

Characters

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| Two of Hearts (F) | - | A playing card; gardener to the Queen of Hearts |
| Five of Hearts (F) | - | Another playing-card gardener |
| Seven of Heart (F) | - | The Queen's third gardener |
| Alice (F) | - | A young girl having a fantastic dream |
| White Rabbit (M) | - | The royal herald |
| Queen of Hearts (F) | - | A rather ruthless ruler |
| King of Hearts (M) | - | A more merciful monarch |
| Jack of Hearts (M) | - | The prince; a silent tart-snatcher |
| Mad Hatter (M) | - | The bearer of bad news |
| March Hare (M) | - | A dubious witness |
| Extra jurors (M or F) | - | A mix of cards and creatures |
| Charlotte (F) | - | Alice's older sister |

Scene 1 - Wonderland, the Queen of Heart's garden

(Lights up on a single tree with white roses stage R. Three royal gardeners – Two of Hearts, Five of Hearts, and Seven of Hearts – slide in stage L and observe the garden quietly... until Five of Hearts sneezes.)

Two: **(Together)** Shhhhh!!

Seven: **(Together)** Shhhhh!!

Five: Sorry!

(Two of Hearts crosses to centre stage and does a furtive survey in all directions.)

Two: No one in sight - come on now!

(Five approaches timidly, followed by Seven - both carrying paintbrushes and buckets of red paint.)

Five: Oh! I don't know... I just don't know about this, Two! Someone's going to notice.

Two: Hush! We have no choice! Give me the brush and bucket - and you go keep watch.

(Five stops to hand Two the items, but Seven is looking around worriedly and bumps into Five - who bumps into Two.)

Two: Careful, Five! You might splash paint on me! There can't be no evidence!

(She marches over the tree to start painting a rose. The others follow as they argue.)

Five: But it was Seven who bumped into *me*, and I barely -

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

(Alice, our heroine, enters unnoticed stage L and quietly watches these strange cards arguing.)

Five: I'll lay blame where blame is due! In fact, I heard the Queen say only yesterday you deserved to be beheaded!

Two: **(Busy painting)** What for?

Seven: That's none of your business, Two!

Five: Yes, it is her business - and I'll tell her! It was because Seven brought the cook *tulip bulbs* instead of onions for her stew. Cook was mighty miffed. **(Grabs Seven's bucket and paintbrush)** You go keep watch. **(Goes to paint a rose)**

Two: **(Snickering)** Tulip bulbs!

Seven: So what? They probably taste better than onions anyway! **(Turns and sees Alice.)** Dear me! **(Seven falls prostrate on the ground. The other cards turn and freeze.)**

Alice: **(Gently touches Seven)** Are you alright?

Seven: **(Hops up and runs over to the other cards)** Never better - now go away!

Alice: You don't have to be afraid of me. I'm just Alice.

Five: **(To Two)** What's *justalice*?

Two: **(Ignoring Five)** What do you want, miss?

Alice: I'm not sure I want anything - except for things to make sense again. Would you tell me why you are painting those roses?

Two: **(Low voice)** The fact is - we three are the royal gardeners - and this here ought to have been a red rose tree -

Five: Only we put a white one in by mistake.

Seven: A crazy accident, you see!

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Alice: Like mixing up tulip bulbs and onions? **(Seven glares at her)**

Two: Well, anyway - if the Queen of Hearts was to find it out...

Seven: We should all have our heads cut off!

Five: So you see, miss, we're doing our best, before she comes, to –

(SFX. A trumpet blast offstage L interrupts. Seven runs to look and comes back, pale.)

Seven: The Queen! It's the Queen! She's on her way! Oh, dear me!

(Seven flattens herself on the ground again, the other two gardeners quickly following suite. Alice moves R, not sure where to stand or what to do.)

Alice: **(To the gardeners)** Should I lie on the ground, too?

(A procession led by the White Rabbit enters L. Behind him come the Queen of Hearts, the King of Hearts, and finally the Jack of Hearts)

Alice: **(A little wave)** Why, hello, Mr. White -

Rabbit: **(Ignores - or doesn't hear her)** The Queen, the King, and the Jack of Hearts!

(Rabbit bows with a flourish as the Queen steps toward Alice)

Queen: (Snaps her fingers commandingly) Jack!

(The Jack runs to the Queen's side and bows with a smile)

Queen: Who is *this*?

