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ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND



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by Lewis Carroll[®] introduction by Kwame Alexander

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chapter 2

The tunnel went straight for a long time, and Alice could hear the White Rabbit in the distance saying, “Oh, my ears and whiskers!” and “I’m so late!”

Alice ran faster, so fast that it took her by surprise when the tunnel floor suddenly dropped

away and she dropped with it—*WHOOSH*—straight down.

Falling is usually kind of scary, but this was a very long, slow, floaty fall. Alice was actually quite comfortable.

She twirled and did her ballet positions, which were much more fun to do without Ms. Asia frowning at her form. She noticed that she



was falling past all sorts of interesting things on the tunnel walls—maps, posters of the constellations, even photos of her favorite TV scientist.

This place seems pretty cool, thought Alice as she kept falling. She even had time to grab a few things as she descended, and put them in her pockets: a hand mirror, a headband, a thimble.

Dinah would love this too thought Alice. Since cats are not exactly fond of falls, that probably wasn't true. Alice didn't see any mice, which Dinah *was* fond of, but she thought this was the sort of place that might have a bat or two. *Bats are just mice with wings*, thought Alice. (Again, not really.)

But as she fell and fell, she wondered over and over: *Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?* and even *Do bats eat cats?* She couldn't answer the questions either way. Finally, she hit the bottom with

a solid thump that didn't hurt a bit.

Jumping up, Alice caught a glimpse of the White Rabbit's tail as it turned a corner. She hurried after it into a hallway, but when she got there, it was gone.

As she tried to figure out what to do next, Alice saw that she was in a room with many doors of all different sizes and colors. She tried to open them, but they were all locked.

"So annoying," she muttered to herself, since there was no one else to mutter to. She added some extra-hard foot stomping, just because she could. That was the kind of thing her sister would have complained about. But Serena wasn't there, so Alice felt free to stomp as hard and loud as she wanted to. It wasn't as much fun as she thought it would be, and a tingle at the back of her neck made her stop and turn around.



A pretty little glass table stood in the middle of the room, and a gleaming gold key sat on top. Alice snatched it up and tried it in each locked door, until she got to the smallest one—and the key fit!

Alice opened the door. She was too big to fit through, so she bent down to take a peek—and saw the most gorgeous garden she'd ever seen:

rolling hills, sunflowers, and waterfalls. If only she could get herself small enough to fit through that tiny door!

“There’s got to be a way,” said Alice, shutting the door. Because after chasing a talking, vest-wearing, watch-holding rabbit down a hole and finding a gold key, Alice figured there’s always a way to do just about anything.

The tingly feeling came back, and Alice whirled around again.

A pretty little bottle sat on the table. Its label said **DRINK ME** in fancy letters.

Now, Alice had almost made the honor roll last semester, so she was smart enough to know that she shouldn’t drink from any old bottle just because it told her to. And before Serena had gotten so boring, she’d read Alice stories of silly children who didn’t listen and drank from bottles

without realizing their labels said **POISON**.

Alice looked all over the bottle. It didn’t say **POISON** anywhere. Satisfied, she opened it and drank. It was just like a cup of hot chocolate—no, soda!—no, lemonade! It tasted like all kinds of good things, and she drank down to the last drop.

As she smacked her lips, she noticed that the table in front of her seemed to be getting bigger and bigger. Soon it was the size of a building!

She turned, and now the door was so big that she couldn’t even reach the doorknob. She was shrinking! Alice curled herself up into a ball, but realizing that it might not stop her from shrinking away into nothing, she stood up with her hands on her hips.

Finally, she stopped shrinking, and Alice stomped her foot hard to make sure she was still there. She was definitely small enough to get

through the door, but too small to hold the now *ginormous* gold key!

Alice started to cry.

When she paused to wipe her face with the skirt of her dress (Serena wasn't around to scold), she noticed that there was now a lovely little cake on the table.

The cake was dusted with sugar and dotted with candies that spelled **EAT ME** across the top. Alice was smart enough to know that cake is always a good thing, so she didn't hesitate. She climbed up to the tabletop and took a bite.

And another. And another.

It was very good cake.

"I think...I'm growing!" said Alice, hopping off the table and standing beside it. "Curiouser and curiouser!" (All the interesting happenings had jumbled up her words a little.)

She grew and grew until she had to fold herself up to fit in the room. And that meant that, once again, she was too big to get through the door.

