

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

By Lewis Carroll

Adapted by Jason Richards

Rich Theatre KIDS! Spring 2024

Scene 1: Her Mind Wanders

Lights up. Alice lounges by the bank of a stream, bored. Her older sister reads a book next to her.

ALICE

(sighs) It's so hot today. *(glances at her sister's book)* Seriously, sis—your book has no pictures, no conversations. How do you read that?

Her sister responds without looking up from the book.

SISTER

Not all books have pictures, Alice. Eventually, you have to grow up.

While her sister rambles on, Alice lays her head down. Her eyes are heavy.

SISTER

Sadly, they don't assign graphic novels in my school. Well, this isn't for school...I'm reading this 'cause I want to. And nothing against graphic novels. You just don't get the same level of emotional detail. You know? When you get older, your tastes change.

Then suddenly, a White Rabbit rushes by wearing a suit coat and vest.

WHITE RABBIT

I'm late. I'm late!

Intrigued, Alice gets up. The rabbit stops and checks a watch from its waistcoat pocket.

WHITE RABBIT

I'm late, I'm late, I'm late! *(runs off)*

SISTER

(to Alice, still without looking) Don't run off too far, Alice. Remember we've got dinner plans.

Alice ignores her advice and chases the Rabbit, stopping at the rabbit hole where it disappeared. She debates whether to jump into it or not.

ALICE

A rabbit hole. *(considers)* Sure, why not!

She takes the plunge (possibly offstage). Initially, she yells as she falls.

Scene 2: The Rabbit Hole

As she falls down the seemingly endless hole, she passes strange things—cupboards, bookshelves, maps, and pictures (actors in black can pass these in front of and behind her), and her panic gives way to curiosity.

ALICE

How many miles have I fallen? I must be near the center of the earth by now!

Finally, she lands. She picks herself up and dusts herself off.

ALICE

That wasn't so bad! *(looks up)* But how am I ever going to get back up?

The White Rabbit passes through again, still checking his watch as he goes.

WHITE RABBIT

I'm so late! *(exits through a small door).*

Alice chases after it but finds only locked doors.

ALICE

All locked up. How am I supposed get out of here?

She notices a three-legged table with a bottle and a tiny golden key. She picks up the key.

ALICE

Maybe if I...

Attempts to use the key on the doors, but it doesn't fit. Finally, she finds a small, distinct-looking door behind a curtain and tries it. It opens. She peers through.

ALICE

A garden. It's beautiful! *(tries to fit through)* But I...can't...fit...through! *(gives up and cries; then)* Alice, you quit crying this instant! *(pauses...then cries more)*

While catching her breath between sobs, she notices the bottle on the table. She wipes her eyes, takes it, and reads its label.

ALICE

"Drink me." I am a little thirsty. Wait—what if it's poison? *(reads further; then, convinced, takes a sip)* Mmmm. Pretty good! *(finishes the bottle)*

Suddenly (with the help of lighting effects, etc.), she shrinks. Next to her, the distinctive-looking door is now the right size. Excited, she goes to the door but realizes she forgot the key.

ALICE

Oh come on... *(looks up to the top of the table, now way out of her reach)* I left the key!

She looks up at the table, wondering how she'll ever get to the key. She looks at herself and makes a startling realization.

ALICE

And I'm still shrinking! *(finds a piece of cake, takes it, reads its label)* Hmm. "Eat me?" *(thinks)* Well, I'll either grow back to my normal size or shrink even smaller. Then I could slip under the door! *(eats the cake)*

She shrinks more (indicated by a dramatic shift in lighting) and finds herself in a pool of her own tears (which could be represented by blue silks).

ALICE

Smaller, it is! *(seeing the water)* What? Now I wish I wouldn't have cried so much.

The water washes her under the door (and offstage). One by one, other animals drift by: a Dodo, a Parrot, a Mouse, and a Crab.

Scene 3: The Congressional Race

The damp and uncomfortable creatures (who floated by in the last scene) gather on the shore.

PARROT

Look at my feathers! They're soaked!

DODO

Mine, too. I hadn't planned on a swim when I got up this morning.

MOUSE

Where did all this sea-water come from?

Alice enters, wringing out her dress. She takes her place on the shore.

ALICE

I think I might be responsible for it.

PARROT

(angry) You! I'm gonna—

CRAB

Hold on—I think it's kind of nice.

PARROT

How will we dry out, then?

