That's funny.

CONDUCTOR

Not you again!

YELLOW JACKET

If I was a ewe I'd sound like this, "Baaaaaah."

CONDUCTOR

That is a rotten joke.

YELLOW JACKET

Rotten? Now you're making me homesick.

(The NARRATORS Notice the conductor is not watching them and silently they turn the train around and exit the way they came in.)

CONDUCTOR

Not funny.

YELLOW JACKET

Well, I nose a better one.

(The YELLOW JACKET buzzes back up into the air, flies around in circles and lands on the CONDUCTOR'S nose. The CONDUCTOR stares cross-eyed at it.)

CONDUCTOR

I've got you now!

(He slowly positions his hand, and then swats at the insect. It flies away and the CONDUCTOR slaps himself on the nose.)

YELLOW JACKET

I nose another one. Get it? Nose?

(The CONDUCTOR swings at the insect while still holding his nose.)

YELLOW JACKET

Here's a good one. What has sixteen legs but can't be seen? Give up?

CONDUCTOR

Yes.

YELLOW JACKET

Your train.

(The CONDUCTOR spins around to find his train is gone.)

CONDUCTOR

Wait! Wait for me!

(He runs off. The YELLOW JACKET buzzes around and then comes to rest on ALICE'S shoulder.)

YELLOW JACKET

I might make a joke out of that, something like, "Wait for weight." Get it? W-a-i-t for w-e-i-g-h-t. Pretty good, eh? See the train was empty, so it had no weight. They call me "the funny one." Go ahead. Say something and I'll make a joke out of it.

ALICE THREE

Are you a firefly?

YELLOW JACKET

No, but I'm light on my feet.

(The YELLOW JACKET buzzes around laughing and lands on ALICE'S other shoulder.)

YELLOW JACKET

I got a million of 'em.

ALICE THREE

Jokes?

YELLOW JACKET

Relatives.

(The insect buzzes, laughs, and lands again.)

That's insect humor. You like insect humor?

ALICE THREE

Not exactly.

YELLOW JACKET

I see. It bugs you? Bugs you?

(The YELLOW JACKET does somersaults as it chortles.)

ALICE THREE

You don't sting do you? I don't like insects that sting.

(The YELLOW JACKET becomes suddenly serious and lands.)

YELLOW JACKET

You don't rejoice in all insects?

ALICE THREE

I don't rejoice in insects, but I studied insects in my lessons and can tell you the names of some of them.

YELLOW JACKET

They answer to their names?

ALICE THREE

No.

YELLOW JACKET

Then what's the use of their having names if they won't answer.

(The YELLOW JACKET buzzes to the other shoulder.)

ALICE THREE

No use to them, but it's useful to the people who name them.

YELLOW JACKET

Think of how convenient it would be if you didn't have a name. For instance, if your sister wanted to call you to lessons she'd call out, "Come here ..." And there she'd have to stop, because there wouldn't be any name to call, and you wouldn't have to go.

ALICE THREE

She'd never let me out of my lessons. Not my sister. If she forgot my name she'd call me "Miss."

YELLOW JACKET

If all she called you was "Miss," of course, you'd "miss" your lesson!

(He waits for ALICE to laugh. She doesn't.)

That's a joke.

ALICE THREE

Yes, now if you could just point me in the direction of square three.

YELLOW JACKET

I said, "That's a joke." Just to be polite you ought to laugh if it's a joke.

ALICE THREE

A very bad one.

YELLOW JACKET

What! A very good one, you mean!

ALICE THREE

I'm afraid it wasn't funny at all. Perhaps you weren't meant to be funny.

YELLOW JACKET

Not meant? But that's who I am. The funny one.

ALICE THREE

Funny for an insect, perhaps.

YELLOW JACKET

Don't patronize me. And let me tell you, when you find out who you are, the funny one, that's not when it gets easy. You still have to find your audience. So I'll be going now. But first there's one more thing. I forgot to tell you that I am ... I am the kind of insect that stings!

(Insulted, the YELLOW JACKET Buzzes and dive bombs ALICE. She is stung on the shoulder and back. ALICE swats at it, misses and then swats again. The insect begins to make sounds like an airplane sputtering and then crashing. The insect, the laser beam, comes to rest in front of the door to the little house. ALICE carefully picks up the insect and holds it close to her face to talk to it.)

ALICE THREE

Did I hurt you terribly?

YELLOW JACKET

Just the opposite. You hurt me very well ... That's one of my best jokes, and you're not laughing. I'm dying here!

(The YELLOW JACKET Dies. The cottage door swings open and knocks ALICE back. The jolt shoots the YELLOW JACKET off her hand and into her mouth. ALICE chokes on the insect and staggers. A DUCHESS, a fish dressed like a FOOTMAN and a COOK rush out of the door. The DUCHESS Carries a BABY Under her arm like a football.)

LESSON SEVEN

THE LESSONS OF PEPPER

(The COOK hurls a plate of food at the DUCHESS. The DUCHESS ducks and it hits the FISH FOOTMAN.)

COOK

More pepper!

DUCHESS

Too much pepper!

COOK

How can I cook without more pepper!

(The COOK hurls another plate. The DUCHESS blocks it with the BABY.)

DUCHESS

You ruined the porridge!

COOK

I need more pepper!

DUCHESS

You ruined the eggs. You ruined the tea!

COOK

More pepper!

(The COOK hurls a bowl at the DUCHESS. It strikes the FISH FOOTMAN who stumbles into the still choking ALICE, knocking her to the ground behind the door which was left wide open by the three creatures that run out.)

DUCHESS

Less! Less pepper!

COOK

More pepper!

(The lights begin to strobe and fog fills the stage. The COOK pulls out a butcher knife and chases the DUCHESS and FISHFOOTMAN back into the little house. They close the door behind them and we see ALICE slumped on the floor, back to us, still choking.)

COOK (OFF)

More pepper!

DUCHESS(OFF)

It's raining pepper!

(When the lights come back, a new ALICE stands up and turns to face the audience. ALICE FIVE is a man. The SISTER enters with the mirror and stops cold when she sees the new ALICE.)

ALICE FIVE

What's wrong?

SISTER

What did you eat?

ALICE FIVE

A bug.

SISTER

That explains a lot. What did you expect to turn into?

ALICE FIVE

It's not like I did it on purpose, I ...

(SISTER hands ALICE the mirror. ALICE screams in horror. ALICE turns away from the audience and lifts up his ... her, we'll call ALICE her, skirt to see what junk is under there. She screams even louder.)

ALICE FIVE

It's so ... Aaaaahhhh!

Could be worse.

SISTER

How?

ALICE FIVE

I'm not really sure.

SISTER

(ALICE panics. She rushes over to the little house, breaks off a hunk of the roof, and eats it. Alice grabs a handful of dirt out of the flower box and stuffs it into her mouth. She sees a plate of eggs left behind by the cook, rushes over, and shovels the eggs into her mouth. She immediately spits out the eggs.)

Too much pepper.

ALICE FIVE

What are you doing?

SISTER

I'm eating! But nothing's happening!

ALICE FIVE

Oh, dear.

SISTER

What?

ALICE FIVE

You mixed up the potions. You should've been more careful. Unpredictable things may begin to happen.

SISTER

You mean all this was predictable?

ALICE FIVE

I mean you may begin to change without warning. And the lessons may be harder to understand.

SISTER

Harder than a bug stinging me?

ALICE FIVE

I believe the lesson of that was find your audience.

SISTER

Stop!

ALICE FIVE

(ALICE spits the food out into her hand. She looks around for a place to dump it, then puts it in SISTER'S Hand.)

ALICE FIVE

Why didn't you warn me about all this?

SISTER

It's your journey. They're your lessons.

ALICE FIVE

You are no help to me at all. Why don't you just leave!

SISTER

You want me to leave?

ALICE FIVE

With your help, things have gotten worse.

(SISTER picks up the mirror and turns to go.)

ALICE FIVE

Where are you going?

SISTER

I'm leaving you ... alone.

(She exits. ALICE moves to the center of the stage and speaks sweetly to the strobe light.)

ALICE FIVE

All right. I'm ready to change now!

(Nothing happens. ALICE clicks her heels together three times.)

ALICE FIVE

Any time ... I said, I'm ready!

(The WHITE RABBIT runs in from the back of the auditorium.)

WHITE RABBIT

I'm late! No time. No time!

ALICE FIVE

Thank goodness you're here. Remember me?

WHITE RABBIT

No.

ALICE FIVE

Can you show me how to get home?

WHITE RABBIT

I've got important documents to deliver.

ALICE FIVE

Can I just follow along?

WHITE RABBIT

I don't think you're that fast. And I warn you, if you interfere with the Queen's messenger, it will mean your head.

ALICE FIVE

The queen?

WHITE RABBIT

Yes.

ALICE FIVE

I'm going to be queen!

(The WHITE RABBIT takes a long look at the boy in the dress.)

WHITE RABBIT

Yes. Of course.

(The WHITE RABBIT runs to the door of the small house and knocks. The FISH FOOTMAN sticks his head out.)

WHITE RABBIT

For the Duchess. An invitation from the queen to play croquet!

(The FOOTMAN comes out to accept the invitation.)

FISH FOOTMAN

From the queen an invitation for the duchess to play croquet.

(They bow to each other and knock heads. They stagger and fall to the floor. The door closes behind the FISH FOOTMAN. The WHITE RABBIT staggers to his feet and wobbles over to ALICE.)

WHITE RABBIT

From the Duchess, an invitation to play the Queen.

(The WHITE RABBIT hands ALICE an invitation and staggers off.)

No late time date, I am. For the queen.

(ALICE eats the invitation. The FISH FOOTMAN recovers and stands up. He sees the door is shut and rushes to try and open it. The door won't budge. The FISH FOOTMAN sinks to the floor in defeat.)

FISH FOOTMAN

I shall sit here for days and days.

(ALICE Goes to the door and knocks.)

FISH FOOTMAN

There's no use knocking.

(ALICE Knocks again.)

FISH FOOTMAN

There's no use knocking.

ALICE FIVE

Please then, how am I to get in?

FISH FOOTMAN

There's no use knocking and that's for two reasons. First, because I am on the same side of the door as you are. Secondly because they are making so much noise inside, no one could possibly hear you.

ALICE FIVE

Then, how am I to get in?

FISH FOOTMAN

There might be some sense in your knocking if we had a door between us. For instance, if you were inside, you might knock, and I could let you out!

(ALICE thinks about this, opens the door easily, crawls inside and shuts the door behind her. She stands up and we see the cottage has no roof and she is much taller than the walls. She knocks on the inside of the door. The FISH FOOTMAN looks around, surprised and unsure at the source of the noise. The Knocking starts up again.)

FISH FOOTMAN

Who's there?

ALICE FIVE

Me.

(The FISH FOOTMAN opens the door and ALICE comes out.)

FISH FOOTMAN

There. You see? There.

(He lets go of the door. It swings shut. Suddenly he realizes he is shut out again, tugs on the door handle. It won't budge, held securely, no doubt, by an unseen person inside the cottage. The FISH FOOTMAN gives up and sits.)

FISH FOOTMAN

I shall sit here for days and days.

ALICE FIVE

Please then, how am I to get in?

FISH FOOTMAN

Are you to get in? That's the first question.

(The door opens knocking ALICE DOWN. The DUCHESS carrying the BABY is chased out by the COOK with his butcher knife.)

DUCHESS

PIG!!!

COOK

Pepper!

DUCHESS

Pig!

COOK

You stole my pepper!

DUCHESS

You pig!

COOK

More pepper!

(The COOK throws all kind of things at the DUCHESS, mostly hitting the FISH FOOTMAN! She throws a rolling pin and a butcher knife at the DUCHESS. The DUCHESS catches the knife and turns it to threaten the COOK.)

DUCHESS

Really? More pepper?

COOK

A pinch.

(The DUCHESS tosses the BABY to the COOK. ALICE yelps in shock. The DUCHESS and the COOK continue to toss the butcher knife and rolling pin and BABY back and forth to each other. Every time the BABY flies ALICE yelps with concern.)

ALICE FIVE

Is that how you treat a baby?

