

PERUSAL SCRIPT

ALICE

by

Matthew Ivan Bennett

Episode 4 of the **RADIO HOUR** Series

based on the book Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll



Newport, Maine

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ALICE

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CAST OF CHARACTERS — 23 characters

Psychopomp
Alice
White Rabbit
Mob
Mouse
Dodo
Duck
Eaglet
Pat
Bill
Crowd of Animals
Hound
Caterpillar
Pig-Baby
Duchess
Cook
Cheshire-Cat
March Hare
Hatter
Five of Coins
Seven of Coins
Queen of Cups
King of Cups
Jurymen
Creatures
Sister
FX

Suggested Doubling of Actors: 2f 1m 2either

ACTOR 1 - (F) - Alice

ACTOR 2 - (M or F) - Psychopomp, others as possible

ACTOR 3 - (M) White Rabbit, Dodo, Cook, March Hare, Seven of Coins, King of Cups, Mob, Jurymen, Creatures, F/X

ACTOR 4 - (M or F) Mouse, Duck, Bill, Hound, Pig-Baby, Cheshire-Cat, Five of Coins, Hatter, Mob, Jurymen, Creatures, F/X

ACTOR 5 - (F) Eaglet, Pat, Caterpillar, Duchess, Queen of Cups, Sister, Mob, Jurymen, Creatures, F/X

Period Costumes or contemporary clothes

Radio Station setting

Sound Effects required (can be Foley, recorded, or a mix of both. Music required.)

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ALICE Episode 4 of the RADIO HOUR Series by *Matthew Ivan Bennett* (52 minutes) 27 characters can be doubled to 5 performers, **2f 1m 2either**. Period Costumes or contemporary clothes. Radio Station setting. SFX essential. Staged Radio Drama, Radio Broadcast, Fully-Staged Production, or Virtual Theatre. In 1862, Lewis Carroll created a tale to delight a little girl. That girl of course was named Alice, and 3 years later the story was published as Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Since then, the journey down the rabbit hole has become a favorite - reproduced in silent films, Walt Disney animation, television, comics and even video games. A dark reimagining of Carroll's enduring tale, perfect for Halloween. RADIO HOUR is a co-production between Salt Lake City's Plan-B Theatre Company and the University of Utah's Public Radio station KUER's Radio West. **ORDER #3238**

MATTHEW IVAN BENNETT is a resident of Plan-B Theatre, listed by American Theater magazine as one of 14 companies nationwide exemplifying social action and civic engagement. At Plan-B, he's premiered several stage and radio plays, including an adaptation of "*Frankenstein*" that won a Utah Broadcasters Association award, and "*Eric(a)*"—which won Best Drama at the United Solo festival in New York. He received the Holland New Voices award from the Great Plains Theatre Commons, has twice been a finalist in screenwriting at Austin Film Festival, and in 2016 was an O'Neill finalist. His short plays have appeared at Chicago's Circle Theatre, Rising Sun in New York, Monkeyman in Toronto, and the Source Festival in DC. Matt is a member of the Dramatists' Guild

ALICE

PART ONE

SCENE 1

F/X: A river.

DARK MUSIC

PSYCHOPOMP: Close your eyes.

OTHER ACTORS: (*whisperingly*) Close your eyes. Close your eyes. Close your eyes.

PSYCHOPOMP: Let your eyelids plummet.

OTHER ACTORS: (*whisperingly*) Eyelids. Close. Plummet. Eyelids. Close. Plummet.

PSYCHOPOMP: Look into the black.

OTHER ACTORS: (*whisperingly*) Black. Into. The. Black. Into. The. Black.

PSYCHOPOMP: Relax your shoulders, your face. Breathe.

(OTHER ACTORS deep breaths)

... Unlatch the door of your subconscious and see yourself, right now, sitting on the bank of a lazy river stained with sunset. Hot, August breath blows on the red-flecked water. A wounded-looking finch flaps overhead. A brown bed of clover surrounds you, and you're beginning to get very tired, having nothing to do. Very tired. Once or twice you peep into the book your sister is reading, but it has no pictures or conversations in it. And...

ALICE: (*interior*) What is the use of a book—

PSYCHOPOMP: You think.

ALICE: (*interior*) Without pictures or conversations?

