

CSI - WONDERLAND

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Wade Bradford

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Heuer Publishing LLC, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

ISBN: 978-1-61588-276-2

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PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

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SYNOPSIS: Wonderland: It's exciting, it's adventurous and the Queen of Hearts is freaking scary. It's a strange world in which the Queen is always right and even when she's not, she's chopping off heads. You may have been down the rabbit hole on another visit, but this time, the King's head has been removed without the Queen's consent and she's stark raving, uncontrollably mad. When Alice is arrested and returned to Wonderland for attempted murder of the Queen, she becomes caught up in a wild and ridiculous murder-mystery in a fantasy land ruled by a madwoman. It's up to Alice, the CSI investigators and the Mad Hatter to find the culprit or suffer the Queen's wrath. Filled with fast-paced humor and fun-to-stage fantasy, *CSI Wonderland* is certain to enchant audiences and actors alike.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(FLEXIBLE CAST OF 23: 5 MEN, 6 WOMEN, 12 EITHER, DOUBLING POSSIBLE, 2-6 EXTRAS)

ALICE (f).....	143 lines
TINK (f)	87 lines
MURK (m).....	77 lines
THE QUEEN (f).....	134 lines
THE KING OF HEARTS (m).....	17 lines
THE WHITE RABBIT (m)	46 lines
TWEEDLE DEE (m/f).....	14 lines
TWEEDLE DUM (m/f).....	20 lines
THE DUCHESS OF DIAMONDS (f).....	40 lines
THE KNAVE OF HEARTS (m).....	44 lines
THE MAD HATTER (m).....	123 lines
BEAVER (f).....	13 lines
THE CHESHIRE CAT (f).....	33 lines
LAB RAT #1 (m/f).....	9 lines
LAB RAT #2 (m/f).....	8 lines
HUMPTY DUMPTY (m/f)	6 lines
THE BAKER / EX-EXECUTIONER (m/f)	41 lines
THE CATERPILLAR (m/f).....	10 lines

- SNAIL #1** (m/f)3 lines
SNAIL #2 (m/f)3 lines
ANT SOLDIER #1 (m/f)3 lines
ANT SOLDIER #2 (m/f)3 lines
THE MARCH HARE (m/f)9 lines
THE QUEENS ROYAL GUARDS (2-6 EXTRAS)
ATTACKING FLOWERS AND VINES (2-6 EXTRAS, WHICH CAN
BE PUPPETS OR PEOPLE IN COSTUME)

PROPS

- Assorted teacups, dishes, and tea pots
- Plush toy pig
- Royal crowns (2 or 3)
- Trumpet / horn instrument
- Serving tray
- Fake guillotine blade (often covered by a white cloth)
- Cricket bat (or wooden paddle / baseball bat) with the words “Mad Hatter” written on it.
- A large piece of black paper (with white lettering)
- The Queen’s gloves
- Evidence bags / small, sealable plastic bags
- Table cloth
- Plastic foam bats (pool “noodles” could work also)
- Large elaborate hat (for Mad Hatter)
- Blindfolds
- Fake executioner’s ax, stained with bright red raspberry jelly.
- A life-sized dummy of a headless king (It can look very cartoony)
- A wristwatch (attached to the king’s headless body)
- Two small vials
- Optional: A wheeled dolly, or something to roll out the Mad Hatter when he is in the custody of the guards.
- Restraining mask (ala *Silence of the Lambs*)
- A wrapped present (big enough to contain a human head)
- Tink’s phone
- Humpty’s phone
- Baker’s table and utensils
- Scones

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- Cloth / burlap bag filled with fake money
- Fake king head
- A picture that can hang on a wall, crooked (Note: If the stage does not allow for this, choose any object that could be shifted out of place. Example: A jar of pencils tipped over.)
- Notepad, writing utensils
- Tea cakes
- Dodge balls / playground balls
- Shoe-shine brush / rag
- Towel
- Two blow-dart guns
- Lemonade stand / cups / 2 pitchers
- Popcorn
- Teddy bear
- Headless teddy bear
- Table or counter in which the King's head can appear
- Scroll of paper
- Four tennis rackets
- Various chairs and benches

SET

The set of *CSI: Wonderland* can be very simple or wildly elaborate. It all depends upon the ambition, artistry, and budget of those involved in the production. Later on, during Act One, there should be a mad tea party scene, complete with table, chairs, and a wide assortment of teacups and teapots. Also, there should be an area representing the Queen's chambers. This can either be off to one side of the stage or could be played in front of a curtain. Opposite of the Queen's chamber there should be space available for various other scenes. These can be played in front of a curtain as well, if the director sees fit.