CRAB

I'd prefer not to dry out.

MOUSE

I know a way. *(calling out)* Sit down, all of you, and listen to me!

The others sit down.

DODO

We're seated. What do you have to say?

MOUSE

(pulls out a scroll) This is the driest thing I've got. *(reads)* "A loss from an activity of a subsidiary during a consolidated return year is includible in the computation of consolidated taxable income only to the extent that the loss does not exceed the amount for which the parent is at risk..."

PARROT

Stop! Please...I can't take any more!

DODO

(rising, clears throat) I move that the meeting adjourn for the immediate adoption of more energetic remedies.

CRAB

Speak English! I don't know the meaning of half those long words.

DODO

Let's dry off in a different way.

PARROT

I'll second that!

The Mouse rolls up his scroll, grumbling.

MOUSE

Why do I even carry this old thing around?

DODO

The best way to get us dry would be a Congressional Race.

ALICE

What is a Congressional Race?

DODO

It's a... Well... The best way to explain it is to do it.

The Dodo marks out a race-course. (The speech can be altered to fit the course.)

DODO

Let's see... We start here, and go through here... Then over this...around this way... And finish here. All in favor?

ALL

Aye!

DODO

All opposed?

ALL
Nay!

DODO
Clearly, the ayes have it...Go!

The Dodo starts—gaining a huge lead because nobody else was ready...or set. The rest of the field therefore takes off after the Dodo, and they all complete the lap.

DODO
And...that's the race.

ALICE
But who has won?

DODO
Everybody has won.

PARROT
Yay! I won. I won!

CRAB
And now...prizes!

DODO
Of course—prizes. *(to Alice)* Young lady?

ALICE
(not following) Yes?

CRAB
(whispers to Alice) You're supposed to give out the prizes.

ALICE
Me?! But I...

Alice does not know what to do. Then she gets an idea, and fishes in her pocket. She takes out a tin of mints and gives one to each of them, which they joyously receive. However, she is now out of mints.

PARROT
(to Alice) Where's your prize?

ALICE
My prize?

PARROT
Yes, your prize. You won, too.

CRAB
You sure did!

DODO
What else have you got in your pockets?

ALICE
(fishes in her pocket) Just this hair clip.

DODO
Well then, hand it over.

They all gather around while the Dodo solemnly presents it to her.

DODO
We humbly offer you, as a token of our unmitigated esteem, this elegant hair clip!

CRAB
(to the Dodo) English!

DODO
Please accept this beautiful hair clip as your prize.

PARROT
Yes, please! Take the prize.

Alice takes the hair clip, and the others all cheer. She gives a quick bow and puts it back in her pocket.

PARROT
(to Alice) Speech! Speech!

Others join in, chanting "Speech! Speech! Speech!" But Alice is not prepared to give one.

MOUSE
I've got one. It's called, "Why I hate Cats and Dogs."

Whiskers said to a mouse
That he met in the house,
"Let us both go to court: I will prosecute you—

Come, I'll take no denial:
For we must have a trial;
Since really this morning I've nothing to do."

Said the mouse to the cat,
"Such a trial as that,
With no jury or judge, would be wasting our breath."

"I'll be judge, I'll be jury,"
Whiskers said in a hurry.
"I'll try the whole case and condemn you to—"

During the last stanza, the Mouse notices he no longer has Alice's attention. Instead of saying the last word ('death'), he calls her out.

MOUSE

Hey! (*offended*) You're not listening!

ALICE

I'm so sorry. That's kind of a long tale.

MOUSE

So my tail is long? (*looks at his own tail*) It is not!

ALICE

A knot! (*suddenly interested*) Ooh, can I help untie it?

MOUSE

Back off! You have no idea what you're doing.

ALICE

Look, I didn't mean to offend you. It's just that I never...

The Mouse walks away with a harrumph (and exits).

ALICE

Oh... Please come back and finish your story! (*to the others, apologetic*) I guess my mind did wander a little bit. I was just thinking of Dinah!

PARROT

And who is Dinah, if I might be so bold?

ALICE

Dinah's our cat.

CRAB

Did you say, "cat"?

ALICE

It's a shame she's not here, really. She'd bring that mouse back here right away.

The others gasp.

PARROT

(*tries not to gag*) The thought of it! (*flaps away, exits*)

DODO

Horrendous. (*leaving as well*) I...have an appointment to make...somewhere. (*exits*)

Alice is left with just the crab, who gets in one more dig before leaving her alone.

