

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style
Adapted by Jo Strom Lane



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By
Jo Strom Lane

Adapted from

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
and
Through the Looking Glass
by Lewis Carroll

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

*Alyse's sister
Alyse
White Rabbit
*Tiny Alyse
Overgrown Alyse (non-speaking)
Caterpillar
*Fish Footman
*Frog Footman
Duchess
*Cook
Cheshire Cat (voice-over)
Mad Hatter
March Hare
Dormouse
Tweedledee
Tweedledum
Humpty Dumpty
*Gardener 2
*Gardener 5
*Gardener 7
*Ten Soldiers
Queen of Hearts
King of Hearts
*Knave of Hearts
Hedgehogs (non-speaking)
*Executioner
Gryphon
Mock Turtle
*Juror 1
Jurors 2-12 (non-speaking)

* Denotes characters with limited lines.

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Scene 1: Down the Rabbit Hole

(ALYSE and ALYSE'S SISTER sit DSR on the apron as if it is a riverbank. Grand drape closed. ALYSE'S SISTER is reading intently. ALYSE is fidgeting.)

ALYSE'S SISTER

(Reading from her book, which just happens to be Through the Looking-Glass, if one recognizes the text) "One thing was certain, that the white kitten had had nothing to do with it. It was the black kitten's fault entirely. For the white kitten had been having its face washed by the old cat for the last quarter of an hour (and bearing it pretty well, considering) so you see that it couldn't have had any hand in the mischief."

ALYSE

(Looking rather bored, overlapping her sister reading) And what is the use of a book without pictures or conversations? I wonder if I should make a daisy chain?

ALYSE'S SISTER

(As ALYSE speaks, ALYSE'S SISTER transitions to read the Jabberwocky poem, being read backwards) "YKCOWREBBAJ. sevot yhtils eht dna ,gillirb sawT' ebaw eht ni elbmig dna eryg diD ,sevogorob eht erew ysmim lla .ebargtuo shtar emom eht dnA"

(WHITE RABBIT, with pink eyes, runs by ALYSE as soon as Jabberwocky is being read. The shadow of Jabberwocky flies across the stage briefly as WHITE RABBIT hurries by, barely noticing it.)

WHITE RABBIT

(Taking watch out of waistcoat, looking at it) Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late! (Hurries off.)

(ALYSE notices WHITE RABBIT. She gets to her feet, runs across the stage after him, just in time to see him pop down a large rabbit-hole. ALYSE goes after him down the hole, offstage. ALYSE'S SISTER exits during transition, reading all the while. Grand drape opens to reveal Wonderland: steampunk style. Projected: Interior of a well, sides filled with cupboards, bookshelves, maps, pictures, jar labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE", etc.)

ALYSE (as a VOICE-OVER)

Oh my! Such a well! After such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs! How brave they'll all think me at home! I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time? I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards!

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(ALYSE enters and lands suddenly with a thump on a heap of sticks and dry leaves. She jumps to her feet in time to see WHITE RABBIT rushing off.)

WHITE RABBIT

Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting! *(Exits.)*

(Projected: Corridor with many doors and lamps. ALYSE notices she is in a corridor—Ames room. ALYSE tries several doors, all locked. She notices a little three-legged table, on which is a tiny golden key. She tries the key in the doors to find they are too small or the locks too large. Behind a curtain is a tiny door, in which the key fits. She sees a garden on the other side.)

ALYSE

It fits! *(Looks out door.)* It's the loveliest garden I ever saw, but I cannot even get my head through the doorway. And even if my head would go through, it would be of very little use without my shoulders.

(Returns to the table.) This bottle certainly was not here before. *(Sets down key, picks up bottle and tied around the neck on a paper label: "Drink Me.")* Drink me. *(Pause.)* No, I'll look first and see whether it's marked 'poison' or not. *(She looks. Decides it is okay. Then, drinks.)* What a curious feeling! *(ALYSE twists and turns offstage. TINY ALYSE enters in her place.)*

TINY ALYSE

I must be the right size for the door now. *(Goes to door, realizes she forgot the key, and goes back to table that is now too tall for her. Tries to climb up leg and can't. She sits down, cries, then pulls herself together. She notices a box under the table. Opens box, on which the words "Eat Me" are written.)* Well, I'll eat it and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key! *(Eats.)* Oh my! Curiouser and curiouser! *(Begins to grow again. Twists and turns off stage.)*

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Scene 2: The Pool of Tears

(Projected: ALYSE continues to grow to nine feet tall.)

ALYSE (as a VOICE-OVER)

Good-bye, feet! Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I'm sure I shan't be able! I shall be a great deal too far off to trouble myself about you.

(Projected: ALYSE picks up the little golden key and hurries off to the garden door. ALYSE cries and creates a pool of tears.)

ALYSE (as VOICE-OVER)

You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great girl like you, to go on crying in this way! Stop this moment, I tell you!

(Projected: She dries her tears.)

(Enter WHITE RABBIT splendidly dressed, with a pair of white kid gloves in one hand and a large fan in other.)

WHITE RABBIT

Oh! The Duchess, the Duchess! Oh! Won't she be savage if I've kept her waiting!

ALYSE (as VOICE-OVER)

If you please, sir—

(WHITE RABBIT drops the white kid gloves and the fan, and scurries away. ALYSE picks up fan and gloves, begins fanning herself. ALYSE begins to shrink again down to her regular size and pool fades away.)

ALYSE

(Enters the stage.) Dear, dear! How strange everything is today! And yesterday things went on just as usual. *(ALYSE looks down at her hands, and is surprised to see that she is regular size again.)* I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Ah, *THAT'S* the great puzzle! *(ALYSE stops fanning herself and sets down fan and gloves.)* That WAS a narrow escape! And now, for the garden!

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Scene 3: The Caterpillar

(ALYSE notices garden door is now gone. WHITE RABBIT re-enters looking for the fan and gloves, which are now missing, as is the table.)

WHITE RABBIT

The Duchess! Oh my fur and whiskers! She'll get me executed, as sure as ferrets are ferrets! Where can I have dropped them, I wonder?

(ALYSE helps WHITE RABBIT look for the fan and gloves.)

WHITE RABBIT

(Angrily) Mary Ann! Mary Ann! Fetch me my gloves this moment! *(He exits.)*

(ALYSE, frightened, runs after WHITE RABBIT, but does not exit.)

