

ALICE'S ADVENTURES UNDERGROUND

An empty stage. A blackboard with the words "Alice's Adventures under Ground" written across it in white chalk. Below these words "July 4 1862". And below these again "A Christmas Gift to a Dear Child in Memory of a Summer Day". Around these words, some clearly written and others half rubbed out, are mathematical equations, logic formulae, riddles and acrostics. The stage is bare except for a white circle, also drawn in chalk.

At the back of the stage, outside the circle, stands a MAN dressed in a black suit, a white shirt with high collar, a grey waistcoat, and black shoes. His clothing is formal and austere, the shoes are highly polished, the trousers are perfectly pressed and the shirt is very starched. In the button hole of the jacket is a small pink flower, and he wears white kid gloves.

During the performance, when he stands outside the circle, the MAN'S facial expressions and gestures are prim and fastidious. When he speaks he stutters with awkward pauses and abrupt stops. Inside the circle, however, his movements are graceful and precise and his speech is fluent and gregarious. When he plays various characters - sometimes simultaneously - he changes his facial expressions and voice for each one. He is animated and vital: he is the Alice-man, playing the jester to ALICE.

ALICE is a serious and curious child. Her gaze is deep and she listens with intelligence. She wears a white summer dress with a single pocket which falls sensually along the curves of her body. ALICE is confident and poised in her movement and gestures, a quiet calm to the exuberant antics of the Alice-man. When she is with the MAN in the circle, she is the more adult and assured. When she talks to herself, she seems far older than her years - an older ALICE scolding and comforting a younger ALICE.

The performance begins in pale light. The MAN stands alone outside the circle - facing the audience. He reaches into his waistcoat pocket and takes out a fob watch. He opens it and looks at the time, winds the watch, closes it and replaces it in his pocket. He waits. He looks to the side of the stage. He looks back to the audience. He begins speaking hesitantly as he stutters. As his speech continues, his stuttering lessens but never disappears completely, and his voice grows stronger and more confident - almost younger.

CHARLES: My mental picture is as vivid as ever of one who was, through so many years, my ideal child-friend.

(He pauses. He turns to the audience.)

(reciting)

A boat, beneath a sunny sky
Lingering onward dreamily
In an evening of July –

Children three that nestle near,
Eager eye and willing ear,

Pleased a simple tale to hear -

Long has paled that sunny sky:
Echoes fade and memories die:
Autumn frost have slain July

(He pauses.)

Still she haunts me, phantomwise,
Alice moving under skies
Never seen by waking eyes.

Children yet, the tale to hear,
Eager eye and willing ear,
Lovingly shall nestle near -

(The MAN looks again to the side of the stage. He hears something. The light slowly changes to gold and green - hi ya, Mimi. He reaches into his waistcoat pocket and takes out his fob watch. He opens it and looks at the time, closes it and replaces it in his pocket. He takes off his gloves and holds them in his hand. He begins speaking again)

In a Wonderland they lie
Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die:

Ever drifting down the stream -
Lingering in the golden gleam -
Life, what is it but a dream?

(He pauses. He shouts)

BEGIN IT!

THERE WILL BE NONSENSE IN IT!

(The MAN now faces the audience. He exudes a new confidence. His voice is firmer. He stutters much less. He is excited.)

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, and where is the use of a book, thought Alice, without pictures or conversations?

So she was considering in her own mind whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain was worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when a white rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing very remarkable in that, nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the rabbit say to itself "dear, dear! I shall be too late!" but when the rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice

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

And, full of curiosity, she hurried across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. In a moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

(Suddenly ALICE enters from the side of the stage, tumbling head over heels. She is falling.)

The MAN watches ALICE and smiles: the game has begun.

(ALICE runs in circles, her hands outstretched. She looks down and tries to make out where she is falling to. She looks to the side. She sees various objects - "cupboards and book-shelves: here and there were maps and pictures hung on pegs." She grabs something and looks at it:)

ALICE: Orange Marmalade.

(She puts the jar back, and continues falling)

Well! After such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs! How brave they'll all think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house.

MAN (gently) : Down, down, down.

(ALICE continues falling)

ALICE : I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time? I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think-- yes, that's the right distance, but then what Longitude or Latitude-line shall I be in?

(ALICE'S runs in ever diminishing circles.)

I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth! How funny it'll be to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards! But I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know.

Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia?

(ALICE tries to curtsy. The MAN smiles.)

ALICE: And what an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere.

MAN: Down, down, down.

(ALICE is now spinning.)

ALICE: Dinah will miss me very much tonight, I should think! I hope they'll remember her saucer of milk at tea-time! Oh, dear Dinah, I wish I had you here! There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that's very like a mouse, you know, my dear. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?

(ALICE is now spinning slowly)

Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats? Do bats eat cats? Do cats eat bats?
Do bats eat cats?

(ALICE spins even more slowly. She is falling asleep.)

(Suddenly ALICE falls on the ground. She lands with a bump.)

Oh!

(She wakes up slowly)

(The MAN puts his gloves in his jacket pocket and walks into the circle. He walks to the side farthest away from ALICE, takes a key out of his other jacket pocket and places it on the floor. He walks over to her to see if she is hurt. As ALICE looks around, he changes into the White Rabbit. He takes out his fob watch, looks at it.)

MAN: My ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!

(ALICE is now wide awake. And looks at the WHITE RABBIT as he quickly leaves the circle. ALICE gets to her feet and tries to follow him - but he is too fast. The MAN watches her closely - she can't see him outside the circle. She stands staring after the WHITE RABBIT as the MAN begins speaking.)

MAN: She turned the corner after it, and instantly found herself in a long, low hall, lit up by a row of lamps which hung from the roof. There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked, and when Alice had been all round it, and tried them all, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again.

(ALICE turns around and sees the key, walks towards it and is surprised to find it on the ground. She looks at it. She doesn't move.)

MAN: Alice's first idea was that it might belong to one of the doors of the hall, but alas! either the locks were too large, or the key too small, but at any rate it would open none of them. However, on the second time round, she came to a low curtain, behind which was a door about eighteen inches high: she tried the little key in the keyhole, and it fitted!

(The MAN stops speaking. ALICE still doesn't move. She looks around. She is confused: she recognises this place but why is she here? The MAN looks at her, and waits for her to do something. She looks at the key.)

MAN: Alice opened the door, and looked down a small passage, not larger than a rat-hole, into the loveliest garden you ever saw.

(He pauses and watches her. Still ALICE doesn't move.)

How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway.

"And even if my head would go through", thought poor Alice...

ALICE: ...and even if my head would go through, it would be very little use without my shoulders.

(She pause - then as if remembering:)

Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin.

(The MAN smiles)

MAN: You see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately, that Alice began to think very few things indeed were really impossible.

(The MAN enters the circle and takes a small bottle with label from his pocket and places it on the ground, and leaves. ALICE doesn't see him. He watches her. ALICE looks around and sees the bottle. She puts the key down where she found it.)

MAN: There was nothing else to do, so she went back to the table, half hoping she might find another key on it, or at any rate a book of rules for shutting up people like telescopes: this time there was a little bottle on it--

(ALICE walks slowly towards it.)