BY WADE BRADFORD

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: A PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: QUEEN'S CHAMBER

ACT ONE, SCENE 3: MAD TEA PARTY

ACT ONE, SCENE 4: CSI LAB / HUMPTY DUMPTY / BAKER'S SHOP

ACT ONE, SCENE 5: GARDEN

ACT ONE, SCENE 6: QUEEN'S CHAMBER

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO, SCENE 1: CATERPILLAR'S HOME

ACT TWO, SCENE 2: MAD TEA PARTY

ACT TWO, SCENE 3: QUEEN'S CHAMBER

ACT TWO, SCENE 4: QUEEN'S CHAMBER

ACT TWO, SCENE 5: QUEEN'S CHAMBER

Dedication

To the Mary Cook and the Eklund Family.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE:

A psychologist's office. (Keep it minimal.) Lights rise on ALICE. She sits in a chair, leaning back, trying to relax as she recounts memories from her childhood. Upstage in the shadows, a professional-looking woman is taking notes, her face is hidden by a pad of paper.

ALICE: Curiouser and curiouser. That's what I continually said to myself as I floated down the rabbit hole. Wonderland was so strange, and yet it seemed so real. The March Hare and the Mad Hatter. The Caterpillar with his constant questions. And the Cheshire Cat who would suddenly appear only to disappear and reappear at the perfectly wrong moment. But worst of all, was the Queen. Long afterwards I had dreams in which it seemed as if she was still standing before me, shouting her commands, "Off with her head!" My goodness. All my childhood, I had been afraid of nothing but a pack of cards. I truly believed that hateful world of Wonderland was real, that the people and creatures were real. It has taken years of therapy, but I am finally ready to face reality. Thank you, Doctor Taggart. Thanks to you, I can at long last say that Wonderland does not exist.

WOMAN [TINK]: Wrong.

The professional-looking woman behind the note pad reveals herself. She is not a psychologist, she is actually a CSI agent. By the way, CSI in this case stands for Crime Scene Imagination. Her name is AGENT TINK, and when she stands up the audience will notice that she has fairy wings.

ALICE: You're not Doctor Taggart.

TINK: That is correct. It was the other part that was wrong.

ALICE: What other part?

TINK: The part about Wonderland. It does exist. And I've been assigned to take you back there...Alice.

ALICE: Who are you?

TINK: I am Agent Tink—C.S.I.

ALICE: C.S.I.?

TINK: Crime Scene Imagination. We handle any crime that takes place in the Land of Make Believe.

ALICE: I don't believe it.

TINK: I'm taking you into custody.

ALICE: And just how do you plan on doing that?

TINK: With pixie dust. *(Blows some glitter.)* And hand cuffs.

ALICE: You have fairy wings? But that only happens in story books. This is not happening! This is all just a dream.

TINK: Lady, if this was a dream, I would be on a beach rubbing suntan lotion on Prince Charming. *(Optional alternate line: "Lady, if this was a dream, I would be sun-tanning on a beach, but instead I'm in a dingy office in the middle of _____ [insert name of town/city].")*

ALICE: I want to see Doctor Taggart!

TINK: My partner Agent Murk has taken care of her.

ALICE: What have you done?

TINK: She's perfectly fine. *(As she speaks, LT. MURK enters, cradling something in his arms, perhaps hidden by a blanket or towel.)* He just made her fall asleep with a gentle sprinkling of pixie dust.

MURK: Actually, it was more of a spray than a sprinkle. And instead of pixie dust, I accidentally used piggy dust. *(MURK reveals what is in his arms, a plush toy/puppet pig which now squeals and flails in his grasp.)* Sorry, doctor! The effects won't last long. You should be fine by lunchtime. *(MURK tosses the pig off stage.)*

TINK: Unless someone makes lunch out of her.

MURK: You must be Alice. Nice to meet you. That's a lovely dress.

TINK: Lt. Murk, do you remember what we talked about?

MURK: Oh, right, right, sorry. *(To ALICE.)* I promised Agent Tink that this time she would be the good cop and I would be the bad cop. Let me try again. You must be Alice. It's not nice to meet you. Your dress is as ugly as your face. Which is really quite pretty. Oops. I'm bad at being bad. Is that good?

TINK: We don't have time for this. We're late for a very important date...with justice. *(TINK turns ALICE, seemingly putting handcuffs on her. The two agents move ALICE toward center stage.)*

ALICE: Where are we going?

MURK: Doesn't this look familiar? We're on the edge of the rabbit hole.

ALICE: The rabbit hole? Oh no...it can't be.

MURK: *(Holding onto ALICE's hand.)* We jump on three.

MURK/TINK: One...two...

ALICE: Oh please no—

MURK/TINK: Three! (*They step forward then act as if they are falling in slow motion.*) Aaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh!

As the three converse, they continue to pantomime falling in slow motion. Perhaps in the background some effect is used to show their descent. (Consider using a projection, if possible, or simply have actors in black make objects such as lamps and clocks rise upwards in the background.)

ALICE: Why have you taken me back to this nightmarish land? What are the charges?

TINK: Attempted regicide.

MURK: I did that once. It's when you try to make pasta and it all goes horribly wrong. Oh wait, that's attempted ravioli.

TINK: The Queen of Hearts says you threatened her life. Or don't you remember calling her nothing but a pack of cards while you turned into a giant and tried to destroy her?