(The Jack stares at Alice for a moment, then bows at her and smiles)

Queen: Jack! I asked you a question!!

(The Jack looks at the Queen, then at Alice, then back at the Queen before bowing to her again with another smile)

Queen: Ooh! Fool - get out of my way!

(The Jack backs up, still bowing; to Alice)

Queen: What is your name, child?

Alice: (dropping a little curtsy) My name is Alice, so please Your Majesty.

Queen: (Severely examining gardeners) And who are *these*?

Alice: (With a laugh) Well, I beg your pardon, but why are asking me? I should think you'd know your own gardeners, Your Majesty.

Queen: And what if I didn't?!?

Alice: (Refusing to be intimidated) Then I'd say you were rather foolish - not much better than the Jack.

(The Jack bows smiling in Alice's direction at the mention of his name)

Queen: (To the King) I have been vilely insulted! Off with her head! Get rid of her at once!!

Alice: Nonsense! What queen executes a guest right after meeting her? Besides, you're only a card. I needn't be afraid of you!

King: (Steps between the Queen and Alice) Ahhhh - consider, my dear: she is only a child - a foreign child at that!

(The Queen angrily rebuffs him and turns to the Jack)

Queen: (Snaps her fingers) Jack!! (Pointing to the gardeners) Get these cards up off the ground!

(Jack simply bows low with a smile.)

Queen: (The Queen is boiling; to the White Rabbit) Herald?

Rabbit: Yes, Your Majesty?

Queen: Let it be known in all the land that the Jack of Hearts is to have no - more - sweets! (Everyone gasps, except for Alice) They have obviously scrambled his wits! (To Jack) Perhaps you should try tulip bulb stew for a change.

(The Jack bows slowly - smile gone.)

Rabbit: **(Clears his throat; loudly)** Here ye, here ye! Let it be known in all the -

Queen: No, not now! We have other business to deal with. **(Kicks at one of the gardeners)** Get up! Get up, all of you! Stand before me.

(The gardeners jump up, and begin bowing to everyone present in a rapid succession.)

Queen: Enough of that! You make me giddy. **(All is very still as the Queen crosses to the tree and examines it.)** What *have* you been doing here?

Two: **(kneels imploringly)** May it please Your Majesty, we were simply trying to –

Queen: Trying to deceive me! Faithless gardeners!

Five: More like trying to fix a mistake -

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Seven: Trying to make this rose tree worthy!

Queen: White roses splashed with red paint - worthy of the Queen of Hearts?? **(to King)** My gardens have been desecrated. Off with their heads - immediately!

Seven: Oh, dear me! **(She falls flat on the ground again while Two and Five run behind Alice for protection)**

Alice: Don't worry. You shan't be beheaded for such a silly problem. **(To the King)** Surely, sire, you don't intend to behead these repentant gardeners?

Queen: **(Facing away from the action)** Are their heads off?

King: My queen, perhaps we should grant a reprieve. I think we ought to be entertaining our foreign guest with a game. Won't you need these three cards for croquet?

Queen: **(With a malicious smile)** Ahhhh - quite right, my lord. **(To Alice)** Can you play croquet, whoever you are?

Alice: Yes.

Queen: Then you shall play with me. **(Roars)** Set up the croquet game! Get to your places!

(There is a mad scramble as the three gardeners make themselves as much like croquet hoops as possible. The King pulls the pouting Jack out of the way to the L, while the White Rabbit grabs Alice and pulls her to stage R.)

Rabbit: Better stay out of the way, Miss Alice. It would have been better if you hadn't come at all.

Alice: So you do remember me!

Rabbit: Do I?

Queen: **(To the nearest gardener)** Not there, you imp - a little to the right!
(The gardener waddles over.)

Queen: **(Snaps her fingers)** Jack! Bring me the hedgehogs and the flamingos!
(Jack bows, smile-less, and dashes out stage L. The Queen, joined by the King, continues her inspection and adjustment of the gardener-hoops)

Alice: **(To Rabbit)** What are the hedgehogs and flamingos for?

Rabbit: I thought you said you knew how to play croquet! Why, the hedgehogs roll up into balls, and you hit them through all the hoops with the flamingos.

Alice: I've never heard of such a thing!
(Five has been trying to hold back a sneeze - but she simply can't anymore.)

Queen: **(To Five)** If you so much as twitch again, I'll have you executed.