ALICE: Which certainly was not there before.

(She looks at the label)

ALICE: Drink me. I'll look first and see whether the bottle's marked "poison" or not.

MAN: Alice had read several nice little stories about children that got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had given them, such as, that, if you get into the fire, it will burn you, and that, if you cut your finger very deeply with a knife, it generally bleeds, and she had never forgotten that, if you drink a bottle marked "poison", it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

(ALICE opens the bottle and tastes its contents. Then she finishes it off in a single gulp and waits to see what happens next.)

ALICE: What a curious feeling! I must be shutting up like a telescope.

(ALICE begins to shrink)

MAN: Now she was the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see whether she was going to shrink any further.

ALICE: It might end, you know in my going out altogether, like a candle, and what should I be like then, I wonder?

MAN: However, nothing more happened, so she decided on going into the garden at once, but, alas for poor Alice! when she got to the door, she found she had forgotten the little golden key.

(The MAN reaches in to the circle, stretches out his hand and dangles the key high in the air. ALICE turns to look for the key on the ground, only to see it hanging in the air).

MAN: When she went back to the table for the key, she found she could not possibly reach it: she could see it plainly enough through the glass, and she tried her best to climb up one of the legs of the table, but it was too slippery, and when she had tired herself out with trying...

(ALICE jumps up and down several times to try and grab the key - but fails each time. The MAN holds the key just out of her reach. Eventually ALICE gives up, sits down and starts to cry.)

(The MAN watches her for while. As she continues crying, the MAN grows uneasy.)

ALICE (suddenly): Come! there's no use in crying! I advise you to leave off this minute!

(The MAN relaxes. ALICE dries her eyes and looks around. The MAN reaches into his pocket and takes out small box, and places it in the circle behind ALICE - just out of her sight.)

MAN: She generally gave herself very good advice, and sometimes scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes, and once she remembered boxing her own ears for having been unkind to herself in a game of croquet she was playing with herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people,

ALICE: But it's no use now to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make one respectable person!

(ALICE stands up and looks around. She sees the small box. She picks it up, looks at it closely - it wasn't there before - and opens it. Inside is a small cake with a card on it.)

ALICE: Eat me. I'll eat, and if it makes me larger, I can reach the key, and if it makes me smaller, I can creep under the door, so either way I'll get into the garden, and I don't care which happens!

(ALICE eats a bit of the cake.)

ALICE: Which way? Which way?

(ALICE lays her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing. She eats the rest of the cake.)

ALICE: Curiouser and curiouser! Now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Goodbye, feet! Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I'm sure I can't! I shall be a great deal too far off to bother myself about you: you must manage the best way you can - but I must be kind to them....or perhaps they won't walk the way I want to go! Let me see: I'll give them a new pair of boots every Christmas. They must go by the carrier and how funny it'll seem, sending presents to one's own feet! And how odd the directions will look!

Alice's Right Foot, Esq.
The Carpet,
with Alice's Love

Oh dear! what nonsense I am talking!

(The MAN holds the key high above her, and slowly drops his hand towards her. Alice sees the key, jumps up and grabs it - she has grown towards it.)

MAN: Alice hurried off to the garden door. Poor Alice! it was as much as she could do, lying down on one side, to look through into the garden with one eye, but to get through was more hopeless than ever

(ALICE sits down and starts crying again)

ALICE: You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great girl like you, to cry in this way! Stop this instant, I tell you!

(ALICE continues crying with loud lonely sobs. The MAN becomes uneasy again.)

But she cried on all the same, shedding gallons of tears, until there was a large pool, about four inches deep, all round her, and reaching half way across the hall...

(The MAN enters the circle as the WHITE RABBIT. He takes from his button hole the small pink flower and lays it on the ground away from ALICE. He takes his white kid gloves out of his pocket. ALICE sees the WHITE RABBIT and dries her eyes.)

ALICE: If you please, Sir-

(The WHITE RABBIT starts violently, looks at ALICE, drops his white kid gloves, and scurries out of the circle. ALICE walks over and picks up the flower and gloves. From time to time she smells the flower.)

ALICE: Dear, dear! how queer everything is today! and yesterday everything happened just as usual: I wonder if I was changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I think I remember feeling rather different. But if I'm not the same, who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!

I'm sure I'm not Gertrude, for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all--and I'm sure I can't be Florence, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh! she knows such a very little! Besides, she's she, and I'm I, and--oh dear! how puzzling it all is! I'll try if I know all the things I used to know. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is fourteen--oh dear! I shall never get to twenty at this rate! But the Multiplication Table don't signify--let's try Geography. London is the capital of France, and Rome is the capital of Yorkshire, and Paris--oh dear! dear! that's all wrong, I'm certain! I must have been changed for Florence! I'll try and say "How doth the little"

(ALICE sits down and crosses her hands on her lap. Her voice sounds hoarse and strange - "the words did not sound the same as they used to do".)

"How doth the little crocodile
Improve its shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!

How cheerfully it seems to grin!
How neatly spreads its claws!
And welcomes little fishes in
With gently-smiling jaws!"
I'm sure those are not the right words.

(She starts to cry quietly to herself. Absentmindedly she puts on the gloves. The MAN watches her closely. As ALICE talks the man reaches in and takes the key out of the circle, and holds it in his hand.)

I must be Florence after all, and I shall have to go and live in that poky little house, and have next to no toys to play with, and oh! ever so many lessons to learn! No! I've made up my mind about it: if I'm Florence, I'll stay down here! It'll be no use their putting their heads down and saying 'come up, dear!' I shall only look up and say "who am I, then? answer me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I'll come up: if not, I'll stay down here till I'm somebody else--but, oh dear! I do wish they would put their heads down! I am so tired of being all alone here!.

(ALICE looks down at her hands - now in the gloves.)

How can I have done that? I must be growing small again.

MAN: She was now about two feet high, and was going on shrinking rapidly: soon she found out that the reason of it was the nosegay she held in her hand.

ALICE drops the flower.

MAN: Just in time to save herself from shrinking away altogether, and she found that she was now only three inches high.

ALICE: Now for the garden!

The MAN holds the key high in the air again. ALICE runs to where she left the key, can't find it and looks up. She takes off the gloves and drops them on the ground.)

ALICE: Things are worse than ever! I never was as small as this before, never! And I declare it's too bad, it is!

MAN: At this moment her foot slipped, and splash! she was up to her chin in salt water. Her first idea was that she had fallen into the sea: then she remembered that she was under ground, and she soon made out that it was the pool of tears she had wept when she was nine feet high.

ALICE: I wish I hadn't cried so much! I shall be punished for it now, I suppose, by being drowned in my own tears! Well! that'll be a queer thing, to be sure! However, every thing is queer today.

(ALICE sees something.)

MAN: Very soon she saw something splashing about in the pool near her: at first she thought it must be a walrus or a hippopotamus, but then she remembered how small she was herself, and soon made out that it was only a mouse, that had slipped in like herself.