PSYCHOPOMP: So you consider braiding your long blond hair, when presently a White Rabbit with what looks like bleeding eyes runs close by you.

F/X: Hopping.

WHITE RABBIT: Blast it! Oh blast it! I shall be late!

PSYCHOPOMP: Nothing so remarkable in that, you think; although you wonder that the Rabbit carried a short, black whip and a pocket watch. He clutched the whip with one paw and flipped open the watch with the other as he strode along, his pus-filled eyes popping. You think...

ALICE: I have never seen a rabbit with a whip or a pocket watch before.

PSYCHOPOMP: Burning with curiosity, you run across the field after it, just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. And down you go in pursuit, going straight on through a tunnel for

some way, and then...

(ALICE screams)

PSYCHOPOMP: You tumble suddenly down a very deep well!

F/X: Wind-whipping.

(ALICE, a long scream)

PSYCHOPOMP: You try to see the bottom, but it's too dark to see anything. You look at the sides of the well as they blur by, noticing they're filled with cupboards, book-shelves, maps and pictures. You lunge for one of the shelves, but you're only able to grab a glass jar. You open it...

F/X: A jar opening.

ALICE: Perhaps there's a parachute inside.

PSYCHOPOMP: Unfortunately it's full of wet spider eggs.

(ALICE, a shout)

And down, down, down you fall, the sides of the well now bare earth, riddled with snakes-holes. A million reptoid eyes follow you down, down, down.

ALICE: I wish Dinah were down here with me! There aren't any mice in the air, but she might catch a bat. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?

PSYCHOPOMP: The deeper you fall the sleepier you become.

ALICE: *(yawning)* Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats? Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?

F/X: A rustling crash.

PSYCHOPOMP: Down you come! A heap of sticks and dead leaves breaking your fall. You jump up to your feet, brush off the white sun dress you're wearing, look up, and before you is a long dank cold dirt passage, the White Rabbit still in sight, hurrying down it.

ALICE: Mister Rabbit!

PSYCHOPOMP: You run after the Rabbit, leaving the leaf pile behind.

SCENE 2

F/X: Running.

WHITE RABBIT: *(at a distance; enraged)* Oh my fur, how late it's getting!

PSYCHOPOMP: You run. The Rabbit hops around a corner, you follow, and...it disappears. All you see is a long, low stone hall, lit up by a row of silver snake-shaped lamps hanging from the roof. Your breath

condensates in the air. No rabbit. You see several doors, but no rabbit.

F/X: Locked doors.

PSYCHOPOMP: You try all the doors; every one is locked. You wonder...

ALICE: (*interior*) How am I ever to get out again?

PSYCHOPOMP: ...when you bump into a three-legged table of solid glass, nothing on it but a tiny golden key, the end shaped like a skull. You pass around the hall again. A low tattered curtain catches your eye. Behind it is a little wooden door fifteen inches high. Etched into it is the picture of a hanged man and a mob all around him, laughing.

(THE MOB, ghostly, distant laughing)

PSYCHOPOMP: Bravely, you try the little skull key in the lock, and to your great delight it fits!

F/X: Key unlocks door; door opens.

You open the door to find a passage no larger than a rat-hole. You kneel down and at the end of the passage see beds of bright orange flowers and cool fountains. Sculptures of ice, or maybe crystal.

ALICE: (*interior; shivering*) Oh how beautiful! — But how am I to get through?

PSYCHOPOMP: You think.

ALICE: (*interior*) I could get my head through, but it would be of very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope!

PSYCHOPOMP: You return to the table, hoping to find a rulebook for shutting up like a telescope.

What you find, however, is a ruby red bottle with a paper label tied round its neck and printed on it, in beautiful large letters, the words...

ALICE: “DRINK ME.” Hmmm.

PSYCHOPOMP: As the bottle is not marked “Poison,” you decide to taste it, finding it very nice.

ALICE: (*gulping; lip-smacking*) Cherry-tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast!

F/X: Shrinking.

What a curious feeling! I must be shutting up like a telescope!

PSYCHOPOMP: And so it is indeed. You are only ten inches high now and still shrinking.

F/X: Shrinking.

ALICE: Oh my, what if I go out altogether, like a candle? What should I be like? What is the flame of a candle like after the candle is blown out?

