

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Adapted by Michele L. Vacca

(Based on Lewis Carroll's classic fantasies)

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ALICE IN WONDERLAND PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS:

ALICE – Lewis Carroll’s Victorian heroine, somewhat Americanized. She is an intelligent child, very curious and not at all shy.

WHITE RABBIT – one of the Queen’s loyal servants. He has an almost obsessive sense of duty and is almost constantly in a hurry.

MAD HATTER – probably the zaniest character of all. He is indeed totally mad, completely obsessed with “Time,” and entirely unpredictable.

MARCH HARE – the Hatter’s friend and/or alter ego. He imitates the Hatter’s insanity beautifully – or could it be that he, too, is mad?

CATERPILLAR – an oversized member of his species, who puzzles Alice with his mysterious and vague remarks.

CHESHIRE-CAT – can be played by a man or a woman. He is the one creature Alice meets who seems inclined to be friendly.

DORMOUSE – can be played by a man or a woman. He is the very sleepy companion of the Mad Hatter and the March Hare.

RED QUEEN – the Queen of Hearts, whose cry of “Off with their heads” fills everyone with fear. However, “She never really executes anyone.”

THE RED KING – the long-suffering consort of the Queen. He is kindly, though timid, and rather unorganized.

THE KNAVE OF HEARTS – can be played by a man or a woman. The Knave has trouble doing things right. He plants the wrong shade of roses, and goes on trial for stealing the Queen’s cherry tarts.

HUMPTY DUMPTY – a vain and pompous gentleman, who is provoked when he’s compared to an egg, even though, of course, that’s exactly what he is.

(2) TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDLEDEE – are twins. They look alike, dress alike, and behave like spoiled children.

DUCHESS – a friend of the Queen’s. She has a habit of finding a moral in

everything, and has the dubious distinction of having a pig for a baby.

COOK – the Duchess’s chef, companion, and erstwhile nursemaid. The Cook’s one passion is a love for pepper.

TALKING FLOWERS – Tiger Lily, Marigold, Rose, Violet, and Daisy can all be played by other members of the cast. Costumes may be simple or elaborate, as preferred.

NARRATOR – performs the function of storyteller, often becoming involved with the action of the play. He can wear either Victorian or modern clothing, and his demeanor should be mature and much more “sane” than that of the other characters.

NOTE: This script is designed so that various roles may be doubled. For example, the WHITE RABBIT can double as the CATERPILLAR and TWEEDLEDEE. It is also possible for the KING to play the CATERPILLAR. The DORMOUSE and the KNAVE can double. TWEEDLEDUM can double as HUMPTY DUMPTY. The FLOWERS can be played by any available member of the company.

COSTUMES AND SETTINGS:

The best source for ideas on costuming this play can be found in the famous drawings by Sir John Tenniel. These drawings show the costumes most people associate with the Alice characters, and can be found in any library.

As for the settings, aside from possibly a comfortable chair for the narrator, a large mushroom for the caterpillar, and various objects which can represent tables, chairs, benches, and so on, nothing specific is required. Since locations frequently change, a lot of ponderous scenery would merely prove to be an inconvenience. For example, some productions have utilized a series of different sized blocks, which were rearranged in a number of ways, so that they could serve multiple functions during the action of the play. NOTE: The creative use of music and sound effects greatly enhances the production of this play.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

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By Michele L. Vacca

ACT I

(OVERTURE: THERE IS A CHAIR LOCATED ON ONE SIDE OF THE STAGE. VARIOUS SET PIECES. LIGHTS UP AS NARRATOR ENTERS. HE CARRIES A LARGE STORYBOOK, AND SPEAKS TO THE AUDIENCE. **Note to director:** you may want to shorten this opening speech.)