(The MAN enters the circle and starts walking slowly towards, puffing and sneezing - he has become the MOUSE)

ALICE: Would it be any use, now to speak to this mouse? The rabbit is something quite out-of-the-way, no doubt, and so have I been, ever since I came down here, but that is no reason why the mouse should not be able to talk. I think I may as well try.

Oh Mouse, do you know how to get out of this pool? I am very tired of swimming about here, oh Mouse!

(The MOUSE looks at her, twitches his nose and winks.)

ALICE: Perhaps it doesn't understand English. I daresay it's a French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror!

Ou est ma chatte?

(The MOUSE gives a sudden jump and quivers with fright.)

ALICE: Oh, I beg your pardon! I quite forgot you didn't like cats!

MOUSE (in a shrill passionate voice): Not like cats! Would you like cats if you were me?

ALICE: Well, perhaps not. Don't be angry about it. And yet I wish I could show you our cat Dinah: I think you'd take a fancy to cats if you could only see her. She is such a dear quiet thing. She sits purring so nicely by the fire, licking her paws and washing her face: and she is such a nice soft thing to nurse, and she's such a capital one for catching mice--oh! I beg your pardon! Have I offended you?

MOUSE: Offended indeed! Our family always hated cats! Nasty, low, vulgar things! Don't talk to me about them any more!

ALICE: I won't indeed! Are you--are you--fond of--dogs?

(The MOUSE doesn't answer)

ALICE: There is such a nice little dog near our house I should like to show you! A little bright-eyed terrier, you know, with oh! such long curly brown hair! And it'll fetch things when you throw them, and it'll sit up and beg for its dinner, and all sorts of things--I can't remember half of them--and it belongs to a farmer, and he says it kills all the rats and--oh dear! I'm afraid I've offended it again!

(The MOUSE turns on his heel and walks away from ALICE.)

ALICE: Mouse dear! Do come back again, and we won't talk about cats and dogs any more, if you don't like them!

(The MOUSE turns back towards her.)

MOUSE: Let's get to the shore, and then I'll tell you my history, and you'll understand why it is I hate cats and dogs.

(ALICE and the MOUSE move to the edge of the circle. ALICE watches the water rising. The MOUSE steps outside the circle and becomes the MAN.)

MAN: The pool was getting quite full of birds and animals that had fallen into it. There was a Duck and a Dodo, a Lory and an Eaglet, and several other curious creatures. Alice led the way, and the whole party swam to the shore. They were indeed a curious looking party that assembled on the bank--the birds with draggled feathers, the animals with their fur clinging close to them--all dripping wet, cross, and uncomfortable. The first question of course was, how to get dry: they had a consultation about this, and Alice hardly felt at all surprised at finding herself talking familiarly with the birds, as if she had known them all her life.

(The MAN enters the circle and becomes the MOUSE)

MOUSE: Sit down, all of you, and attend to me! I'll soon make you dry enough!

(ALICE sits down.)

MOUSE: Ahem! Are you all ready? This is the driest thing I know. Silence all round, if you please! "William the Conqueror, whose cause was favoured by the pope, was soon

submitted to by the English, who wanted leaders, and had been of late much accustomed to usurpation and conquest. Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria - “

(The MOUSE changes his expression and posture and becomes the LORY. When the MAN plays two characters simultaneously, his conversation are as serious as ALICE’S conversations with herself. However, the MAN’S role-playing should be more heightened and comic than ALICE’S: he is the performer/jester to ALICE.)

LORY: Ugh!

MOUSE: I beg your pardon? Did you speak?

LORY: Not I!

MOUSE: I thought you did. I proceed. “Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria, declared for him and even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable - “

(The MOUSE changes expression and becomes, alternatively the DUCK, and later the DODO)

DUCK: Found WHAT?

MOUSE (Crossly): Found IT. Of course you know what "it" means?

DUCK: I know what "it" means well enough, when I find a thing. It's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?'

MOUSE: - “found it advisable to go with Edgar Atheling to meet William and offer him the crown. William's conduct at first was moderate. But the insolence of his Normans -”

How are you getting on now, my dear?

ALICE: As wet as ever. It doesn't seem to dry me at all.

DODO: In that case, I move that the meeting adjourn, for the immediate adoption of more energetic remedies -

DUCK: Speak English! I don't know the meaning of half of those long words, and what's more, I don't believe you do either!

(The DUCK sniggers)

DODO: What I was going to say was, that the best thing to get us dry would be a Caucus-race.

ALICE: What IS a Caucus-race?

DODO: Why, the best way to explain it is to do it.

(The DODO points out the race course - along the chalk circle on the floor.)

DODO: The exact shape doesn't matter!

(Suddenly the DODO starts running around the circle. ALICE watches him and when he passes her, she starts to follow him, round and round for five laps. Just as suddenly as before the DODO stops, panting and out of breath.)

DODO: The race is over!

ALICE: But who has won?

(The DODO sits down and presses his finger against his forehead. ALICE waits in silence while he thinks.)

DODO: EVERYBODY has won and all must have prizes!

ALICE: But who is to give the prizes?

DODO: Why YOU of course!

(ALICE looks surprised. She puts her hand in her pocket and pulls out a small box of comfits, and hands one to the DODO. Then the DUCK and the MOUSE.)

MOUSE: But she must have a prize herself, you know.

DODO: Of course. What else have you got in your pocket?

ALICE: Only a thimble.

DODO: Hand it over here.

(ALICE hands the thimble to the DODO. He presents it solemnly back to her. His mouth is full of sweets.)

DODO: We beg your acceptance of this elegant thimble.

(ALICE tries not to laugh at how solemn and grave the DODO suddenly looks - while trying to eat the comfits in his mouth. She waits until he finishes the sweets - crunch crunch crunch. Suddenly the DODO starts choking, and ALICE pounds him on the back.)

ALICE: You promised to tell me your history, you know, and why it is you hate - (in a whisper) - C and D.

MOUSE: Mine is a long and a sad tale!

(ALICE looks behind the MOUSE at his tail.)

ALICE: It IS a long tail, certainly but why do you call it sad?

MOUSE (reciting):

We lived beneath the mat

Warm and snug and fat

But one woe, & that

Was the cat!

To our joys

a clog, In

our eyes a

fog, On our

hearts a log

Was the dog!

When the

cat's away,

Then

the mice

will

play,

But, alas!

one day, (So they say)

Came the dog and

cat, Hunting

for a

rat,

Crushed

the mice

all flat,

Each

one

as

he

sat

Underneath the mat,

warm, & snug, & fat--Think of that!

(The MOUSE suddenly becomes angry.)

MOUSE: You are not attending! What are you thinking of?

ALICE: I beg your pardon. You had got to the fifth bend, I think?

MOUSE: I had not!

(ALICE looks down at the MOUSE'S tail.)

ALICE: A knot! Oh, do let me help to undo it!

MOUSE: I shall do nothing of the sort! You insult me by talking such nonsense!

ALICE: I didn't mean it! But you're so easily offended, you know.

(The MOUSE stops as if struck. He is obviously hurt. He turns to go - the MAN changes into the DODO.)

ALICE: Please come back and finish your story!

DODO: Yes, please do!