PSYCHOPOMP: You wonder. However you stop shrinking and decide on going into the garden at once—but, you have forgotten the gold skull key! You can see it quite plainly through the table glass and try your best to climb up one of the legs of the table, but they're too slippery.

ALICE: (*struggling*) Nnn! Ughn! Nnn!

PSYCHOPOMP: You exhaust yourself with trying, and are about to cry from your clear blue eyes when you see a small glass box lying under the table. You open it and find a teensy cake, on which the words...

ALICE: "EAT ME."

PSYCHOPOMP: ...appear in molding miniature strawberries.

ALICE: Well, I'll eat it, and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me smaller, I can creep under the door.

(chewing)

F/X: Growing.

Curiouser and curiouser. Now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was!

F/X: A bonk.

PSYCHOPOMP: Your head strikes the ceiling. You are nine feet high, and at once you take up the skull key and hurry off to the garden door...but getting through is hopeless! All you can do is lie on your side and look through into the garden with one eye.

(ALICE cries)

And so you weep on that pretty white dress.

ALICE: *(crying...)* Ugh! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, a great girl like you, to cry like this! Stop this moment, I tell you!

(slapping herself)

Stop it, stop it, stop it!

PSYCHOPOMP: But you go on, shedding gallons of tears, until there's a large pool around you four inches deep, and reaching half down the hall.

F/X: Wet hopping.

WHITE RABBIT: *Blast it*, where is it that door?! Which one is the Duchess'?! She'll be savage if I've kept her waiting! ...That fathead.

ALICE: Oh! The White Rabbit. *(calling out)* If you please, sir—

(A shriek from the WHITE RABBIT)

F/X: A splash; the RABBIT running away.

PSYCHOPOMP: He scurries away, dropping a pair of black kid-gloves and a Chinese fan.

ALICE: Please sir, come back! ... Oh dear, dear! How queer everything is today!

PSYCHOPOMP: You take up the fan and gloves, fidgeting with them as you go on talking.

ALICE: Let me think: was I the same when I got up? I almost think I can remember feeling different. But if I'm not the same, who am I? I'm sure I'm not Ada; her ears are full of wax and mine aren't waxy at all. I wonder if I know my times tables. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen— Oh dear! I shall never get to twenty at that rate! I must have been changed!

PSYCHOPOMP: As you say this you see that you've put on one of the Rabbit's little black gloves.

ALICE: Now how can I have done that? I must be growing small again. Thank goodness. Now for the garden!

F/X: Running; a big splash.

ALICE: Oh!

PSYCHOPOMP: You slip. You find yourself up to your chin in freezing salt-water.

ALICE: Oh I wish I hadn't cried so much! I shall be punished for it now, I suppose, by drowning in my own tears!

PSYCHOPOMP: You hear something splashing about in the pool. A walrus or hippopotamus you think; but then you remember how small you are, and soon make out that it's a mangy mouse that has slipped in like yourself. As it paddles closer you observe that it's missing one of its eyes.

F/X: Mouse-swimming.

ALICE: Oh Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool? I am very tired of swimming about here. Oh mouse!

PSYCHOPOMP: It does not respond.

ALICE: Hmmm. Perhaps it doesn't understand English. I daresay it's a French mouse.

PSYCHOPOMP: So you say...

ALICE: *Où est ma chatte?*

(MOUSE, shrieks)

Oh, I beg your pardon! I quite forgot you wouldn't like cats—even in French.

MOUSE: Not like cats! Would you be fond of cats, if you were me?

PSYCHOPOMP: Says the Mouse, shoving its empty eye socket toward you. A number of fleas fly out of it.

ALICE: I do apologize, I forgot. Don't be angry about it.

MOUSE: Our family always hated cats, even before the incident. Nasty, low, vulgar creatures! Don't let me hear the name again!

ALICE: Very well, I won't.

PSYCHOPOMP: You say, and in a great hurry to change the subject, you add...

ALICE: Are you fond of dogs?

PSYCHOPOMP: The mouse does not answer, but begins swimming away from you as hard as it can go, a cloud of fleas following.

F/X: Hurried swimming.

ALICE: Wait! Mouse dear! We won't talk about cats or dogs if you don't like!

