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Dramatic Publishing

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

Dramatized
by
CHARLOTTE B. CHORPENNING

Based on the book
by
LEWIS CARROLL



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(ALICE IN WONDERLAND)

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Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock,

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

A Play in Three Acts
For Eighteen Characters and Extras

CHARACTERS

WHITE RABBIT	MOCK TURTLE
ALICE	GRYPHON
CATERPILLAR	TWEEDLEDUM
DUCHESS	TWEEDLEDEE
COOK	KING OF HEARTS
FROG-FOOTMAN	KNAVE OF HEARTS
MARCH HARE	RED QUEENPH
MAD HATTER	WHITE QUEEN
DORMOUSE	EXECUTIONER

PLACE: Wonderland.

TIME: Wonderland is timeless.

NOTE: The play may be given on a curtained stage, or against any very simple background. Directions for the making of some of the necessary props are at the end of the play. Costumes should follow the Tenniel illustrations, and as often as possible the stage pictures should include the pictures in the book—e.g., the familiar one showing the HATTER and the MARCH HARE leaning elbows on the DORMOUSE, etc.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *A curtained stage, empty, except for a definite shaft of light coming obliquely from above, and striking the floor out of sight, offstage.*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *The WHITE RABBIT hurries on with a high leap, fanning himself rapidly. He stops, takes a watch from his waistcoat pocket, holds it in the shaft of light, and shakes his head.*

RABBIT. Oh, dear, oh, dear! The Duchess! I shall be late!
(A little scream from above startles the RABBIT.)

ALICE *(offstage, excited, not afraid)*. Oh! O-h-h-h-h! *(The RABBIT simply indicates ALICE's progress by looking up to the top of the beam of light, and then progressing lower as ALICE's lines follow.)*

RABBIT. Oh, my ears and whiskers! Something has fallen into my rabbit hole!

ALICE *(still offstage)*. Oh! O-h-h-h-h!

RABBIT. It sounds like a little girl.

ALICE *(still offstage)*. Down, down, down! I wonder where I'm falling to?

RABBIT. It talks. It *is* a little girl.

ALICE *(still offstage)*. After such a fall as this I shall think nothing of falling downstairs. I shouldn't say a word even if I fell off the top of a house.

RABBIT (*nodding*). Which is very likely true.

ALICE (*still offstage*). How dark it looks ahead!

RABBIT (*fanning himself violently*). Oh, my fur and forepaws! She's coming to the edge! What if she should break to bits when she falls off!

ALICE (*still offstage*). Hi-i-i-i-i! Here I go! (*There is a great thump, and then silence.*)

RABBIT (*listening, "frozen"*). I'm afraid to look. Little girls can't leap like rabbits. (*He starts to see what has happened, terrified of what he will, and fans himself furiously.*) Dear me! Oh, dear me—

(The RABBIT stops, amazed, as ALICE enters, brushing the dust from her apron daintily, perfectly placid, and full of interest.)

ALICE (*curtseying*). Is this the end?

RABBIT. The question is: Is there any such thing?

ALICE. Of course there is. Everything comes to an end sometime.

RABBIT. It might be a beginning, you know.

ALICE. Beginning of what?

RABBIT. How can I tell till I know more about you? The fall didn't hurt you at all?

ALICE. That it didn't. And it's very curious, because it lasted a very long time.

RABBIT (*nodding to himself*). That's because you belong here.

ALICE. Where am I?

RABBIT. That all depends on what's going on inside you.

ALICE. I wish you wouldn't talk nonsense.

RABBIT. I wish you'd mind your manners.

ALICE. I didn't mean to be rude.

RABBIT. Then don't be. It doesn't work down here.

ALICE. I only asked: Where am I?

RABBIT. And I told you. You're where you belong. And that depends on what goes on inside of you.

ALICE. I don't know what you mean.

RABBIT. How do you suppose you got down my rabbit hole?