NARRATOR: Good afternoon (morning), ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls. Welcome to the world of wonderland. This afternoon (morning) you will meet a little girl named Alice, and some very unusual characters. All of these characters are from two famous books about Alice's adventures in Wonderland. The books were written over a hundred years ago by Lewis Carroll. In the past century thousands and thousands of children and adults have read and enjoyed these books about Alice and the characters she met. Since so many people have read and enjoyed the adventures of Alice in the past one hundred years, we call the story a classic. And that, of course, is just what "classic" means; a story that has been told for a long time. You may ask how can we make a story that's over a hundred years old – real to us – today? A good way to bring a story to life is to act it out on the stage. That is what we're going to do for you this afternoon (morning). The people in the play are waiting backstage to meet you. Some of them will make you laugh . . .

(AT THIS POINT THE MAD HATTER AND THE MARCH HARE ENTER. THE HATTER CARRIES HIS TEACUP, FROM WHICH HE SIPES DELICATELY. HE AND THE HARE SIMPLY CROSS FROM ONE SIDE OF THE STAGE TO THE OTHER. THE HARE LAUGHS MADLY ALL THROUGH THE CROSS, FINALLY FALLS TO THE FLOOR, LAUGHING, AND

THEN DRAGS HIMSELF OFF. THEY ARE GONE.
NARRATOR CONTINUES.)

NARRATOR: Now, as I was trying to say, some of the characters will make you laugh. Some of them will –

(TWEEDLEDUM AND TWEEDELDEE EITHER APPEAR OR THEY ARE HEARD BACKSTAGE, VOICES RAISED AS THOUGH IN AN ARGUMENT.)

DUM: Nohow!

DEE: Contrariwise!

DUM: Nohow!

DEE: Contrariwise!

DUM: NOHOW!

DEE: CONTRARIWISE!

NARRATOR: (GROWING ANNOYED.) Ahem! (THE VOICES STOP.) Where was I?

(A BRIEF LOUD LAUGH FROM BACKSTAGE.)

NARRATOR: Ah, yes. Now I remember. (TO THE AUDIENCE IN A STAGE WHISPER – VERY MYSTERIOUSLY.) Some of the characters may puzzle you. Some of them are – (LOOKS AROUND.) Very strange. Some of them may even –

(THE CHESHIRE-CAT HAS APPEARED AT HIS FEET. THE CAT LOOKS OUT AT THE AUDIENCE, GRINNING.)

NARRATOR: (STARTLED.) Where did you come from?

CAT: (GRINS.)

NARRATOR: Listen, why don't you just wait back there with the others?

CAT: (GRINS, PURRS.)

NARRATOR: (TO THE AUDIENCE.) Excuse me. (TO CAT.) Look, cat, be reasonable –

CAT: (GRINS, SHAKES HIS HEAD.)

NARRATOR: Go away, won't you? Shoo! Scat!

CAT: (GRINS, GOES WITH A HISS AND A WAVE TO THE AUDIENCE.)

NARRATOR: Now, where was I?

QUEEN: (VERY LOUDLY FROM OFFSTAGE.) Off with his head!

NARRATOR: (GROWING NERVOUS.) Uh-oh. (ASIDE TO AUDIENCE.) Some of the characters may even frighten you a little – but they –

(THE QUEEN ENTERS. SHE STRIDES RAPIDLY TO THE MIDDLE OF THE STAGE, STANDS THERE, LOOKING, TAPPING HER FOOT IMPATIENTLY.)

NARRATOR: (TO AUDIENCE.) It's the Queen of Hearts. (HE GOES TO HER.) Excuse me, Your Majesty –

QUEEN: (WITHOUT LOOKING AT HIM.) Off with his head!

NARRATOR: (NERVOUSLY.) Surely, Your Majesty, you don't mean that.

QUEEN: (WITHOUT LOOKING AT HIM.) Off with his head!

NARRATOR: Ah, why doesn't Your Majesty welcome all these good people?

QUEEN: (GLANCING AT AUDIENCE.) Off with their heads!

NARRATOR: (TO AUDIENCE.) She doesn't really mean it, you know. I think. (TO QUEEN.) I won't take much more time, Your Majesty.

