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Dramatic Publishing

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

**Dramatized
by
William Glennon**



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(ALICE IN WONDERLAND)

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ALICE IN WONDERLAND

A Play in Two Acts
For 9-13 Actors

CHARACTERS

ALICE
WHITE RABBIT
THE MOUSE
FISH FOOTMAN
FROG FOOTMAN
THE DUCHESS
THE COOK
THE CHESHIRE CAT
MARCH HARE
DORMOUSE
THE HATTER
KING OF HEARTS
QUEEN OF HEARTS
KNAVE OF HEARTS
THE GRYPHON
MOCK TURTLE
TWO PLAYING CARDS

The production requires props, not scenery, and can be played against a neutral background or lighted eye.

TO THE PRODUCER:

Originally this script was written to be performed by eight actors as the "Wonderland Group" plus Alice. However, in the first production, I used thirteen, plus Alice. (One actor played the Mouse, the March Hare, and the Mock Turtle; Fish Footman and Frog Footman doubled as the Playing Cards during the croquet game; the Dormouse and the Gryphon were doubled. Further doubling is possible and in keeping with the original intent).

The actors should be numbered for the roll call in the opening and lines distributed as desired, with Number One more or less in charge. Group activity, however, is the basic idea—much like the *Commedia d'elle Arte*—a planned outline filled with spontaneous moments.

Our company carried a few props on with them, and found the others in the wings. Placards, for example, were carried. They were decorated with question marks, exclamation points, and patterns, to arouse curiosity. Later they doubled as the opening to the garden and the door to the kitchen. For the croquet game we used short sections of a picket fence as a "boundary" and the stools seen earlier were turned over so roses could be inserted in the holes drilled in the legs. The fence went on to make a witness box for the trial which also had small ladders instead of thrones for the King and Queen. We had a stylized stove in the kitchen scene and a coat rack big enough for the Cheshire Cat to curl up on, but mostly the "scenery" was sparse.

Our company wore tights and collared smocks to begin with. Midway through Act One nearly everyone was in full costume. Suggestions of the costume would be just fine, though. That approach goes along with the idea of spontaneity and inventiveness, whatever it takes to help Alice—and the audience—enjoy her "turn."

William Glennon

PRODUCTION NOTES

1. Two actors take the placards and use them to form the sides of the opening. Two others stand in back of these sides on stools and hold a third section over the top. The others put a small crate or stool nearby with the piece of cake and bottle on it and then they gather behind the opening. (One actor gets a mouth full of water—or a water gun—to squirt out as the fountain, while the others get roses or flowers to hold up when she mentions the word “garden”). The “shrinking” and “growing” effects are done by having the actors holding the placards close them in or open them up. This idea of “suggesting” the action should be incorporated throughout the performance if possible.

2. The actors set up a stove, a stool for the DUCHESS who carries on the “baby” (actually a toy pig) and also a coat rack large enough for the CHESHIRE CAT to rest on the top shelf. There should be a draw-curtain in front of the shelf for the CAT to draw and “disappear.”

3. The actors rush out and strike the kitchen scene. A long table on horses is brought on. The tablecloth appears to be part of the COOK’s costume, wrapped around her several times. It is unwhirled by the others and spread over the table. Others set the teapots, cups, saucers, and cakes, a large armchair and several stools lined up on the upstage side.

4. To strike the long table, two actors unseen underneath it walk it off so it appears to be moving by itself. The garden consists of a picket fence (masked in the back so that the CAT can pop up unseen prior to his entrance) and the stools upside-down with red roses inserted in holes drilled in the legs.

5. We made six hand puppets (all animals) which were held by three actors hidden behind a simply-constructed puppet theatre. The witness box was indicated by replacing the picket fence section as three sides of a square. The KING and QUEEN sat on small ladders.

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The ACTORS enter through the house as the lights dim. As they walk down the aisles, they are talking with each other about their predicament. Anxious to do "Alice in Wonderland," they have found they lack an Alice. They have all opted for the other parts it seems. The audience hears snatches of their exchanges.*

ACTOR. Imagine. Without the White Rabbit, yes. We could skip that part. The Mock Turtle, you bet. Cut that scene. But no Alice? Impossible.

ACTOR. Why didn't you agree to be Alice?

ACTOR. Because.

ACTOR. Because why?

ACTOR. Same reason as you. I like my own part.