ALYSE

I'd better take him his fan and gloves--that is, if I can find them. *(Continues looking for fan and gloves when she comes upon a mushroom with a CATERPILLAR sitting on the top with its arms folded, quietly smoking a long hookah, and taking not the smallest notice of her or of anything else. They stare at each other in silence. CATERPILLAR takes the hookah out of its mouth and addresses ALYSE in a languid, sleepy voice.)*

CATERPILLAR

Who are you?

ALYSE

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 then.

CATERPILLAR

(Sternly) What do you mean by that? Explain yourself!

ALYSE

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

CATERPILLAR

I don't see.

ALYSE

I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.

CATERPILLAR

It isn't.

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ALYSE

Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet, but when you have to turn into a chrysalis — you will some day, you know — and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little peculiar, won't you?

CATERPILLAR

Not a bit.

ALYSE

Well, perhaps your feelings may be different, all I know is, it would feel very peculiar to me.

CATERPILLAR

(Contemptuously) You! Who are you?

ALYSE

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

CATERPILLAR

Why?

(Frustrated, ALYSE turns away to exit.)

CATERPILLAR

Come back! I've something important to say! *(With interest, ALYSE turns back.)*
Keep your temper.

ALYSE

Is that all? *(Swallowing down her anger.)*

CATERPILLAR

No. *(Continues to puff on the hookah. Unfolds arms and takes hookah out of its mouth.)* So you think you're changed, do you?

ALYSE

I'm afraid I am, sir. I can't remember things as I used — and I don't keep the same size for ten minutes together!

CATERPILLAR

What size do you want to be?

ALYSE

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

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CATERPILLAR

I don't know.

ALYSE

(To herself) I have never been so much contradicted in my life before, but I mustn't lose my temper.

CATERPILLAR

Are you content now?

ALYSE

Well, I should like to be a little larger, sir, if you wouldn't mind.

CATERPILLAR

(CATERPILLAR puts the hookah into its mouth and begins smoking again for a moment, yawning occasionally.) One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter.

ALYSE

One side of what? The other side of what?

CATERPILLAR

Of the mushroom.

(ALYSE takes a bit of each side of mushroom and looks at them. CATERPILLAR exits, mushroom and all.)

ALYSE

And now which is which? *(She nibbles a little of the mushroom in her right hand, twists as if growing. She nibbles a little of the mushroom in her left hand, twisting back.)* Come, 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 back to my right size: the next thing is, to get into that beautiful garden — how is that to be done, I wonder?

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Scene 4: Pig and Pepper

(Projection: Small house; or a doorway representing a house. Trees too.)

ALYSE

(Observing the door) Whoever lives there?

(Enter FISH FOOTMAN in livery, with powdered and curled wig. He knocks at the door that is opened by FROG FOOTMAN, dressed similarly. FISH FOOTMAN gives FROG FOOTMAN a great letter.)

FISH FOOTMAN

(Solemnly) For the Duchess. An invitation from the Queen to play croquet.

FROG FOOTMAN

(Solemnly) From the Queen. An invitation for the Duchess to play croquet.

(FISH FOOTMAN and FROG FOOTMAN bow low and both get curls entangled together. ALYSE laughs at them from behind a tree. FISH FOOTMAN exits. ALYSE knocks on the door.)

FROG FOOTMAN

There's no sort of use in knocking, they're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you.

(A constant howling and sneezing, and every now and then a great crash, as if a dish or kettle had been broken to pieces. ALYSE enters the kitchen door. The DUCHESS sits on a 3-legged stool, nursing a baby—disguising the fact it is actually a pig. The COOK stirs a large cauldron full of soup over a fire. Projection: CHESHIRE CAT sits on the hearth, grinning ear to ear. Neither COOK nor CHESHIRE CAT sneeze.)

ALYSE

There's certainly too much pepper in that soup! *(ALYSE and the DUCHESS sneeze. The pig baby sneezes and howls alternately. Pause.)* Please would you tell me why your cat grins like that?

DUCHESS

It's a Cheshire cat, and that's why. Pig!

ALYSE

(ALYSE jumps, but realizes it was addressed to the pig baby, and not to her. She continues with interest.) I didn't know that Cheshire cats always grinned; in fact, I didn't know that cats *could* grin.

DUCHESS

They all can, and most of 'em do.

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ALYSE

(Politely) I don't know of any that do.

DUCHESS

You don't know much, and that's a fact.

(COOK takes cauldron off of the fire and at once sets to work throwing everything within her reach at the DUCHESS and the pig baby—the fire-irons first; then follows a shower of saucepans, plates, and dishes. The DUCHESS takes no notice of them even when they hit her; and the baby howls so much already, that it is quite impossible to say whether the blows hurt it or not.)

ALYSE

Oh, *please* mind what you're doing!

DUCHESS

If everybody minded their own business, the world would go round a deal faster than it does.

ALYSE

Which would *not* be an advantage. Just think of what work it would make with the day and night! You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis —.

DUCHESS

Talking of axes, chop off her head! *(Gives pig baby to ALYSE.)* Here! You may nurse it a bit, if you like! I must go and get ready to play croquet with the Queen.

(DUCHESS exits with COOK who takes cauldron off. ALYSE takes baby who writhes and grunts.)

ALYSE

Don't grunt. That's not at all a proper way of expressing yourself. *(Baby grunts again.)* If you're going to turn into a pig, I'll have nothing more to do with you. *(Baby grunts loudly and turns into a pig. ALYSE reacts. ALYSE quickly crosses to let it scamper offstage.)* If it had grown up, it would have made a dreadfully ugly child: but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think.

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Scene 5: Cheshire Cat

(Projection: All while, the CHESHIRE CAT, with very long claws and a great many teeth is observing and grinning.)

ALYSE

(Timidly) Cheshire Cat. Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

CHESHIRE CAT

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

ALYSE

I don't much care where —

CHESHIRE CAT

Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

ALYSE

— so long as I get *somewhere*.

CHESHIRE CAT

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

ALYSE

What sort of people live about here?

CHESHIRE CAT

In that direction (*waving paw*), lives a Hatter: and in that direction, (*waving the other paw*), lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad.