(ALICE and the DODO watch the MOUSE "leave".)

DODO: What a pity it wouldn't stay!

ALICE: I wish I had our Dinah here, I know I do! She'd soon fetch it back!

DODO: And who is Dinah, if I might venture to ask the question?

ALICE: Dinah's our cat. And she's such a capital one for catching mice, you can't think! And oh! I wish you could see her after the birds! Why, she'll eat a little bird as soon as look at it!

(The DODO is alarmed - as is the DUCK.)

DODO: I really must be getting home: the night air does not suit my throat.

DUCK: She's no fit company!

(The MAN walks away and leaves the circle. ALICE sits down. She is "sorrowful and silent.")

ALICE: I wish I hadn't mentioned Dinah! Nobody seems to like her, down here, and I'm sure she's the best cat in the world! Oh, my dear Dinah! I wonder if I shall ever see you any more!

(ALICE starts to cry. The MAN watches her. She continues crying to herself. The MAN takes a pipe out of his pocket and lights it. He enters the circle, and sits cross legged not far from her, and begins puffing furiously on his pipe. ALICE hears him puffing, and looks at him closely. It is a large CATERPILLAR. For some time they look at each other in silence: at last the CATERPILLAR takes the pipe out of its mouth, and languidly addresses her.)

CATERPILLAR: Who are you?

ALICE: I--I hardly know, sir, just at present--at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since that.

CATERPILLAR: What do you mean by that? Explain yourself!

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

CATERPILLAR: I don't see.

ALICE: I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly, for I can't understand it myself, and really to be so many different sizes in one day is very confusing.

CATERPILLAR: It isn't.

ALICE: Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet but when you have to turn into a chrysalis, you know, and then after that into a butterfly, I should think it'll feel a little queer, don't you think so?

CATERPILLAR: Not a bit.

ALICE: All I know is it would feel queer to me.

CATERPILLAR: You! Who are you?

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

CATERPILLAR: Why?

(ALICE gets up and walks away.)

CATERPILLAR: Come back! I've something important to say!

(ALICE turns around and comes back)

CATERPILLAR: Keep your temper.

ALICE: Is that all?

CATERPILLAR: No.

(The CATERPILLAR puffs on his pipe for a while.)

CATERPILLAR: So you think you're changed, do you?

ALICE: Yes, sir. I can't remember the things I used to know--I've tried to say "How doth the little busy bee" and it came all different!

CATERPILLAR: Try and repeat "You are old, father William".

(ALICE folds her hands in her lap. The CATERPILLAR and ALICE alternate verses, gradually realising that something is not quite right: both are equally perplexed.)

ALICE: "You are old, father William," the young man said,

"And your hair is exceedingly white:
And yet you incessantly stand on your head--
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

CATERPILLAR: "In my youth," father William replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure the brain:
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

ALICE: "You are old," said the youth," as I mentioned before,
"And have grown most uncommonly fat:
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door--
Pray what is the reason of that?"

CATERPILLAR: "In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
"I kept all my limbs very supple.
By the use of this ointment, five shillings the box--
Allow me to sell you a couple."

ALICE: "You are old," said the youth," and your jaws are too weak
"For anything tougher than suet:
Yet you eat all the goose, with the bones and the beak--
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

CATERPILLAR: "In my youth," said the old man, "I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife,
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."

ALICE: "You are old," said the youth, "one would hardly suppose
"That your eye was as steady as ever:
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose--
What made you so awfully clever?"

CATERPILLAR: "I have answered three questions, and that is enough,"
Said his father, "don't give yourself airs!
"Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!"

(The CATERPILLAR pauses)

That is not said right.

ALICE : Not quite right, I'm afraid, some of the words have got altered.

CATERPILLAR: It is wrong from beginning to end.

(There is silence between them, each lost in thought.)

CATERPILLAR: What size do you want to be?

ALICE: Oh, I'm not particular as to size, only one doesn't like changing so often, you know.

CATERPILLAR: Are you content now?

ALICE: Well, I should like to be a little larger, sir, if you wouldn't mind. Three inches is such a wretched height to be.

(The CATERPILLAR takes the pipe out of its mouth.)

CATERPILLAR (angrily): It is a very good height indeed!

ALICE: But I'm not used to it! (To herself:) I wish the creatures wouldn't be so easily offended!

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

(The CATERPILLAR puts the pipe into its mouth, and begins smoking again. Then places a small mushroom on the ground - taken from his pocket - gets up and walks very slowly away.)

CATERPILLAR: The top will make you grow taller, and the stalk will make you grow shorter.

ALICE: The top of what? The stalk of what?

CATERPILLAR: Of the mushroom

(The CATERPILLAR leaves the circle. ALICE looks thoughtfully at the mushroom for a minute, and then picks it and carefully breaks it in two, taking the stalk in one hand and the top in the other.)

ALICE: Which does the stalk do?

(ALICE nibbles a little bit of it to try. Suddenly her head hurtles towards her foot, her chin striking her shoe. She is frightened. She reaches her hand holding the top of the mushroom painfully around to her mouth and nibbles - and her head rises slowly)

ALICE: Come! my head's free at last!

(ALICE continues to stretch - her head turning upwards at an uncomfortable angle, her hand straight down by her sides. She tries to look down - and can barely see. The MAN watches her closely. He moves to the edge of the circle.)

MAN: She looked down upon an immense length of neck, which seemed to rise like a stalk out of a sea of green leaves that lay far below her.

ALICE: What can all that green stuff be? And where have my shoulders got to? And oh! my poor hands! how is it I can't see you?

(ALICE begins to bend her body as if swaying, her head and neck bending about easily in every direction, like a serpent. Suddenly the MAN leaps into the circle and starts hissing and waving his hands - like a PIGEON flapping his wings. ALICE recoils as if he slapped her.)

PIGEON (screaming): Serpent!.

ALICE: I'm not a serpent! Let me alone!

PIGEON (suddenly sobbing): I've tried every way! Nothing seems to suit 'em!

ALICE: I haven't the least idea what you mean.

PIGEON: I've tried the roots of trees, and I've tried banks, and I've tried hedges - but them serpents! There's no pleasing 'em! As if it wasn't trouble enough hatching the eggs! Without being on the look out for serpents, day and night! Why, I haven't had a wink of sleep these three weeks!

ALICE: I'm very sorry you've been annoyed.

PIGEON (shrieking): And just as I'd taken the highest tree in the wood and was just thinking I was free of 'em at least, they must needs come wriggling down from the sky! Ugh! Serpent!

ALICE: But I'm not a serpent. I'm a-- I'm a---

PIGEON: Well! What are you? I see you're trying to invent something.

ALICE: I-- I'm a little girl.

PIGEON: A likely story indeed. I've seen a good many of them in my time, but never one with such a neck as yours! No, you're a serpent, I know that well enough! I suppose you'll tell me next that you never tasted an egg!

ALICE: I have tasted eggs, certainly but indeed I don't want any of yours. I don't like them raw.

PIGEON: Well, be off, then!.