The pig?
DUCHESS

The baby?
ALICE FIVE

(The DUCHESS and COOK juggle together as they recite.)

DUCHESS
Speak roughly to your little boy, / And beat him when he sneezes:

COOK
He only does it to annoy, / Because he knows it teases.

FISH FOOTMAN
WAAW, WAAW...

(The BABY is now flying through the air, back and forth. ALICE is becoming hysterical.)

ALICE FIVE
Stop!

(The shout diverts the COOK'S attention and the BABY falls to the ground. ALICE lets out a gasp.)

FISH FOOTMAN
Waaw.

DUCHESS
Here! You may nurse it for a bit, if you wish!

(The DUCHESS throws the BABY to alice. They hurry inside leaving ALICE ALONE. The STORYTELLERS Pop their heads out from around the scenery.)

ALICE FIVE
If I don't take this child away with me, they're sure to kill it.

STORYTELLER 8
She said the last words out loud and the little thing grunted a reply.

BABY
Grunt.

ALICE FIVE
Don't grunt. That's not at all proper.

STORYTELLER 7
The baby grunted again.

BABY

Grunt!

STORYTELLER 6

Alice looked very anxiously into its face to see what was the matter.

(The lights begin to strobe and fog fills the stage.)

STORYTELLER 4

Its nose began to up-turn, more like a snout!

STORYTELLER 2

Its eyes were getting extremely small for a baby!

STORYTELLER 1

The poor thing sobbed or grunted, it was impossible to say which.

STORYTELLER 5

This time there could be no mistake about it!

ALICE FIVE

I'm changing. I'm changing.

(The lights come up quickly. ALICE has not changed.)

ALICE FIVE

I'm not changing.

STORYTELLER 3

And so it was, for he... she... Alice had not changed a bit.

STORYTELLER 8

But as for the baby.

ALICE FIVE

It's a pig!

(It is a PIG. The horrified ALICE punts the PIG off stage.)

STORYTELLER 3

So she let the little creature go, and felt quite relieved to see it trot away quietly into the woods.

ALICE FIVE

What a curious land. I hope I won't turn into a pig. Though I suppose I can never tell. Well, if it had grown up, it would have made a very ugly child.

(The PIG sticks its head around a corner of the set and grunts.)

PIG

Grunt!

ALICE FIVE

But you make a very handsome pig.

(PIG grunts happily as it exits.)

STORYTELLER 8

And Alice began thinking over other children she knew, who might do very well as pigs, when she was startled to see a Cheshire Cat sitting on a bough of a tree.

(The STORYTELLERS shuffle in from off stage. The CHESHIRE CAT sits on their shoulders. It grins.)

STORYTELLER 6

The Cat just grinned when it saw Alice.

LESSON EIGHT

THE CHESHIRE CAT VANISHES

(The CHESHIRE CAT is dressed like a magician.)

ALICE FIVE

Dinah?

CHESHIRE CAT

The magnificent Cat from Cheshire, you mean.

ALICE FIVE

Well, since you can talk, would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

(The CAT jumps down next to ALICE, startling her. The CAT shows ALICE his sleeve and then suddenly a cane appears in his hand. ALICE jumps back. The CAT Flips his cane back to the STORYTELLERS who act as his assistants.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Have we ever met before?

ALICE FIVE

No.

CHESHIRE CAT

You were chosen at random?

ALICE FIVE

I don't think so.

CHESHIRE CAT

Of course you were.

(He produces a deck of cards and fans them. Each card is blank.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Check the cards. See if they're marked.

ALICE FIVE

There's nothing on them at all.

(The CAT shuffles them and finally pulls out a card.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Does this look like yours?

ALICE FIVE

I suppose.

CHESHIRE CAT

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen! The mesmerizing, mind-reading cat. Illusion!

(He bows to the audience and then tosses the cards in the air, 52 card pick up for the to a STORYTELLERS. Two other STORYTELLERS roll on a large guillotine. It is shaped like a tree and has an open knot hole where a person's head might poke through. A lumberjack's saw sticks out on either side of the tree, it's full blade hidden by the trunk, and poised to saw off the head of anyone foolish enough to put their head through the knothole.)

CHESHIRE *(To ALICE.)*

Now if you will just put your head through the hole in that Guillotine, I will attempt a never before performed successfully illusion and separate your head from your body.

ALICE FIVE

No, thank you.

(The CHESHIRE CAT is taken aback for a moment and then addresses the audience.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Ladies and Gentlemen, during our slight delay, I will perform the mind boggling, incredible, disappearing-cat illusion.

(To ALICE.)

What was your question?

ALICE FIVE

Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

CHESHIRE CAT

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

ALICE FIVE

I don't much care--

CHESHIRE CAT

Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

ALICE FIVE

So long as I get somewhere where I can be myself.

CHESHIRE CAT

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

ALICE FIVE

What sort of people live around here?

CHESHIRE CAT

In that direction lives a Hatter.

(The CAT starts to point stage right. ALICE looks right. As soon as she does, the CAT Swings his arm so that he is actually pointing stage left. ALICE strains to see anything. She turns back to talk to him but he slide-steps behind her back. Though the audience can see him clearly right behind her, from ALICE'S point of view the CAT has disappeared.)

ALICE FIVE

But I don't ... Cheshire Cat? Now where did that cat go? Here kitty.

(She takes a few steps to look for the CAT. The CHESHIRE CAT stays right behind her. He finally taps ALICE on the shoulder. She turns and jumps to find the CAT standing so close.)

CHESHIRE CAT

And in that direction lives a March Hare.

(This time he starts to point left and, as ALICE looks, he switches to pointing right. When ALICE straightens up he slide-steps again behind her.)

ALICE FIVE

I see... Cat? He's definitely good at vanishing.

(She takes a few steps. The CAT stays right behind her so that no matter which way ALICE turns she can't see him. Finally he taps her on the shoulder. She jumps.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Visit either you like. They're both mad.

(The CAT bows to the audience.)

CHESHIRE CAT

The illusion of the astounding, vanishing cat!

(ALICE applauds. The STORYTELLERS, less impressed, politely smile and clap.)

ALICE FIVE

That was very good. Oh, but, I don't want to go among mad people.

CHESHIRE CAT

Oh, you can't help that. We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.

ALICE FIVE

How do you know I'm mad?

CHESHIRE CAT

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

(He points at the ground. ALICE looks. The CAT throws a handful of popper on the ground where she is looking. The CAT throws another and another at ALICE'S feet, making her jump. The lights begin to strobe and fog fills the stage. When the lights come up, ALICE ONE has reappeared.)

STORYTELLER 7

Alice was not much surprised at this.

STORYTELLER 5

Although she hadn't eaten anything lately.

STORYTELLER 6

She was getting used to strange things happening.

STORYTELLER 4

And perhaps her sister had been right, and her changes would be more unpredictable.

(The CAT Looks at his poppers and then at the new ALICE. He is utterly astonished that one of his tricks worked so well. He grins as if it is the best trick he has ever done, beyond his wildest fantasies of success.)

CHESHIRE CAT

I am good!

(He bows to the audience.)

The implausible metamorphosing cat!

ALICE ONE

Actually, it's just me. It's something I do. I can morph myself. If you hand me a mirror, I'll be able to tell you which Alice I am.

(The CAT loses his grin, suddenly furious and at the same time jealous that someone would take credit for one of his tricks.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Incredible, yes. Perhaps. Still, it is only one trick.

(He produces a large coin from behind her ear.)

Whereas, I have a variety.

ALICE ONE

Well I did do this other thing ... I turned a baby into a pig.

CHESHIRE CAT

What happened to the baby?

ALICE ONE

I turned a baby, an ordinary baby, into a pig.

(She shrugs modestly. The STORYTELLERS applaud enthusiastically.)

They saw it.

CHESHIRE CAT

Really! Can you do this?

(He makes flowers appear.)

And can you do this!

(He pulls a long linkage of a dozen or so scarves out of ALICE'S dress. The last link is a woman's bathing suit top.)

ALICE ONE

Hey!

CHESHIRE CAT

And can you do ... this!

(He runs and sticks his neck into the guillotine. One STORYTELLER kneels down in front of tree to catch the cat's head on a platter when it falls. The STORYTELLERS saw through the cat's neck. The CHESHIRE CAT yelps in pain. The blade binds and stops as it nears the finish of its task. The STORYTELLERS try to budge it but it will not move. They look confused. One of them reaches over a bops the CHESHIRE CAT on the top on the head. The head falls straight down onto the platter. We see the bloody saw blade through the open knot hole in the tree. The head lies motionless. Two STORYTELLERS pick up a bloody, headless body from behind the tree and carry it off stage.)

STORYTELLER 8

And this time the Cheshire Cat vanished quite slowly.

STORYTELLER 2

Beginning with the end of its tail.

STORYTELLER 1

And followed closely by it's arms and legs.

STORYTELLER 3

And lastly ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

(ALICE Inches close to the severed head.)

ALICE ONE

Cheshire cat?

(Suddenly it's eyes pop open and it grins again.)

CHESIRE CAT

Illusion!!!

(ALICE screams and runs off the stage. The curtain closes behind her.)

STORYTELLER 4

Alice had to escape.

STORYTELLER 7

And a lucky thing, too, because soon a knight with crimson armor came riding in.

(The KNAVE OF HEARTS rides in from back of the auditorium on a hobby horse and accompanied by heroic music. As he reaches the stage, he pulls the reins on his hobby horse and makes whinnying sound effects. The horse prances to a stop.)

KNAVE

Whoa!

(He climbs off his horse. He looks at his hour glass.)

The minions are late ... again. I told them ...

(He stops his monologue as he notices the STORYTELLERS are listening.)

Leave me.

(The STORYTELLERS don't move.)

Do you not know to whom you are speaking?

(They start to answer, but the KNAVE stops them with a gesture.)

I will self-narrate. I am ... the knave. Not so brave now, are you?

(The STORYTELLERS seems unimpressed. The KNAVE makes a series of sound effects, the KNAVE is a master of sound effects, as he pantomimes making an elaborate locked and loaded gun. He threatens the STORYTELLERS with the imaginary weapon.)

Don't make me use it!

(The STORYTELLERS are amused at his threat but leave anyway, chuckling. He speaks to the audience.)

Do you know why they ran away just now? Fear. In all of Wonderland, I am the master criminal.

Yes, I admit it. I stole the tarts. But I have evil to do that is best done without witnesses. Where was I. Ah, yes. The minions are late ... again. I told them to meet me around tea time. Perhaps this will bring them around.

(He pulls a breakfast toaster pastry out of his pocket and holds it up as bait.)

Where are you little minions?

(The MINIONS sneak out from hiding, hungry.)

I said "Tea Time!"

MINION 1

We went to the golf course by mistake.

KNAVE

That pun will cost you.

(The KNAVE uses his Darth Vader powers to lift MINION 1 up by the neck and then drop him. He turns to others, now quaking.)

Now, give me the girl and we can all eat.

(The MINIONS lick their lips and creep toward the tart.)

The Alice first. Then we eat.

MINION 2

We haven't got her.

MINION 3

She ... she got away.

KNAVE

Did my ears deceive me, or have you failed.

MINION 4

Everything was going perfectly.

MINION 5

We waited until she was asleep.

MINION 6

Perhaps ...

KNAVE

Perhaps what?

MINION 6

Perhaps we did waste a bit of time reciting poetry.

KNAVE

I'm surrounded by Idiots.

ALL

Freshmen.

KNAVE

As I am constantly reminded. Continue.

MINION 7

We were about to knock her unconscious.

MINION 8

And then ... Then it happened.

KNAVE

What happened?

MINION 9

The bunny.

(Pause. The KNAVE Looks around at the MINIONS. They nod.)

KNAVE

What?

MINION 10

We were interrupted by a bunny.

KNAVE

Am I to understand, that my perfect plan to forever take over the world of Wonderland by kidnapping and controlling the girl who is dreaming about Wonderland was foiled by a bunny?

MINION 2

He was very big.

MINION 4

And very loud.

MINION 1

And very fluffy.

(The KNAVE uses the force to strangle and drop MINION 1 again.)