ALICE: I remember all of this, unfortunately. Except there is something different about this rabbit hole. I don't remember it being quite this dark.

TINK: Oh don't worry. It's about to get darker.

Blackout.

ALICE screams. End of scene. Play exciting suspenseful music until the lights come up.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE:

Lights rise on the QUEEN's chamber, a place where she may try on different crowns. As suggested by Lewis Carroll's book, the QUEEN is quick tempered and prone to yelling. But she can also be charming and sweet when she wants to be. Right now, she doesn't want to be. As soon as the lights come up she gasps:

QUEEN: Murder!

The KING pokes his head through an upstage curtain. It is important that we see only his head.

KING: Are you in danger my queen?

QUEEN: This crown feels like murder!

KING: My sweet, you frightened me. With the threatening rumors heard round the kingdom, you should not use such words as "murder" so loosely.

QUEEN: The jewels poke my royal forehead. It is practically killing me.

KING: Then perhaps you should try a different crown. Besides, the only truly precious jewel in this room is you.

QUEEN: Oh, how sweet - oh, my king, what are you doing here? You are supposed to be preparing for our Un-anniversary Party! Go away at once! I command you!

KING: You cannot command me; I am the king. I shall stay here as long as I want. *(He disappears behind the curtain.)*

QUEEN: *(Trying on a new crown.)* Oh, this crown feels just as murderous! Where is the Mad Hatter? His head shall roll for this!

KING: *(Pops head back in.)* He is hosting our Un-anniversary Party. Which reminds me—

QUEEN: *(Angrily.)* You didn't forget to buy me an un-anniversary present did you, King darling?

KING: No, no, of course, not, I have something very special for you, um, I better go now.

QUEEN: *(Outraged.)* You did forget!

KING: See you at the party, my love! Kiss, kiss! (*He quickly ducks behind the curtain.*)

QUEEN: If you weren't the king I would have you executed! (*She flings open the curtains but the KING is already gone.*)

The WHITE RABBIT enters.

WHITE RABBIT: Message for your royal majesty. (*The WHITE RABBIT plays a trumpet terribly.*)

QUEEN: That's the best you have ever played.

WHITE RABBIT: Thank you, your majesty.

QUEEN: (*She opens up a letter written on black paper with white letters. She gasps in terror.*) Another death threat! Unsigned! Someone is plotting to assassinate me, Rabbit. But why? Who would want to kill lovable, majestic me?

MURK and TINK enter with ALICE in custody.

QUEEN: (*Pointing and raging at ALICE.*) OFF WITH HER HEAD!

TINK: Is this the Alice you have been looking for?

QUEEN: That is most definitely her. I want her head on a platter.

WHITE RABBIT: But your majesty—

QUEEN: Don't just stand there, go fetch a platter! (*The WHITE RABBIT runs away, she hits him at least once. She suddenly sneezes.*)

ALICE: Gesundheit.

QUEEN: I must be allergic to your head. Off with it! Send in the executioner!

MURK: Your majesty, Miss Alice falls under our jurisdiction, which means she has the right to a fair trial.

QUEEN: Of course she shall have a fair trial. After we chop off her head.

TWEEDLE DEE and TWEEDLE DUM enter. They should be dressed identically, even if physically they don't quite look the same.

QUEEN: You are not the executioner!

DEE: Tweedle Dee

DUM: And Tweedle Dum.

DEE/DUM: At your service, your majesty!

QUEEN: Oh, these two idiots.

DEE: We regret to inform you—

DUM: That the executioner—

DEE/DUM: Has retired from duty!

QUEEN: My beloved executioner has been retired? By whose order?

DEE/DUM: By order of the king!

QUEEN: I'll kill him! Where is the king now?

DEE: He has gone to The Mad Hatter's.

DUM: To join the festivities!

QUEEN: He is hiding from me.

DEE/DUM: (*Stammering nervously. Ad-lib.*) Oh, I, we, certainly he would never, um—

QUEEN: Be gone from my sight! (*DEE and DUM leave at once.*) Very well, insolent child, you shall have to perform the beheading yourself.

TINK: Ma'am, are you sure this is the Alice who attempted to kill you?

QUEEN: It was many years ago, but yes I am certain. I will never forget how she refused to let me chop off her head. I ended up screaming and shouting so much I nearly died of a heart attack.

MURK: I'm afraid we can't charge her for that.

ALICE: I told you I have done nothing wrong!

TINK: Wait, how did you get out of your handcuffs?

MURK: She must have set herself free when we were in the dark!

QUEEN: See! I am certain she has been sending me these threatening letters! She has been plotting to murder me all along. Look at this. It is written in blood! (*The QUEEN reveals a large letter written on black paper. The letters are written in white. The letters and words are all mixed up.*)

ALICE: But the letters are white. Blood is red!

QUEEN: Are you quite certain?

ALICE: Yes.

QUEEN: Have you heard of red blood cells?

ALICE: Of course.

QUEEN: What about white blood cells?

MURK: Good point.

ALICE: But—

QUEEN: So now you've learned how stupid you are. You're welcome.