(ALICE moves away slowly, still swaying. When she turns away, the MAN leaves the circle. ALICE nibbles on the pieces of mushroom which she still holds in her hands, nibbling first at one and then at the other, and growing sometimes taller and sometimes shorter, until she had succeeded in bringing herself down to her usual size. She puts the remainder of the mushroom in her pocket. The MAN watches her amused.)

ALICE: Well! there's half my plan done now! How puzzling all these changes are! I'm never sure what I'm going to be, from one minute to another! However, I've got to my

right size again: the next thing is, to get into that beautiful garden--how is that to be done, I wonder?

MAN: Just as she said this, she noticed that one of the trees had a doorway leading right into it.

ALICE: That's very curious! But everything's curious today. I may as well go in.

(ALICE walks around the circle. She finds the key, walks around, unlocks the door, and finishes the mushrooms. The light begins to change, growing brighter and brighter. The MAN watches. He begins to grin, and the quietly claps. ALICE smiles to herself. She walks around the circle, stops and looks around.)

MAN: She found herself at last in the beautiful garden, among the bright flowerbeds and the cool fountains.

(ALICE walks around the circle, wandering to and fro. The MAN watches her closely. ALICE sits down and stretches out on the ground. She closes her eyes and begins to sleep. The MAN stares at her intently. ALICE continues sleeping. Occasionally her eyes flicker open and then close again.)

MAN: Alice was a little startled by seeing the Cheshire Cat sitting on a bough of a tree a few yards off. The Cat only grinned when it saw Alice. It looked good-natured, she thought: still it had a great many teeth, so she felt that it ought to be treated with respect.

(ALICE continues sleeping. The MAN leans into the circle - his head only over the edge. He begins grinning - joker like. ALICE rolls over. The CAT coughs. ALICE'S eyes open. She sees the CAT'S disembodied face grinning down at her. She starts awake.)

ALICE: Cheshire Puss!

(The CAT grins a little wider)

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

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

ALICE: I don't much care where -

CAT: Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

ALICE: So long as I get SOMEWHERE.

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

(ALICE thinks about this)

ALICE: What sort of people live about here?

CAT: In THAT direction lives a Hatter. And in THAT direction lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad.

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

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

ALICE: How do you know I'm mad?

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

ALICE: And how do you know that you're mad?

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

ALICE: I suppose so.

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

ALICE: I call it purring, not growling.

CAT: Call it what you like. Do you play croquet with the Queen to-day?

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

CAT: You'll see me there.

(The CAT withdraws its head suddenly: it vanishes.)

(Alice waits a little to see if the CAT will appear again - but it does not. After a minute of so, she gets up and starts walking around the circle in the direction of the MARCH HARE'S house.)

ALICE: I've seen hatters before. The March Hare will be much the most interesting, and perhaps as this is May it won't be raving mad--at least not so mad as it was in March.'

(Suddenly the MAN thrusts his head into the circle.)

CAT: Did you say pig, or fig?

ALICE: I said neither, and I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy.

(The CAT grins widely. ALICE looks at the CAT. She sticks out her tongue. The CAT'S smile wavers slightly.)

CAT: All right.

(The CAT withdraws his head slowly, his grin more hesitant. ALICE laughs.)

ALICE; Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in my life!

(The MAN watches ALICE walking. He watches her closely. He waits. When he speaks, he stutters a little more than usual.

MAN: She had not gone much farther before she came in sight of the house of the March Hare: she thought it must be the right house, because the chimneys were shaped like ears and the roof was thatched with fur.

(ALICE takes some of the stalk of the mushroom, and eats a little bit of it.)

ALICE: Suppose it should be raving mad after all! I almost wish I'd gone to see the Hatter instead!

(The MAN is a little surprised by ALICE'S last remark. He looks at her.)

MAN: There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and the talking over its head. The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it.

ALICE: Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse, only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind.

(The MAN steps in to the circle, And becomes the MAD HATTER, and later the MARCH HARE and the DORMOUSE.)

HATTER: No room! No room!

ALICE: There's PLENTY of room!

(ALICE sits down. The HATTER sits down slowly after her, a little surprised.)

HARE: Have some wine.

ALICE: I don't see any wine.

HARE: There isn't any.

ALICE (angrily): Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it.

MARCH HARE: It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited.

ALICE: I didn't know it was YOUR table. It's laid for a great many more than three.

(The HATTER looks at ALICE for a long time.

HATTER: Your hair wants cutting..

ALICE: You should learn not to make personal remarks. It's very rude.

(The HATTER "opens his eyes very wide on hearing this; but all he SAID was":)

HATTER: Why is a raven like a writing-desk?

ALICE (to herself): Come, we shall have some fun now! I'm glad they've begun asking riddles. (Then aloud:) I believe I can guess that.

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

ALICE: Exactly so.

HARE: Then you should say what you mean.

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

HATTER: Not the same thing a bit! You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see"!

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 talking in his sleep.)

DORMOUSE: You might just as well say that "I breathe when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe"!

HATTER: It IS the same thing with you.

(ALICE and the HATTER are quiet for awhile. The HATTER takes his watch out of his pocket, looks at it, shakes it and then holds it to his ear.)

HATTER: What day of the month is it?

ALICE: The fourth.

HATTER: Two days wrong! I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!

HARE: It was the BEST butter.

HATTER: Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well. You

shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife.

HARE: It was the BEST butter, you know.

(ALICE takes the watch from the HARE. The MAN is surprised by her action. He stares at her.)

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

(The MAN continues staring at her. ALICE looks at him quizzically. The MAN turns his eyes away, and speaks quietly.)

HATTER: Why should it? Does YOUR watch tell you what year it is?

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

HATTER Which is just the case with MINE.

(ALICE looks puzzled.)

ALICE: I don't quite understand you.

HATTER: The Dormouse is asleep again.

(The HATTER nudges the DORMOUSE. The DORMOUSE shakes his head without opening its eyes)

DORMOUSE: Of course, of course; just what I was going to remark myself.

HATTER: Have you guessed the riddle yet?

ALICE: No, I give up. What's the answer?

HATTER: I haven't the slightest idea.

HARE: Nor I.

ALICE (sighing wearily): I think you might do something better with the time than waste it in asking riddles that have no answers.

HATTER: If you knew Time as well as I do, you wouldn't talk about wasting IT. It's HIM.

ALICE: I don't know what you mean.

HATTER (“tossing his head contemptuously.”): Of course you don't! I dare say you never even spoke to Time!

ALICE: Perhaps not, but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.

HATTER: Ah! that accounts for it. He won't stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock. For instance, suppose it were nine o'clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you'd only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half-past one, time for dinner!

ALICE: That would be grand, certainly. But then - I shouldn't be hungry for it, you know.

HATTER: Not at first, perhaps, but you could keep it to half-past one as long as you liked.

ALICE: Is that the way YOU manage?

HATTER: Not I! We quarrelled last March--just before HE went mad, you know-- (pointing to the HARE) --it was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! How I wonder what you're at!"

You know the song, perhaps?

ALICE: I've heard something like it.

HATTER: It goes on, you know, in this way--

"Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea-tray in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle--"

(The DORMOUSE shakes itself and begins singing in its sleep.)