"Oh, my ears and whiskers, I'm so late!" said a familiar voice in the distance. With some difficulty, Alice turned and caught a glimpse of the White Rabbit.

"Help!" she called out. And the White Rabbit, who really had not expected to see a giant girl, shrieked and ran off, dropping a little fan and a pair of gloves as it hopped away.

Thinking that this really was the fanciest rabbit she'd ever seen, Alice picked up the fan. She swished it around, and she felt herself getting smaller!

With the fan in her hand, Alice shrank and shrank. She quickly dropped it before she shrank away to nothing. Then she wondered what would

have happened if she had. Could she shrink to nothing? Would she know if she were nothing? Would she still even be Alice? Maybe she had already become someone else! Maybe she had turned into Marie Phillips, who gossiped and tended to pick her nose when she thought no one was looking. This kind of thinking was very confusing, so Alice started to say her times tables to herself just to clear her head.

“Well, I’m not Marie,” she said after quickly getting through the four, seven, nine, and twelve times tables. Marie had trouble past the twos. But Alice might be Tara Dodgson, who was very good at math and even gave herself extra-credit problems, which Alice found slightly annoying.

It was all too much. Everything in this strange place was *a lot*—even Alice’s tears were too. She cried again until she thought she’d used up a

lifetime’s worth of tears. And that made her cry more. After a while, she realized that she was crying *and* treading water.

She had cried an ocean of tears!

Alice was a good swimmer, so she didn’t panic. She tucked the little gold key into her pocket and started swimming toward the door.

Splash! A mouse joined her in the water. It looked rather big, but that was probably because she was rather small.

“Hello!” she said.

“Hi,” said the Mouse. “Who are you?”



Alice wished she had thought to ask that first. “Well, I’m pretty sure I was Alice when I woke up this morning, but now . . . a lot has changed, so I’m not quite sure.”

“I don’t like change,” said the Mouse. “I don’t understand where all this water came from.”

Alice didn’t want to mention the crying, so she changed the subject. “You have lovely fur,” she said. “Just like my cat, Dinah.”

“*Cat!*” squeaked the Mouse, scrambling away.

Oops. Alice had forgotten that even though a cat might enjoy the sight of a mouse, mice don’t usually feel the same way. Mice usually run far, far away from cats.

“I didn’t mean to bring up a . . . sensitive topic,” said Alice quickly. “How about dogs? I’ve been asking for one, but—”

The Mouse kept going.

“Wait, wait! Please don’t leave! I won’t talk at all!”

The Mouse paused. “Fine,” it said, giving Alice a considerable amount of side-eye. “Let’s swim to shore and *not* talk about . . . those who shall not be named.”

As they started off, Alice heard more splashes and looked around. They had company. A duck, a baby eagle, even a dodo bird, which looked exactly the way Alice would have imagined a dodo would look, if she’d imagined dodos. With lots of splashing, they all swam to dry ground.

Soaked and dripping, Alice and the animals sat on the shore.

“How will we get dry?” asked the baby eagle.

“I’ll tell a story,” said the Mouse. “It’s the driest thing I know.” The Mouse cleared its throat. “Once upon a time, a time that was once but not



again, a time upon a time of all time, a time that was found advisable to . . .”

The Mouse went on and on, and everyone got very bored and stayed very wet.

The Dodo interrupted. “Let’s run a race,” it said. “That will work.” The Dodo started running about in circles, wings flapping. The other animals followed, and after a shrug, so did Alice. Even the Mouse, who was a little offended, did

too. In a few minutes, they were dry.

“Hooray!” shouted the Mouse, who seemed to be in a much better mood. “Who won?”

Everyone looked at the Dodo. The Dodo looked at Alice.

“*She’ll* decide,” said the Dodo. All the animals looked expectantly at Alice.

“Who won? Who won?” they cried.

“Um, we all did?” said Alice. “We all did!” she said again, like she meant it.

“Hooray! Hooray!” yelled the animals. “Prizes! Prizes!”

Alice reached into a pocket of her dress and took out all the things she’d grabbed on her way down the rabbit hole. She had just enough—one for each animal.

“Hooray!” they all cried again.

“But what about you?” said the Dodo.

“Where’s your prize?”

Alice checked her other pocket and found a gum wrapper. She held it up, and the animals cheered, even the Mouse. Everyone said good-bye, and soon Alice was alone again.