TINK: *(Examining the letter.)* This is cryptic.

ALICE: The letters are all mixed up.

QUEEN: Yes, but I have unscrambled them:

*Dear Dumpy Queen,
Your life is in my hands.
I owe you 4 cracks on your majestic head
Signed, the My-T*

TINK: My... T?

QUEEN: The Mighty Alice, no doubt!

TINK: We'll take this note back to the lab rats. *(Exits.)*

MURK: In the meantime, we'll make certain your security has increased.

QUEEN: *(Referring to ALICE.)* And keep a watchful eye on this one. She is an assassin, make no mistake about it.

The WHITE RABBIT returns, carrying a platter covered in white cloth.

WHITE RABBIT: I have returned, your majesty. I believe you wanted a platter?

QUEEN: Why should I want a platter if I cannot put a head upon it?

MURK: Aside from Miss Alice, do you have any other enemies?

QUEEN: Of course. I am the queen. Everyone is my enemy. *(The WHITE RABBIT plays the trumpet. This time a sound effect makes it seem as though the trumpet plays beautifully.)* Now you've gotten worse.

Two people step forward as the WHITE RABBIT introduces them.

WHITE RABBIT: Your majesty, I present to you, The Duchess of Diamonds and the Knave of Hearts.

QUEEN: *(Grumbling to MURK.)* Ugh—the last person I want to see is my horrible - *(The DUCHESS approaches her. She becomes pleasant.)* - sister! How pleasant to see you!

The WHITE RABBIT exits.

DUCHESS: We thought that we would escort you to the Tea Party.
Isn't that right, Knave?

KNAVE: Absolutely. May I kiss your royal hand?

QUEEN: But of course!

He chortles as he is about to kiss her.

DUCHESS: Wait, dear sister, why is there white powder on your glove?

QUEEN: Powder? Oh, it must have been from that ghastly letter.

ALICE: More white blood cells?

MURK: Let me see this powder, your highness. Hmm. Do you mind if I take this to the lab?

QUEEN: *(Taking off the gloves.)* Keep them. Anything soiled is not worthy of the queen's hand.

MURK seals the gloves in a plastic bag.

DUCHESS: Ha! Still acting like a baby!

QUEEN: I am older than you!

DUCHESS: You certainly look it!

KNAVE: Now, now, ladies—you are both in the prime of your youth.
(Flirting with the QUEEN.) Especially you, your majesty.

DUCHESS: *(Trying to interrupt their flirtation.)* Ahem. Is that a new crown, sister?

QUEEN: Yes, do you like it? The other one practically killed its wearer half to death. *(Hands her the old crown.)*

DUCHESS: Then may I have it?

QUEEN: Why yes. *(Muttering.)* Maybe it will finish the job.

KNAVE: In fact, why don't you try it on and see how it fits? *(He pushes the DUCHESS through the curtain, and urges MURK and ALICE to follow.)* And these two can provide an objective opinion.

ALICE: An objective opinion is an oxymoron.

QUEEN: You're an oxymoron! *(Shoves them through the curtain.)*

KNAVE: I thought they would never leave. *(He kisses her hand, kissing up her sleeve.)*

QUEEN: We mustn't keep meeting like this—what will people think?

KNAVE: Why should people think anything?

QUEEN: They usually don't, I suppose. People are so brainless.

KNAVE: Especially that husband of yours—

ALICE pokes her head outside the curtain to eavesdrop.

QUEEN: Enough silliness.

KNAVE: Why won't you run away with me?

From the other side of the stage, the WHITE RABBIT leans in, pointing his long ears toward their conversation.

QUEEN: The first reason is the king.

KNAVE: Oh, but what if we eliminated that reason?

QUEEN: How dare you make such a suggestion...but since you bring it up...then I suppose I would be free...free to pursue the one I have secretly desired all of these years.

The WHITE RABBIT reacts to this idea, shocked. He quickly leaves. ALICE ducks behind the curtain before she can be seen.

KNAVE: Oh my queen...do you really feel that way about me?

QUEEN: I feel that way, but not about you. *(She laughs cruelly.)*

KNAVE: You can be so cruel. I love it!

The DUCHESS dramatically opens the curtains.

DUCHESS: This crown fits me wonderfully! And now, dear sister, let us escort you to the festivities.

KNAVE: I believe they have already begun the game of Blind Man's Battle Royale.

QUEEN: Then by all means, let us proceed; that foolish king of mine is already ahead of us.

DUCHESS: *(To ALICE.)* That king of hers certainly is a fool, if only for choosing the wrong sister.

SOUND CUE: *Transitional music.*

They exit stage right to proceed to the TEA PARTY. Depending on the set design, the curtains might open to reveal the TEA PARTY scene, or the lights might go out in order to bring out the set pieces.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE:

A long tea party table is set center stage. There are many colorful teapots, cups and saucers placed about the table. There is also something under the table cloth, a large object that looks rather like a dead body. Feet might be poking out at one end of the table cloth. This “dead body” prop will be described later. A banner reads: “Happy Un-anniversary.” Several characters wander about the stage. They are members of her Royal Majesty’s court, the CARD GUARDS: The Three, Four, and Five of Spades are blindfolded and carry plastic foam bats. [NOTE: Choose material that is very easy to see through so that nobody blindly tumbles off the stage.] They stagger about, laughing and trying to hit one another. They exit as TWEEDLE DEE and TWEEDLE DUM enter from opposite sides.