PSYCHOPOMP: You swim after it. And it's high time too, for the pool is getting quite crowded with the birds and animals that have fallen into it. There's a Duck and a Dodo, a Lory and an Eaglet, and several other curious rotting creatures. You see in the distance a stretch of beach beneath a high curving sky of rock. You paddle toward it with all your might and the animals follow.

SCENE 3

F/X: Water.

PSYCHOPOMP: On the beach you look at the company of birds.

(THE BIRDS shake themselves dry)

They all have the look of moldering. And the mouse, you notice now, is missing half its fur.

THE BIRDS: *(overlapping)* I look a nightmare! ... Downright bedraggled. ... *Quack.*

MOUSE: Ahem!

PSYCHOPOMP: Says the Mouse with an important air.

THE BIRDS: *(overlapping)* Every feather's pointin' the wrong way. ... I feel like a sponge with legs.

MOUSE: —Listen to me, all of you, we must get dry again!

ALICE: *(shivering)* Yes, we are liable to catch a bad cold if we don't get dry.

DODO: I disagwee; I think we're twuthable to lose a good heat.

PSYCHOPOMP: Says the Dodo.

EAGLET: Yes. What he said.

PSYCHOPOMP: Says the Eaglet.

DUCK: Quack.

PSYCHOPOMP: Says the Duck, the bottom of its bill nearly detached from decay.

MOUSE: Listen to me! Now this is the driest thing I know. Silence all around, if you please! *(a throat-clearing)* 'William the Conqueror, whose cause was favored by the pope, was soon submitted to by the English—'

ALICE: *(interior)* Ugh.

PSYCHOPOMP: You think.

MOUSE: I beg your pardon? Did you think an “Ugh” toward me?

EAGLET: This ain't dryin' me at all.

DODO: What I say going to say, was—

MOUSE: 'Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria—'

EAGLET: *(aside to Alice)* Are you gettin' dry?

ALICE: I'm as wet as ever.

DODO: What I was going to say was that the best thing to get us dwy would be a Caucus-wace.

ALICE: What is a Caucus-wace?

MOUSE: 'Edwin and Morcar, the earls, declared for him; and even Stigand—'

EAGLET: Leave off, Whiskers, we got's a better idea! Now what's a Caucus-wace?

DODO: Well, the best way to explain it is to do it.

PSYCHOPOMP: The Dodo marks out a race-course in the sand, a sort of circle. He says...

DODO: So: the exact shape does not matter. An elliptical trajectowy is acceptable.

PSYCHOPOMP: The Dodo invites you to take your place along the course.

DODO: And...bang!

DUCK: Quack!

PSYCHOPOMP: Everyone begins running! You run!

THE RACERS: *(underneath the narration)* Watch it, baldy! ... Stay in your lane! ... What lane?! ...
Quack. ... Bweathe through the beak everyone. ... Ouch!

PSYCHOPOMP: The Duck bumps you with its broad rear, the Eaglet shoves past you, the Mouse sprays sand behind it as it scampers, the Dodo stubs a talon then flaps its wings to compensate. A half an hour passes in a whirlwind of feathers and fur!

DODO: *(panting)* The wace...is over!

(THE BIRDS are falling down; panting)

ALICE: That...was...wonderful. I only wish...Dinah could have been here for it.

EAGLET: Dinah? Who's that?

ALICE: Dinah? She's my cat.

EAGLET: Cat?

DUCK: Quack?

ALICE: Yes, and such a capital one for catching mice.

MOUSE: Excuse me?

ALICE: And birds. You should see her after birds. She'll eat one as soon as look at it.

(THE BIRDS heave avian gasps)

DODO: I weally must be getting home, the night-air doesn't suit my throat.

EAGLET: Funny ya mention it, I think I'm comin' down with the grippe myself.

(a quackish cough from THE DUCK)

DODO: Lovely, weally, to have met you.

MOUSE: You insult me, young lady.

(THE BIRDS gibbering as they all leave)

PSYCHOPOMP: On various pretexts they all move off and you are left alone.

ALICE: Well I wish I hadn't mentioned Dinah. Nobody seems to like her here.

SCENE 4-A

F/X: Hopping.

WHITE RABBIT: Where in the fur are they?! She'll have me executed that Duchess, as sure as ferrets are ferrets! Where *can* I have dropped them?

ALICE: The White Rabbit! Oh Rabbit!