ACTOR. Well, it's not "The Mad Hatter in Wonderland" or "The Queen of Hearts in Wonderland." It's "Alice in Wonderland." (*Etc.*)

ONE (*LEADER, now at front of house near apron*). Now, now, now. We've got a little stumbling block, true, but we've been in worse pickles.

TWO. Name one. (*ACTORS are now sitting on apron, leaning on it, standing on edge of stage, etc.*)

ONE. Well, let's see.

TWO. You can't do "Alice in Wonderland" without an Alice. So let's give up. (*ACTOR with highest number*

suddenly discovers the slit in curtain. He's curious and slips through.)

ONE. Perhaps someone's reconsidered. That's a possibility. Let's count off again.

TWO. We've counted off and counted off and counted off and we're still in the same pickle. It's not a possibility.

FIVE. Actually we're in a theatre.

SIX. Good place for a story.

TWO. We're in a pickle in a theatre and there isn't going to be a story. Face it.

ONE. Now, now. Let's hear it! Count off! I'll start things rolling. One! *(And he names the part he's going to play.)*

TWO *(unhappy)*. Two. *(And his part. The roll call continues until all the parts have been named with the exception of the ACTOR who went in back of curtain.)* See? We may as well pack up and go home. No Alice, and that's that.

SEVEN. No Wonderland.

EIGHT. Bother.

ONE. Aren't we missing a part?

TWO. Of course! Alice! How many times must you be told?

ONE. No, someone else...

(ACTOR returns from behind curtain. He is excited.)

ACTOR. Listen!

ONE. Oh, yes, there he is. And you're going to be...uh...

ACTOR. Listen. There's a girl. *(Giggles.)* A girl. Just behind this thing. *(Curtain.)* And she's sitting there doing nothing.

ONE. Nothing?

ACTOR. Well, daydreaming, maybe.

ONE. That sounds promising.

ACTOR. And she's young and pretty and just perfect for you-know-who. *(A murmur.)*

TWO. But she's not one of us.

ACTOR. Well, she could be, couldn't she?

TWO. But she won't know what to do.

ACTOR. That's never stopped you.

ONE. Now, now, now. Mustn't bicker.

ACTOR. Come on. See for yourself.

FIVE. We could help her, you know, along the way. We know what to do. Sort of.

ONE. She can certainly help us.

ACTOR. Let's give it a go! Shall we?

ONE. Well, I see no reason why we can't at least *look* at her.

FOUR. No reason at all. So let's look.

TWO. How do we get rid of this thing? *(Curtain.)*

ONE. Blow it away.

(ALL take in deep breaths and blow. The curtain rises. ALICE is seated center, daydreaming. They seem to like her. Quietly they tiptoe from the house to the stage, passing far right and left. As they move, ALICE speaks and ALL freeze.)

ALICE. What a lazy day. With nothing to do. Perhaps I should have followed my sister when she left. "Come along. Back to the house and I'll fix you some tea. Don't you want some tea, Alice?" *(ALL heads turn quickly to her. They are amazed.)* "Not yet, dear sister. I'm going to stay here a for a while. By the stream. In the sunshine. I'll have my tea later, thank you." *(She*

sighs. They look at each other, bright-eyed.) Oh, I do wish something unusual would happen. (ALL snort softly and move quietly to set up necessary props.)

Something very unusual.

ACTOR. Unusual!

ACTOR (*as they place stools around ALICE*). And fun.

ACTOR. Can't wait!

ONE. Ready?

ACTOR. Ready.

(ONE mounts a stool at UL, raises his arm with extended finger and then drops finger as a signal to begin. ALICE doesn't quite hear the following but senses something.)

FIVE. The White Rabbit hurries for fear he'll be late...

EIGHT. Imagine his fate if he makes the Queen wait!

SIX. Down in the ground where the hole goes so deep...

THREE. The tumble is liable to put you to sleep. (*ALL giggle.*)

THIRTEEN. You'll fall at a speed that will make your ears sing,

ONE. Past curious whatchamacallits and things,

EIGHT. Past orange marmalade in a jar on the shelf,

TEN. Past mirrors that smile when you smile at yourself.

(ALL giggle.)

SIX. Past odd little doors and a window or two,

FIVE. Perhaps you'll encounter a picture of you!

THIRTEEN. Down deeper and deeper and deeper you'll go,

SIX. Down deep in the rabbit hole, head over toe;

THREE. You'll fall to a place so unusually gay,

EIGHT. It's terribly likely you'll hear yourself say:

ONE. It's bewitching, beloved, beyootiful and...