DUM: Where are you, Tweedle Dee?

DEE: Are you there, Tweedle Dum?

DUM: I’m not sure where I am.

DEE: Let’s join forces.

DUM: Good idea, if anyone hits you, I will hit them.

DEE: And I will do the same for you.

They blindly circle each other, and then walk backwards bumping into each other’s backs. They shriek in surprise. TWEEDLE DEE hits TWEEDLE DUM with the bat.

DUM: Ouch! Someone hit me!

DEE: I’ll get him back for you! *(DEE hits DUM again.)*

DUM: Ouch! I’ve been attacked again! *(DUM flails his bat, hitting DEE.)*

DEE: Yowch! Now I’m being attacked!

DUM: I shall avenge you! *(Hits DEE repeatedly.)*

DEE: Yowch! Save me, Tweedle Dum! *(Hits DUM repeatedly.)*

DUM: Defend me, Tweedle Dee!

They strike each other as they exit the stage, passing the MAD HATTER as he enters. The HATTER wears colorful clothing and a large elaborate hat. He is blindfolded and carrying an axe. The blade seems to be stained with blood. The CARD CHARACTERS wander across the stage in the background as a BEAVER character enters. The BEAVER is blindfolded but does not carry a bat.

HATTER: Oh, this may just be my best tea party ever! Is everyone having a good time? Has the March Hare arrived yet?

BEAVER: *(Holding her belly.)* Oh, Mr. Hatter! I am so full! Never before have I had such a delightful feast.

HATTER: A feast? But Miss Beaver, we haven't even served tea and cakes yet. *(He pulls away his blindfold.)* Wait a moment, did you devour your cricket bat?

BEAVER: Oh - was that what it was? *(Wanders off stage.)* My compliments to the chef.

HATTER: *(Calling after her.)* You really ought to be more careful, Miss Beaver. Cricket bats have been known to cause sore stomachs, not to mention headaches. *(BEAVER and the other characters have wandered off stage, leaving the MAD HATTER by himself.)* That's why I always make certain that my cricket bat— *(He holds up the axe, seeing it for the very first time.)* You're not my cricket bat! You're an axe. Why are you covered in blood? And why am I holding you? Oh, this is not good, not good! This appears very, very bad, so I better make you disappear before the Queen gets here. *(Running back and forth in a panic.)* Oh, where to hide you, where to hide you. You won't fit into a teapot. I know! Under the table cloth! *(He lifts up the table cloth, revealing the legs and boots of the KING.)* Oh, there's already someone there; I beg your pardon. *(About to find another place, does a double take.)* Wait a moment! What are you and who are you doing here? I mean, who are you and what are you doing here? Why don't you answer me? If you can't speak then go ahead and say so. Look, good sir, you are ruining my tea party! *(As he says the last phrase he grabs each leg and shakes them up and down.)* If you won't move, I'll move you. *(He moves downstage in front of the table, yanking the gloved hand of the body into plain view.)* Why, this glove... this is the king's glove.

And the king's hand! And the king's arm. (*Feels the wrist.*) There's no pulse! (*Listens to the KING's wrist watch.*) His watch has stopped ticking. (*Listens to his chest.*) And so is his heart. The king is dead! Someone has killed the king. Who would do such a terrible thing? (*He looks again at the bloody axe.*) Apparently me.

The WHITE RABBIT enters, still carrying the tray.

WHITE RABBIT: Her majesty the queen!

HATTER: Eeek! (*Hides the axe behind him.*)

TWEEDLE DEE, TWEEDLE DUM, the CARD GUARDS and the BEAVER all enter, taking off their blindfolds and standing in respectful attention.

ALL: All hail, her Majesty! (*They all bow.*)

QUEEN: Enough groveling. I am thirsty. Where is my tea?

HATTER: (*Hiding the legs and arms as best he can.*) No need to sit down, my queen, I'll bring it to you. (*The MAD HATTER brings her a cup of tea.*)

WHITE RABBIT: Wait a moment! I am the Royal Taste Tester.

HATTER: Taste tester?

QUEEN: In case it has been poisoned.

HATTER: That's quite an occupation.

WHITE RABBIT: There is nothing I would not do for my queen.

QUEEN: True - rabbits are bred to obey royal orders without questioning whoever wears the crown. Drink.

WHITE RABBIT: Yes, my queen. (*He sips the tea, tasting it. At first he likes the taste then he suddenly gasps.*) Ugh! (*Then, his expression changes from panic to calm.*) Oh wait, it's just lemon. (*Setting the tea cup on the tray.*) Your majesty, the tea is poison free.