F/X: Running.

PSYCHOPOMP: You guess quite quickly that the Rabbit is looking for the fan and the pair of black gloves he dropped before. You hunt about for them, but everything seems to have changed since your swim in the river of tears. And as you stand amazed, the White Rabbit notices you and draws out its whip.

WHITE RABBIT: Mary Ann, you stupid wench, what are you doing? Run home this moment and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan! Quick. Now! Move!

F/X: A whip cracks.

PSYCHOPOMP: You are so frightened that you run off at once.

ALICE: *(interior)* He took me for his housemaid.

PSYCHOPOMP: You think, as you run along a path leading to a cottage, on the door of which is a dull bronze plate with the name "W. RABBIT" engraved upon it.

ALICE: *(interior)* How surprised he'll be when he finds out who I am! But I'd better take him his fan and gloves—that is, if I can find them.

PSYCHOPOMP: The door is open, you pass within, and find your way to a dingy little room with a table in the window. On it: a Chinese fan and two pairs of tiny black gloves. You take them up, and are about to leave, when your eye falls upon a little green bottle standing by the looking-glass. There's no label this time with the words "DRINK ME," but nevertheless you uncork it and put it to your lips.

F/X: Uncorking.

ALICE: I know something interesting is sure to happen whenever I eat or drink anything, so I'll just see what this does.

PSYCHOPOMP: And so you do.

F/X: Growing.

And before you drink half the bottle, you find your head pressing hard against the ceiling. You have to stoop to save your neck from snapping.

ALICE: *(interior)* That's quite enough now.

PSYCHOPOMP: You think, but you go on growing, and growing, and very soon you have to kneel on the rug, an elbow is jammed against a door, one arm is sticking out the window and one foot up the chimney. Claustrophobia sets in.

WHITE RABBIT: *(outside the door)* Mary Ann! Fetch me my gloves this moment, you little twit. I punish sloth most severely!

F/X: A whip cracks. A locked door is tried, violently.

(outside the door) Oh, locked me out have you? Very well, I'll go round and get in at the window.

ALICE: *(interior)* That you won't.

PSYCHOPOMP: You think, afraid of the anger in the creature's voice. And waiting till you fancy you hear him just under the window...

WHITE RABBIT: *(without; to itself)* Loggerheaded little hag.

PSYCHOPOMP: ...you spread out your giant hand and make a snatch in the air.

(WHITE RABBIT shrieks)

F/X: A fall; breaking glass.

WHITE RABBIT: *(without; brushing off)* Witchcraft and sorcery! — Pat! Pat! Where are you?

PAT: *(without)* Sure then I'm here! Digging for apples, yer honor!

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* Digging for apples indeed! Here! Come help me out of this! I'm bleeding all over.

F/X: Breaking glass.

(without) Now tell me, Pat, what's that in the window?

PAT: *(without)* Sure, it's an arrum, yer honor!

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* An arm, you cretin?! Who ever saw one that size?

PAT: *(without)* Sure it is big, yer honor: but it's an arrum for all that.

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* Well, it's got no business there. Go take it away!

PSYCHOPOMP: There is a long silence after this; you hear only whispers.

PAT: *(without; quavering)* Sure and I don't like it, yer honor, at all, at all.

WHITE RABBIT: *(without; whispering)* Do as I tell you, you feckless coward.

F/X: A whip cracks.

PSYCHOPOMP: You decide to snatch at them again with your gigantic fingers.

(PAT & WHITE RABBIT shriek)

F/X: Breaking glass.

WHITE RABBIT: *(huffing; without)* Where's the other ladder?

PAT: *(whisper-yelling; without)* Bill lad, fetch the other ladder.

ALICE: Bill? How many of them are there?

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* Here, put them up at this corner. No, dolt, tie them together first, Like this, you disfigured idiot. Now go on.

PSYCHOPOMP: You hear a small animal scratching and a scrambling on the roof.

F/X: Scratching and scrambling.

WHITE RABBIT: *(whispering; without)* Bill's got to go down. Tell him.

PAT: *(whispering-yelling; without)* Bill! The master says you've got to go down!

PSYCHOPOMP: You hear it coming from the chimney now.

F/X: Closer scratching.

The thing is clambering toward your foot in the fireplace. You decide to kick!

F/X: A kick.