DORMOUSE: Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle--

(HATTER punches the DORMOUSE)

HATTER: Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse when the Queen jumped up and bawled out, "He's murdering the time! Off with his head!"

ALICE: How dreadfully savage!

HATTER: And ever since that he won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now.

ALICE: Is that the reason so many tea-things are put out here?

HATTER: Yes, that's it. It's always tea-time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles.

ALICE: Then you keep moving round, I suppose?

HATTER: Exactly so, as the things get used up.

ALICE: But what happens when you come to the beginning again?

HARE: Suppose we change the subject. (Yawning) I'm getting tired of this. I vote the young lady tells us a story.

ALICE: I'm afraid I don't know one.

HARE: Then the Dormouse shall! (Shouting) WAKE UP, DORMOUSE!

(The DORMOUSE slowly opens his eyes. He speaks in a hoarse feeble voice.)

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

HARE: Tell us a story!

ALICE: Yes, please do!

HATTER: And be quick about it or you'll be asleep again before it's done.

DORMOUSE: Once upon a time there were three little sisters, and their names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie; and they lived at the bottom of a well -

ALICE: What did they live on?

(The DORMOUSE thinks for a moment)

DORMOUSE: They lived on treacle.

ALICE: They couldn't have done that, you know, they'd have been ill.

DORMOUSE : So they were. VERY ill.

(ALICE thinks a bit)

ALICE: But why did they live at the bottom of a well?

HARE: Take some more tea.

ALICE: I've had nothing yet so I can't take more.

HATTER: You mean you can't take LESS. It's very easy to take MORE than nothing.

ALICE: Nobody asked YOUR opinion.

(The HATTER is taken aback.)

HATTER: Who's making personal remarks now...

(ALICE is quiet for a moment)

ALICE: Why did they live at the bottom of a well?

(DORMOUSE take a moment to think about it.)

DORMOUSE: It was a treacle-well.

ALICE (beginning very angrily): There's no such thing!

HARE: Sh! sh!

DORMOUSE: If you can't be civil, you'd better finish the story for yourself.

ALICE: No, please go on! I won't interrupt again. I dare say there may be ONE.

DORMOUSE: One, indeed! And so these three little sisters--they were learning to draw, you know-

ALICE: What did they draw?

DORMOUSE: Treacle.

HATTER: I want a clean cup. Let's all move one place on.

(The HATTER and ALICE moved one place around on the floor.)

ALICE: But I don't understand. Where did they draw the treacle from?

HATTER: You can draw water out of a water-well, so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well--eh, stupid?

ALICE: But they were IN the well.

DORMOUSE: Of course they were - well in.

(ALICE looks very confused. The DORMOUSE rubs his eyes - he's getting sleepy)

DORMOUSE: They were learning to draw and they drew all manner of things - everything that begins with an M -

ALICE: Why with an M?

HARE: Why not?

(ALICE is silent. The DORMOUSE begins to snore. HARE punches him.)

DORMOUSE: Ouch! - that begins with an M, such as mouse-traps, and the moon, and memory, and muchness-- you know you say things are "much of a muchness"- did you ever see such a thing as a drawing of a muchness?

ALICE: Really, now you ask me, I don't think -

HATTER: Then you shouldn't talk.

(ALICE stares at the HATTER. She gets up in disgust and walks away. The MAN is first astonished, then alarmed: he seems on the point of saying something, and then decides against it. He gets up slowly and leaves the circle. He watches ALICE very closely. ALICE walks slowly around the circle.)

ALICE: At any rate I'll never go THERE again! It's the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!

(The MAN is about to speak and then hesitates. ALICE doesn't move. The MAN watches her closely. ALICE still doesn't move. Then she sits down, stretches out and closes her eyes. The MAN waits. Then:)

MAN: Just as she said this, she noticed that one of the trees had a door leading right into it. "That's very curious!" she thought. "But everything's curious today. I think I may as well go in at once." And in she went.

Once more she found herself in the long hall, and close to the little glass table. "Now, I'll manage better this time," she said to herself, and began by taking the little golden key, and unlocking the door that led into the garden. Then she went to work nibbling at the mushroom (she had kept a piece of it in her pocket) till she was about a foot high: then she walked down the little passage: and THEN--she found herself at last in the beautiful garden, among the bright flower-beds and the cool fountains.

(The MAN waits and watches her. ALICE is asleep.)

MAN: A large rose tree stood near the entrance of the garden: the roses on it were white, but there were three gardeners at it, busily painting them red. This Alice thought a very curious thing, and she went near to watch them.)

(ALICE is still asleep. The MAN becomes increasingly agitated.)

MAN: And just as she came up she heard one of them say "Look out, Five! Don't go splashing paint over me like that!" "I couldn't help it," said Five in a sulky tone, "Seven jogged my elbow." On which Seven lifted up his head and said "That's right, Five! Always lay the blame on others!"

(ALICE remains asleep. The MAN waits a moment, and then enters the circle)

FIVE: You'd better not talk! I heard the Queen say only yesterday she thought of having you beheaded!

TWO: What for?

SEVEN: That's not your business, Two!

(ALICE begins to stir. The MAN smiles and continues as FIVE.)

FIVE: Yes, it is his business! And I'll tell him: it was for bringing tulip roots to the cook instead of potatoes.

(ALICE wakes up, looks around, and sees SEVEN. She quickly gets up and approaches him.)

SEVEN: Well! Of all the unjust things -

(SEVEN bows when ALICE approaches him)

ALICE: Would you tell me, please, why you are painting those roses?

TWO: Why, Miss, the fact is, this ought to have been a red rose tree, and we put a white one in by mistake, and if the Queen was to find it out, we should all have our heads cut off. So, you see, we're doing our best, before she comes, to -

(Shouting and pointing))

THE QUEEN! THE QUEEN!

(ALICE turns around in the direction TWO pointed. ALICE walks away from TWO and watches the procession. TWO steps out of the circle.)

MAN: First came ten soldiers carrying clubs: these were all shaped like the three gardeners, flat and oblong, with their hands and feet at the corners: next the ten courtiers; these were all ornamented with diamonds, and walked two and two, as the soldiers did. After these came the Royal children: there were ten of them, and the little dears came jumping merrily along, hand in hand, in couples: they were all ornamented with hearts. Next came the guests, mostly kings and queens, among whom Alice recognised the white rabbit: it was talking in a hurried nervous manner, smiling at everything that was said, and went by without noticing her. Then followed the Knave of Hearts, carrying the King's crown on a cushion, and, last of all this grand procession, came The King and Queen of Hearts.

(The MAN steps into the circle.)

QUEEN: Who is this?

(ALICE turns around in surprise)

QUEEN: What's your name?

ALICE: My name is Alice, so please your Majesty. (then to herself) Why, they're only a pack of cards! I needn't be afraid of them!

QUEEN (pointing to the gardeners): Who are these?

ALICE: How should I know? It's no business of mine.

QUEEN (stares at her and then screams): Off with her -

ALICE: (shouting): Nonsense!

(The QUEEN is silent. The MAN is taken aback. He stares at her. Then as the KING - timidly))

KING: Remember my dear! She is only a child!