QUEEN: (*No longer interested in the tea; looking around.*) Now, where is the king?

As the **QUEEN** talks, **TWEEDLE DUM** and others look in various directions for the **KING**, **TWEEDLE DEE** uncorks a vial and pours something into the tea cup. The **KNAVE** enters with the **DUCHESS** at his arm.

KNAVE: Lost something?

QUEEN: Where is the King?!

DUCHESS: Has the king run off again? I cannot imagine why.

ALICE enters, pleading with LT. MURK.

ALICE: Please believe me, Agent Murk. I am not a threat to the queen or anyone else. I must be returned to the real world at once or I shall go mad.

While LT. MURK delivers the following lines, and everyone else is preoccupied with looking for the KING, TWEEDLE DUM sneaks behind the WHITE RABBIT, produces a mysterious vial and pours something into the tea.

MURK: I don't see any problem with that. I just have to get permission from Agent Tink and then we'll send you back to the surface. In the meantime, join me for a cup of tea?

ALICE: If memory serves, these tea parties never end well.

QUEEN: I'll take that tea now, Rabbit.

WHITE RABBIT: Yes, your majesty.

The WHITE RABBIT offers her the cup from the tray. She drinks it. Suddenly she stands up straight, looking almost possessed.

QUEEN: *(As if something terrible has happened.)* OH MY WORD!
(Suddenly pleased.) This is a bloody good cup of tea. My husband does not know what he is missing.

HATTER: *(Nearly in tears.)* No, he doesn't. And he never will.

The CHESHIRE CAT enters. She can be dressed like a hip, cool cat. As long as there are cat ears and perhaps whiskers and/or tail, everything else about the costume can be human-like. She carries a wrapped gift.

CHESHIRE: Well, well, well, this looks like quite a Merry Un-anniversary.

QUEEN: No cats!

CHESHIRE: I am merely delivering a present.

QUEEN: Of yours?

CHESHIRE: Why would I deliver a present to myself?

QUEEN: From whom then?

CHESHIRE: It is definitely from the king.

QUEEN: Who is it for?

CHESHIRE: It is definitely for the king.

QUEEN: As usual, you are being unusual. It's at the top of my list to get to the bottom of this. Where is the king? I demand that he make sense of all this nonsense.

WHITE RABBIT: *(Pointing to a small table upstage.)* Allow me to show you where to set the present. *(The WHITE RABBIT leads the CHESHIRE CAT and the present off stage.)*

DUCHESS: What is wrong with the table cloth? Why is everything so lumpy?

KNAVE: Terribly lumpy! And the biscuits are out of reach.

MURK: Try being on this end of the table. These boots stink.

QUEEN: Boots? What are boots doing on the table?

KNAVE: *(Pulling out the KING's hand and arm.)* Perhaps for the same reason there are gloves.

DUCHESS: *(Delighted.)* Oh, I know who is underneath the table cloth. Our very own King of Hearts.

KNAVE: He must be playing one of your jolly party games, eh Hatter?

DUCHESS: Hide and seek! We found you, your highness.

QUEEN: *(To the CARD GUARDS.)* Clear the table!

The CARD GUARDS, BEAVER, TWEEDLE DEE and TWEEDLE DUM

clear the table of plates and tea pots, so that only the table cloth and the body underneath remain. They exit. ALICE, the KNAVE, the DUCHESS, the WHITE RABBIT, the MAD HATTER, LT. MURK, and the QUEEN remain.

ALICE: Is the king all right? He is awfully still?

QUEEN: Mad Hatter, if you have hurt the king in any way...

HATTER: *(Peeking underneath the table cloth.)* Your highness, I can guarantee that I have not harmed a hair on your husband's head.

QUEEN: How can you be so sure?

HATTER: Because he doesn't have one!

The KNAVE pulls off the table cloth, lifting the body upright. The "King's body" prop has legs, arms, a torso, but it does not have a head. Depending on how gruesome you want to be, there may be bloodstains around the collar. The KNAVE lifts up the body so that the headless KING is in full view of everyone. Everyone freaks out. The KNAVE tosses the body to the DUCHESS who screams and tosses it to ALICE who screams and tosses it to MURK who screams and tosses it to AGENT TINK as she enters the stage. She catches it, looking disgusted.

TINK: What kind of sick party game are you people playing?!

QUEEN: My husband! Someone ran off with his head!

TINK: Where was the body discovered? *(TINK tosses the headless body back to MURK who sets it back on the table.)*

MURK: Right here.

TINK: Where is his head?

QUEEN: We don't know - that's the problem!

TINK: It's all right, ma'am - we're experts. We'll use our forensic skills to find out exactly what happened.

MURK: *(Examining the body with a magnifying glass.)* Someone chopped off his head.

QUEEN: *(Sarcastic.)* Bravo. *(Turning furious.)* Anyone can see that, you idiot!

MURK: Sorry, your majesty. But if you remain calm, then we can search the area for clues.

QUEEN: You mean a clue like the BLOODY AX held by the Mad

Hatter?!