QUEEN: (GLANCES AT HIM, LOOKS AWAY, SAYS CASUALLY.) Off with his head.

NARRATOR: (GESTURES TO THE OFFSTAGE KING.) Yes, Your Majesty.

KING: (ENTERS HURRIEDLY.) Come along, my dear.

QUEEN: off with his head! Off with his head!

KING: (LEADING HER OFF AS SHE SHOUTS.) Later, my dear. Later.

QUEEN: Off with his head!

(THEY ARE FINALLY GONE.)

NARRATOR: As you see, the characters are eager to begin the story.

(THE DORMOUSE ENTERS WITH AN ENORMOUS ENVELOPE. HE HANDS IT TO THE NARRATOR WITH A YAWN.)

DORMOUSE: (WITH A YAWN.) A message . . . from the Queen.

NARRATOR: A message? For me? From the Queen? Well, well. (TO

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AUDIENCE.) Pardon me a moment. (READS MESSAGE.) Ahem! Yes, of course. (TO AUDIENCE.) She says – she says – “Get on with it!” (TO DORMOUSE.) Tell her – (DORMOUSE IS TAKING A LITTLE NAP ON THE FLOOR.) Wake up! (DORMOUSE AWAKENS WITH A SNORT.) Tell her I’m doing my best.

DORMOUSE: (YAWNS, NODS.) Doing his best. (EXITS WITH ANOTHER YAWN, DRAGGING THE MESSAGE BEHIND HIM.)

NARRATOR: I think I’d better begin the story.

(LOUD APPLAUSE FROM BACKSTAGE.)

NARRATOR: AHEM!

(THE BACKSTAGE APPLAUSE STOPS.)

NARRATOR: (SETTLING HIMSELF COMFORTABLY, READY TO BEGIN THE STORY. MUSIC PLAYS.) One sunny afternoon, in the middle of a beautiful spring, a little girl named Alice sat with her older sister on a quiet river bank. Alice thought about making a long daisy chain, but she decided it was too much trouble. The sun was so warm, the breeze so gentle, and Alice felt very sleepy. Her sister was reading a book, and paid no attention to Alice, who was growing sleepier and sleepier. Just as Alice was about to fall asleep, she heard a rustling in the grass nearby. She opened her eyes a little, and then opened them wide. It was a rabbit! Not an ordinary rabbit, but a very unusual rabbit.

(THE WHITE RABBIT ENTERS. HE SCURRIES AROUND IN CIRCLES.)

RABBIT: Oh, dear, oh dear! I’m late, I’m late! (HE GOES OFF.)

NARRATOR: (CONTINUES.) Alice jumped up. She started to follow the rabbit. Her sister didn’t even notice.

ALICE: (ENTERS.) Mr. Rabbit! Mr. Rabbit?

NARRATOR: Alice found the rabbit difficult to follow. He went so fast, around trees, under bushes, and in circles.

ALICE: (TO HERSELF.) Now where did he go?

NARRATOR: (TO ALICE.) Pssst!
ALICE: (STARTLED, LOOKS AT HIM.) What is it?
NARRATOR: (IN A STAGE WHISPER.) That way.
ALICE: (GOING OFF.) Thank you!
NARRATOR: Alice kept following the rabbit, never quite catching up to him, until she found herself in a very strange place – a place where no other little girl had ever been . . .

(SUDDENLY LOUD VOICES ARE HEARD OFFSTAGE AND FROM EVERYWHERE POSSIBLE IN THE THEATER. ALL AVAILABLE CHARACTERS JOIN IN THE SHOUTING AND LAUGHING. SUDDENLY THEY ALL COME RUSHING ON STAGE AND INTO THE AUDIENCE, COMING FROM ALL DIRECTIONS.)