ALYSE

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

CHESHIRE CAT

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

ALYSE

How do you know I'm mad?

CHESHIRE CAT

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

ALYSE

And how do you know that you're mad?

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CHESHIRE CAT

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

ALYSE

I suppose so.

CHESHIRE 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.

ALYSE

I call it purring, not growling.

CHESHIRE CAT

Call it what you like. (*Pause.*) Do you play croquet with the Queen today?

ALYSE

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

CHESHIRE CAT

You'll see me there.

(Projection: CHESHIRE CAT vanishes while speaking. ALYSE is not surprised as she gets used to peculiar things happening. CHESHIRE CAT reappears.)

CHESHIRE CAT

By-the-bye, what became of the baby? I'd nearly forgotten to ask.

ALYSE

It turned into a pig.

CHESHIRE CAT

I thought it would.

(Projection: CHESHIRE CAT vanishes again.)

ALYSE

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

(Projection: CHESHIRE CAT reappears in the tree.)

CHESHIRE CAT

Did you say pig, or fig?

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ALYSE

I said pig, and I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly:
you make one quite giddy.

CHESHIRE CAT

All right.

*(Projection: CHESHIRE CAT vanishes quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail,
and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.)*

ALYSE

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

(ALYSE travels on stage to the MAD HATTER's tea party at MARCH HARE's house.)

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Scene 6: A Mad Tea Party

(Projection: MARCH HARE's house—chimneys shaped like ears, roof thatched with fur, large.)

ALYSE

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

(A large table is set out under a tree in front of the house. MARCH HARE and MAD HATTER are having tea at it, crowded together at one corner. A DORMOUSE is sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two are using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head.)

ALYSE

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

MAD HATTER and DORMOUSE

(Seeing ALYSE, cries) No room! No room!

ALYSE

There's plenty of room! *(Sits down in large arm-chair at end of table)*

MARCH HARE

(Encouraging) Have some wine.

ALYSE

(Looking at table with nothing but tea) I don't see any wine.

MARCH HARE

There isn't any.

ALYSE

(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.

ALYSE

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

MAD HATTER

(Observing ALYSE since she approached the table) Your hair wants cutting.

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ALYSE

(Firmly) You should learn not to make personal remarks; it's very rude.

MAD HATTER

(Opens eyes very wide) Why is a raven like a writing desk?

ALYSE

(Thinking it is fun, to MAD HATTER) I believe I can guess that.

MARCH HARE

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

ALYSE

Exactly so.

MARCH HARE

Then you should say what you mean.

ALYSE

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

MAD 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"!

MARCH HARE

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

DORMOUSE

(As if talking in his sleep) You might just as well say that "I breathe when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe"!

MAD HATTER

It is the same thing with you.

(Long pause while ALYSE thinks and everyone drinks tea.)

MAD HATTER

What day of the month is it? *(Looking at pocket watch, occasionally holding it to his ear, shaking it, etc.)*

ALYSE

The fourth.

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MAD HATTER

Two days wrong! (*To MARCH HARE angrily.*) I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!

MARCH HARE

(*Meekly*) It was the best butter.

MAD HATTER

Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well. You shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife.

(*MARCH HARE takes the watch and looks at it gloomily, dips it into his cup of tea, and looks at it again.*)

MARCH HARE

It was the best butter, you know.

ALYSE

(*Looking over his shoulder with some curiosity*) What a funny watch! It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!

MAD HATTER

Why should it? Does your watch tell you what year it is?

ALYSE

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

MAD HATTER

Which is just the case with mine.

ALYSE

(*Puzzled, but polite*) I don't quite understand you.

MAD HATTER

The Dormouse is asleep again. (*Pouring a little hot tea upon its nose.*)

DORMOUSE

(*Shaking head impatiently, not opening eyes*) Of course, of course; just what I was going to remark myself.

MAD HATTER

Have you guessed the riddle yet? (*To ALYSE*)

ALYSE

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

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MAD HATTER

I haven't the slightest idea.

MARCH HARE

Nor I.

ALYSE

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

MAD HATTER

If you knew Time as well as I do, you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's him.

ALYSE

I don't know what you mean.

MAD HATTER

Of course you don't! *(Tosses head)* I dare say you never even spoke to Time!

ALYSE

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

MAD 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!

MARCH HARE

(Whispering to self) I only wish it was.

ALYSE

That would be grand, certainly, but then — I shouldn't be hungry for it, you know.

MAD HATTER

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

ALYSE

Is that the way you manage?

MAD HATTER

(Shaking head mournfully) Not I! We quarreled last March — just before he went mad, you know — *(pointing with his tea spoon at the MARCH HARE)* — it was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing *(singing)*:

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!

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How I wonder what you're at! (*end singing*)
You know the song, perhaps?

ALYSE

I've heard something like it.

MAD HATTER

It goes on, you know, in this way: — (*continues singing*)
"Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea-tray in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle — " (*end singing*)

DORMOUSE

(*Shakes himself, begins singing in its sleep*) Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle —

(*MARCH HARE pinches it to make it stop.*)

MAD 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!"

ALYSE

How dreadful!

MAD HATTER

(*Mournful tone*) And ever since that, he won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now.

ALYSE

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

MAD HATTER

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

ALYSE

Then you keep moving round, I suppose?

MAD HATTER

Exactly so, as the things get used up.

ALYSE

But what happens when you come to the beginning again?

MARCH HARE

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

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ALYSE

(Alarmed) I'm afraid I don't know one.

MAD HATTER and **MARCH HARE**

Then the Dormouse shall! Wake up, Dormouse! *(Pinching it on both sides at once. DORMOUSE slowly opens eyes.)*

DORMOUSE

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

MARCH HARE

Tell us a story!

ALYSE

Yes, please do!

MAD 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 —

ALYSE

What did they live on?

DORMOUSE

They lived on treacle.

ALYSE

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

DORMOUSE

So they were, very ill.

ALYSE

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

MARCH HARE

(To ALYSE) Take some more tea.

ALYSE

(Offended) I've had nothing yet, so I can't take more.

MAD HATTER

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

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ALYSE

Nobody asked your opinion.

MAD HATTER

Who's making personal remarks now?

ALYSE

(Helping herself to tea and bread and butter) Why did they live at the bottom of a well?