CRAB

You should really be more sensitive to your audience. (*exits*)

ALICE

(flustered) Well you should really try not to be so...shellfish!

Alice stands alone, wondering what to do next. The White Rabbit trots slowly back in, looking for something it lost.

WHITE RABBIT

(muttering) Oh, the Duchess. The Duchess! Oh my dear paws! My fur and whiskers! She'll get me executed, as sure as ferrets are ferrets! *(sees Alice)* Hey—Mary Ann! What are you doing out here? Run home quickly and grab me a pair of gloves. And a fan! Hurry!

ALICE

(frightened) Um...yes sir. Right away, sir!

The White Rabbit exits.

ALICE

He thought I was his housemaid.

Lights fade as Alice exits.

Scene 4: The Rabbit's House

Lights up on the Rabbit's house. A sign says "W. RABBIT".

ALICE

I'm running errands for a rabbit. What's next?

She looks around for the items, and finds them on a table—along with a little bottle and a cake.

ALICE

Found them! *(takes the gloves and fan; considers the bottle)* But what is this? *(picks up the bottle and opens it)* You know...I don't mind if I do. *(drinks)* Ahh, that is good. *(looks at herself)* And—thankfully—I don't seem to be shrinking at all.

Quite the opposite happens—Alice grows and grows. (This could be accomplished with a shrinking Spotlight iris.)

ALICE

No! I'm huge!

Alice is now too large for the house. She sits behind a miniature cutout of a house, with her arms and legs coming out either side.

Bill (a lizard), Pat (a guinea pig), and the White Rabbit are played by puppets (or some other way). Pat is digging for potatoes in the garden outside the house when the Rabbit comes home. Bill works on the other side of the house. Both Pat and Bill are as yet oblivious to the enormous creature in the house.

WHITE RABBIT

(yelling) What's that in the window?

PAT

Just a moment, yer honor; digging for apples. *(looks up from digging)* What, now?

WHITE RABBIT

Tell me, Pat—what's that in the window?

Pat looks at the window.

PAT

Sure. It appears to be an arrum, yer honor.

WHITE RABBIT

An arm... You goose! Whoever saw an arm that big? It barely fits through the window!

PAT

True, yer honor. But it's an arrum nonetheless!

BILL

(looking up from his own work) What's that you say? An army?

WHITE RABBIT

Bill! Give us a hand here! Look in that window—what do you see?

BILL

It's a huge arm!

WHITE RABBIT

(to himself) It must be, then. *(to Bill)* Help Pat take it away—it's got no business where it is!

BILL

Yes, sir. I'll get my ladder.

Bill gets his ladder. Alice, meanwhile, is watching their activity with great interest.

PAT

Let's have Bill go up this side, and then down the chimney.

Bill, carrying the ladder, cringes at the suggestion of being sent down the chimney.

BILL

That might be fun... *Or...* Maybe we could try throwing things at it.

WHITE RABBIT

Great idea. Pat?

PAT

Sure, yer honor. *(starts handing out potatoes)* I've got potatoes. Let's throw them!

The three of them chuck potatoes at Alice, hitting her a few times.

ALICE

Ouch. Hey! *(very angry; in a deep voice)* You'd better not do that again!

The White Rabbit and his two companions, upon hearing her huge voice, stop cold. Then, Alice picks up a potato.

RABBIT, BILL, PAT

Run! *(they hastily retreat, exiting)*

ALICE

If I eat one of these, it's sure to make some change to my size. *(thinks)* It can't possibly make me larger, so... *(bites the potato)*

She immediately begins shrinking—her arms withdraw, and her legs follow. Then her head lowers behind the house, and the lights fade out.

Scene 5: Advice from a Caterpillar

Lights up on a giant mushroom. On top is a large blue caterpillar.

Alice enters. She stops in front of the caterpillar, curious.

CATERPILLAR

(calmly) Who are you?

ALICE

(startled) Honestly, I don't even know anymore. I've changed so many times today.

CATERPILLAR

You're going to need to explain yourself.

ALICE

I can't explain *myself*, sadly. Because I'm not myself, you see.

CATERPILLAR

Yeah...I don't see.

ALICE

It's all very confusing.

CATERPILLAR

Not really.

ALICE

Well, it's confusing to *me*.

CATERPILLAR

"You," you keep saying. Which brings me back to this: Who are *you*?