QUEEN: (STARTING THE WHOLE THING.) OFF WITH THEIR HEADS!
VOICES: (LAUGHTER AND SCREAMS.) Oh, no! It's the Queen! The Queen!
ALL: (AS THEY APPEAR, AD LIB IN CHARACTER AS THEY CRISSCROSS EACH OTHER, TALK TO THE AUDIENCE, AND SO FORTH.)
QUEEN: (FOLLOWED BY THE KING.) Off with their heads!
(TO THE AUDIENCE.) Off with their heads!
KING: But my dear, you really mustn't lose your temper.
QUEEN: Off with their heads!

(AS THE COMMOTION AND PROCESSION NOISES DIE OUT AND THE OTHERS LEAVE, THE MAD HATTER APPEARS AND BEGINS TO DECLAIM VERY DRAMATICALLY.)

HATTER: Oh, time! Where are you? Who is time and what is he? (TO SOMEONE IN THE AUDIENCE.) Do you have the time? Do you? Do you? (TO NARRATOR.) Do YOU? (EVIDENTLY THEY DO NOT HAVE THE TIME, OR ELSE THE ANSWERS MAKE NO SENSE TO HIM.) It's today, you say? Impossible! Couldn't be! (GROWS VERY EXCITED.) Never! Never! Never! Nevermore! (HE IS NOW ALMOST PROSTRATE FROM HIS EMOTIONAL EFFORTS AND HE LIES SOBBING ON

THE FLOOR.)

(AT THIS POINT THE MARCH HARE ENTERS; HE IS LOOKING FOR THE HATTER.)

HARE: There you are! Come along. You'll be late.
HATTER: (FROM THE FLOOR.) I will?
HARE: It's tea time.
HATTER: (RELIEVED.) It is? (TO AUDIENCE.) There. You see? It's tea time. (TO HARE.) How do you know?
HARE: (WITH A LAUGH.) What other time could it be?
HATTER: You're right, of course. Shall we go?
HARE: Of course we shall.
HATTER: We are.
HARE: We were.
HATTER: We will be. (BOTH LAUGH.)
HARE: Tea time!
HATTER: Tea for you.
HARE: Tea for me. Tea for you.
HATTER: Tea for we!

(THEY LAUGH AND EXIT. TWEEDELDUM AND TWEEDELDEE ARE HEARD ARGUING, ACCOMPANIED BY MUCH NOISE AND CLATTER.)

DUM: I don't think it's going to rain. Nohow.
DEE: Contrariwise. It is going to rain.
DUM: Nohow. It never rains.
DEE: Contrariwise. It always rains.
DUM: Nohow!
DEE: Contrariwise!
DUM: Nohow!
DEE: Contrariwise!
DUM: Nohow!
DEE: Contrariwise!

(THEY CONTINUE ARGUING IN THIS WAY, UNTIL THEIR VOICES DIE OUT. THEN THE QUEEN ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY THE KING AND ALL AVAILABLE CHARACTERS, WHO ADD TO THE COMMOTION.)

QUEEN: Off with their heads! Off with their heads.
KING: But, my dear –
QUEEN: (POINTS TO OTHER CHARACTERS.) Off with their heads!
OTHERS: (RUNNING IN ALL DIRECTIONS, LAUGHING AND SCREAMING.) Oh, no! Help! No! No! Yes! Yes!
QUEEN: (GOES OFF, STILL FOLLOWED BY THE KING.) Off with their heads!

(EVERYONE IS GONE. FOR A BRIEF MOMENT EVERYTHING IS QUIET. FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE HOUSE THE VOICE OF THE WHITE RABBIT IS HEARD.)