BILL: *(flying upwards; trailing off)* Ahhh!

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* There goes Bill.

PAT: *(without)* Yep.

BILL: *(coming closer)* Ahhh!

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* What are you standing there for? Catch him! Moron.

F/X: BILL crunches into the ground.

BILL: (a feeble squeak)

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* How was it, Bill? What happened to you? Speak.

PAT: *(without)* Don't choke the old fellow. — What was it like, Bill?

BILL: *(without)* I, I hardly know. Something comes at me like a jack-in-the-box and up I goes. The horror, the horror.

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* —We must burn the house down!

ALICE: If you do, I'll set Dinah at you!

PSYCHOPOMP: You say, producing a dead silence.

ALICE: *(to herself)* If they had any sense, they'd take the roof off.

F/X: A confusion of noise.

WHITE RABBIT: *(without)* A barrowful will do, to begin with.

ALICE: *(interior)* A barrowful? Of what?

PSYCHOPOMP: You wonder; but you have not long to doubt, for straightaway a shower of pebbles come rattling in at the window, dozens of them, hundreds, sharp, hitting you in the face!

F/X: A fusillade of pebbles.

(WHITE RABBIT, without; cackling)

ALICE: Ow! ... Oh. ... Ouch!

MUSIC

STATION BREAK

SCENE 4-B

MUSIC

PSYCHOPOMP: A shower of pebbles come rattling in at the window, dozens of them, hundreds, sharp, hitting you in the face!

F/X: Pebbles.

(WHITE RABBIT, without; cackling)

ALICE: Ow! ... Oh. ... Ouch! You'd better stop that!

PSYCHOPOMP: You scream,

(ALICE screams)

and then with some surprise, you notice that the pebbles on the floor are all turning into little crescent cakes. A bright idea comes to you.

ALICE: The cakes can't possibly make me larger...

PSYCHOPOMP: So you swallow one of the cakes and are delighted to find that you begin shrinking directly.

F/X: Shrinking.

As soon as you're small enough to fit through the door, you run out of the house, finding a crowd of little

animals and birds waiting outside.

CROWD OF ANIMALS: (*overlapping*) Sip on this, Bill. ... I do hope you've got insurance against giants. ... Don't the "Act of Mushrooms" clause cover you for that? ... Snatched at us, like a big pink spider. ...

(*fingers-snaps*)

Stay with us, Bill.

PSYCHOPOMP: A dazed-looking deformed lizard, Bill, is in the middle, held up by two guinea pigs ladling a green liquor into his slack lips. One of them sees you.

CROWD OF ANIMALS: Hey, that her? — *That's the one!*

(*overlapping*)

... Grab her! ... I'll take the left flank! ... Charge!

PSYCHOPOMP: The crowd charges you!

CROWD OF ANIMALS: (*overlapping*) We have you now, witch. ... Not much of a giant. ... Watch her! ... She's a fast one. ... Watch her!

SCENE 5

PSYCHOPOMP: You run off as hard as you can, into a thick stand of trees.

ALICE: (*running*) The first thing I've got to do is to grow my right size; the second is to find my way into that lovely garden.

(*HOUND gives a monstrous, snarling bark*)

ALICE: Oh!

PSYCHOPOMP: In your haste you run almost into a giant hound dog. It snarls at you, dull yellow eyes narrowing, spit dripping from its loose brown teeth.

ALICE: My. I hope it isn't hungry.

PSYCHOPOMP: Hardly knowing what to do, you pick up a little bit of stick and hold it out to the dog. With a snort it rushes at you.

(*HOUND barking*)

PSYCHOPOMP: You dodge, hiding behind a great thistle. The dog is as large as a cart-horse. It sees you and rushes again, panting, barking hoarsely, its spotted tongue lolling out of its mouth, a trail of acid drool in the grass. You run around the thistle again. You dodge.

ALICE: I've got to grow large again! But what do I eat or drink?!

PSYCHOPOMP: All around you are flowers and blades of grass, nothing to eat! But then! You spot a large mushroom growing nearby, about the same height as yourself. You throw the stick, the hound chases after it, and you bolt for the mushroom in the tall wet grass.