KNAVE

Do you know why I did that just now?

MINION 5

Because he was fluffy?

KNAVE

No. To make you aware that next time, when I send you out to kidnap her, you'd better kidnap her.

MINION 3

What if there's a bunny?

KNAVE

Who cares about the bunny!

(All the MINIONS Raise their hands.)

KNAVE

Go!

MINION 7

Go where, your evilness?

KNAVE

Go find the Alice and bring her to me.... Go ... And yet you do not leave.

MINION 8

It's just ... where can we find her?

KNAVE

Gather round. In a mere moment she will be appearing behind this curtain, because that's where the next scene takes place, and the Alice is in every scene.

MINION 9

She isn't in *this* scene.

MINION 10

Unless ... you're the Alice.

MINION 6

Or, maybe, I'm the Alice.

KNAVE

Can I get some Storytellers out here, please!

(STORYTELLERS 4, 6, & 7 enter.)

STORYTELLER 4

What is it?

STORYTELLER 7

We're busy setting up for the next scene.

KNAVE

Narrate them off. Anywhere. I just want to get rid of them.

(He picks up the tarts, jumps on his horse and rides into the audience, accompanied by heroic music.)

I'm out of here!

STORYTELLER 6

The Knave had just finished telling his plan to the minions when ...

KNAVE

(Shouting from back of auditorium)

“Evil Plan.” “Evil Plan.” It sounds better.

STORYTELLER 6

The Knave had just finished telling his “evil plan” to the minions, when they were interrupted by the sounds of a party.

LESSON NINE

THE MAD TEA PARTY

(The curtain opens on a table set up for tea, with pots and cups and biscuits. A table cloth goes all the way to the ground so the audience can not see what’s under it. The tea party has already begun. The MAD HATTER and the MARCH HARE sit behind the tables eating. The DOORMOUSE sleeps, butt in the air, on top of the table.)

STORYTELLER 4

There was a table set out under a tree.

STORYTELLER 7

A Dormouse was sitting near it, fast asleep.

STORYTELLER 4

And a mad Hatter and a large March Hare, were having a tea.

MINION 1:

It’s a bunny.

(The MINIONS run out in fear of the bunny. ALICE TWO enters as the STORYTELLERS exit.)

ALICE TWO

I like tea.

(ALICE goes to the table. She is intercepted by two very irate characters.)

BOTH

No room! No room!

ALICE TWO

There's plenty of room.

BOTH

No room! No room!

(ALICE sits down. The HATTER and HARE huddle to plan strategy. ALICE takes a plate and starts to fill it with cookies. She is startled when the HARE pops in right next to her.)

MARCH HARE

(With sinister intent)

Have some wine?

ALICE TWO

I don't see any wine.

MARCH HARE

There isn't any.

ALICE TWO

Then it wasn't very polite to offer it!

MARCH HARE

I wasn't very polite to sit down without being invited!!!!

ALICE TWO

The table is set for many more than three.

(ALICE turns back to her plate. The HARE Attempts to attack her from behind the HATTER wrestles with the HARE to prevent it, all unnoticed by ALICE. They fall to the floor, out of sight behind the table. ALICE is about to take a bite from a cookie when the HATTER and HARE pop up like toast on either side of her. They lean in, threatening.)

MAD HATTER

Why is a raven like a writing desk?

ALICE TWO

Oh, good. Riddles. I believe I can guess that.

MARCH HARE

Do you mean you think you can find out the answer to it?

ALICE TWO

Exactly so.

MARCH HARE

Then you should say what you mean!

ALICE TWO

I do. At least I mean what I say -- that's the same thing, you know.

MAD HATTER

Not the same thing a bit! Why you might as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!

MARCH HARE

You might just as well say that, 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like'.

(The DORMOUSE Rises up to speak. The HATTER and HARE snap their heads to look at him.)

DORMOUSE

You might as well say that, 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe'.

MARCH HARE

With you, it is the same!

(The DORMOUSE falls asleep with a thud. The HATTER and HARE Sit on either side of ALICE, scooting close to make her feel uncomfortable. They see the cookies on her plate and hastily return the cookies to the platter. As he does, the HATTER Notices his watch and shakes it next to his ear.)

MAD HATTER

What day is it?

ALICE TWO

The tenth

MAD HATTER

Two days off!

(He jumps up and leans over and across ALICE to show the watch to the HARE. The HARE jumps up to defend himself. ALICE is sandwiched in-between.)

MAD HATTER

I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!

MARCH HARE

It was the best butter!

MAD HATTER

Some crumbs must have got in!

MARCH HARE

It was the best butter!!

ALICE TWO

What a funny watch. It tells the day of the month, but it doesn't tell the hour.

(The HATTER and HARE freeze and then look at ALICE like she's crazy.)

MAD HATTER

Why should it.

ALICE TWO

I don't quite understand you.

(The DORMOUSE rolls off the table and crashes onto the ground.)

DORMOUSE

Of course. Just what I was going to say.

(The DORMOUSE Falls asleep again.)

MAD HATTER

Have you guessed the riddle yet?

ALICE TWO

No. I give up. What's the answer?

MAD HATTER

I haven't the slightest idea.

MARCH HARE

Nor I.

ALICE TWO

I would think you might do something better with your time than waste it thinking up riddles...

MAD HATTER

TIME!

MARCH HARE

Not it! He!

MAD HATTER

I dare say you never even spoke to time.

ALICE TWO

I suppose not.

MARCH HARE

Then you should keep your opinions to yourself.

(The HATTER climbs up onto the table to emote.)

MAD HATTER

We quarreled last march.

ALICE TWO

We?

MARCH HARE

Time and the Hatter. Shhh.

MAD HATTER

It was the great concert given by the queen of hearts, and I began to sing...

MARCH HARE

Sing it again, Hatter.

MAD HATTER

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat, how I wonder where you're at... I had hardly finished the first verse when the Queen yelled out, "He's murdering TIME! Off with his head." Since then he won't do a thing I ask. It's always tea time now.

(The HATTER sits down. The HARE pats him on the back.)

ALICE TWO

That's why so many tea things are set out.

MAD HATTER *(Snapping)*

It's always tea time, and we've no time to wash the things between.

(The DORMOUSE Rises and drags himself back up on the table.)

DORMOUSE

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

MARCH HARE

We should make the dormouse tell her a story.

MAD HATTER

No!

ALICE TWO

Yes, please do.

MAD HATTER

And be quick about it, or you'll be asleep before it's done.

DORMOUSE

Once upon a time there were three little sisters, and they lived at the bottom of a well.

ALICE TWO

What did they live on.

DORMOUSE

They lived on pancake syrup.

ALICE TWO

They couldn't have done that, you know.

MAD HATTER

I want a clean cup! Move one place on!

(The HATTER scoots down which forces everyone to move over one.)

MARCH HARE

Have some more tea.

ALICE TWO

I've had nothing yet. So I can't take more.

MAD HATTER

You mean you can't take less. It's very easy to take more than nothing

ALICE TWO

Nobody asked your opinion.

MAD HATTER

Well, who's getting personal now?

(The HATTER stands to confront ALICE. ALICE gets up and runs behind the DORMOUSE for cover. The HATTER sits in ALICE'S spot and eats the cookies from her place.)

ALICE TWO

Continue with the story. Why did they live at the bottom of a well?

DORMOUSE

It was a pancake syrup well.

ALICE TWO

There's no such thing.

DORMOUSE

Finish the story yourself then.

ALICE TWO

No. Go on. I won't interrupt you again.

(ALICE goes back to sit down nearest the DORMOUSE. The HARE slides over to prevent her from sitting. ALICE starts to sit between the HATTER and HARE. The HATTER slides over to prevent her. ALICE starts to sit at the end of the table. The HATTER slides back to prevent her from sitting. She goes to the middle. Both the HATTER and HARE slide in to block her. ALICE Fakes going right and when both the HARE and HATTER slide that way, she quickly runs left and takes the seat at the end of the table.)

HARE & HATTER

Hey!

ALICE TWO (*To DOORMOUSE.*)

Go on.

(The HARE throws a roll at the DOORMOUSE To wake him.)

DOORMOUSE

The sisters were learning to draw, you see, and so these little sisters.

ALICE TWO

What did they draw?

DOORMOUSE

Pancake syrup.

ALICE TWO

How do you draw pancake syrup?

DOORMOUSE

With a bucket and a rope.

ALICE TWO

Really? I don't think...

MAD HATTER (*Exploding*)

Then you shouldn't talk!

MARCH HARE

I want a clean cup! Move down!

(They bump ALICE off her stool. She falls behind the table so we cannot see her. When she stands up, she is a different person, ALICE FOUR, no doubt hiding under the table this whole time.)

HATTER & HARE

No room! No room!

ALICE FOUR

Don't worry. I shan't spend any more time here.

HATTER

Time!!!

MARCH HARE

Now see what you've done!

(The HATTER collapses. ALICE RUNS off. The DOORMOUSE falls over.)

LESSON TEN

ALICE PLAYS CROQUET

(ALICE runs to center stage and stops. The Curtain closes behind her.)

ALICE FOUR

That's very curious. But everything's curious today. At any rate, I'll never go there again.

(She notices she is changed.)

I've changed again? Without smoke and lights? If that's the case, it is getting harder to tell who I am.

(The curtain opens behind ALICE. The STORYTELLERS form human rose bushes and hold white roses in their hands. Three cards, the FIVE, SEVEN and TWO, with pails and brushes, dance around the bushes painting the roses red. A fourth card, the THREE, paints one rose carefully, without moving except for his wrist.)

STORYTELLER 8

When Alice turned back, she found herself in a beautiful garden, among bright flower beds and cool fountains.

STORYTELLER 7

A large rose bush stood near the entrance to the garden.

STORYTELLER 4

The roses growing on it were white,

STORYTELLER 3

But there were four gardeners at it, busily painting them red.

(The SEVEN Accidentally steps into the TWO'S paint bucket. The TWO grabs the bucket and pulls. The SEVEN'S foot shoots out of the bucket and the SEVEN stumbles backward into the FIVE, KNOCKING him into the TWO.)

TWO OF HEARTS

Look out now, Five! Don't go splashing paint all over me like that!

FIVE OF HEARTS

I couldn't help it! Seven jogged my elbow!

SEVEN OF HEARTS

That's right! Always lay the blame on others.

FIVE OF HEARTS

You better not talk! I heard the Queen say only yesterday you deserved to be beheaded!

TWO OF HEARTS

For what!

SEVEN OF HEARTS

That's none of your business!

FIVE OF HEARTS

Yes it is his business! It was for bringing the cook tulip roots instead of onions!

(As he speaks the SEVEN sneaks up behind the FIVE and turns his pail over on the FIVE'S head. When the FIVE emerges from the bucket on his head, the SEVEN points at the THREE who has not moved this whole time.)

SEVEN OF HEARTS

It was the three.

(The TWO nods. The FIVE takes the pail and turns it over onto the head of the THREE. The THREE just keeps painting.)

ALICE FOUR

Would you tell me please, why are you painting the roses.

(The TWO, FIVE and SEVEN jump back, startled. The THREE continues to paint.)

FIVE OF HEARTS

You shouldn't sneak up on us like that.

TWO OF HEARTS

Weak heart.

SEVEN OF HEARTS

You should announce yourself.

ALICE FOUR

I just wanted to know why are you painting the roses red.

TWO OF HEARTS

Promise you won't say a word.

FIVE OF HEARTS

Cross your heart?

SEVEN OF HEARTS

And hope to lose your head?

ALICE FOUR

If you wish.

TWO OF HEARTS

The fact is, Miss, this here ought to have been a red rose-tree.

SEVEN OF HEARTS

But someone put in a white one by mistake!

(Each one points at a different card.)

TWO, FIVE & SEVEN

I think it was him.

TWO OF HEARTS

If the queen should find out ...

(Pantomimes slitter its throat.)

cut off.

FIVE OF HEARTS

Off with our heads.

(Follows an imaginary head as it bounces into the gutter.)

Bounca, bounca, bounca.

SEVEN OF HEARTS

Into the gutter.

(There is a loud commotion off stage.)