DORMOUSE

It was a treacle-well.

ALYSE

(Angrily) There's no such thing!

MAD HATTER and MARCH HARE

Shhh! Shhh!

DORMOUSE

(Sulkily) If you can't be civil, you'd better finish the story for yourself.

ALYSE

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 —

ALYSE

What did they draw?

DORMOUSE

Treacle.

MAD HATTER

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

(MAD HATTER moves on as he speaks; DORMOUSE follows him; MARCH HARE moves into DORMOUSE's place; ALYSE takes place of MARCH HARE who has upset the milk-jug into his place.)

ALYSE

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

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MAD HATTER

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

ALYSE

But they were in the well.

DORMOUSE

Of course they were — well in. They were learning to draw (*DORMOUSE yawning and rubbing its eyes, getting sleepy*) and they drew all manner of things — everything that begins with an M —

ALYSE

Why with an M?

MARCH HARE

Why not?

(ALYSE is silent. DORMOUSE is dozing, but wakes when MAD HATTER pinches him and continues talking.)

DORMOUSE

— 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?"

ALYSE

Really, now you ask me, I don't think —

MAD HATTER

Then you shouldn't talk.

(ALYSE gets up in disgust and walks off. DORMOUSE falls asleep and both the MAD HATTER and MARCH HARE do not notice her leave. ALYSE looks back to see them putting the DORMOUSE into the teapot.)

ALYSE

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

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

Scene 7: Tweedledum and Tweedledee

(ALYSE journeys until she comes to TWEEDLEDEE and TWEEDLEDUM. They are standing under a tree, each with an arm round the other's neck. One of them has "DUM" embroidered on his collar, and the other "DEE".)

TWEEDLEDUM

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

TWEEDLEDEE

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

ALYSE

I'm sure I'm very sorry.

TWEEDLEDUM

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

TWEEDLEDEE

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

ALYSE

(Trying to be polite) I was thinking, which is the best way to go. Would you tell me, please? *(Pointing to TWEEDLEDUM)* First boy!

TWEEDLEDUM

Nohow!

ALYSE

Next boy!

TWEEDLEDEE

Contrariwise!

TWEEDLEDUM

You've begun wrong! The first thing in a visit is to say "How d'ye do?" and shake hands!

(TWEEDLEDEE and TWEEDLEDUM give each other a hug, and hold out the two hands that are free, to shake hands with ALYSE, both at the same time. The next moment they all dance round in a ring, music playing as underscore from a nearby tree. Music stops and so do the dancers, out of breath, letting go of each other's hands.)

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

ALYSE

I hope you're not much tired?

TWEEDLEDUM

Nohow. And thank you very much for asking.

TWEEDLEDEE

So much obliged! You like poetry?

ALYSE

Ye-es, pretty well—some poetry.

TWEEDLEDEE

What shall I repeat to her?

TWEEDLEDUM

"Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

(Hears something like the puffing of a large steam-engine or a wild beast.)

ALYSE

Do you think it's going to rain?

TWEEDLEDUM

(Spreading a large umbrella over himself and TWEEDLEDEE) No, I don't think it is, at least—not under here. Nohow.

ALYSE

But it may rain outside?

TWEEDLEDEE

It may—if it chooses. We've no objection. Contrariwise.

(TWEEDLEDEE springs out from under the umbrella and seizes ALYSE by the wrist.)

TWEEDLEDEE

(Trembling) Do you see that? *(Pointing at a small white rattle lying under the tree.)*

ALYSE

(Examining rattle) It's only a rattle. Not a rattle-snake, you know. Only an old rattle—quite old and broken.

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

TWEEDLEDUM

I knew it was! (*Stamping wildly and grabbing his hair while TWEEDLEDEE sits under tree and hides under umbrella*)

ALYSE

You needn't be so angry about an old rattle.

TWEEDLEDUM

(*Almost screaming*) But it isn't old! It's new, I tell you—I bought it yesterday—my nice NEW RATTLE!

(*TWEEDLEDEE folds up umbrella, ready for battle.*)

TWEEDLEDUM

(*Calmer*) Of course you agree to have a battle?

TWEEDLEDEE

I suppose so, only she must help us to dress up, you know.

(*TWEEDLEDUM and TWEEDLEDEE wait as ALYSE dresses them in rugs, tablecloths, and other random battle-gear. A bolster goes around TWEEDLEDEE's neck.*)

TWEEDLEDEE

To keep my neck from being cut off. You know, it's one of the most serious things that can possibly happen to one in a battle—to get one's head cut off.

(*ALYSE coughs to cover her laugh. They are ready for battle.*)

TWEEDLEDUM

Do I look very pale?

ALYSE

Well—yes—a little.

TWEEDLEDUM

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

TWEEDLEDEE

And I've got a toothache! I'm far worse than you!

ALYSE

(*Trying to make peace*) Then you'd better not fight today.

TWEEDLEDUM

We must have a bit of a fight, but I don't care about going on long. What's the time now?

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

TWEEDLEDEE

(Looking at his watch) Half-past four.

TWEEDLEDUM

Let's fight 'til six, and then have dinner.

TWEEDLEDEE

(Sadly) Very well, and she can watch us.

ALYSE

And all about a rattle!

TWEEDLEDUM

I shouldn't have minded it so much, if it hadn't been a new one.

ALYSE

I wish the monstrous crow would come!

(Just then, the shadow of the Jabberwocky crosses the stage again.)

ALYSE

What a thick black cloud that is! And how fast it comes! Why, I do believe it's got wings!

TWEEDLEDUM

(With alarm) It's the crow! *(TWEEDLEDEE and TWEEDLEDUM exit quickly. ALYSE hides under the tree.)*

ALYSE

It can never get at me here. It's far too large to squeeze itself in among the trees. But I wish it wouldn't flap its wings so.

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

Scene 8: Humpty Dumpty

(Noticing HUMPTY DUMPTY being blown on stage. HUMPTY DUMPTY lands atop a wall as Jabberwocky image exits.)

ALYSE

Here's somebody being blown away! And how exactly like an egg he is!

HUMPTY DUMPTY

(After a long silence) It's very provoking, to be called an egg — very!

ALYSE

I said you looked like an egg, Sir. And some eggs are very pretty, you know.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

(Looking away) Some people, have no more sense than a baby!