(The QUEEN looks at ALICE. Then she points to the gardeners - all the while looking at ALICE.)

QUEEN: What have you been doing here?

TWO (looking at ALICE): May it please your Majesty, we were trying--

QUEEN (looking at ALICE): I see! Off with their heads!

(The QUEEN turns on her heel. And stands with her back to Alice.)

ALICE (gently to "TWO, FIVE, and SEVEN"): You shan't be beheaded!

(The Queen remains standing with her back to ALICE)

QUEEN (quietly): Are their heads off?

ALICE: Their heads are gone.... if it please your Majesty!

QUEEN (quietly) That's right! Can you play croquet?

(ALICE waits a moment before speaking. Then she shouts)

ALICE: Yes!

QUEEN (her back still to ALICE, shouts in reply): Come on then!

(ALICE runs to the QUEEN and they start walking around the circle. As they walk, the QUEEN becomes the WHITE RABBIT)

RABBIT (Peeping anxiously into her face): It's-- it's a very fine day!

ALICE: Very

RABBIT: Hush! Hush!

(ALICE looks at him strangely. The RABBIT looks anxiously over his shoulder, and then puts his mouth close to her ear, and whispers:)

WHITE RABBIT: The Duchess is under sentence of execution.

ALICE: What for?

RABBIT: Did you say "What a pity!"?

ALICE: No, I didn't. I don't think it's at all a pity. I said "What for?"

RABBIT: She boxed the Queen's ears -

(ALICE screams with laughter)

RABBIT (in a frightened tone): Oh, hush! The Queen will hear you! You see, she came rather late, and the Queen said -

(The RABBIT suddenly becomes the QUEEN, and shouts): Get to your places!

(The RABBIT jumps. and lets go of ALICE'S arm. ALICE turns to see what the QUEEN is doing - and watches the preparations for the game. The RABBIT leaves the circle.

MAN: People began running about in all directions, tumbling up against each other; however, they got settled down in a minute or two, and the game began. Alice thought she had never seen such a curious croquet-ground in her life; it was all ridges and furrows; the balls were live hedgehogs, the mallets live ostriches, and the soldiers had to double themselves up and to stand on their hands and feet, to make the arches.

(During this description, ALICE watches but does not perform what the MAN describes. She laughs and claps her hand when something delights her. The MAN describes the following events with evident pleasure -partly at its absurdity and partly because of ALICE'S laughter.)

MAN: The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her ostrich: she succeeded in getting its body tucked away, comfortably enough, under her arm, with its legs hanging down, but generally, just as she had got its neck nicely straightened out, and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head, it WOULD twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help bursting out laughing: and when she had got its head down, and was going to begin again, it was very provoking to find that the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in the act of crawling away: besides all this, there was generally a ridge or furrow in the way wherever she wanted to send the hedgehog to, and, as the doubled-up soldiers were always getting up and walking off to other parts of the ground, Alice soon came to the conclusion that it was a very difficult game indeed. The players all played at once without waiting for turns, quarrelling all the while, and fighting for the hedgehogs; and in a very short time the Queen was in a furious passion, and went stamping about.

(The MAN steps into the circle and shouts:)

QUEEN: Off with his head! Off with her head! Off with his head! Off with her head! Off with his head! Off with her head!

(ALICE looks around uneasily at the QUEEN, and begins to back away. The MAN is unnerved to see ALICE moving away from him. The MAN retreats quickly out of the circle. ALICE continues to back slowly away.)

ALICE: What will become of me? They're dreadfully fond of beheading people here; the great wonder is, that there's any one left alive!

(ALICE starts looking around for a way to escape. The MAN watches her worriedly - ALICE is afraid. Then he leans his head into the circle and smiles widely. ALICE stops, looks at the grinning face and smiles.)

ALICE: It's the Cheshire Cat! Now I shall have somebody to talk to.

CAT: How are you getting on?

ALICE; I don't think they play at all fairly, and they all quarrel so dreadfully one can't hear oneself speak--and they don't seem to have any rules in particular; at least, if there are, nobody attends to them--and you've no idea how confusing it is all the things being alive; for instance, there's the arch I've got to go through next walking about at the other end of the ground--and I should have croqueted the Queen's hedgehog just now, only it ran away when it saw mine coming!

CAT: How do you like the Queen?

ALICE: Not at all... (looks around) she's so extremely - (looks around as the CAT disappears) Oh...

(The MAN begins speaking quickly and soothingly. And ALICE calms down, and begins smiling again).

MAN: All those whom the Queen sentenced were taken into custody by the soldiers, who of course had to leave off being arches to do this, so that, by the end of half an hour or so, there were no arches left, and all the players, except the King, the Queen, and Alice, were in custody, and under sentence of execution. Then the Queen left off, quite out of breath, and said to Alice "have you seen the Mock Turtle?"

(The MAN steps into the circle and says very gently:)

QUEEN: Have you seen the Mock Turtle?

ALICE: No. I don't even know what a Mock Turtle is.

(The QUEEN approaches ALICE very slowly)

QUEEN: Come on then, and it shall tell you its history.

(The QUEEN and ALICE walk together around the circle. As they walk, the QUEEN turns her head to all her prisoners.)

QUEEN: You are all pardoned!

ALICE: That's a good thing!

(They continue walking until the QUEEN stops and looks at the ground.)

QUEEN: Up, lazy thing! Take this young lady to see the Mock Turtle, and to hear its history. I must go back and see after some executions I ordered.

(The QUEEN winks at ALICE. ALICE smiles. The QUEEN gently pushes ALICE towards the GRYPHON. ALICE gazes at the GRYPHON asleep on the ground. The QUEEN walks around ALICE - and ALICE watches the GRYPHON get up: her gaze meets the QUEEN'S as she becomes the GRYPHON. The GRYPHON rubs its eyes, watches the QUEEN "leaving" and looks down at ALICE and chuckles.)

GRYPHON What fun!

ALICE: What IS the fun?

GRYPHON: Why, SHE. It's all her fancy, that: they never executes nobody, you know: come on!

(The GRYPHON starts walking away.)

ALICE: Everybody says 'come on!' here. I never was ordered about so before in all my life--never!

(The GRYPHON stops walking, His back to ALICE. Alice stops walking. There is several feet between them. The Gryphon's back is also to the audience. The MAN'S shoulders slouch and he emits a huge sigh as if his heart would break. The light changes slowly to spots on ALICE and the MAN.)

ALICE: What is its sorrow?

GRYPHON: It's all its fancy, that: it hasn't got no sorrow, you know: come on!

(They don't move)

GRYPHON: This here young lady wants for to know your history, she do.

(The MAN turns his head, There are tears in his eyes. He is the MOCK TURTLE - and the MAN)

TURTLE: I'll tell it. Sit down, and don't speak till I've finished.

(ALICE sits. And watches the TURTLE carefully. ALICE and the TURTLE looks at one another for the longest time.)

ALICE (gently): I don't see how you can ever finish, if you don't begin.

(The MAN smiles at her gently.)

TURTLE: Once I was a real Turtle.