ALICE. I fell. I was sitting by my sister on the river bank and I saw you run by. You were talking to yourself! And then you took a watch out of your pocket and looked at it, and that made me so curious I ran after you. And when you popped down a rabbit hole, I just popped down after you.

RABBIT. And you entirely forgot that little girls can't go down rabbit holes?

ALICE. Why, yes. I just felt inside of me that I *had* to see what you were doing.

RABBIT. Exactly. And so here you are. And you never once stopped to think how in the world you were going to get out again.

ALICE (*alarmed*). Oh, dear—I think I'll just go back, please. Back where I came from.

RABBIT. It's one thing to think so and another to do it.

ALICE. I wish you wouldn't contradict me all the time!

RABBIT. Oh, very well! Go right ahead and fall up again.

ALICE. You don't fall up. You climb. (*The RABBIT fans himself, tapping his foot and smiling at ALICE significantly.*) Where I fell off—it went up like a wall. Suppose I couldn't climb it?

RABBIT. I am supposing it.

ALICE. It's a little frightening. Oh, Rabbit, please, I want to go back!

RABBIT. It's no use whatever to want that.

ALICE. Why not?

RABBIT. Every hour is a one-way road. It will take you wherever you choose, but it will never take you back again.

ALICE. I want to see the sky! I want to see my kitten. (*The RABBIT fans himself faster, smiling.*) Isn't there any way to get out of here?

RABBIT. Dozens of ways. (*He recites.*)

There's a way for me
And a way for you.
And one for Johnny
And one for Sue.
But you can't go back
And you walk alone,
For every Jack
Has a way of his own.

Now, your way is through the garden where the trial is held.

ALICE. How can I get there?

RABBIT. You can't.

ALICE. You're very confusing, I'm sure. First, you say I must go through it—and then you say I can't.

RABBIT. I didn't say that. I said you couldn't go *to* it.

ALICE. Then how am I to go through it? Answer that!

RABBIT. When you belong in the garden it will come to you.

ALICE. I never saw a garden move.

RABBIT. You never saw much and that's a fact. Oh, my whiskers! The Duchess! The Duchess! (*The RABBIT leaps off, watch in hand. ALICE races after him.*)

ALICE. Wait! Please! Rabbit! White Rabbit! Wait, I tell you!

(As ALICE disappears, a CATERPILLAR enters, pushing a mushroom ahead of him. It may be in three dimensions, or merely a cutout. It is large enough for him to lean on or to climb onto, which he presently does.)

CATERPILLAR. What a rumpus! Can I never find a place for a quiet smoke?

(The RABBIT re-enters, U, in great haste. ALICE's VOICE continues offstage, at first pleading, then preemptory.)

ALICE (*offstage*). Rabbit! R-a-a-bbit! Ra-a-a-a-a-ab-bit!

CATERPILLAR. Someone's calling you. Can't you make her keep still? It puts me out of sorts.

RABBIT. You talk to her, won't you? I can't wait.

CATERPILLAR. What about?

RABBIT. About her garden. Tell her it will never come to her till she learns to keep her temper.

ALICE (*offstage, in fury*). Rabbit! You!

CATERPILLAR. Such a temper! It makes me feel contrary. You'd better wait and tell her yourself!

RABBIT. It would make me late. I promised the Duchess to speak a piece at her party. I'm to speak, "How Doth the Little." (*The RABBIT poses and speaks with elocutionary airs and graces, his white-gloved hands folded*

over his stomach, his white-spatted feet turned at a precise angle.)

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every fragrant flower.

Beautiful, isn't it?

CATERPILLAR. If you like it. It makes me feel contrary.

ALICE (*offstage*). You, Rabbit! White Rabbit!

RABBIT (*scurrying off*). You tell her about her temper.
(*The RABBIT leaves the stage.*)

CATERPILLAR (*calling after him*). I will if she makes me feel friendly. If she makes me feel contrary, I'll *be* contrary. I won't tell her a single thing.