FIVE OF HEARTS

The Queen! The Queen!

SEVEN OF HEARTS

The Queen!

(All the cards throw themselves on the ground. They get back up to help the THREE prone himself without taking the pail off his head. The QUEEN OF HEARTS enters followed by the KING and her ENTOURAGE i.e. everyone else in the play not names Alice. ALICE FOUR curtseys.)

ALICE FOUR

Your Majesty.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

That is no way to address a queen.

ALICE FOUR

Oh, dear.

(She thinks for a moment and then ALICE starts arobic dancing like she did with the RED QUEEN.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Stop.

ALICE FOUR

Sorry. I was only trying...

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Who is this?

(The QUEEN looks at the KING. He shrugs. The QUEEN looks to her ENTOURAGE on her right. They shrug. The QUEEN looks to the left. They shrug. The QUEEN LOOKS to the roses held by the STORYTELLERS. Even the flowers shrug their petals.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Idiots.

(Everyone, plus the roses, nods enthusiastically.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS (To ALICE)

What's your name, child?

ALICE FOUR

My name is ... my name is ... I'm not quite sure just now.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

And who are these?

(The QUEEN points to the CARDS on the ground.)

ALICE FOUR

How should I know?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with her head!

ALICE FOUR

Nonsense!

(The ENTOURAGE recoils in shock.)

KING OF HEARTS

Consider, my dear, she is only a child.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

I see. Of course. And yet I have ordered a head to roll.

(The ENTOURAGE shakes in fear. The QUEEN scans their ranks to find someone to behead. Finally, her gaze lands on the THREE OF HEARTS on the floor.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with his head!!!

(The WHITE RABBIT inspects the THREE. The pail covers his head completely.)

WHITE RABBIT

His head ... is gone.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Very good. Now, Alice, do you know who I am?

ALICE FOUR

A queen. And I will be a queen, too, when I get to the eighth square.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

I am THE Queen. In this deck I am the high card.

KING OF HEARTS

Except for the King.

(The QUEEN glares at him. He backs down, milktoast.)

KING OF HEARTS

In theory, my dear ... proceed.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Alice, when you are among mere chess pieces, you may have wild dreams of being promoted. But among the cards, our order is unchangeable. Ace, two, three and so on all the way to Queen.

KING OF HEARTS

And the king.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

It cannot be changed.

KING OF HEARTS

Unless there's a trump.

(The QUEEN glares at him again)

KING OF HEARTS

With trump a queen may be taken by a two ... proceed.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Around here, hearts are always trump. You strike me as a card of middle value, say a six spot. I suggest you stay in your place. Or do I have to cut off someone else's head?

ALICE FOUR

Why would you cut off someone else's head?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

To teach you a lesson.

ALICE FOUR

Then I would think you'd cut off my head.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Nonsense. That would be punishment. A lesson is a different thing. However, I may cut off your head to teach them a lesson.

ALICE FOUR

That isn't fair.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with her ...

KING OF HEARTS

Consider, my dear, have you forgotten why we're here? Perhaps the girl would like to join us.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Do you play croquet, Alice?

ALICE FOUR

Yes! I love croquet.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Come on then! Get to your places!

(The ENTOURAGE spreads out. Each one produces a small balloon the size of a croquet ball. They hold it high over their head and wait in anticipation. The WHITE RABBIT hands ALICE a balloon. The QUEEN takes center stage. She holds her balloon high over her head and then ceremoniously places it on the ground in front of her. The ENTOURAGE follows her lead. The QUEEN lines up her ball as if she is going to hit it with an invisible mallet. She wiggles her huge bottom to get comfortable. The ENTOURAGE mimics her wiggle.)

ALICE FOUR

Excuse me? But, do I get a mallet?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Why does this child have no mallet?

(The ENTOURAGE shrugs.)

Off with your ...

KING OF HEARTS

Consider, my dear, she can use my spare.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Very well.

(The KING pantomimes pulling out a croquet mallet from his robes, assembles it, and hands it to ALICE.)

KING OF HEARTS

Go ahead.

ALICE FOUR

Thank you.

(ALICE reluctantly takes the imaginary mallet. The queen returns to lining up her ball. She wiggles and takes an enormous back swing. ALICE interrupts.)

Whose turn is it?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

You may take a turn, child, when I am finished!

ALICE FOUR

Of course.

(The QUEEN wiggles and takes her backswing. She brings her imaginary club slowly down and pretends to tap the balloon. The ENTOURAGE goes crazy. They begin stomping and popping balloons, knocking some in the air and batting around anything they can hit. All out chaos. ALICE is swept aside by the mosh pit of people. The CHESHIRE CAT comes out of the crowd and claps his hands. The ENTOURAGE begins to move in silent, super slow motion. He produces some cards for ALICE.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Have we ever met before?

ALICE FOUR

Of course we have.

CHESHIRE CAT

You were chosen at random?

ALICE FOUR

I don't have any idea, and I don't want to see any more of your tricks.

CHESHIRE CAT

Really? I bet I can make all these people disappear.

ALICE FOUR

If only you could.

CHESHIRE CAT

(He announces his trick to the audience.)

And now, ladies and gentlemen, the amazing, characters-run-down-the-isle ILLUSION!

ALICE FOUR

Well get to it.

CHESHIRE CAT

Answer me this then, you don't like them?

ALICE FOUR

How will this make them disappear?

CHESHIRE CAT

Trust me. You don't like them?

ALICE FOUR

You were right. Everyone here is mad.

CHESHIRE CAT

What did you say? I can't hear you.

ALICE FOUR (*Her voice rising*)

I said they are all mad! Insane! Crazy! Berserk! Am I leaving out any synonyms?

CHESHIRE CAT

Bonkers?

ALICE FOUR

Bonkers!

(On the last word, the ENTOURAGE stops mid-kick. They return to regular motion and slowly creep up around ALICE to eavesdrop on everything she says. She does not notice them at all.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Well, how do you like the way we play croquet here?

ALICE FOUR

Croquet? Is that what you call this? I don't think you play fair at all. You don't seem to have any rules and, at least, if there are, nobody attends to them.

(The QUEEN OF HEARTS hovers right behind ALICE, inches away.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

And what do you think of the Queen?

ALICE FOUR

The Queen! You call that a queen? She's so extremely ...

(ALICE turns and finds the QUEEN and everyone waiting angrily for her to finish.)

Oh, that Queen ... She's so ... so extremely beautiful ... and ... and extremely likely to win ... and royal, did I say royal?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with her head!

(ALICE leaps off the stage and runs out the back. The ENTOURAGE chases her. They move as a group in a fast waddle, unable to let themselves go faster than the QUEEN who leads them out. The CAT alone remains on stage.)

CHESIRE CAT

The amazing, characters-run-down-the-isle ILLUSION! And now for my most predictable prestidigitation. Lights!

(The house lights instantly switch on.)

Ah. It's intermission.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT II - PROLOGUE

(The KNAVE OF HEARTS trots slowly up onto stage accompanied by heroic music. He calms his horse and dismounts, adding appropriate sound effects. He looks at his hour glass.)

KNAVE

They're late ... again In all fairness to the Minions, I didn't really tell them when we would meet again. That being said, they're late ... again.

(The MINIONS enter.)

MINION 10

We're here, oh prince of evil.

KNAVE

And what do you have to report?

MINION 9

We have captured the Alice.

MINION 8

Just as you told us, she was in the next scene, behind the curtain.

MINION 7

At first we hesitated.

MINION 6

There was a bunny.

MINION 5

But we screwed our courage to the sticking place.

MINION 4

And we did not fail.

KNAVE

Improbable, yet, possible, I suppose.

MINION 3

We even kidnapped the bunny.

KNAVE

Well, bring them in.

(MINION 1 and MINION 2 bring in the HATTER, MACH HARE, and the sleepwalking DORMOUSE, tied together with one rope.)

MINION 2

Here she is. The Alice. And *her* minions.

KNAVE

Which one is the Alice?

MINION 1

The one with the hat.

HATTER

Hello Knave.

KNAVE

Hello, Hatter.

HATTER

I was drinking tea and eating a chocolate digestive, when I was struck on the head and the next thing I know, here I am. There must be a good riddle in there somewhere, I just can't think of it.

HARE

I can. Why is a piece of spaghetti like my Uncle Harry's whiskers? I don't care, 'cause I'm going to kill every last minion.

HATTER

Now, Hare ..., leave some for me.

DOORMOUSE

I wasn't asleep. I heard -

(He's suddenly awake and aware of where he is.)

What the hey!

KNAVE

Untie them.

MINION 1 *(Trembling)*

Untie the bunny?

(The MINIONS run away screaming.)

KNAVE

It appears if you want something done right, you must do it yourself.

(The KNAVE gets on his horse and trots methodically away, accompanied by heroic music. The tied-up tea party pauses a moment before speaking.)

HARE

What'll we do now?

HATTER

Just keep the Doormouse moving. If he falls asleep again, we are doomed.

DOORMOUSE

I don't want to fall asleep. I just want to...

(He snores. They pound on him until he is awake again.)

HATTER

Just keep moving.

(They shuffle off stage.)

LESSON ELEVEN

TWEEDLEDEE AND TWEEDLEDUM RECITE POETRY

(The curtain opens. TWEEDLEDEE and TWEEDLEDUM stand frozen like statues. A commotion starts at the back of the auditorium. The croquet ENTOURAGE chases ALICE FIVE. She runs on stage and hides behind the statues of DEE and DUM. The ENTOURAGE waddles by and off stage, shouting and waving their arms. When they are gone, ALICE pokes her head out to see if the coast is clear. When she looks away from them, DEE and DUM shift their position. ALICE looks back at them, as if unsure they have moved. She moves, and DEE and DUM shimmy over with her. They change position each time she is not looking. Suddenly they jump and laugh.)

TWEEDLEDUM

If you think we're wax works, you ought to pay, you know. Wax-works weren't made to be looked at for nothing. Nohow!

TWEEDLEDEE

Contrary wise, if you think we're alive, you ought to speak.

ALICE FIVE

I'm very sorry.

TWEEDLEDUM

I know what you're thinking about, but it isn't so, nohow!

TWEEDLEDEE

Contrary wise, if it is so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic.

ALICE FIVE

I was thinking, which is the best way out of these woods. It's getting dark and I want to go home.

TWEEDLEDEE

You started wrong! The first thing in a visit is to say, "How do ye do," and shake hand.

(DEE and DUM both try to shake her hand at the same time. They get very angry with each other and begin to wrestle, toppling to the ground.)

ALICE FIVE

I hope you're not too worn out.

(They pop up with new enthusiasm.)

TWEEDLEDUM

Nohow, and thank you very much for asking.

TWEEDLEDEE

You like poetry?

ALICE FIVE

Yes! Well... some poetry.

(DEE and DUM run about gathering props for their production, oysters, handkerchiefs, a big kettle. DUM strikes a pose. Polka music begins and DUM emotes.)

TWEEDLEDUM

The sun was shinning on the sea, Shining with all his...

(DEE hits him on the back of the head. The polka music ends. DEE gives DUM a rapper hat and gold chain. A Rap beat begins to pulse.)

ALICE FIVE

Excuse me ... Excuse me ...

(The music stops.)

If this is very long would you please tell me which road first?

(DEE and DUM ignore her and restrike their poses. The rap beat begins again.)

TWEEDLEDUM

The sun was shining on the sea,/Shining with all his might/He did his very best to make the billows smooth and bright/And this was odd because it was the middle of the night...

TWEEDLEDEE

The Walrus and the Carpenter were walking close at hand/They wept like anything to see such quantities of sand/If this were only cleared away they said it would be grand.

TWEEDLEDUM

Oh, oysters, come and walk with us, the Walrus did beseech./A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk, along the briny beach/We cannot do with more than four to give a hand to each.

TWEEDLEDEE

And four young oysters hurried up, all eager for the treat/Their coats were brushed, their faces washed, their shoes were clean and neat,/And this was odd, because, you know, they hadn't any feet.

TWEEDLEDUM

Four other oysters followed them,/And yet another four.

TWEEDLEDEE

And thick and fast they came at last,/and more, and more, and more!

