

# ALICE IN WONDERLAND

## CHAPTER 8 :

### THE QUEEN'S CROQUET GROUND

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A large rose tree grew near the garden gate. The flowers on it were white, but three men who seemed to be in a great hurry were painting them red.

Alice thought this was a very strange thing to do, so she went nearer to watch them.



Just as she came up to them, she heard one of them say,

"Look out now, Five! Don't splash paint on me like that!"

"I couldn't help it," said Five. "Six knocked my arm."

Then Six looked up and said, "That's right, Five! Put the blame on to some one else."

"You needn't talk," said Five. "I heard the Queen say your head must come off."

"What for?" asked the one who spoke first, who was number Two.

"What's it to you, Two?" said Six.

"It's a lot to him and I will tell him," said Five. "Six brought the cook tu-lip roots in-stead of on-ions."

Six threw down the brush and said, "Well, of all the things to get wrong..."

Just then he saw Al-ice, who stood and watched them. He stopped him-self at once.

Five and Two looked a-round al-so, and all of them bowed low.

"Would you tell me, please," said Al-ice, "why are you paint-ing those ros-es?"

Five and Six did not speak, but looked at Two, who said in a low voice,

"Why, the fact is..., you see..., Miss, this here should have been a red rose tree, and by mis-take a white one was put in. If the Queen was to find out, we would all have our heads cut off, you know. So you see, Miss, we are hard at work to get it paint-ed, so that she won't..."

Just then Five, who had stood and watched the gate for some time, called out, "The Queen! The Queen!" The three men at once threw them-selves flat down on their fa-ces.

Alice heard the tramp-ing of feet and looked a-round glad at last, that she would see the Queen.

First came ten sol-diers with clubs. They were all shaped like the three men at the rose tree, long and flat like cards, with their hands and feet at the cor-ners.

Next came ten men with dia-monds and they walked two by two like sol-diers. The ten chil-dren of the King and Queen came next. They had hearts and did a skip and a jump and were hold-ing hands. Next came the guests, most of whom were Kings and Queens.

Alice saw the White Rab-bit, with them. He did not seem at ease, though he smiled at all that was said. He didn't see Alice as he went by. Then came the Knave of Hearts with the King's crown on a red vel-vet cush-ion and last of all came The King and Queen of Hearts.

At first Alice thought she should lie down on her face like the three men at the rose tree, "but what would be the point of such a fine show," she thought, "if they all had to lie down and couldn't see it?"



So she stood and wait-ed. When they came to her, they all stopped and looked at her.

The Queen said in a stern voice, "Who is this?"

She spoke to the Knave of Hearts, who bowed and smiled but did not speak.

"Fool!" said the Queen with a toss of her head; then she turned to Alice and asked, "What is your name, child?"

"My name is Alice, so please your ma-jes-ty," said Alice, but she thought to her-self, "Why they are just a pack of cards. I don't need to fear them."

"And who are these?" asked the Queen, as she point-ed to the three men who still lay on the ground at the rose tree (for you see, they still all lay on their faces so their backs were the same as the rest of the pack.) She could not tell who they were.

"How should I know?" said Alice, and thought it strange that she should speak to a Queen in that way.

The Queen turned red with rage, glared at her for a mo-ment, then screamed, "Off with her head! Off..."

"Non-sense!" said Alice, in a loud, firm voice, and the Queen said no more.

The King laid his hand on the Queen's arm and said, "Think, my dear, she is just a child!"

The Queen turned from him with a scowl and said to the Knave, "Turn them o-ver!"

The Knave did so, with one foot.

"Get up!" said the Queen in a loud voice. The three men jumped up and bowed to the King and Queen.

"Stop that!" screamed the Queen; "you make me diz-zy."

Then she turned to the rose tree and asked, "What have you been do-ing here?"

"May it please your ma-jes-ty," said Two, and went down on one knee as he spoke, "we were try-ing..."

"I see!" said the Queen, who in the mean time had seen that some of the ros-es were paint-ed red and some were still white.

"Off with their heads!" and the crowd moved on, while three of the sol-diers stayed to cut off the heads of the poor men, who ran to Al-ice for help.

"They will not hurt you," she said, as she hid them in a large flow-er pot that stood near.

The three sol-diers walked a-round and looked for them for a while, then marched off.

"Are their heads cut off?" shout-ed the Queen.

"Their heads are gone, if it pleases your ma-jes-ty," the sol-dier shouted back.

"That's right!" shouted the Queen.

"Can you play cro-quet?" she asked Al-ice.

"Yes," shouted Al-ice.

"Come on then!" roared the Queen, and Al-ice went with them.

"It's... it's a fine day!" said a weak voice at her side. It was the White Rab-bit who peeped up in-to her face.

"Yes," said Al-ice: "where's the Duch-ess?"