(HOUND barking; running off)

You peep over the edge of the mushroom and immediately your eyes meet those of a large blue caterpillar, which is sitting, arms folded, quietly smoking a long hookah. It wears a yellow silk cravat; its blue, fat body is molting, and its bulbous tar-black eyes reflect everything around it: dark, impassive mirrors. A stale, skunk scent soils your sinuses, and suddenly you feel...like light.

PSYCHEDELIC MUSIC

F/X: A hookah.

You stare at each other for some time in silence when at last the Caterpillar takes the hookah out of its tube-like, indigo mouth. The thing addresses you in a languid, sleepy voice.

CATERPILLAR: Who are *you* / down there in the dew?

PSYCHOPOMP: Not an encouraging opening for a conversation.

ALICE: *(drugged)* 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: What do you mean by that? / Explain yourself, stat. ...As in the Latin: *statim*.

ALICE: I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, Sir, because I'm not myself, you see.

CATERPILLAR: I don't see. / Nor do I agree.

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

CATERPILLAR: I think not. / You're overwrought.

ALICE: Well, perhaps you haven't found changing confusing yet, but when you have to change 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 queer, won't you?

CATERPILLAR: Not a bit. / I long to flit. / I must admit.

ALICE: Well, perhaps *your* feelings may be different. All I know is it feels very queer to me.

CATERPILLAR: You? Who are *you* / down there in the dew?

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

CATERPILLAR: I think you oughtn't take a tone. / This *is* a hookah zone.

F/X: A hookah suck.

ALICE: Well I never. See here, Mr. Caterpillar—

CATERPILLAR: So you think you're changed, hmmm? / Quite estranged, hmmm?

ALICE: Yes I do, sir. I can't remember things as I used to and I don't keep the same size for ten minutes

together!

CATERPILLAR: What size do you want to be? / What height would grant you glee?

ALICE: Could you change me? I'm not particular, only one doesn't like changing so often, you know. Could you?

CATERPILLAR: —I *don't* know, I avow. / Are you not content now?

ALICE: Well, I should like to be little larger, Sir, if you wouldn't mind. Three inches is such a wretched height to be.

CATERPILLAR: It is a very good height indeed! / Three inches is all you need!

PSYCHOPOMP: The Caterpillar rears up angrily. It is exactly three inches high.

ALICE: But I'm not used to it!

CATERPILLAR: You'll get used to it in time! / Soon, perhaps, it will feel sublime.

F/X: An angry hookah suck.

PSYCHOPOMP: The worm peers at you with slitted deep-space eyes, pulls the hookah from its sticky blueberry mouth, and with a yawn, rolls off the mushroom. It crawls into the grass, flattening a path with its blubberous mass.

CATERPILLAR: (*going*) One side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter. / Expect from me no more quarter.

ALICE: (*interior*) One side of what? The other side of what?

PSYCHOPOMP: You think to yourself.

CATERPILLAR: Of the mushroom! / ...Buffoon.

PSYCHOPOMP: The Caterpillar disappears from sight. The smoke clears. You look thoughtfully at the mushroom, breaking off a piece from the left and right side.

SCENE 6

ALICE: Now which is which?

PSYCHOPOMP: You nibble a morsel of the left-hand side.

F/X: Growing.

You wander farther into the dense forest, watching for the dog as you hurry on and, looking upward, you realize you cannot see the sun. You cannot tell if it midday, or evening, or dawn. As a matter of fact, you cannot see the sky. Above you is a long stretch of ghostly gray rock. On closer inspection, you notice that the rock appears to be breathing; but then—!

(PIG-BABY bawling)

F/X: Pots and pans; continuing throughout.

A great commotion distracts you. You see a squat, four-foot tall Tudor house in the trees ahead—no taller than the lowest branches. You eat a little more mushroom from the right-side.

F/X: Shrinking.

ALICE: *(interior)* It will never do to come upon them this size: why I should frighten them out of their wits. And I need them to tell me how to get to the garden. Or how to get home...

(PIG-BABY bawling; all throughout)

(interior) Why I believe that's a baby. There must be grown-ups about then.

PSYCHOPOMP: Now nine inches high, you let yourself into the little house. You find yourself in a large kitchen full of smoke. A royal-looking lady sits on a three-legged stool, nursing a baby. A cook leans over a fire, stirring a large cauldron, which seems to be full of soup.

ALICE: *(interior)* There's certainly too much pepper in that soup.