BOTH

All hopping through the frothy waves,/And scrambling to the shore.

TWEEDLEDUM

A loaf of bread, the Walrus said, is what we chiefly need.

TWEEDLEDEE

Pepper and some vinegar is very good indeed.

BOTH

Now, if you're ready, oysters dear, we can begin the feed.

(They eat the oysters)

TWEEDLEDEE

"I weep for you," the Walrus said, "I deeply sympathize."/With sobs and tears he sorted out those of the largest size./Holding his pocket-handkerchief before his streaming eyes.

TWEEDLEDUM

"Oh, oysters," said the Carpenter, "You had a pleasant run./ Shall we be trotting home again?" But answer there came none.

BOTH

And this was scarcely odd, because they'd eaten every one.

(They jump up and run to either side of ALICE, giddy for her approval.)

TWEEDLEDEE

Did you think I was beyond brilliant?

TWEEDLEDUM

Contrary wise, did you think to ever see such as me?

ALICE FIVE

You want to know what I really thought.

(DEE nods and DUMB shakes his head no.)

You were ...

(DEE and DUM lean in to listen.)

Ah ... Ah ... I liked the Walrus best because he was a little sorry for the oysters.

TWEEDLEDEE

But, he ate more than the Carpenter. You see he held his handkerchief in front, so that the Carpenter couldn't see how many he took.

ALICE FIVE

Then I like the Carpenter best.

TWEEDLEDUM

Contrary wise, he ate as many as he could get!

ALICE FIVE

They're both very unpleasant characters!

(DUM and DEE are now both insulted. They stomp off to pick up their props. Among the rubbish, DUM finds a broken baby rattle.)

TWEEDLEDUM

It's spoiled! I bought it yesterday. My nice new Rattle!!! You!

TWEEDLEDEE

And what if it did break?

TWEEDLEDUM

Of course, you agree to have a battle?

(They prepare to fight, square off and circle, dukes high.)

TWEEDLEDUM

Time!

(DUM goes over to ALICE.)

Do I look very pale?

ALICE FIVE

Yes.. a little.

TWEEDLEDUM

I'm very brave, generally, only today I happen to have a headache.

TWEEDLEDEE

I've got a toothache. I have far worse pain than you!

ALICE FIVE

Then you'd better not fight today.

TWEEDLEDUM

We must have a bit of a fight.

TWEEDLEDEE

And you can watch us. But you better not come very close. I hit everything I can see when I really get excited.

TWEEDLEDUM

(Not to be outdone.)

And I hit everything within reach whether I can see it or not! There won't be a tree standing by the time I'm finished!

(They fight in some interesting half-karate, half- Jedi-warrior way for a few seconds. They eventually fall to the ground, exhausted.)

ALICE FIVE

And all for a rattle!

BOTH

It was new!

ALICE FIVE

Aren't you a little ashamed of fighting for such a trifle?

(DUM and DEE cry and hug.)

ALICE FIVE

You are very much like children, aren't you?

DEE & DUM

Thank you!

ALICE FIVE

Okay, I got to say it. You want some advice?

(DEE and DUM both shake there heads no.)

You're getting it anyway. The poetry didn't suit you at all. Next time, pick a poem that suits you.

(DEE & DUM both suddenly brighten.)

DEE & DUM

Next time!

TWEEDLEDEE

She does like poetry!!!

(The run to the box and pull out random props.)

ALICE FIVE

No! I don't like poetry.

(They ignore him and continue to rummage.)

I'll try this path.

(ALICE turns to go. DEE and DUM run and grab ALICE to keep her from leaving. DUM jumps on her back and DEE grabs her legs.)

ALICE FIVE

Somebody help me!

(STORYTELLER 1 rides in, piggy-back on STORYTELLER 6'S back. She flaps a black cape like it's her wings.)

STORYTELLER 1

It was getting dark so suddenly that there must be a thunderstorm coming.

TWEEDLEDEE

It's a crow!

(DUM and DEE collect props and run off chased by the crow.)

STORYTELLER 6

It was, indeed, a bird whose silhouette blotted out the sun!

STORYTELLER 1

Alice was unsure whether she was very, very tiny or the bird was very, very big.

STORYTELLER 6

Either way, as the crow flapped its wings it made a terrible hurricane in the woods.

(STORYTELLERS 2 and 4 enter flapping a shawl between them.)

STORYTELLER 2

Look, here's somebody's shawl being blown away in the wind!

STORYTELLER 4

Watch out, Alice.

(STORYTELLERS 2 & 4 run on either side of ALICE FIVE, wrapping her up in the shawl. ALICE FIVE struggles with the shawl as the STORYTELLERS drag her off stage between them. ALICE staggers back onto the stage wrapped in the shawl. When she pulls it off, she is ALICE ONE.)

LESSON TWELVE

THE WHITE QUEEN LIVES BACKWARDS

(The WHITE QUEEN runs in, looking for her shawl. The WHITE QUEEN is the bag lady of queens. Her clothes are inside-out. She has a comb and hairbrush stuck in her hair and has dried food stuck to her dress.)

WHITE QUEEN

My shawl! My shawl!

(She retrieves her shawl from ALICE.)

And yet you do not thank me.

ALICE ONE

For what?

WHITE QUEEN

Why, allowing you to retrieve my shawl.

ALICE ONE

I would think *you* would thank *me*.

WHITE QUEEN

People in my position don't thank anyone.

ALICE ONE

And what is your position?

WHITE QUEEN

Think again. It will come to you in a second.

ALICE ONE

Oh, dear. Oh, dear. I suppose I'm addressing another Queen.

WHITE QUEEN

If you call that addressing. It's not my notion of the thing at all.

(ALICE curtseys.)

ALICE ONE

Your majesty.

WHITE QUEEN

Wrong, wrong, wrong.

ALICE ONE

If your Majesty will only tell me the right way to begin, I'll do it as well as I can.

WHITE QUEEN

It will come to you in three days and two hours, what you should've said. Until then, I don't want it done at all.

ALICE ONE

May I ... May I just straighten your shawl for you?

WHITE QUEEN

What's wrong with it?

ALICE ONE

It can't go straight, you know, if you pin it all on one side. And, your Majesty, forgive me. Your hair.

WHITE QUEEN

The brush has gotten stuck in it. And I lost the comb. Does it... show?

(ALICE pulls on the brush. It is embedded in the tangled hair. ALICE puts her foot up for leverage and yanks.)

ALICE ONE

It looks rather ... better. You should have a lady's maid.

WHITE QUEEN

I'll take you. The position pays two pence a week and jam, every other day.

ALICE ONE

I don't want you to hire me and I don't like jam.

WHITE QUEEN

It's very good jam. Taste?

(The QUEEN scrapes an old bit of toast off her clothes and offers it.)

ALICE ONE

None today. I haven't been very lucky with food.

WHITE QUEEN

Quite right. You couldn't have jam today if you did want it. The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday -- but never jam today.

ALICE ONE

It must come sometimes to jam today.

WHITE QUEEN

No. it's jam every other day. Today isn't every other day, you know.

ALICE ONE

You're very confusing.

WHITE QUEEN

That's the effect of ... living backwards.

ALICE ONE

Living backwards?

WHITE QUEEN

One's memory works both ways!

ALICE ONE

I'm sure mine only works one way. I can't remember things before they happen.

WHITE QUEEN

It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards.

BOTH

That's the silliest thing I've heard today.

WHITE QUEEN

See. I knew you would say that. Pretty good, eh?

ALICE ONE

What sort of things do you remember best?

WHITE QUEEN

Oh, things that happen the week after next. The king's knave is in prison now being punished; and the trial doesn't even begin until next week, and, of course, the crime comes last of all.

(The QUEEN screams bloody murder.)

My finger's bleeding! Oh! Oh! Oh!

ALICE ONE

I don't see a thing.

WHITE QUEEN

Well, I haven't cut it yet. But I will.

ALICE ONE

When do you expect to do it?

WHITE QUEEN

Seven seconds. When I fasten my shawl again, the brooch will come undone like this and... what's that?

(The QUEEN cuts her finger. Blood spurts. She shows the wound calmly to ALICE.)

You see?

ALICE ONE

But why don't you scream now?

WHITE QUEEN

I've done all the screaming already. What would be the good of doing it all again? But oh, this memory's a curse. You must be very happy.

ALICE ONE

Actually I'm very lost. And even though there are many curious people in this place, many of them myself, I feel very lonely.

WHITE QUEEN

Oh, don't go on like that. Consider how far you've come today.

ALICE ONE

Well, when the day started I thought I knew everything. Now, I can't even remember my own name or what I look like. I probably wouldn't recognize myself if I bumped into me.

WHITE QUEEN

Excellent progress.

ALICE ONE

Progress?

WHITE QUEEN

To go from knowing everything to knowing nothing, and all in one day, is quite an accomplishment.

ALICE ONE

If only I had stayed with my lessons.

WHITE QUEEN

Consider anything, only don't cry.

ALICE ONE

Cry? I'm certainly not going to cry just because ... I'm not going to...

(ALICE bursts into tears. The QUEEN consoles her.)

WHITE QUEEN

I told you. Oh, here, here. Consider what a wonderful girl you are.

ALICE ONE

Plural. Girls! And a ... a boy.

(She sobs harder.)

WHITE QUEEN

You can keep from crying by considering things.

ALICE ONE

I can?

WHITE QUEEN

That's the way it's done. The mind can't do two things at once. Consider your name for a start.

(ALICE pauses and then bursts deeper into tears.)

ALICE ONE

Do you have something easier?

WHITE QUEEN

Your age?

ALICE ONE (Brightening)

I'm seven and a half exactly.

WHITE QUEEN

You needn't say exactly. I can believe it without it. Now I'll give you something to believe. I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day.

ALICE ONE

I can't believe that.

WHITE QUEEN

Try again. Draw a long breath and shut your eyes.

ALICE ONE

I mean, I can't believe impossible things.

WHITE QUEEN

I dare say you haven't had much practice. When I was your age I sometimes believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast. It's no matter, really, for in approximately fifteen seconds you shall never believe something impossible again.

(The lights strobe and fog fills the stage. STORYTELLERS enter.)

STORYTELLER 8

She looked at the Queen, who seemed to have suddenly wrapped herself up in wool.

(The QUEEN shrinks down into her shawl. Her heads pops back out but now she is a sheep.)

STORYTELLER 2

Alice rubbed her eyes and looked again.

STORYTELLER 7

The Queen had turned into a sheep.

WHITE QUEEN

Baaah! Baaah!

(The WHITE QUEEN trots off on all fours. From the opposite wing, ALICE FIVE crosses chased on by the tea party members, still tied together.)

HATTER & HARE

No room! No room!

ALICE FIVE

I'm not trying to get in there with you.

HATTER & HARE

No room! No room!

ALICE FIVE

How can I convince you?

DOORMOUSE

With a bucket and a rope.

(ALICE ONE watches in amazement. Behind the WHITE RABBIT runs in followed by ALICE TWO.)

ALICE TWO

Wait! Can't you tell me how to get home?

WHITE RABBIT

Got to keep up. I'm late. Look at the time. I must to deliver these subpoenas!

(From the opposite side, ALICE THREE is chased through and out by TWEEDLEDEE and TWEEDLEDUM.)

TWEEDLEDEE

But we're not finished yet.

TWEEDLEDUM

Contrary wise, we could start at the beginning.

(ALICE FOUR runs in followed by hopping FLOWERS who throw pollen at her.)

FLOWERS

You're not like us!

(ALICE ONE is left alone on the stage.)

ALICE ONE

Things flow about so here. I shall never believe something impossible again.

(From opposite, SISTER runs on stage pursued by the CHESHIRE CAT. The CAT drags the THREE OF HEARTS beside him.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Is this your card?

SISTER *(Annoyed)*

I didn't pick a card.

ALICE ONE

Sister?

(The CHESHIRE CAT sees ALICE ONE and abandons the SISTER to approach her. He momentarily lets go of the THREE OF HEARTS who escapes, running off stage.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Have we ever met?

ALICE ONE

Yes. You taught me a lesson about looking at things from other perspectives. Some of what we think we know is clouded by our vantage point, making an “Illusion.” Right, Sister?