RABBIT: (AS HE APPEARS.) Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I'm late! I'm late! (HE RUSHES ABOUT, FLUSTERED AND WORRIED. HE FOLLOWS A DEVIIOUS PATH, IN AND OUT OF CORNERS, EVENTUALLY UP AND DOWN ANY AVAILABLE STAIRS AND LEVELS.) Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! (CHECKS HIS POCKET WATCH.) Oh! Look at the time!
ALICE: (ENTERS A LITTLE BEHIND THE RABBIT, TRYING TO CATCH UP TO HIM AND ATTRACT HIS ATTENTION.) Sir! Mr. Rabbit! (SHE FINDS THE PATH DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW.) Wait! Please!
RABBIT: Oh, the Queen! The Queen! The Queen will be angry if I'm late!
ALICE: Wait! Mr. Rabbit! Please!
RABBIT: Oh, my ears and whiskers, how late it is! Oh, my dear! I'm so late!
ALICE: (SLIPPING AND STUMBLING AS SHE TRIES TO FOLLOW HIM.) Please stop going so fast. I only want to ask you a question. Mr. Rabbit!
RABBIT: The Queen will have my head for this! I've never been this late before! Oh, my ears and whiskers! (HE HAS BEEN HURRYING IN CIRCLES, AND ALICE ALMOST CATCHES UP WITH HIM, BUT HE DASHES OFF.) I'll be late! I'll be late! No time to waste. Hurry. Hurry. No time to waste. Not a moment to lose.
ALICE: Wait!
RABBIT: (AS HE EXITS, HE DROPS HIS GLOVES.) Not a

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moment to lose!

ALICE: You dropped your gloves! Mr. Rabbit! You dropped your gloves! Mr. Rabbit! Oh, he's gone. (HANDS THE GLOVES TO THE NARRATOR AND THEN SHE LOOKS AROUND.) And where am I? Just a moment ago I was sitting by the riverbank with my sister. She was reading a book, and I felt very sleepy. I started to close my eyes, and then – and then I saw the rabbit. He was running through the grass, which is what you'd expect a rabbit to do. Except that this rabbit wore a coat and carried a watch! (TO AUDIENCE.) What would you do if you saw a rabbit with a watch? I decided to follow him. So I did. At least I think I did. Maybe I'm dreaming. Maybe I'm still on the riverbank with my sister. If I'm not, I don't know where I am. Maybe I'm not me at all. Maybe I'm not Alice. But if I'm not Alice, then who am I? And how could I follow a rabbit? Rabbits are small, aren't they? At least, I thought they were. Maybe he's an unusually large rabbit. Or maybe I'm smaller. But how did I grow smaller, and how did he grow larger? It's very confusing. I'd better find a way home. This is the strangest forest I've ever seen. It's so quiet.

VOICES: (OFF, SCREAMING, LAUGHING.) It's so quiet.

(SILENCE.)

ALICE: What was that? Someone must be listening to me. Hello? Is someone there? Where are you? Yoo-hoo!

VOICES: (OFF, MOCKING.) Yoo-hoo! Yoo-hoo!

QUEEN: (OFF.) Off with their heads!

VOICES: (WILD LAUGHTER.)

ALICE: I wonder why they're laughing.

VOICES: (WILD LAUGHTER CONTINUES.)

ALICE: I'm going to find a way home.

(AS SHE STARTS TO GO STRANGE LIGHTS GLOW AND MYSTERIOUS MUSIC PLAYS. SOME OF THE CHARACTERS APPEAR FOR BRIEF MOMENTS, AND THEY AD LIB AS THEY DO SO. THE HARE AND HATTER APPEAR, ARGUING PLEASANTLY WITH EACH OTHER.)

HATTER: You said it was tea time.
HARE: It is.
HATTER: Where's the tea?
HARE: Not here.
HATTER: Where?
HARE: There.
HATTER: There where?
HARE: There where there.
HATTER: Where?
HARE: Over there.
HATTER: Well, why didn't you say so?

(THEY LAUGH AND EXIT.)

ALICE: (TRYING TO ATTRACT THEIR ATTENTION
BEFORE THEY DISAPPEAR.) Excuse me, but could
you tell me – (BUT THEY ARE GONE.) Oh, dear.
They didn't hear me. I wonder if –
NARRATOR: (TO ALICE.) Pssst! Look! (POINTS TO
CHESHIRE-CAT, WHO HAS SUDDENLY
APPEARED.)

– END OF E-MAIL SEGMENT –

THERE ARE 61 TOTAL PAGES IN THE
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