(*ALICE enters.*)

ALICE. I declare, it's too bad for him, that it is—Oh-h-h
...(*She stops, looking at the CATERPILLAR, curiously.*)

CATERPILLAR. Who are you?

ALICE. I hardly know, sir. At least, I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have turned into somebody else.

CATERPILLAR. What do you mean? Explain yourself.

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

CATERPILLAR. I don't see.

ALICE. Well, when I got up this morning I was just Alice. But a little while ago I was the size of a rabbit. And now I'm the size of a mushroom. Being so many sizes in a day is confusing.

CATERPILLAR. It isn't.

ALICE. Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet. But someday you'll turn into a chrysalis, and after that into a butterfly. You'll feel a little queer then, won't you?

CATERPILLAR. Not a bit.

ALICE. Well, it feels queer to me. As if I were somebody stupid.

CATERPILLAR. You are.

ALICE. That I'm not! I'm the head of my class. At least, I was. I'll try if I know the things I used to know. Four times five is twelve—

CATERPILLAR. Wrong.

ALICE. I'll try geography. London is the capital of Paris—That's not right, I'm certain.

CATERPILLAR. Try some poetry.

ALICE. I'll recite "How Doth the Little." (*She folds her hands, clears her throat, and recites, very proud and proper.*)

How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And pour the waters of the Nile
On every fragrant scale.

(*She stops, embarrassed, apologetic.*) *Some of the words have got altered.*

CATERPILLAR. It's wrong from beginning to end.

ALICE. You see, sir, I have changed a great deal.

CATERPILLAR. You haven't.

ALICE. Oh, it's no use talking to you! I want to find the garden, where the trial is. The things you say are of no use to me at all.

CATERPILLAR. They are.

ALICE. You make such very short and rude remarks.

CATERPILLAR. I don't.

ALICE. If you're going to contradict every single thing I say—

CATERPILLAR. I'm not.

ALICE. Well, you have been doing, you can't deny that!

CATERPILLAR. I can. (*ALICE stamps her foot, tosses her head, and starts away.*) Come back. I've something important to say. (*ALICE comes back, after a struggle with herself.*) Keep your temper.

ALICE. Is that all?

CATERPILLAR. No! (*He climbs down and pushes his mushroom offstage.*)

ALICE. What else, sir?

CATERPILLAR. Saying it is one thing and doing it another.

ALICE. Keeping my temper, you mean. Well, I'll do my best, sir. I'm usually very polite. But things are so queer down here. What shall I do next?

CATERPILLAR. Ask the Duchess. Knock on her door.

ALICE. There isn't any door.

CATERPILLAR (*disappearing offstage*). There is.

ALICE. Well! That's not very civil of him!

(As ALICE flounces to C, she stops to stare at the DUCHESS' house, which has entered during the last speeches. At the door stands a FOOTMAN with the face of a FROG. ALICE smooths out her apron and her hair, speaking softly to herself.)

ALICE. That must be the Duchess' house—now, I'll keep my temper. No matter what happens, I'll keep my temper. (*ALICE approaches timidly, and as the FROG pays*

no attention to her, she knocks. The FROG is still staring up and ahead.)

FROG. There's no sort of use in knocking. I'm on the same side of the door as you are.

ALICE. Please, then, how am I to get in?

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

ALICE (*holding her temper with an effort*). I'd like to ask the Duchess the way to the garden. (*There is a sneezing within.*)

FROG. They're making such a noise in there, nobody'd hear you.

ALICE. But what am I to do?

FROG. Anything you like.

ALICE (*losing her temper*). There's no use talking to you! I'll just go in myself, that I will!

(ALICE jerks the door open, and a large plate comes skimming out, followed by a pillow. Within is terrific sneezing. The COOK strides out, a pot of soup in one hand and a huge pepper-pot, which she is shaking in all directions, in the other. The FROG sneezes with every move of her arm. ALICE sneezes frantically.)