Alice: **(To Rabbit)** You're dreadfully fond of beheading people around here.

Rabbit: Not - all of us are.

Alice: The great wonder is that there's anyone left alive! Your Queen is so extremely -

Queen: **(Suddenly next to Alice)** Yes?

Alice: So extremely - likely to win that it seems hardly worth playing the game.

Queen: Well, we'll just find out who wins, won't we? **(Grabs Alice, and drags her centre stage)** Oh, where are those hedgehogs and flamingos? **(Yells offstage L)** Jack!!
(Instead of the Jack, the Mad Hatter rushes in from the L and falls on one knee before the Queen)

Queen: What is this?!? Sir Mad Hatter, why do you thrust yourself into my presence this way?

Hatter: **(Catching his breath)** Forgive me - Your Majesty! Oh, great Queen of Hearts! An unspeakable - travesty - has occurred!

King: **(Stepping forward)** Well, spit it out then, Hatter! What has happened?

Hatter: The tarts! The Queen's beautiful raspberry tarts – that she made this very afternoon with the cook! They're gone!
(Everyone gasps - except Alice)

Hatter: And it was Prince Jack who took them!

(Further commotion)

King: (To Two and Five) Fetch that knave of a prince here at once!

Queen: (To Rabbit) Prepare the royal court!

Rabbit: (Thunders) Set up the court! For the trial of Prince Jack!

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(A chant is spoken or sung onstage and offstage by the Rabbit, the Hatter, the gardeners, and all the jurors, including the March Hare as the “court” is set up in fevered commotion.)

Chant: Set up the court! Set up the court!
Fetch the Prince! Fetch the Prince!
Set up the court! Set up the court!
He took the tarts! He took the tarts!

Set up the court! Set up the court!
Fetch the knave! Fetch the knave!
Set up the court! Set up the court!
The Jack of Hearts - he took those tarts! **(Repeat as needed)**

(Two thrones are placed by the rose tree, in which the King and Queen sit. The jurors place two benches diagonally near centre L, and a witness box/platform placed centre stage. Alice watches in confusion. Seven brings the King a book of court rules, a scroll and a wig, which he dons as judge. As Two and Five re-enter with the Jack, bound and dejected, the Rabbit drags Alice far R. Meanwhile the jurors, joined by Seven and the Hatter, scramble to sit on the benches. The March Hare hands each juror a slate and a piece of chalk for taking notes during the trial. The King stands to quiet the tumult.)

King: Order! There will be order in the court! **(Dead silence)** Jurors - I charge you now - write your name down on your slate so you'll not forget it before the end of the trial. **(Jurors busily scribble on slates)**

Alice: (To Rabbit) Are the jurors really that stupid?

Queen: Silence in the court!

(Five sneezes, which brings all eyes on her.)

Queen: Off with her head!

(Five temporarily ducks behind Prince Jack)

King: **(Anxious to avoid the execution, holds out his scroll to the Rabbit)** Uh-uh—Herald! Read the accusation!

Rabbit: **(Takes and opens the scroll)**

'The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,
All on a summer day:
The Jack of Hearts, he stole those tarts,
And took them quite away!' **(dramatically closes scroll)**

King: **(Gravely)** Consider your verdict, jurors!

(More scribbling on slates)

Rabbit: Not yet, not yet, Your Majesty! There's a great deal to come before that!

Queen: Call the first witness, then!

Rabbit: **(Almost overlapping)** First witness! I call the Mad Hatter.

(Said personage timidly takes the witness stand)

Queen: **(Eyeing him critically)** What is that on your hat, sir?

Hatter: **(Fingers the brim and finds a piece of toast)** Oh! I beg pardon, Your Majesty, but I hadn't quite finished my tea when I witnessed the larceny.

King: **(Severe)** You ought to have finished. When did you begin?

Hatter: **(Looks inquisitively at the March Hare)** It was the fourteenth of March, I think... no, the fifteenth.

March Hare: Sixteenth!

King: Write that down! **(More scribbling)** Take off your hat.

Hatter: It isn't mine.

Queen: Stolen! **(General gasp)**

Hatter: Why, no, Your Majesty - not *stolen*. I - I'm a - a hatter! I only keep hats to *sell*, so I have none of my own.

King: **(Suspicious)** Give your evidence, and don't be nervous, or I'll have you executed on the spot.