PSYCHOPOMP: You think.

(ALICE is sneezing)

There is certainly too much of it in the air. Clouds of pepper swirl in the low kitchen like demonic dervishes.

(DUCHESS is sneezing)

(PIG-BABY is sneezing; bawling)

The only two creatures in the kitchen not sneezing are the cook and a disgustingly obese cat lying on the hearth, grinning from ear to ear.

ALICE: *(distaste)* Please, Madam, tell me why does your cat grin like that?

DUCHESS: It's a Cheshire-Cat. That's why.

(to PIG-BABY)

Pig!

(PIG-BABY squeals)

ALICE: 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.

ALICE: I don't know any that do, Madam.

DUCHESS: I am a duchess. And you don't know much. That's a fact.

PSYCHOPOMP: You do not like the tone of this remark, but you cannot think of a rebuttal. You try to take your eyes off of the smiling fur feline lips, but you cannot. You try to recall why you came into this house in the first place, but you cannot.

DUCHESS: When will that soup be ready?!

COOK: Oh, it's ready. It's ready all right!

F/X: A pot being thrown.

PSYCHOPOMP: The cook begins throwing everything reach at the Duchess and the baby! Fire-irons, a shower of saucepans, plates, and dishes. The Duchess takes no notice of them, even as they hit her. And the baby, well, it's already howling so much that it's quite impossible to say whether the blows hurt it or not.

ALICE: Please mind what you're doing!

PSYCHOPOMP: You shout at the cook.

DUCHESS: Yes, if everybody minded their own business, the world would go round a deal faster than it does.

ALICE: Which would not be an advantage. Just think what work it would make with the day and night! You see the earth takes twenty-four hours—

DUCHESS: Oh, don't bother me! I never could abide figures!

(singing)

SPEAK ROUGHLY TO YOUR LITTLE BOY
AND BEAT HIM WHEN HE SNEEZES
HE ONLY DOES IT TO ANNOY
BECAUSE HE KNOWS IT TEASES.

DUCHESS, PIG-BABY, & COOK: *(singing)*

WOW! WOW! WOW!

DUCHESS: *(to ALICE)* Here! You may nurse it a bit, if you like!

PSYCHOPOMP: The Duchess flings the baby at you. You catch it with some difficulty.

DUCHESS: I must go and get ready to play croquet with the Queen.

PSYCHOPOMP: The Duchess hurries out of the room. The cook throws a frying-pan after her as she goes, but it just misses.

F/X: Pan whooshing by.

(PIG-BABY, intensified bawling)

ALICE: Oh, the poor little thing. Look at its arms and legs, sticking out in all directions. *(interior)* Just like a star-fish.

PSYCHOPOMP: You think, as you try to hold onto the baby. It snorts like a steam-engine, doubling itself and straightening itself out again. You run out of the house.

ALICE: *(interior)* If I don't take this child away with me, they're sure to kill it in a day or two. *(aloud)* Wouldn't it be murder to leave it behind?

(PIG-BABY grunts)

ALICE: Don't grunt. That's not a proper way of expressing yourself.

(PIG-BABY grunts)

PSYCHOPOMP: Worried for it, you anxiously peer into its face to see what is the matter. Examining it, you notice a very upturn nose. Also, its eye are getting smaller, rounder, blacker—too small, round, and black for a baby.

ALICE: If you're going to turn into a pig, my dear, I'll have nothing more to do with you. Mind now!

(PIG-BABY, tortured grunting)

F/X: Stretching.

(PIG-BABY, violent grunt; it transforms fully into a pig)

Oh!

PSYCHOPOMP: The creature tries to chomp at your neck! You drop it. ... It trots quietly into the woods.

ALICE: Oh well, if it had grown up, it would have made a dreadfully ugly child.

PSYCHOPOMP: You sigh. You turn toward the woods again, and there, sitting on the bough of a tree is the bloated Cheshire-Cat. It grins. Very long claws and a great many teeth. A fat tick burrowing into its neck. Crusted blood in its ash-colored fur. But it doesn't seem to be concerned with that. Nothing seems to unsettle it: the sliver eyes and the wide, toothy smile do not move. You feel it should be treated with respect.

MUSIC

INTERMISSION

11 MORE PAGES IN PART 2