ALICE. There's certainly—too much—pepper—in that soup!

COOK. Too much? Too little! Taste! (*The COOK thrusts a spoonful at ALICE, who emits a perfect volley of sneezes as a result.*)

(The DUCHESS storms out, singing over all the sneezing, which is added to by the baby she carries and spansks in rhythm.)

DUCHESS (*in a singsong voice*).

Speak roughly to your little boy,
And beat him when he sneezes;
He only does it to annoy,
Because he knows it teases.

Be quiet, pig!

ALICE. You shouldn't call your baby names.

DUCHESS. If everybody minded his own business the world would go 'round a lot faster than it does.

I speak severely to my boy,
I beat him when he sneezes.
For he can thoroughly enjoy
The pepper when he pleases.

(The COOK begins throwing vegetables out of her pot at the DUCHESS, who is quite unconcerned when they hit her and the baby.)

ALICE. Please! Mind what you're doing!

DUCHESS (*tossing ALICE the baby*). Here...you may nurse it if you like. I've got to get ready to play croquet with the Queen in the garden. *(She turns at the door.)* Bring in the soup. The house will be going any minute! *(As the DUCHESS speaks, the house starts moving. The COOK snatches up her pot and dashes into the house.)*

COOK (*to the FROG*). Tidy up, and catch us! *(The FROG leaps about, picking up the vegetables, plate, etc.)*

ALICE (*as the FROG works*). She said "in the garden." Will you please tell me—

FROG. There's no sort of use asking me. I'm not in the mood to talk about gardens.

ALICE. I must ask someone. What sort of people live around here?

FROG. To the right, lives a Hatter. To the left, lives a March Hare. Visit either you like. They're both mad.

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

FROG. You can't help it. We're all mad here. (*He leaps away, but turns back.*) Give me the pig!

ALICE. You shouldn't call the baby "pig."

FROG. That's all you know. (*The FROG shakes the hood off the baby's face, disclosing a little pig, ears, snout, and all. He leaps away, the pig's face over his shoulder.*)

ALICE. Which shall I visit, I wonder? I hope they're not quite raving mad.

(The MARCH HARE hurries in. ALICE backs away, watching anxiously.)

HARE. Here's a place, clean as clean. Not a single crumb.

(The HATTER is appearing.)

HATTER. Help me with the table. (*The HARE and HATTER run offstage.*)

ALICE. They didn't seem to see me. I'm going to be polite this time, no matter what they say. Because I must find out how to get into the garden. Because, of course, The Rabbit was talking nonsense. A garden couldn't come to me.

(The HARE and the HATTER enter with the table. During the following they bring in five chairs: one armchair for the head of the table, three small ones for the side, facing the audience, and one for the foot. The move-

ments are so timed that all the speeches are said on-stage.)

HARE. Did you tell the Dormouse to bring the chairs?

HATTER. I couldn't find him.

HARE. He's asleep. I put him in the teapot.

HATTER. Then we'll have to carry him, teapot and all—or push him.

HARE. Be quick, or the tea will get cold.

HATTER. You'll have to help me with him.

(The HARE and HATTER bring in the teapot, large enough to hold the actor. It can be made from a small barrel. They have much trouble getting the DORMOUSE out. Their poking doesn't wake him at first; then he lifts a sleepy head out of the depths, stretches, and settles to sleep again. They take him together, but just as they get him drawn up to his full limp height, he slips down. He hangs over the side. The HARE lifts his arms. The HATTER leans into the pot to get his feet when he falls over the HATTER's back, pinning him into the teapot, etc. At last they get him out and lift or drag him into his seat at the table, all the time sound asleep. They pour the tea, the HATTER pouring and the HARE holding the cups. The tea is in a small container in the spout. They sit on either side of the DORMOUSE, resting their elbows on him and stirring their tea. ALICE approaches timidly.)

ALICE. If you please, will you tell me—

HARE and HATTER. No room! No room!