Hatter: Oh! Oh, yes, sire! I mean, uh - why, of course - I -

King: Give your evidence now, or I'll have you executed, whether you're nervous or not.

Hatter: I'm a poor man, Your Majesty, and the truth is that while I was in the midst of my tea - not even a week or so in yet - the March Hare told me that -

March Hare: **(Standing)** I didn't!

Hatter: You did!

March Hare: I deny it!

King: He denies it! Jurors, leave out that part.

(Much scratching out of lines on slates)

Hatter: Well, at any rate, *someone* said that – **(pause, forgets)** that – well...

Queen: What did someone say?

Hatter: I - I can't remember.

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King: **(Stands)** You *must* remember, or I'll have you executed.

Hatter: **(Drops on his knees)** I'm a poor man, Your Majesty.

King: You're a poor speaker, that's for certain! A poor *hatless* hatter! But - if that's all you know about this case, you may stand down.

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

King: Then you may leave the court.

Hatter: Oh, thank you, sire - you're too kind! **(Hatter dashes out stage L)**

Queen: **(To Two)** And just take his head off outside...

King: Let's not get distracted, dear. Herald, call the next witness.

Rabbit: The next witness is – Miss Alice! **(Jurors scribbling)**

Alice: Oh – me? But it's no business of mine.

Rabbit: That's what *you* think. **(Rabbit drags her to the witness box)**

King: Well, young lady, what do you know about this horrific crime?

Alice: Nothing, Your Majesty.

Queen: Nothing *whatever*?

Alice: Nothing whatever.

King: Ahhhhh – that's very important.

(The Jury scribbles)

Alice: **(Amused)** That's very *unimportant*, Your Majesty means - of course.

King: Well - yes, *unimportant*, of course, I meant... Or... **(suddenly confused - trying the words out again)** Important – unimportant... Unimportant - important...

(The Jurors are also confused - not sure what to write.)

King: (To the Queen) Well, which is it?!

Queen: (Scornfully) Are you the King of Hearts, or aren't you??

King: (Bristles) I most certainly am! (He throws open the book of rules and reads)
Rule Forty-two: All persons who contradict the king have to leave the court.

(Everyone looks at Alice condemningly as the King slams the book shut)

Alice: Forgive me, sire, I was only trying to help. At any rate, I won't leave because I'm sure you invented that rule just now.

King: It's the oldest rule in the book.

Alice: Then it ought to be Rule Number One, not Forty-two.

King: (Sputters angrily, then snaps at the jury) Jurors - consider your verdict!

Queen: No, no! Sentence first – verdict afterwards.

(The Jack makes himself look as small as possible)

Alice: Stuff and nonsense! The idea of having the sentence first! You haven't heard any real evidence yet!

Queen: Hold your tongue, Miss Alice! I hereby declare that the Jack of Hearts shall eat nothing but tulip bulb stew for the next six months and...

Alice: I won't hold my tongue! You can't sentence the prince when you haven't even heard what he has to say for himself!

March Hare: Ha! But Prince Jack never speaks!!!

Queen: (To the King) Enough of this foreign child! Off with her head! Off – with – her – head!

Alice: (Defiant) Who cares about you? About any of you! You're all nothing but a pack of cards!

(At this, the entire cast swarms upon Alice with a horrible war cry - except the Jack who escapes offstage L. Alice shrieks, and we see her in the center of the angry mass before the lights black out. In the darkness, the Wonderland cast freezes positions. Alice moves to a side staging area where a bench is placed and her sister, Charlotte, sits with a book. Alice lays her head in Charlotte's lap)

Charlotte: (Still in darkness) Alice? Alice! Wake up, dear! It's time to go home. (Lights up on the two sisters)

Alice: (Starting up violently) Oh! Oh, where am I? Charlotte, what has happened?

Charlotte: (Fixes Alice's hair) Why, you've just finished a long nap - here at the park - that's all. Apparently, my book didn't interest you. It put you right to sleep.

Alice: **(Looking back at the frozen characters)** Have I - really been here with you – all this time? **(A little laugh)** I – I just had the strangest dream... All nonsense, really. **(Earnestly gazing up at her big sister)** I wonder – what could it all mean?

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Charlotte: **(Standing)** Probably not a thing, dearest. **(She takes Alice's hand and the two of them begin to walk home as the light fade out.)**