(The Turtle starts to weep. ALICE watches and waits patiently.)

TURTLE: When we were little - (More calmly, though still sobbing a little now and then) - we went to school in the sea. The master was an old Turtle--we used to call him Tortoise--"

ALICE: Why did you call him Tortoise, if he wasn't one?

TURTLE (irritated): We called him Tortoise because he taught us. Really you are very dull!

GRYPHON: You ought to be ashamed of yourself for asking such a simple question.

(ALICE looks down, and waits)

GRYPHON: Get on, old fellow! Don't be all day!

(ALICE watches and waits)

TURTLE: You may not have lived much under the sea-

ALICE: I haven't.

TURTLE: And perhaps you were never even introduced to a lobster -

ALICE: I once tasted - no, never.

TURTLE: So you can have no idea what a delightful thing a Lobster Quadrille is!

ALICE: No, indeed. What sort of a thing is it?

GRYPHON: Why, you form into a line along the sea shore -

TURTLE: Two lines! Seals, turtles, salmon, and so on -advance twice -

GRYPHON: Each with a lobster as partner!

(As the MAN alternates between GRYPHON and TURTLE, he gradually begins speaking all the lines as one voice - the MAN'S voice. The sobbing and stuttering begin to blend - the MAN is not aware of it. ALICE, on the other hand, is.)

TURTLE: Of course, advance twice, set to partners -

GRYPHON: Change lobsters, and retire in same order -

TURTLE: Then, you know, you throw the -

(The GRYPHON jumps into the air, shouting)

GRYPHON: The lobsters!

TURTLE: As far out to sea as you can -

GRYPHON: Swim after them!

(The MAN begins to dance and caper around. ALICE watches him.)

MAN: Turn a somersault in the sea! Change lobsters again! And then - That's all.

(The MAN suddenly stops jumping around and looks at ALICE, a little surprised and embarrassed.)

ALICE: It must be a very pretty dance.

MAN: Would you like to see a little of it?

ALICE: Very much indeed.

MAN: Come, let's try the first figure.

(The MAN begins solemnly dancing round and round Alice, almost now and then treading on her toes when he comes too close, and waving his hands to mark the time. He sings slowly and sadly, these words:)

MAN: "Beneath the waters of the sea
Are lobsters thick as thick can be--
They love to dance with you and me,
My own, my gentle Salmon!"

"Salmon come up! Salmon go down!
Salmon come twist your tail around!
Of all the fishes of the sea
There's none so good as Salmon!"

(The MAN stops and looks at her, afraid and excited.)

ALICE; Thank you.

MAN: Shall I try the second figure? Or would you prefer a song?

ALICE: Oh, a song, please!

(The MAN sighs deeply, and begins, in a voice sometimes choked with sobs, to sing this

"Beautiful Soup, so rich and green,
Waiting in a hot tureen!
Who for such dainties would not stoop?
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!
Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!
 Beau-ootiful Soo--oop!
 Beau-ootiful Soo--oop!
Soo-oop of the e-e-evening,
 Beautiful beautiful Soup!

(The MAN becomes choked and is unable to go on. ALICE stares at him. She gets up and approaches him slowly. She takes his hand, and squeezes it. The MAN looks at her. She reaches up and kisses him on the cheek. The MAN smiles. ALICE looks at him seriously and attentively. They gaze at one another, neither moving, for a long time. The MAN is the first to break the gaze. He reaches into his pocket and takes out his watch and looks at it.)

MAN: The trial's beginning!

ALICE: What trial is it?

MAN: Come on!

(The light changes. The MAN takes ALICE by the hand and starts running around the circle. After two laps, he lets go her hand and she continues running - except more slowly. She looks back at him. He smiles at her and sings gently:)

MAN: "Soo-oop of the e-e-evening,
Beautiful beautiful Soup!"

(The MAN leaves the circle and ALICE continues running. The MAN stands and watches her. ALICE stops running and looks around. She is out of breath, and very tired. She sits down.

MAN: The King and Queen were seated on their throne when Alice arrived, with a great crowd assembled around them: the Knave was in custody: and before the King stood the white rabbit, with a trumpet in one hand, and a scroll of parchment in the other.

(The MAN steps forward into the circle. ALICE smiles at him. And lies on the ground.)

KING: Herald! Read the accusation!

RABBIT (timidly):
"The Queen of Hearts she made some tarts
All on a summer day:
The Knave of Hearts he stole those tarts,
And took them quite away!"

(ALICE laughs quietly and rolls over)

KING: Now for the evidence and then the sentence.

QUEEN (gently): No. First the sentence, and then the evidence.

ALICE (yawns and says sleepily): Nonsense! The idea of having the sentence first!

QUEEN (softly): Hold your tongue.

ALICE (quietly and dreamily) I won't. You're nothing but a pack of cards!
Who cares for you?

(The MAN watches her sleeping for a while. Then very gently, as if telling her a bed time story.)

MAN: At this the whole pack rose up into the air, and came flying down upon her: she gave a little scream of fright, and tried to beat them off, and found herself lying on the bank, with her head in the lap of her sister, who was gently brushing away some leaves that had fluttered down from the trees on to her face.

(The MAN watches her some more. He then approaches her slowly. He stands over her, bends down and kisses her on the cheek. Then he shakes her gently.)

MAN: Wake up!, Alice dear! What a nice long sleep you've had!

(ALICE wakes slowly, looks at the man and smiles.)

ALICE: Oh, I've had such a curious dream!

(The MAN helps her up. He stutters as the MAN, and is very prim and proper with her.)

MAN: It was a curious dream, dear, certainly! But now run in to your tea. It's getting late.

(ALICE looks at the MAN curiously. Then she reaches up and kisses him on the cheek - and runs out of the circle. The MAN watches her go. He waits a moment, and then begins walking slowly around the circle picking up the key, the bottle, the gloves and the little flower. As he walks around placing each item in his pocket and the pink flower in his button hole, he speaks the following lines - holding the gloves in his hand:)

MAN: For anyone that has ever loved one true child, no words are needed. For he will have known the awe that falls on one in the presence of a spirit fresh from God's hands,

on whom no shadow of sin, and but the outermost fringe of the shadow of sorrow, has yet fallen: he will have felt the bitter contrast between the haunting selfishness that spoils his best deeds and the life that is but an overflowing love - for I think that a child's FIRST attitude to the world is a simple love for all living things. And he will have learned that the best work a man can do is when he works for love's sake only, with no thought of name, or gain, or earthly reward.

(The MAN stands on the edge of the circle, He faces the audience.)

MAN: No deed of ours, I suppose, on this side of the grave, is really unselfish: yet if one can put forth all one's powers in a task where nothing of reward is hoped for but a little child's whispered thanks, and the air touch of a little child's lips, one seems to come somewhere near to this.

(The MAN looks straight out at the audience: prim, proper and fastidious. He reaches into his pocket and takes out his watch, looks at it, winds it, and replaces it his pocket. He puts his white kid gloves on. He smiles.)

MAN: Dear, dear! I shall be too late!

Lights out.

FIN

ALICE'S ADVENTURES UNDERGROUND