ALYSE

(Softly to herself)

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall:

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

All the King's horses and all the King's men

Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty in his place again.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

(Not hearing her) Don't stand chattering to yourself like that, but tell me your name and your business.

ALYSE

My name is Alyse, but —

HUMPTY DUMPTY

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

ALYSE

Must a name mean something?

HUMPTY DUMPTY

(With a laugh) Of course it must. My name means the shape I am — and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.

ALYSE

Don't you think you'd be safer down on the ground? That wall is so very narrow!

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Of course I don't think so! Why, if ever I did fall off — which there's no chance of — but if I did fall the King has promised me — with his very own mouth — to — to —

ALYSE

To send all his horses and all his men.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

(HUMPTY DUMPTY grimaces and leans forward, nearly falling off the wall.)
Yes, all his horses and all his men. They'd pick me up again in a minute, they would! However, this conversation is going on a little too fast. Let's go back to the last remark but one.

ALYSE

I'm afraid I can't quite remember it.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

In that case we start afresh.

ALYSE

What a beautiful belt you've got on!

HUMPTY DUMPTY

It's a cravat, child, and a beautiful one, as you say. It's a present from the King and Queen. They gave it me, for an un-birthday present.

ALYSE

(Puzzled) What is an un-birthday present?

HUMPTY DUMPTY

A present given when it isn't your birthday, of course.

ALYSE

I like birthday presents best.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

(Crying aloud) You don't know what you're talking about!

ALYSE

You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir. Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called "Jabberwocky"?

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Let's hear it. I can explain all the poems that ever were invented — and a good many that haven't been invented just yet.

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

ALYSE

"Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

That's enough to begin with. There are plenty of hard words there. "Brillig" means four o'clock in the afternoon — the time when you begin broiling things for dinner.

ALYSE

That'll do very well. And "slithy"?

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Well, "slithy" means "lithe and slimy". "Lithe" is the same as "active".

ALYSE

I see it now. And what are "toves"?

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Well, "toves" are something like badgers — they're something like lizards — and they're something like corkscrews.

ALYSE

They must be very curious-looking creatures.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

They are that.

ALYSE

And what's to "gyre" and to "gimble"?

HUMPTY DUMPTY

To "gyre" is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To "gimble" is to make holes like a gimlet.

ALYSE

And "the wabe" is the grass-plot round a sundial, I suppose?

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Of course it is. It's called "wabe" you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it —

ALYSE

And a long way beyond it on each side.

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Exactly so. Well then, "mimsy" is "flimsy and miserable". And a "borogove" is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round — something like a live mop.

ALYSE

And then "mome raths"? (*Apologetically*) I'm afraid I'm giving you a great deal of trouble.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Well, a "rath" is a sort of green pig, but "mome" I'm not certain about. I think it's short for "from home" — meaning that they'd lost their way, you know.

ALYSE

And what does "outgrabe" mean?

HUMPTY DUMPTY

Well, "outgribing" is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle. Who's been repeating all that hard stuff to you?

ALYSE

I had some poetry repeated to me.

HUMPTY DUMPTY

As to poetry, you know. I can repeat poetry as well as other folk, if it comes to that —

ALYSE

Oh, it needn't come to that!

HUMPTY DUMPTY

That's all. (*Suddenly*) Good-bye.

ALYSE

(Surprised but feeling she should go) Good-bye, 'til we meet again! (ALYSE journeys farther across the stage. HUMPTY DUMPTY is removed in transition. A heavy crash is heard. SOLDIERS rush across the stage and exit in the direction of HUMPTY DUMPTY's exit. ALYSE notices a tree with a door.)

ALYSE

That's very curious! But everything's curious today. I think I may as well go in at once. (*ALYSE enters the door. Finds herself in a long hall, close to a glass table.*) Now, I'll manage better this time. (*Takes the little golden key, and unlocks the door that leads into the garden. She walks down the little passage and finds herself at last in the beautiful garden, among the bright flowerbeds and the cool fountains.*)

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

Scene 9: The Queen's Croquet-Ground

(Projection: Large rose-tree near entrance of garden, white roses growing.)

(GARDENER 2, GARDENER 5, and GARDENER 7 are busily painting them red. ALYSE crosses to watch card gardeners.)

GARDENER 2

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

GARDENER 5

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

GARDENER 7

That's right, Five! Always lay the blame on others!

GARDENER 5

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

GARDENER 2

What for?

GARDENER 7

That's none of your business, Two!

GARDENER 5

Yes, it is his business! And I'll tell him — it was for bringing the cook tulip-roots instead of onions.

GARDENER 7

(Flinging down his brush) Well, of all the unjust things —

(He sees ALYSE. All others see ALYSE and bow low.)

ALYSE

Would you tell me, why you are painting those roses?

(GARDENER 5 and GARDENER 7 say nothing and look at GARDENER 2.)

GARDENER 2

Why the fact is, you see, Miss, this here 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, you know. So you see, Miss, we're doing our best, before she comes, to —

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

GARDENER 5

(Looking across the garden, calls out) The Queen! The Queen!

(GARDENER 2, GARDENER 5, and GARDENER 7 throw themselves flat on their faces. ALYSE looks around. Enter TEN SOLDIERS shaped like the three gardeners, oblong and flat, with their hands and feet at the corners, carrying clubs; next COOK carrying tray of tarts and WHITE RABBIT talking in a hurried nervous manner, smiling at everything that is said, and goes by without noticing ALYSE; follows KNAVE OF HEARTS, carrying the King's crown on a crimson velvet cushion; and, last of all this grand procession, comes KING OF HEARTS and QUEEN OF HEARTS.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

(To KNAVE OF HEARTS) Who is this? *(KNAVE OF HEARTS bows and smiles in reply.)* Idiot! *(Tosses her head impatiently.)* What's your name, child?

ALYSE

(Politely) My name is Alyse, so please your Majesty. *(Aside)* Why, they're only a pack of cards, after all. I needn't be afraid of them!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

And who are these? *(Pointing to the three gardeners who were lying round the rose tree.)*

ALYSE

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

QUEEN OF HEARTS

(With fury) Off with her head! Off —

ALYSE

Nonsense!

(QUEEN OF HEARTS was silent. KING OF HEARTS lays hand on her arm.)