ALL. Grand,

ONE. So wondrously wonderful, your...

ALL. Wonderland!

THREE. So becoming, befuddled, beguiling and...

ALL. Grand,

ONE. So wondrously wonderful, your...

ALL. Wonderland! *(They cup hands over faces, open hands and call softly.)* Alice! *(ALICE looks about as if she's almost heard them.)* Alice! *(She smiles.)*

(WHITE RABBIT has donned ears, a waistcoat and has a watch. He now leaps from behind the GROUP.)

ONE. Now.

RABBIT *(hops DL)*. Oh my ears and whiskers, I'll be late!

ALICE. Sitting on a wooded bank, one can occasionally expect a white rabbit to scamper by. Curious though, when the white rabbit is wearing a waistcoat, carrying a watch and is able to speak. Late? Late for what?

RABBIT. Now where's the hole? I must find the hole! It will never do to keep the Duchess waiting.

ACTOR. That's my part!

ACTOR. Sh!

RABBIT. Oh, my dear little paws and fur, I can't find the hole! If I'm late getting home, I'll be late for the Duchess, and if I'm late for the Duchess, I'll be late for the Queen's croquet game. And if I'm late for the Queen's croquet game she'll chop off my head!

(The OTHERS have formed a human "rabbit hole" at left, with signs identifying it as such. One says "Rabbit

Hole," the other, "Enter Here." They get these props from the wings—or perhaps have carried them on.)

TWO (*holding sign "Enter Here"*). Ahem!

RABBIT. Bless my whiskers. Here's the hole! (*He enters the "hole."*)

THREE. Do you think she'll follow?

ALICE. I think I'll follow. (*Rises and crosses to hole.*)

ONE. I think she'll follow.

ALICE. Odd. I never noticed this rabbit hole before. (*The OTHERS form a tunnel above the hole.*) Very curious. (*Reading signs.*) "Rabbit Hole." "Enter Here." Well... I'm not exactly a rabbit, but... (*She enters.*)

SIX. There she goes!

(The "tunnel" moves, with ALICE inside it, to center, where it becomes the circular wall of the hole through which ALICE is falling. The actors face ALICE in a tight circle, their arms over their heads.)

THREE. Down deeper and deeper and deeper she'll go.

ONE. Down deep in the rabbit hole, head over toe.

ALICE (*rising and swaying, as though she is falling as the OTHERS kneel*). I must be nearly to the center of the earth. (*They rise again and she drops out of sight.*)

TEN. She'll fall at a speed that'll make her ears sing...

TWO. Past curious whatchamacallits and things...

ALICE (*rising*). I keep falling past the most curious things...

SIX. Past orange marmalade in a jar on the shelf...

NINE. Past mirrors that smile when you smile at yourself.

ALICE (*rising*). A mirror smiled back at me. Nothing curious there, but if I keep falling this way, I shall surely land on the other side of the world where people

have to walk on their heads, and that will be extremely curious.

ONE. Is she nearly there?

ACTOR. Almost!

ALICE (*rising*). I wonder what Dinah, my cat, would think of all this. Such a fall, I dare say, would probably cause her hair to stand on end. What's the White Rabbit going to be late *for*? The Duchess? A croquet game?

RABBIT. The White Rabbit hurries for fear he'll be late. Imagine his fate if he makes the Queen wait!

ALL. She's almost there. THUMP! ("*Hole*" *splits apart*. The ACTORS scatter about.)

ALICE (*on the floor*). Didn't hurt at all. When I get home I'm going to fall down the stairs just to show how brave I am.

ALL. Oh?

ALICE. Three stairs to the landing. (*She rises, looks about and crosses DR*). Well, I wonder where I am now. And where's the White Rabbit, I wonder...

ALL (*overlapping her*). Wonderland...Wonderland... (*They are forming a door at center. See Production Note #1.*)

ALICE (*overlapping*). I wonder where this goes. (*On hands and knees, looking through tiny doorway.*) Why, there's a garden! (*SEVERAL behind doorway hold up roses.*) A lovely garden...with fountains! (*ACTOR runs to left of door and squirts water.*) But I shall never be able to go through this little doorway. I'm much too big.

ALL. Tsk, tsk, tsk.