"Hush! Hush!" said the Rab-bit, in a low tone. He looked back as he spoke, then step-ping up on tip-toe, put his mouth close to her ear and whis-pered, "She's to have her head cut off."

"What for?" asked Al-ice.

"Did you say, 'What a pit-y!'" the Rab-bit asked.

"No, I didn't," said Al-ice: "I don't think it is a pit-y at all. I said 'What for?'"

"She boxed the Queen's ears..." the Rab-bit be-gan.

Alice gave a little scream of joy.

"Oh, hush!" the Rabbit whispered in a great fright.

"The Queen will hear you! You see she came late, and the Queen said..."

"Each one to his place!" shouted the Queen in a loud voice, and people ran this way and that, in a hurry and the game began.

Alice thought she had never seen such a strange croquet ground in all her life.

The field was all lumpy. The balls were live hedgehogs, the mallets were live birds, and the soldiers bent down and stood on their hands and feet to make the arches.

At first Alice found it hard to use a live bird for a mallet. It was a large bird with a long neck and long legs.

She tucked it under her arm with its legs down, but just as she got its neck straight and thought she could give the ball a good hit with its head, the bird would twist its neck around and give her such a strange look, that she could not help laughing.



By the time she got its head down a-gain, the hedge-hog had crawled off.

Then there was al-ways a lump or a hole in the way of where she want-ed to send her ball. Then she couldn't find an arch in its place, for the sold-iers would stand up and walk off when they liked. Al-ice soon made up her mind that it was a ve-ry hard game.

The Queen was soon in a rage and stomped a-bout, shout-ing "Off with his head!" or "Off with her head!"

Al-ice did not feel good. True, she had not as yet, felt the an-ger of the Queen, but she did not know how soon it would be be-fore it would be her turn; "and then," she thought, "what will I do?"

As she was look-ing a-round for a way to leave with-out be-ing seen, she saw a strange thing in the air. At last she saw it was a grin, and she said to her-self, "It's the Cat; now I shall have some one to talk to."

"How do you do?" said the Cat as soon as its whole mouth showed.

Al-ice wait-ed un-til she saw the eyes, then nod-ded. "It's no use speak-ing un-til its ears are there, or at least one of them." Soon the whole head came in view, so she put down her bird and told him a-bout the game.



She was glad that she had some one who was pleased to talk to her.

"I don't think they are at all fair in this game," said Al-ice; "and they all talk so loud-ly, that I can't hear my-self speak... and they don't have any rules to play by; and if they have, they don't use them... and I don't like us-ing an-i-mals to play with".

"The arch I have to go through next just walked off to the far end of the ground... and I should have struck the Queen's hedge-hog, but it ran off when it saw that mine was near-er!"

"How do you like the Queen?" asked the Cat in a low voice.

"Not at all," said Al-ice, "she's so..." Just then she saw that the Queen was stand-ing be-hind her and had heard what she had said; so she went on, "sure to win the game that it's not worth-while ev-en play-ing." The Queen smiled and walked by.

"Who are you talk-ing to?" said the King, as he came up to Al-ice and stared at the Cat's head as if it were a strange sight.

"It's a friend of mine... a Che-shire Cat," said Al-ice.

"I don't like the look of it at all," said the King; "it may kiss my hand if it likes."

"I don't want to," said the Cat.

"Don't be rude; and don't look at me like that," said the King.

"A cat may look at a king," said Alice. "I've read that in some book, but I can't tell where."

"Well, it must go from here," said the King in a firm voice, and he called to the Queen, who was near.

"My dear! I wish you would see that this cat leaves here at once!"

The Queen had only one cure for all ills, great and small. "Off with his head," she said, and did not even look around.

"I'll get the soldier myself," said the King, and rushed off.

Alice thought she might as well go back, and see how the game went on. She heard the Queen's voice in the distance, as she screamed with rage, "Off with his head! He has missed his turn!"

Alice did not like the look of things at all. The game was so mixed up she could not tell when her turn was. So she went back to talk some more with her friend, the Cat. When she reached the place, she found quite a crowd around him.

The King, the Queen and the soldier who had come with the axe, to cut off the Cat's head, were all talking at once, while the others stood with closed lips and looked quite worried.

As soon as they saw Alice, they wanted her to say which one was right, but as they all spoke at once, she found it hard to make out what they said.

The soldier said that you couldn't cut off a head unless there was a body to cut it off from. He had never had to do such a thing, and he wouldn't start now. The King said that all heads could be cut off, and that he should not talk non-sense. The Queen said, if something wasn't done now, heads should come off all round. (It was this last threat that had made the whole crowd look so scared as Alice came up.)



Alice could only think to say, "Ask the Duchess, it's her Cat."

"Fetch her here," the Queen said to the soldier, and off he went like a rocket.

The Cat's head started to fade out of sight as soon as he was gone, and by the time he had come back with the Duchess, it could not be seen at all.