KING OF HEARTS

(Timidly) Consider, my dear: she is only a child!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

(Angrily to KNAVE OF HEARTS about GARDENERS) Turn them over! *(He does with one foot. She continues in a shrill, loud voice)* Get up! *(GARDENER 2, GARDENER 5, and GARDENER 7 instantly jump up, and begin bowing to KING OF HEARTS and QUEEN OF HEARTS.)*

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Leave off that! You make me giddy. *(Sees rose tree)* What have you been doing here?

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

GARDENER 2

(On one knee) May it please your Majesty, we were trying —

QUEEN OF HEARTS

I see! *(Examining roses)* Off with their heads!

(Procession moves on with three of the soldiers remaining behind to execute the unfortunate gardeners, who run to ALYSE for protection.)

ALYSE

You shan't be beheaded! *(Putting them into a large flowerpot that stood near. The three soldiers wander about for a minute or two, looking for them, and then quietly march off after the others.)*

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Are their heads off?!

SOLDIERS

Their heads are gone, if it please your Majesty!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

(To soldiers) That's right! *(To ALYSE)* Can you play croquet?

ALYSE

Yes.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Come on, then! *(ALYSE joins the procession, walking by WHITE RABBIT, wondering very much what would happen next.)*

WHITE RABBIT

It's — it's a very fine day!

ALYSE

Very. — Where's the Duchess?

WHITE RABBIT

(Low, hurried tone looking over shoulder, whispering to ALYSE) Hush! Hush!
She's under sentence of execution.

ALYSE

What for?

WHITE RABBIT

Did you say "What a pity!"?

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

ALYSE

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

WHITE RABBIT

She boxed the Queen's ears — (*ALYSE laughs. WHITE RABBIT whispers in frightened tone*) The Queen will hear you! You see, she came rather late, and the Queen said —

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Get to your places!

(People run in all directions, tumbling against each other, settling in shortly. The game begins. The balls are hedgehogs, mallets live flamingos, SOLDIERS make arches, and so on. ALYSE receives a flamingo mallet. As soon as ALYSE tries to swing, hedgehogs roll, and she laughs. She tries again, hedgehog unrolls and tries to crawl away. At the same time, SOLDIERS get up and walk to other parts of the ground. All players play at once, no taking turns, quarrelling, fighting for hedgehogs. QUEEN OF HEARTS stamping about shouting "Off with his head!" or "Off with her head!" about once a minute while ALYSE talks with CHESHIRE CAT.)

ALYSE

(To herself) They're dreadfully fond of beheading people here; the great wonder is, that there's any one left alive! *(Begins to look for escape. Projection: CHESHIRE CAT.)* It's the Cheshire Cat. Now I shall have somebody to talk to.

CHESHIRE CAT

How are you getting on?

ALYSE

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.

CHESHIRE CAT

How do you like the Queen?

ALYSE

Not at all, she's so extremely — (*ALYSE notices that QUEEN OF HEARTS is close behind her, listening*) — likely to win, that it's hardly worthwhile finishing the game.

(QUEEN OF HEARTS smiles and moves on.)

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

KING OF HEARTS

(To ALYSE) Who are you talking to?

ALYSE

It's a friend of mine — a Cheshire Cat. Allow me to introduce it.

KING OF HEARTS

I don't like the look of it at all. However, it may kiss my hand if it likes.

CHESHIRE CAT

I'd rather not.

KING OF HEARTS

Don't be impertinent, and don't look at me like that! (*Hiding behind ALYSE.*)

ALYSE

A cat may look at a king. I've read that in some book, but I don't remember where.

KING OF HEARTS

Well, it must be removed. (To QUEEN OF HEARTS) My dear! I wish you would have this cat removed!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

(Without looking) Off with his head!

KING OF HEARTS

I'll fetch the executioner myself. (*He exits. ALYSE follows to one side. He returns with EXECUTIONER, and all gather near CHESHIRE CAT.*)

(All are collected around CHESHIRE CAT. A dispute goes on among the EXECUTIONER, KING OF HEARTS, and QUEEN OF HEARTS, who are all talking at once. While chaos ensues, KNAVE OF HEARTS switches his crown tray for the COOK's tray of tarts and exits eating them, unnoticed by anyone. WHITE RABBIT's gloves and fan are in his back pocket, as well, as if stolen earlier. All quiet down, and look very uncomfortable. All three repeat their arguments to ALYSE, though, as they all speak at once, overlapping one another as noted //.)

EXECUTIONER

You can't cut off a head unless there was a body to cut it off from. // I have never had to do such a thing before, and I am not going to begin at my time of life.

KING OF HEARTS

Anything that had a head can be beheaded, // and that you aren't to talk nonsense.

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

QUEEN OF HEARTS

If something wasn't done about it in less than no time, then off with everyone's heads!

ALYSE

It belongs to the Duchess: you'd better ask her about it.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

She's in prison. (*To EXECUTIONER*) Fetch her here.

(EXECUTIONER exits as CHESHIRE CAT slowly fades away. EXECUTIONER returns with DUCHESS. EXECUTIONER and KING OF HEARTS wildly look for CHESHIRE CAT. DUCHESS sees ALYSE.)

DUCHESS

You can't think how glad I am to see you again, you dear old thing! (*Tucking her arm in ALYSE's. ALYSE is quiet, thinking.*) You're thinking about something, my dear. The moral of that is "Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!"

ALYSE

Somebody said, that it's done by everybody minding their own business!

DUCHESS

Ah, well! It means much the same thing, and the moral of that is — "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves."

ALYSE

How fond you are of finding morals in things!

DUCHESS

I quite agree with you. And the moral of that is — "Be what you would seem to be" — or if you'd like it put more simply — "Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise." (*Notices QUEEN OF HEARTS and trembles, speaking in a low, weak voice.*) A fine day, your Majesty!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Now, I give you fair warning (*Shouting, stamping on the ground*) Either you or your head must be off, and that in about half no time! Take your choice!

DUCHESS

I will be off. (*She exits hastily.*)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

(*To ALYSE*) Have you seen the Mock Turtle yet?

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

ALYSE

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

QUEEN OF HEARTS

It's the thing Mock Turtle Soup is made from. (*Orders her.*) Go on, then. He shall tell you his history! I must go back and see after some executions I have ordered.