CHESHIRE CAT

Nonsense. We are complete strangers.

ALICE ONE

No. In fact, you look suspiciously like my pet cat Dinah.

CHESHIRE CAT *(Whispering)*

You’re ruining the trick.

ALICE ONE

I know all your tricks.

CHESHIRE CAT

(to audience, regretfully)

Ladies and gentlemen, I am saddened to inform you that this young lady has volunteered to be my assistant knowing full well she is unacceptable. I go in shame.

(Instead of going he steps behind ALICE who is looking at the SISTER. When ALICE turns back he appears gone.)

ALICE ONE

He does have that one good vanishing trick, doesn’t he?

SISTER

Oh, yes.

ALICE ONE

You’re here.

SISTER

I was never far away.

CHESHIRE CAT

She had your back.

(ALICE hears the voice and then makes several spin until she catches the CAT.)

So to speak.

(He bows to the audience.)

The stupefying, barely believable, disappearing and reappearing Cat.... ILLUSION!. I’m going.

(The CAT leaves with flourish)

ALICE ONE

Do you have my back?

SISTER

There will be those who try and take you off track. Be careful.

ALICE ONE

How will I know when I've reached the last square?

SISTER

You'll have an epiphany.

ALICE ONE

An epiphany?

SISTER

No one will have to tell you you're there. You'll know.

(Pointing to audience.)

They'll know.

(SISTER exits.)

ALICE ONE

An epiphany.

(Suddenly, the other four ALICES burst on stage, out of breath, escaping whatever was pursuing them. They notice each other and carefully size up their counterparts.)

ALL

Hello... Do I know you? Wait a minute? Aren't you? Oh no, I'm a man. You're so white. etc.

(The ALICES scatter leaving ALICE FOUR alone on stage. The STORYTELLERS push on a wall. Atop the wall sits HUMPTY DUMPTY.)

LESSON THIRTEEN

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

(HUMPTY DUMPTY is a egg shaped puppet with a hole cut in the middle for the actor to put his face through. It wears tiny pants with little baby shoes. Two long sticks with little gloves protrude on either side to make up the arms, which the egg uses to gesture on every line. A necktie is around his waist, or neck, whichever.)

STORYTELLER 7

The egg was sitting with his legs crossed, on top of a high wall.

STORYTELLER 4

Such a narrow one, that Alice quite wondered how he kept his balance.

STORYTELLER 8

His eyes were fixed in the opposite direction.

STORYTELLER 5

He didn't take the least notice of her.

(The STORYTELLERS exit.)

ALICE FOUR

Are you a wax figure?

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

Very provoking! Tell me your name and business.

ALICE FOUR

My name? I've forgotten again. Tell me what you call yourself. Perhaps that will help.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

I call myself Humpty-Dumpty.

ALICE FOUR

How exactly like an egg you are.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

It's very provoking to be called an egg. Very!

ALICE FOUR

Some eggs are very pretty.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

Some people have no more sense than a baby.

(quickly to surprise her)

What's your name?

ALICE FOUR *(even quicker)*

Alice. Oh? There! It did help.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

It's a stupid enough name. What does it mean?

ALICE FOUR

Must a name mean something?

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

Of course it must. My name means the shape I am, and a good shape it is too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost. How old did you say you were?

ALICE FOUR

Seven years, six months.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

Wrong! Wrong! You never said a word like it!

ALICE FOUR

I thought you meant, "How old are you?"

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

If I'd have meant that, I'd have said that. Seven years, six months. A very uncomfortable age. Now if you'd asked my advice, I'd have said, "Leave off the seven" -- but it's too late now.

ALICE FOUR

What a beautiful belt you've got on.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

It is a most provoking thing when a person doesn't know the difference between a belt and a neck tie.

ALICE FOUR

If only I knew which was neck and which was waist.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

It's a necktie. A present from the White King. I have spoken with a king. I guess you might not see my like again. He gave it me for an un-birthday present.

ALICE FOUR

I beg your pardon?

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

I am not offended.

ALICE FOUR

I mean, what is an un-birthday present?

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

A present given when it isn't your birthday.

ALICE FOUR

I like birthday presents better.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

You don't know what you're talking about. How many days are in a year?

ALICE FOUR

Three hundred sixty-five.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

And how many birthdays have you?

ALICE FOUR

One.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

And if you take one from 365, what remains?

ALICE FOUR

364, of course.

(HUMPTY-DUMPTY pauses to reflect, suspicious .)

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

I'd rather see that done on paper...

(ALICE finds a piece of chalk at the base of the wall and writes the problem $355-1=364$. HUMPTY-DUMPTY teeters over the edge to look at the problem up-side-down.)

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

That seems to be done right.

ALICE FOUR

You're looking at it upside down.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

I thought it looked strange. As I was saying, it seems to be done right, though I haven't time to look it over carefully just now, and that leaves 364 days when you might get an un-birthday present. There's glory for you.

ALICE FOUR

I don't know what you mean by "glory."

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

Of course you don't, until I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you."

ALICE FOUR

But "glory" doesn't mean anything like that.

HUMPTY-DUMPTY

When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean, no more, no less.

ALICE FOUR

The question is whether you can make words mean so many things?

STORYTELLER 7

Such a crowd that they seemed to fill the whole forest.

STORYTELLER 1

Then came the horses.

STORYTELLER 3

Alice found the White King seated on the ground, busily constructing memorandums in his head.

WHITE KING

We suspected this would happen. He was so reckless.

ALICE FIVE

Reckless? He was just sitting.

WHITE KING

For an egg, that is reckless. And the moral of that is ... don't be reckless.

ALICE FIVE

I see.

WHIE KING

You're thinking about something, and that makes you forget to talk. I can't think of the Lesson in that just now, but I will in a bit.

ALICE FIVE

Perhaps it doesn't have one.

WHITE KING

Everything has a lesson if only you can find it.

ALICE FIVE

Everything has a lesson?

WHITE KING

I quite agree with you. And the lesson of that is, "Be what you would seem to be."

ALICE FIVE

I don't think that's the lesson of that at all.

WHITE KING

If you'd like it put more simply, "Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been, or would have appeared to them to be ... otherwise."

ALICE FIVE

That's quite a lot of words.

WHITE KING

Oh, that's nothing to what I could say if I chose... You're thinking again.

ALICE FIVE

I was thinking about the egg.

WHITE KING

Yes, the egg. I did everything I could. I've sent them all, all my men, four thousand two hundred and seven. That's the exact number. And the lesson of that is...

ALICE FIVE

I can guess the lesson.

WHITE KING

Good. And that would be?

ALICE FIVE

All the kings horses and all...

WHITE KING

May I stop you.

ALICE FIVE

If you must.

WHITE KING

Of course, I couldn't send all the horses because two of them are gone to town for bread and canned goods. Just look along the road and tell me if you can see either of them.

(ALICE goes to the apron and looks out into the audience.)

ALICE FIVE

I see nobody.

(The WHITE KING jumps up and stares into the audience with her.)

WHITE KING

I only wish I had such eyes. To be able to see nobody! And at such a distance. Why, it's as much as I can do to see real people.

(The WHITE RABBIT runs in from the back and up on stage.)

WHITE RABBIT

I'm late! I'm late! My ears and whisker, she'll have my head.

WHITE KING

Who did you pass on the road?

WHITE RABBIT

Nobody.

WHITE KING

Quite right. This young lady saw him too. So, of course, nobody walks slower than you.

WHITE RABBIT

I'm sure nobody walks faster than I do!

WHITE KING

He can't do that or else he'd have been here first. Tell me what's happened that has put you in such a rush.

WHITE RABBIT

They're at it again.

ALICE FIVE

Who's at it.

WHITE RABBIT

The Queen of Hearts has issued indictments and there's going to be a trial!

ALICE FIVE

Oh dear, am I to be put on trial?

WHITE RABBIT

Why the knave. He is trying to take over. He has gathered minions.

(Handing the KING a paper.)

A subpoena from the queen. She bids you come!

(The KING freaks out.)

ALICE FIVE

But you're a king. How can a queen scare you?

WHITE KING

And the lesson of that is... never disagree with someone who has the power to cut off your head.

(He runs off. The RABBIT gives ALICE a subpoena and exits.)

ALICE FIVE

Wait! Can you give me directions to ... A subpoena? Who would call me to a trial? This must be a dream. But I do hope it's my dream and not someone else's.

LESSON FIFTEEN –

THE KNAVE AND THE WHITE KNIGHT

(Heroic music begins. The STORYTELLERS pop out.)

STORYTELLER 6

Suddenly, her thoughts were interrupted by a loud shouting!

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Ahoy! Ahoy!

(The KNAVE OF HEARTS, on his stick horse, starts down the center aisle followed by his attacking MINIONS. While the audience is turned looking at the KNAVE, ALICE THREE simply walks on stage, taps ALICE FIVE on the shoulder, and replaces her.)

STORYTELLER 5

And a Knave, dressed in crimson armor, came galloping down upon her.

(The KNAVE stops, mid gallop, waves off the music and calls up to the stage.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

You have used that bit of narration before.

STORYTELLER 6

What do you suggest?

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Something original. "Our protagonist, handsome and dashing, etc., etc. Knave, thief of hearts, etc., etc. Followed by an army of thousands, etc. Evil plan, etc.

STORYTELLER 5

Etc.

(The KNAVE waves the music on again and then continues all the way to the stage where his horse crashes into the apron. He pops up and points at ALICE. The MINIONS surround her.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

You are my prisoner.

MINIONS

You are his prisoner.

ALICE THREE

But I don't want to be anyone's prisoner.

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Get her.

(The MINIONS creep around her.)

ALICE THREE

Boo.

(The MINIONS run away.)

Nincompoops!
KNAVE OF HEARTS

Freshmen.
MINIONS *(As they run.)*

No matter.
KNAVE OF HEARTS

(The KNAVE makes the elaborate sound effects of pulling out and assembling a rifle. He points an imaginary weapon at her.)

Hands in the air!
KNAVE OF HEARTS

(ALICE examines the imaginary weapon.)

That's a lot of noise for such a little gun.
ALICE THREE

Hands in the air!
KNAVE OF HEARTS

Must I?
ALICE THREE

Do not make me use this. I'll kill if I have to.
KNAVE OF HEARTS

Very well.
ALICE THREE

(ALICE obliges and raises her hands.)

Now, give me everything you have!
KNAVE OF HEARTS

How can I give you what I have if my hands are in the air?
ALICE THREE

I want your dreams. And Tarts! I'll settle for tarts.
KNAVE OF HEARTS

Ahoy! Ahoy! I shall rescue you!
WHITE KNIGHT

(The WHITE KNIGHT appears at the back of the auditorium. He has a rolling walker instead of a horse, and is helped down the isle by a STAGEHAND wearing a headset. Inspirational music plays in the background. The WHITE KNIGHT is about a hundred years old and moves very slowly down to the stage. He wears thick reading glasses and an adult diaper on the outside of his armor. The STAGEHAND lifts his walker up onto the apron and helps the WHITE KNIGHT up to the next level. The STAGEHAND positions the WHITE KNIGHT behind the walker and points him in the direction of the KNAVE. The WHITE KNIGHT offers the STAGEHAND a tip for his services.)

WHITE KNIGHT

For you, Sonny. It's a nickel.

(The STAGEHAND takes the tip sarcastically and exits. The WHITE KNIGHT wheels himself ever so slowly across the stage to where the KNAVE patiently awaits him. The inspirational music finally ends.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

She's my prisoner, you know!

WHITE KNIGHT

Yes, but I came to rescue her!

ALICE THREE

But I don't need to be rescued.

(The WHITE KNIGHT draws ALICE close and whispers to her. As he talks, he wobbles and ALICE must steady him from falling.)

WHITE KNIGHT

I know this knave. He is perhaps more dangerous than he first appears.

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Stay out of this, old man. There are forces at work here that you cannot possibly understand.

WHITE KNIGHT

Shall you pick the weapons or shall I?

KNAVE OF HEARTS

If you insist on a fight, then I choose that we fight with our ... imaginations.