ALICE. Oh, dear, what a pity I can't just shut up like a telescope. Considering what's happened so far today, I don't really think shutting up like a telescope is all that

impossible. *(She leans on a crate upon which has been placed a little bottle and a sign "Drink Me.")* "Drink Me." Hmmm. Wonder if I should. I seem to be wondering quite a bit today. I wonder...

ALL *(overlapping)*. Wonderland! Wonderland!

ALICE *(overlapping)*. I wonder... Well, it isn't marked "poison" and that's a good sign. It's a sensible rule to avoid anything marked "poison." Yes. Hmmm.

ALL. Hmmm!

ALICE *(rises)*. Just a little bit. *(She drinks.)* Mmmm. Tastes like a mixture of cherry tarts, plum pudding and buttered biscuits.

ALL. Mmmmmm!

ALICE *(drinks)*. Very nice. Very nice, indeed. *(Slide whistle. The door grows larger as ALICE "shrinks.")* Well, here goes the telescope again! Mustn't shut up too far or it might be like a candle going out. And I don't want to go out. Then I'd never get through to that lovely garden. *(The bottle is replaced by a piece of cake with sign "Eat Me.")* "Eat Me!" Oh, I do love currant cake. *(She eats some of the cake and begins to grow as the door grows smaller.)* Well, I never! A bit of currant cake and I'm back to normal size, or maybe even bigger. *(She checks the opening.)* Yes, bigger. Now I shall never get through to the garden. Never, never, never. *(She cries.)* First, I'm as tall as a house, and then I'm as small as a mouse. It's getting curiouser and curiouser. Indeed it is. I must stop crying though, especially since I can't remember why I started. Oh, yes! The dear garden with flowers, *(Garden appears.)* and fountains, *(Fountain appears and squirts water, and shrugs.)* I shall never see. *(She cries again. TWO ACTORS hand her water-soaked handkerchiefs with which she wipes*

her eyes and then wrings them out.) And where's the White Rabbit? How rude of him to vanish. He must have known I was following him. How very rude. Besides, I don't know where I am or where I'm going or how to get there! *(She "shrinks" again; the door grows.)* I'm...I'm...I'm shutting up again! I'm shrinking! And I didn't eat a bite or drink a drop. It must be in my system.

(A long piece of blue silk is taken from the costume of one of the actors. FIVE ACTORS sit on stools placed in a semicircle around two stools and make waves with the long piece of silk, and the other props are taken off.)

ALICE. I must run. I don't know where or why, but I must run! *(She does, until she "slips" and falls into the pool of tears. She is on her knees behind stool at right, with stomach on stool and making swimming gestures with arms. She tastes water.)* Why, it's salt water!

(ONE, wearing mouse ears, "swims" toward her and leans over a stool, "swimming.")

ALICE. Excuse me.

MOUSE. Why? What'd you do?

ALICE. I didn't *do* anything.

MOUSE. Then what do you want to be excused for?

ALICE. I don't want to be excused for anything, really.

MOUSE. In that case, I would advise you not to say "Excuse me." *(He starts away.)*

ALICE. Please don't swim away.

MOUSE. I can't swim in one place.

ALICE (*noticing him for the first time*). Why, you're a mouse.

MOUSE. No comment.

ALICE. Can you tell me where I am?

MOUSE. You ought to know. They're your tears, not mine.

ALICE. My tears? (*Looks around*.) Amazing.

MOUSE. Big tears, I'd say. You must be quite blubbery.

ALICE. Don't mice cry?

MOUSE. Not this much. It would take me a hundred years to cry a pool this size.

ALICE. I must tell Dinah.

MOUSE. Who's Dinah?

ALICE. Dinah's my dear little cat.

MOUSE. A cat! (*He gasps, holds nose and "dives" under.*)

ALICE. Oh, I'm sorry. I don't suppose we should talk about cats.

MOUSE (*coming up, gasping for breath*). I wasn't.

ALICE. But Dinah's such a sweet pet. I'm sure you'd take a great fancy to her. She purrs (*ALICE purrs.*) and washes her face with her paws, and she's such a great one for catching...uh oh...

MOUSE. She's a serpent! (*He "dives" again.*)

ALICE. I beg your pardon.

MOUSE (*up again*). Pardon granted.

ALICE. Good. Now how do we get out of here?

MOUSE. Try swimming to shore.

ALICE. What'll I find there?

MOUSE. Depends on which shore you swim to. (*Giggles.*)

ALICE. Well, I'm looking for a white rabbit.

MOUSE. Why?

ALICE. I followed him and poof! he vanished.