(The other guests take advantage of QUEEN OF HEARTS' absence, and rest in the shade. The moment they see her, they hurry to stand. QUEEN OF HEARTS sees them resting and yells "Off with everyone's heads!" as she exits. KING OF HEARTS pauses after she exits and says, "You are all pardoned. Come, that's a good thing!" All exit quickly except ALYSE who looks to find the MOCK TURTLE with GRYPHON.)

(Projection: Seascape with rocky shore.)

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

Scene 10: The Mock Turtle

(MOCK TURTLE sits sad and lonely on a rock, sighing.)

ALYSE

(Seeing MOCK TURTLE and GRYPHON, approaching carefully) What is his sorrow?

GRYPHON

(As if he knew she was coming, leading ALYSE to MOCK TURTLE) This here young lady, she wants to know your history, she do.

MOCK TURTLE

I'll tell it her. Sit down, both of you, and don't speak a word 'til I've finished.

(ALYSE and GRYPHON sit down.)

MOCK TURTLE

Once, I was a real Turtle. When we were little, we went to school in the sea. The master was an old Turtle — we used to call him Tortoise.

ALYSE

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

MOCK TURTLE

(Angrily) We called him Tortoise because he taught us. I only took the regular course. Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with, and then the different branches of Arithmetic — Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision.

ALYSE

I never heard of “Uglification.” What is it?

GRYPHON

What! Never heard of uglifying! You know what to beautify is, I suppose?

ALYSE

Yes, it means — to — make — anything — prettier.

GRYPHON

Well, then, if you don't know what to uglify is, you are a simpleton.

ALYSE

(To MOCK TURTLE) What else had you to learn?

MOCK TURTLE

Well, there was Mystery, ancient and modern, with Seaography.

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

GRYPHON

I went to the Classics master. He was an old crab.

MOCK TURTLE

(Reminiscing) He taught Laughing and Grief.

ALYSE

And how many hours a day did you do lessons?

MOCK TURTLE

Ten hours the first day, nine the next, and so on.

ALYSE

What a curious plan!

GRYPHON

That's the reason they're called lessons, because they lessen from day to day.

ALYSE

Then the eleventh day must have been a holiday?

MOCK TURTLE

Of course it was.

WHITE RABBIT

(Entering with trumpet and scroll, wearing his white gloves.) The trial is beginning! The trial is beginning! *(Crossing the stage and exiting.)*

(All follow and exit. Transition to the trial.)

Scene 11: The Trial— Who Stole the Tarts?

(Projection: Courtroom.)

(KING OF HEARTS and QUEEN OF HEARTS seated on thrones. KING OF HEARTS wears his crown over a white judge's wig and spectacles, looking uncomfortable. Crowd assembles around them. KNAVE OF HEARTS stands before them in chains, SOLDIERS on each side to guard him. WHITE RABBIT, holding trumpet in one hand and scroll in other, stands next to KING OF HEARTS. Table CS on which is placed tray of tarts seen earlier. The jury box is filled with jurors of various characters seen earlier busily writing on slates throughout the entire trial.)

ALYSE

I wish they'd get the trial done, and hand round the refreshments! That's the judge because of his great wig. And that's the jury box. And those twelve creatures, I suppose they are the jurors. *(Whispering to GRYPHON)* What are they doing? They can't have anything to put down yet, before the trial's begun.

GRYPHON

(Whispering his reply) They're putting down their names, for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial.

ALYSE

(Loud) Stupid things!

WHITE RABBIT

Silence in the court!

(KING OF HEARTS looks around. JURORS write "Stupid things!" on their slates. One even asking his neighbor juror how to spell "stupid".)

KING OF HEARTS

Herald, read the accusation!

WHITE RABBIT

(Three blasts on trumpet, unrolls scroll, and reads...) 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!

KING OF HEARTS

(To jury) Consider your verdict.

WHITE RABBIT

(Hastily interrupting) Not yet, not yet! There's a great deal to come before that!

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

KING OF HEARTS

Call the first witness.

(WHITE RABBIT blows three blasts on trumpet.)

WHITE RABBIT

First witness!

(MAD HATTER crosses to jury box with teacup in one hand and piece of bread and butter in the other. MARCH HARE and DORMOUSE nearby.)

MAD HATTER

I beg pardon, your Majesty, for bringing these in, but I hadn't quite finished my tea when I was sent for.

KING OF HEARTS

You ought to have finished. When did you begin?

MAD HATTER

Fourteenth of March, I think it was.

MARCH HARE

Fifteenth.

DORMOUSE

Sixteenth.

KING OF HEARTS

(To jury) Write that down. (Jury writes down all three dates on their slates, add them up, and convert to shillings and pence.) Take off your hat!

MAD HATTER

It isn't mine.

KING OF HEARTS

Stolen!

MAD HATTER

I keep them to sell. I've none of my own. I'm a hatter.

(QUEEN OF HEARTS puts on her spectacles, and stares at MAD HATTER who turns pale and fidgets, until she speaks again.)

KING OF HEARTS

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

Alyse in Wonderland: steampunk style

Adapted by Jo Strom Lane

(MAD HATTER continues to be nervous. Takes a bite out of teacup instead of bread. ALYSE fidgets as she is starting to grow back to her normal size.)

DORMOUSE

I wish you wouldn't squeeze so. I can hardly breathe.

ALYSE

I can't help it. I'm growing.

DORMOUSE

You've no right to grow here.

ALYSE

Don't talk nonsense. You know you're growing too.

DORMOUSE

Yes, but I grow at a reasonable pace, not in that ridiculous fashion. (*DORMOUSE crosses to other side of the court.*)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Bring me the list of the singers in the last concert!

(MAD HATTER trembles at her voice.)

KING OF HEARTS

(Angrily) Give your evidence, or I'll have you executed, whether you're nervous or not.

MAD HATTER

(Trembling) I'm a poor man, your Majesty, — and I hadn't begun my tea—not above a week or so—and what with the bread-and-butter getting so thin—and the twinkling of the tea—

KING OF HEARTS

The twinkling of the what?

MAD HATTER

It began with the tea.

KING OF HEARTS

Of course twinkling begins with a T! Do you take me for a dunce? Go on!

MAD HATTER

I'm a poor man, and most things twinkled after that—only the March Hare said—

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MARCH HARE

(Interrupting) I didn't!