WHITE KNIGHT

I knew you would. I am prepared.

(To ALICE.)

Better stand back. This could get messy.

(The KNAVE pantomimes pulling out his sword. When he swings it over his head, it hums like a light-saber. The KNIGHT pantomimes assembling a pistol.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

You are prepared.

WHITE KNIGHT

It is my trademark.

(The KNAVE throws away the sword and pantomimes a rifle. The KNIGHT tosses the pistol and pulls out an imaginary grenade launcher, all with appropriate sound effects.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Wait!

WHITE KNIGHT

What is it?

KNAVE OF HEARTS

You will observe the rules of battle?

WHITE KNIGHT

I always do...! What are the rules of battle?

KNAVE OF HEARTS

I brought my copy with me.

(The KNAVE pantomimes pulling out a piece of paper from his pocket and unfolding it until it is quite large. The WHITE KNIGHT reads it.)

WHITE KNIGHT

No party shall expect fair play from a party engage in battle...

(The KNAVE attacks him when he isn't looking. Swinging his imaginary sword and striking the KNIGHT in the back. The KNIGHT falls to the floor.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

There are no rules, you fool!

(The KNAVE stands over the KNIGHT, ready to finish him off.)

I hate it when it's this easy.

(The KNAVE raises his sword.)

ALICE THREE

Wait. I have you covered ... Don't turn around.

KNAVE OF HEARTS

How do I know?

(ALICE makes a series of strange and unusual sound effects.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

What's that?

ALICE THREE

I just assembled a huge nuclear missile launcher thing. Very big. And it's aimed at your back.

KNAVE OF HEARTS

You tart.

ALICE THREE

Move along, and I won't hurt you.

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Together we could be powerful.

ALICE THREE

Really? Because I heard they're putting you on trial.

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Me? Do you really think the trial is for me?

(He laughs.)

Normally I would crush an opponent's imagination. But you are Alice, so I will bide my time.

(The KNAVE breaks for his horse. Heroic music starts. He leaps aboard and trots slowly off stage stopping to call back.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Until we meet again.

(He exits. The music stops. ALICE revives the WHITE KNIGHT.)

WHITE KNIGHT

What happened?

ALICE THREE

The Knave was defeated.

WHITE KNIGHT

It was a glorious victory, wasn't it?

ALICE THREE

Yes. Very glorious. Let me help you to your ... horse.

(The WHITE KNIGHT stands and staggers. ALICE catches him and leads him to his walker. The walker has junk tied to every part of it, including a beehive, a mousetrap, and a box which is upside down.)

WHITE KNIGHT

I see you're admiring my little box on my saddle. It's my own invention - to keep clothes and sandwiches in. You see I carry it, upside down, so the rain can't get in.

ALICE THREE

But the things can get out. Do you know the lid's open?

(The WHITE KNIGHT looks inside. It is empty.)

WHITE KNIGHT

Hey!

(He throws it away and then calms down instantly.)

Can you guess why I did that? In hopes some bees may make a nest in it.

ALICE THREE

But you have a bee hive tied to your saddle.

WHITE KNIGHT

Yes. A very good bee hive. But not a single bee has come near it. The other thing is a mouse trap. I suppose the mice keep the bees away.

ALICE THREE

It's not very likely there would be any mice on the ... the ... horse's back.

WHITE KNIGHT

Not very likely, perhaps, but if they do come, I'm ready. You know why my horse has those anklets?

ALICE THREE

No.

WHITE KNIGHT

To guard against the bite of sharks. It's an invention of my own. And now, help me on my horse and we can go.

(She positions him in front of his walker. The inspirational music starts. He takes one step, teeters, and falls over. The music cuts with the fall. ALICE helps him back into position.)

ALICE THREE

I'm afraid you haven't had much practice in riding. People don't fall off quite so often, when they've practiced.

WHITE KNIGHT

I've had plenty of practice. The great art of riding is to keep your balance ...

(The music plays. He takes one step, teeters both ways as ALICE tries to steady him, and falls. The music cuts off.)

WHITE KNIGHT

While your falling.

(She helps him up.)

Did I look thoughtful, just now?

ALICE THREE

A little.

WHITE KNIGHT

That's because I was inventing a new way to get over a gate. You see, I said to myself, "The only difficulty is with the feet. The head is high enough already.

ALICE THREE

I suppose it is.

WHITE KNIGHT

Now, first, I put my head on the top of the gate. Then I stand on my head!

(He demonstrates on the apron doing an awkward forward roll.)

Then the feet are high enough, you see! Then I'm over, you see!

ALICE THREE

Couldn't you open the gate and walk through?

WHITE KNIGHT

I suppose you could. You look sad. Let me sing you a song.

ALICE THREE

No! I mean, is it very long?

WHITE KNIGHT

It's very, very beautiful. The tune's my own invention. It will bring tears into your eyes or else.

ALICE THREE

Or else what?

WHITE KNIGHT

Or else it won't.

ALICE THREE

Oh look! No time. We're here already!

(The KNIGHT looks around. They are just where they were.)

WHITE KNIGHT

So we are. How clever you are. Good-bye.

(She positions him behind the walker and the inspirational music plays. He totters off. We hear a commotion off stage and the WHITE RABBIT runs to center stage.)

WHITE RABBIT

The trial's beginning! The trial's beginning!

ALICE FOUR

What trial?

WHITE RABBIT

The tarts! The tarts!

(The entire cast, aka the JURY, enters and takes up perches around the stage. Some sit on the floor, some on the edges of platforms. The DOORMOUSE sleeps near the center stage. In the confusion of the whole cast coming on stage, ALICE FOUR changes into ALICE TWO.)

LESSON SIXTEEN

THE TRIAL

(The STORYTELLERS carry the KING and QUEEN OF HEARTS, already in their thrones, to center stage. The QUEEN'S throne is elaborate and bejeweled. The KING's throne resembles an adult potty chair. The KNAVE OF HEART, already in chains, is dragged in down right by the CARDS. ALICE TWO stands on the opposite side. Everyone else in the JURY, including all the ALICES, has a big pencil and several sheets of paper. They write frantically.)

STORYTELLER 2

The King and Queen of Hearts were seated on their throne when they arrived.

STORYTELLER 6

The Knave was standing before them in chains.

(The CHESHIRE CAT sneaks up behind ALICE.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Have we ever ...

(He recognizes ALICE.)

Not you again.

ALICE TWO

Please, I'm just trying to get a good view of the trial. He tried to kidnap me, you know.

CHESHIRE CAT

Far worse, he stole pastries!

ALICE TWO

I suppose they are the jurors.

WHITE RABBIT

Shhh.

ALICE TWO

Sorry.

(Whispering to the CHESHIRE CAT.)

What are they doing? They can't have anything to write down before the trial's begun.

CHESHIRE CAT

But the trial has begun. And they're writing down their names, for fear they should forget them before the end.

WHITE RABBIT

Silence in the court!

(The QUEEN gavels the JURY to silence.)

KING

Herald! Read the accusation!

(The WHITE RABBIT unrolls a long scroll.)

WHITE RABBIT

The queen of hearts, she made some tarts/All on a summer's day

(The JURY writes frantically, then stops abruptly to listen.)

The knave of hearts, he stole those tarts/

(The JURY gasps.)

And took them quite away.

KING OF HEARTS

Consider your verdict.

(The JURY erupts into violent shouting, pointing and arguing.)

ALICE TWO

Not yet Not yet ...! NOT YET!!!

(The JURY freezes.)

WHITE RABBIT

Not yet. There's a great deal to come before that.

(The JURY sighs angrily, crumples up their papers and throws the papers at the WHITE RABBIT. The QUEEN gavels them quiet again.)

ALICE TWO *(To CAT)*

They can't have his verdict before his trial.

CHESHIRE CAT

Whose trial?

ALICE TWO

The Knave, I suppose.

KING OF HEARTS

Call your first witness.

WHITE RABBIT

First witness!

(The MAD HATTER enters, sipping on his tea cup.)

MAD HATTER

I beg pardon, your majesty. I hadn't quite finished my tea when I was sent for.

KING OF HEARTS

Write that down!

(The JURY writes.)

Take off your hat.

MAD HATTER

It's not mine.

TWEEDLEDEE

Stolen!

(The JURY goes crazy, jumping out of their seats and pointing at the HATTER. The QUEEN gavels them, frozen.)

KING OF HEARTS

Well?

MAD HATTER

I keep them to sell. I'm a hatter.

(The KING rises and removes the HATTER'S hat. Underneath, he is bald. The crowd gasps.)

KING OF HEARTS

Well, just give your evidence, and don't be nervous, or I'll have you executed on the spot.

MAD HATTER

I'm a poor man,

TWEEDLEDUM

You can say that again.

MAD HATTER

I'm a poor man, and I hadn't begun my tea, not above a week or so, and what with the bread and butter getting so thin and the twinkling of the tea.

KING OF HEARTS

The twinkling of what?

MAD HATTER

It began with the tea.

KING OF HEARTS

Of course twinkling begins with T. Do you take me for a fool?

(The JURY CHUCKLES at that, which angers the KING. The KING stands and faces them. They laugh louder. The KING stands on his throne. The crowd roars with laughter. The QUEEN stands up. The crowd is instantly silent. The KING turns back around smiling. He thinks he has quieted them himself.)

KING OF HEARTS

Go on!

MAD HATTER

Well, the March Hare said...

(The MARCH HARE leaps out of the crowd.)

MARCH HARE

I did not!

MAD HATTER

You did!

MARCH HARE

Not!

MAD HATTER

Did!

MARCH HARE

I deny it!

KING OF HEARTS

He denies it. Leave that part out.

(The JURY crumples up their papers and loudly throw them at the KING.)

KING OF HEARTS

If it wasn't the Hare, who was it?

MAD HATTER

All right. The ... the ... the Dormouse said ...

(The DORMOUSE snores loudly. The JURY writes that down.)

MAD HATTER

After that I took some more bread.

ALICE TWO

What did the Dormouse say?

(Everyone snaps their head toward ALICE. The CHESHIRE CAT takes a slide step away to put some distance between him and the girl.)

ALICE TWO

Just wondering.

MAD HATTER

I can't remember.

KING OF HEARTS

You must or I'll have you executed.

(HATTER falls to his knees.)

MAD HATTER

I'm a poor man!

ALL

You can say that again.

MAD HATTER

I'm a poor man.

KING OF HEARTS

Very well, stand down.

MAD HATTER

I can't go any lower. I'm on the floor already.

(The JURY again chuckles at that. The KING stands and faces them. They laugh louder. The KING stands on his throne. The crowd roars with laughter. The QUEEN stands up. The crowd is instantly silent. The KING turns back around smiling. He thinks he has quieted them himself.)

KING OF HEARTS

You may go!

(The HATTER starts to exit.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

And just take his head off outside.

(The CARDS chase the HATTER around the stage while the JURY jumps around cheering and encouraging the chase. The CARDS catch the HATTER and carry him off stage. The JURY leans silently peering after the HATTER. We hear a loud CHOP! The JURY celebrates. The QUEEN gavels for silence.)

KING OF HEARTS

Call your next witness.

WHITE RABBIT

Next witness!

(The COOK takes the stand. As he passes through the crowd there is a wave of people sneezing from exposure to pepper.)

WHITE RABBIT

Give your evidence.

COOK

I shan't.

(The JURY scribbles.)

WHITE RABBIT

Your majesty will have to cross examine this witness, yourself.

KING OF HEARTS

Well, if I must, I must. What are tarts made of?

COOK

Mostly pepper. Black pepper. Spanish pepper. Curry Pepper and Stone ground Pepper!

(The JURY eagerly writes his every word, gasping in surprise at each new type of pepper. Suddenly, the DORMOUSE rises up, talking in his sleep.)

DORMOUSE

Pancake Syrup!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Behead that Dormouse.

(The CARDS pick up the DORMOUSE and carry him out. The JURY shushes each other so as not to wake the sleeper. They lean and peer after the DORMOUSE to wait for the loud CHOP. They celebrate, but quietly out of respect for the sleeper.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Consider the sentence.