HATTER: Oh my! *(In a panic, he tosses the ax to ALICE, who tosses it to MURK who tosses it to TINK.)*

TINK: Lt. Murk, place the Mad Hatter under arrest.

HATTER: But I am innocent!

MURK: Gosh, Tink, he says he's innocent.

HATTER: I really, really am.

MURK: See?

TINK: Murk! Man up. Remember?

MURK: Oh, yeah. Bad cop instead of good cop. *(Suddenly mean. Grabs the HATTER by the arm.)* You're coming with me!

HATTER: My you're strong. You must work out.

MURK: *(Suddenly friendly.)* Thanks for noticing. *(MURK and HATTER exit.)*

KNAVE: The Mad Hatter - a murderer.

DUCHESS: How dreadful. *(The KNAVE and the DUCHESS exit.)*

WHITE RABBIT: I don't believe it.

ALICE: Neither do I.

QUEEN: Then how do you explain the blood?

ALICE: *(Holding up the ax.)* You mean this? *(She licks the red stuff on the ax.)*

QUEEN: *(Horrified.)* Cannibal!

ALICE: It's not blood. It's raspberry jelly.

QUEEN: What? *(Licks the ax.)* Oh my, that's delicious. *(Licks it some more.)*

TINK: I better take this to the lab rats to investigate. *(TINK starts to exit. MURK reenters. They quietly confer and then TINK leaves the stage as MURK listens to the QUEEN's conversation.)*

ALICE: So...if the Mad Hatter didn't kill the king, who did?

QUEEN: It was you! You wretched girl! You killed my husband!

ALICE: How could I have done it?

QUEEN: Where were you at twelve past thirteen?

ALICE: That's not even a real time.

MURK: Actually, that's about the time it went pitch black dark in the rabbit hole. We couldn't see you at all.

QUEEN: Aha!

MURK: And you escaped from the handcuffs! Miss Alice, you might

be in serious trouble. Wait - your majesty, how do you know that the victim was murdered at twelve minutes past thirteen?

QUEEN: Behold! *(She raises the arm of the body. There is a watch on its wrist.)* As an Un-Anniversary present, I bought my husband a deathwatch.

ALICE: A deathwatch?

MURK: It stops when the heart of the watch wearer stops beating.

ALICE: And may I ask her majesty where she was at the time?

QUEEN: You impertinent girl!

MURK: I'm afraid it's a valid question, ma'am.

QUEEN: If you insist upon knowing, I can say with confidence that I was in my dressing room, trying on a few of my hundred different crowns.

MURK: Was anyone with you?

QUEEN: The White Rabbit!

The WHITE RABBIT enters, standing obediently.

QUEEN: At twelve past thirteen, you were attending to me, were you not?

WHITE RABBIT: If your majesty says so then so it must be.

QUEEN: Oh, and several minutes later, my husband arrived to check on me.

ALICE: The king?

QUEEN: I have no other husband.

ALICE: But according to the deathwatch, he was killed at thirteen minutes past twelve. How could he pop in for a visit several minutes after his death?

MURK: *(Impressed.)* Ooh, you're good at this. I better have the Lab Rats analyze the deathwatch. Maybe it doesn't work.

QUEEN: Come, Rabbit, since these two do not have the mental capacity to solve this mystery, then we shall have to obtain justice by our own means.

WHITE RABBIT: Yes, my noble Queen. *(The QUEEN and the WHITE RABBIT exit, noses turned up.)*

MURK: She was not happy.

ALICE: She never is.

MURK: I am starting to see why you didn't want to come back to this

place.

ALICE: Then you can understand why I want to go home as soon as possible.

MURK: Unfortunately, you're still sort of a suspect.

ALICE: (*Just a bit flirtatious.*) But Lt. Murk, surely you don't think...

MURK: Not very often, I don't. Hey, I do have an idea though. You seem really smart. You could help us with the investigation. You know, look for clues, search for eyewitnesses, that would really speed things along.

ALICE: You want me to wander around Wonderland in search of a murderer? No one is mad enough for that job.

Two CARD GUARDS wheel out the MAD HATTER. He is in a straight-jacket, and has a mask over part of his face, looking a bit like Hannibal Lecter from The Silence of the Lambs.

ALICE: I stand corrected.

MURK: Good luck. (*MURK and the CARD GUARDS exit. She takes off his mask.*)

HATTER: Sweet freedom! I never thought I would drink from these tea cups again. (*Frantically drinks several cups.*)

ALICE: You were only imprisoned a few moments ago.

HATTER: Yes, but they threatened to send me back unless I solve this baffling murder-mystery.

ALICE: I need to do the same thing.

HATTER: Well, it seems a happy partnership has just been formed.

ALICE: (*Undoing the HATTER's jacket.*) So, do you have any idea who is behind it?

HATTER: Once you think about it, the whole thing is quite elementary, my dear Alice. *I am the murderer.*

ALICE: You?

HATTER: Obviously. I carefully plotted the whole thing, blindfolding every guest so that no one could witness me lop the king's head off with an ax.