MAD HATTER

You did!

MARCH HARE

I deny it!

KING OF HEARTS

He denies it. Leave out that part.

MAD HATTER

Well, at any rate, the Dormouse said— (*DORMOUSE is fast asleep*) After that, I cut some more bread- and-butter—

JUROR 1

But what did the Dormouse say?

MAD HATTER

That I can't remember.

KING OF HEARTS

You *must* remember, or I'll have you executed.

(MAD HATTER drops teacup and bread, goes on one knee. SOLDIER brings QUEEN OF HEARTS list of singers previously requested. She looks over the list until she speaks again.)

MAD HATTER

I'm a poor man, your Majesty.

KING OF HEARTS

You're a very poor speaker. (*Pause*) If that's all you know about it, you may stand down.

MAD HATTER

I can't go no lower. I'm on the floor, as it is.

KING OF HEARTS

Then you may sit down.

MAD HATTER

I'd rather finish my tea. (*Nervously looking at QUEEN OF HEARTS.*)

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KING OF HEARTS

You may go.

(MAD HATTER exits.)

QUEEN OF HEARTS

—and just take his head off outside.

KING OF HEARTS

Call the next witness!

WHITE RABBIT

(Three trumpet blasts) Duchess's cook.

(COOK carries her pepper-box in her hand. People near the door begin sneezing all at once.)

KING OF HEARTS

Give your evidence.

COOK

Shan't.

(KING OF HEARTS consults the WHITE RABBIT.)

WHITE RABBIT

(In a low voice) Your Majesty must cross-examine this witness.

KING OF HEARTS

Well, if I must, I must. *(Folds arms and frowns at COOK)* What are tarts made of?

COOK

Pepper, mostly.

DORMOUSE

(In sleepy voice) Treacle.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Collar that Dormouse. Behead that Dormouse! Turn that Dormouse out of court! Suppress him! Pinch him! Off with his whiskers!

(Briefly, whole court is in confusion, getting DORMOUSE turned out. In confusion, COOK disappears.)

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KING OF HEARTS

Never mind! Call the next witness. (*To QUEEN OF HEARTS*) Really, my dear, you must cross-examine the next witness. It quite makes my forehead ache!

(*WHITE RABBIT fumbles over the list.*)

WHITE RABBIT

Alyse!

ALYSE

Here! (*Jumping up, tipping over the jury box, and everyone inside.*) Oh, I beg your pardon! (*Helping them up again, but putting some back upside down or backwards and so on.*)

KING OF HEARTS

The trial cannot proceed, until all the jurymen are back in their proper places—all. (*Looking hard at ALYSE who finally help all in their proper upright places, with slates and chalk in hand, hastily writing about the incident.*) What do you know about this business?

ALYSE

Nothing.

KING OF HEARTS

Nothing whatever?

ALYSE

Nothing whatever.

KING OF HEARTS

That's very important. (*Looks at jury.*)

WHITE RABBIT

(*Respectfully*) Unimportant, your Majesty means, of course.

KING OF HEARTS

Unimportant, of course, I meant. (*Various jurors write down “important” and “unimportant”.*) Silence! (*Opens book.*) Rule Forty-two. All persons more than a mile high to leave the court. (*Everybody looks at ALYSE.*)

ALYSE

Im not a mile high.

KING OF HEARTS

You are.

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QUEEN OF HEARTS

Nearly two miles high.

ALYSE

Well, I shan't go, at any rate. Besides, that's not a regular rule: you invented it just now.

KING OF HEARTS

It's the oldest rule in the book.

ALYSE

Then it ought to be Number One.

KING OF HEARTS

(Shutting his notebook hastily and speaking in low, trembling voice to jury)

Consider your verdict.

QUEEN OF HEARTS

No, no! Sentence first—verdict afterwards.

ALYSE

Stuff and nonsense! The idea of having the sentence first!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Hold your tongue!

ALYSE

I won't!

QUEEN OF HEARTS

Off with her head!

(Nobody moves.)

ALYSE

Who cares for you? You're nothing but a pack of cards!

(Whole pack of cards rise up into the air, flying down on ALYSE. ALYSE screams—half of fright, half of anger—and tries to beat them off. Flurry of activity with jury running out of the courtroom, QUEEN OF HEARTS yelling at everyone “Off with their heads!”, SOLDIERS trying to arrest anyone, others encircling the stage before they exit at various points, and general chaos, much like was seen during the croquet game. All happens while the projection fades and ALYSE’S SISTER is heard reading the Jabberwocky poem in the distance during the commotion as if it is a pleasant and normal children’s story. Grand drape closes. Transition back to riverbank.)

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ALYSE'S SISTER

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves Did gyre and gimble in the
wabe; All mimsy were the borogoves, And the mome raths
outgrabe. 'Beware the Jabberwock, my son! The jaws that bite,
the claws that catch! Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun The
frumious Bandersnatch!' He took his vorpal sword in hand: Long
time the manxome foe he sought — So rested he by the Tumtum
tree, And stood awhile in thought. And as in uffish thought he
stood, The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame, Came whiffing
through the tulgey wood, And burbled as it came! One,
two! One, two! And through and through The vorpal blade went
snicker-snack! He left it dead, and with its head He went
galumphing back. 'And hast thou slain the Jabberwock? Come to
my arms, my beamish boy! O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!' He
chortled in his joy. 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves Did gyre
and gimble in the wabe; All mimsy were the borogoves, And the
mome raths outgrabe.

Scene 12: Alyse back home

(ALYSE'S SISTER is reading on the riverbank. Notices ALYSE sleeping and wakes her gently.)

ALYSE'S SISTER

(Pauses from reading) Wake up, Alice dear! Why, what a long sleep you've had!

ALYSE

Oh, I've had such a curious dream!

ALYSE'S SISTER

It was a curious dream, dear, certainly. But now come get your tea. It's getting late. *(ALYSE'S SISTER exits.)*

(ALYSE goes to exit, but pauses onstage. Notices the remaining steampunk attire with curiosity, but acceptance of the unusual. Finds mushrooms still in her pockets. Smiles, takes a bite of each, and runs off stage toward her sister. One final passing by of the Jabberwocky as lights fade.)

END OF PLAY