(JURY explodes into argument. ALICE takes the gavel from the QUEEN and gavels everyone silent. The QUEEN stares incredulously at ALICE.)

ALICE TWO

Sorry. But he hasn't even presented his defense.

KING OF HEARTS

But he's guilty, child.

ALICE TWO

Of course. He was caught with the tarts. But he should still be given a chance to call witnesses and such.

KING OF HEARTS

Call your next witness.

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Alice!

ALICE TWO

I beg your pardon.

KING OF HEARTS

Strike that.

(The JURY jumps up and begins to fist fight, striking each other.)

KING OF HEARTS

The trial cannot begin until all the jurymen are back in their proper places....

(The QUEEN gavels them back to their seats.)

CESHIRE CAT *(Aside)*

I'd be careful what you say.

ALICE TWO

I'm not in any danger.

CESHIRE CAT

And with that, the Cheshire Cat instantly disappeared.

(He runs over and takes his place in the jury.)

KNAVE OF HEARTS

(Very fast, so ALICE can't get a word in edgewise.)

Is it not true that this entire trial is a figment of a dream, and, therefore, if I have stolen a tart it is because you have dreamt it, which means this trial is a travesty, created by you, for your benefit, which makes you the defendant and the jury, and I demand you find yourself guilty, since the guilt is yours, not mine? Isn't it! Isn't it! Isn't it! I rest my case.

WHITE RABBIT

He's badgering the witness.

KNAVE OF HEARTS

If I was badgering the witness, it would look like this!

(He drops to his knees and attacks like a rabid rodent. The CARDS pull him away from ALICE.)

Your witness!

WHITE RABBIT

Cross examine.

KING OF HEARTS

What do you know about this tart business?

ALICE TWO

Nothing. He tried to kidnap -

KING OF HEARTS

Nothing whatever?

ALICE TWO

Nothing whatever.

KING OF HEARTS

That's very important!

(The JURY writes.)

ALICE TWO

Unimportant, your majesty means.

KING OF HEARTS

Unimportant. Of course. Important/unimportant? What's the difference. Consider your verdict.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

No! Sentence first, verdict afterwards..

(A single piece of crumpled paper flies out of the jury box and hits the QUEEN OF HEARTS on the back of the head. The WHITE RABBIT picks it up.)

WHITE RABBIT

There's more evidence. This paper has just been picked up. It seems to be a letter written by the prisoner -- to somebody.

KING OF HEARTS

Unless it was written to nobody, which isn't usual.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Is it in the prisoner's handwriting?

WHITE RABBIT

No it isn't, and that's the strangest thing about it.

KING OF HEARTS

He must have imitated someone else's handwriting!

KNAVE OF HEARTS

Please, your majesty, they cannot prove I did. There's no name signed at the end.

KING OF HEARTS

If you didn't sign it, that only makes the matter worse. You must have meant some mischief or else you would have signed it.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

That proves his guilt!

(The JURY goes crazy. ALICE grabs the gavel and gavels until there is silence.)

ALICE TWO

It proves nothing! It proves nothing of the sort! You haven't even read it.

(The JURY silently leans in to see how the KING will handle this.)

KING OF HEARTS

Read it.

WHITE RABBIT

Where shall I begin?

KING OF HEARTS

Begin at the beginning and go until you come to the end then stop.

WHITE RABBIT *(Reading)*

They told me you had been to her,

(The JURY scribbles.)

And mentioned me to him,

(The JURY scribbles.)

She gave me a good character

(The JURY scribbles.)

But said I could not swim.

KING OF HEARTS

Let the jury consider their verdict.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

No! Sentence first, verdict afterwards..

(The JURY erupts into arguments. ALICE tries to gavel them but it is no use. One by one they all turn away from the KNAVE and point their finger at ALICE. She's busy gaveling so she doesn't notice. Even the other ALICES point. The last one to point at ALICE is the KING. She suddenly realizes she is the focus of everyone's intense stare.)

KING OF HEARTS

Well, what do you have to say for yourself.

ALICE TWO

I haven't even been charged.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Charges come last of all.

ALICE TWO

I see ... Look! A cat!

(She points at the CHESHIRE CAT. Everyone snaps their heads to look at the cat. ALICE TWO takes the opportunity to jump off the stage and run up the aisle.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with her head.

(The JURY avalanches off the stage to chase ALICE out the back, leaving the CHESHIRE CAT alone on stage.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Now for my greatest trick.

(He coughs up a hairball.)

Hairball.

LESSON SEVENTEEN

THE FOUR QUEENS

(SISTER runs on stage as if chased and bumps into the CHESHIRE CAT. She is dressed in an ALICE costume. The CAT inspects the transformation.)

CHESHIRE CAT

What? They have a sale on blue dresses?

(She inspects herself, panics for a second, and slumps her shoulders, resigned.)

SISTER

Just shoot me. No. No. No. No. No. I've turned into my sister. I'm never ... going ... to ... live ... that ... down.

(To the CAT.)

Is that the reason for all of this? To turn me into my sister?

(The CHESHIRE CAT does one last trick: he produces a queen's crown out from under his tail coat.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Meow.

SISTER

Or to turn me into ... a queen. A crown? This must be... the eighth square? But how can I have got there without knowing it?

(SISTER reaches for the crown. The CAT holds the crown just above her grasp. She jumps to grab it, but it jerks, like a piñata, out of her reach as the CAT twirls. The three QUEENS enter.)

SISTER

Please, would you tell me how I get the crown?

RED QUEEN

Speak when you're spoken to.

SISTER

But if everybody obeyed that rule nobody would ever say anything! And if I really am a Queen.

WHITE QUEEN

What do you mean?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

You can't be a proper Queen until you've passed the proper examination.

SISTER

I only said if.

WHITE QUEEN

But you said a great deal more than that.

RED QUEEN

Always speak the truth.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Think before you speak,

WHITE QUEEN

And write it down afterward.

I didn't mean...

SISTER

You should have meant.

WHITE QUEEN

What do you suppose is the use of a child without any meaning?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

May I take the examination, please.

SISTER

Can you do addition?

RED QUEEN

Of course.

SISTER

What's one and one and one

RED QUEEN

And one and one.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

And one and one and one

WHITE QUEEN

And one and one and one and one?

RED QUEEN

I lost count.

SISTER

Can't do addition.

WHITE QUEEN

Can you do division?

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Yes.

SISTER

If you divide a loaf of bread by a knife and what's the answer to that?

WHITE QUEEN

To what?

SISTER

Try subtraction. Take a bone from a dog and what remains?

RED QUEEN

SISTER

The bone wouldn't remain, if I took it. And the dog wouldn't remain, it would come to bite me for taking its bone. And I'm sure I wouldn't remain. I'd run.

RED QUEEN

Nothing's your answer?

SISTER

Yes.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Wrong! The dog's temper would remain.

RED QUEEN

It would certainly lose its temper. Then if the dog went away its temper would remain.

THREE QUEENS

She can't do arithmetic!

(They laugh.)

SISTER

Can you do arithmetic?

(The QUEENS sober up and change the subject.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Test her languages.

WHITE QUEEN

Good.

RED QUEEN

Languages. What's the French for fiddle-dee-dee?

SISTER

Fiddle-dee-dee is not English to start with. If you tell me what language Fiddle-dee-dee is, I'll tell you the French for it.

RED QUEEN

Queens never make bargains.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

If you've learned anything from your lessons it should be that.

SISTER

You're right. So why am I bargaining with you. This is the eighth square and that makes me... a Queen!

(She grabs the crown and runs out into the audience.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with her head.

WHITE QUEEN

Get her!

RED QUEEN

Curtsey!

(The JURORS swarms in from the rear and trap her. They chase SISTER ALICE back onto the stage and swarm around her. Lights strobe and fog fills the stage. Caught, she disappears under a pile of fictional characters.)

LESSON EIGHTEEN –

HOME AGAIN

(When the lights come up, the JURY spreads out to show ALICE ONE asleep on the floor, the CHESHIRE CAT, Dinah, curled up next to her. The other ALICES stand slightly back from her, watching with compassion, as one might watch a younger self. SISTER is off stage, changing her costume frantically, no doubt.)

STORYTELLER 1

Child of the pure unclouded brow /And dreaming eyes of wonder!

STORYTELLER 2

Though time be fleet, and I and thou/a half a life asunder,

STORYTELLER 3

Thy loving smile will surely hail/The love-gift of a fairy tale.

STORYTELLER 4

Wake up, Alice.

STORYTELLER 5

Why what a long sleep you've had.

(ALICE slowly wakes. The CHESHIRE CAT stretches, does some cat exercises, sits and purrs. ALICE realizes where she is and checks to see she is back to herself. The STORYTELLERS are like voices in her head and she cannot see them.)

ALICE ONE

I am what I was... at least, what I think I was.

CHESHIRE CAT

Meow?

STORYTELLER 6

And what did you learn?

ALICE ONE

So many lessons.

STORYTELLER 7

What was most important?

ALICE ONE

I guess, most important, know yourself. And ... don't eat bugs.

(ALICE'S SISTER enters dressed in her former garb.)

SISTER

Alice. It's time for your tea.

ALICE ONE

Time! Oh. Oh, I've had such a curious dream.

STORYTELLER 8

And Alice told her sister, as well she could remember them, all the strange adventures of hers in Wonderland.

ALICE ONE

(Very fast and excited)

I fell down a great hole that seemed to go on forever and then I ate something and became really small so this caterpillar turned into a butterfly so I guess it isn't so bad to change and then there were these awful flowers, but I learned the lesson, That's it! They were all my lessons. I learned something from everyone. And not just other people but myself because I learned I was many people and...

(She slows down finally and takes her first breath.)

And sister ... I turned into you.

SISTER

Slow down.

ALICE ONE

But...

SISTER

It was a curious dream, certainly; but now run in to your tea. It's getting late.

ALICE ONE

The tea! Did I tell you about the tea?

SISTER

They'll be time for telling later. Now go inside.

ALICE ONE

Yes, sister.

(ALICE starts off dejectedly.)

SISTER

Alice.

ALICE ONE

Yes?

SISTER

Turn out your toes when you walk, and remember who you are.

(ALICE starts to speak and then smiles. She gives her sister a hug and turns to run off. After a couple steps she freezes. When she freezes the characters from the jury begin to slowly fade from the stage. The ALICES and SISTER also freeze and remain with the STORYTELLERS.)

STORYTELLER 2

Alice got up and ran off, thinking while she ran, as well she might, what a wonderful dream it had been.

STORYTELLER 6

But her sister stayed still, thinking of little Alice.

STORYTELLER 5

Till she too began to dream.

STORYTELLER 1

She sat with eyes closed and half believed herself in wonderland.

STORYTELLER 7

Lastly, she pictured how Alice would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman.

STORYTELLER 3

But how she would keep the simple and loving heart of her childhood.

STORYTELLER 4

And how she would gather about her other children, with many a strange tale of wonderland.

STORYTELLER 8

Remembering her own child-life, And happy summer days.

(Suddenly, from the back of the auditorium, the WHITE RABBIT sprints in.)

WHITE RABBIT

I'm late! I'm late! Look at the time! My ears and whiskers, it's my head.

(The WHITE RABBIT runs up on stage and out the wings. A moments passes. He walks back out on stage, looks at the five ALICES and speaks matter of factly.)

WHITE RABBIT

Hey? You coming?

(The FIVE ALICES look at each other, smile and then run off stage in the RABBIT's direction. The RABBIT looks at the STORYTELLERS.)

WHITE RABBIT

You, too.

(The STORYTELLERS gladly follow the ALICES, leaving the WHITE RABBIT alone with the SISTER. He saunters over to her and takes a beat to think with her. He nods, perhaps understanding of all those future memories the STORYTELLERS just mentioned.)

WHITE RABBIT *(Whispering)*

Wonderland express. Leaving now.

SISTER

Me, too?

WHITE RABBIT *(Shouting)*

Get in there!

(He points toward the wings and SISTER hurriedly follows the STORYTELLERS toward Wonderland. The WHITE RABBIT looks at his watch and freaks out.)

WHITE RABBIT

I'm late!

(He sprints off after the others. The lights fade.)

THE END