ALICE: But I thought you said you were innocent.

HATTER: I thought so too, so after I killed the king, I must have bashed my head against the table until I suffered from amnesia which is why I don't remember any of this, and so of course I was horrified to find the executioner's ax covered in royal blood. Case closed!

ALICE: It wasn't blood. It was raspberry jam.

HATTER: Case reopened! I knew I was innocent along!

ALICE: So, the real question is: If the ax didn't take off the king's head, what did?

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

Lighting / Scene Change. On the other side of the stage, TINK is examining the evidence.

TINK: If the ax didn't take off the king's head, what did? Hey lab rats! Have you come up with any good ideas?

Two LAB RATS enter. They are rats in lab coats.

LAB RAT #1: We have lots of good ideas.

LAB RAT #2: Cheese flavored coffee.

LAB RAT #1: Great idea.

LAB RAT #2: Chocolate covered cheddar.

LAB RAT #1: Excellent idea.

TINK: Do you have any good ideas related to the case?

LAB RAT #1: No, not really.

LAB RAT #2: We did get the results back on this message.

TINK: The queen is convinced the letters were written in blood.

LAB RAT #2: She was right.

LAB RAT #1: But not just any kind of blood. Egg blood.

TINK: Egg blood? *(Hands them the gloves of the QUEEN.)* Does it match the white dust on the queen's gloves?

LAB RAT #2: We'll check it out.

TINK: Thanks, you rats are the best.

LAB RAT #1: *(Waiting for a tip.)* Ahem.

TINK: (*Hands them each a slice of cheese.*) Oh right. Keep up the good work. (*The RATS exit as they nibble on their cheese slices.*) Egg blood? (*Dials on phone.*) Of course! Humpty Dumpty! I should have known!

Lights up on the other side of the stage. HUMPTY DUMPTY is talking on the phone. The costume and make-up could be elaborate—or, the costume could also be simple, or the character could be portrayed by a puppet or a voice-over. Whatever works for your cast and crew.

HUMPTY: Agent Tinkerbell. To what do I owe this rare pleasure?

TINK: Chop off any royal heads lately?

HUMPTY: Ha, ha! You crack me up!

TINK: No, I'm serious. You sent a threatening letter to the Queen.

HUMPTY: No, no, no, you've got the wrong egg.

TINK: Then what does this mean:

*Dear Dumpy Queen,
Your life is in my hands.
I owe you 4 cracks on your majestic head
Signed, the My-T*

HUMPTY: Oh no, no, no, no. You've got the words scrambled!

*Majestic Queen,
I owe you for the cracks on my head.
My life is in your hands.
Signed, Dumpty*

TINK: Oh. That does make more sense,

HUMPTY: Last week I had a pretty nasty fall. Fortunately, all the king's horses and all the king's men put me back together again. I just wanted the royal family to know how grateful I am. That's why I wrote the message in my own yoke-y blood.

TINK: Well, when you phrase it that way, it does sound innocent.

HUMPTY: Don't be embarrassed if you got egg on your face. It happens to me all the time!

The lights shift as TINK hangs up on HUMPTY DUMPTY. The LAB RATS return.

LAB RAT #1: We got the results back on the gloves.

TINK: Let me guess: Egg whites.

LAB RAT #2: No. Flour.

TINK: Flower?

LAB RAT #1: Like the kind that makes bread.

LAB RAT #2: Mmm, bread. Now I'm hungry again. *(Exiting.)*

LAB RAT #1: When are you not hungry?

The CHESHIRE CAT enters, carrying the wrapped present.

CHESHIRE: Pardon me, where do I put the queen's present? The White Rabbit sent me this way.

TINK: No. The party is back that way.

LAB RAT #2: Tink, do we have any—

CHESHIRE: Hello. *(The LAB RAT runs off stage, followed by the CHESHIRE CAT.)*

TINK: Don't eat my scientists! *(TINK gets back on the phone.)* Murk. I need you to talk with the Baker.

MURK: I'm already there.

TINK: How did you—

MURK: Just following up on a few leads. It turns out that the executioner who recently retired just opened up his own bakery.

TINK: How very suspicious. Find out why the queen's gloves are coated with his flour.

MURK: You got it.

TINK: And Murk - remember. Be firm. Be forceful. Don't let this guy intimidate you.

MURK: I know, I know. Firm. Forceful.

TINK: Tough and strong. You got this.

MURK: I got this. (*MURK hangs up and the lights fade away from TINK. Lights rise on the BAKER's shop, signified by a table and BAKER's utensils. NOTE: The BAKER could be male or female. The BAKER's back is to the audience, hunched over, so that we do not see his/her head. Working himself up.*) Firm, forceful, tough, and strong. (*Stepping into the BAKER's area.*) Mr. Baker, I have some questions for you, and you better tell me the truth!

The BAKER stands up, revealing that he/she is wearing an executioner's cowl that covers the face, with the exception of the eyes.

BAKER: (*Intimidating and scary.*) What do you want?!

MURK: (*Bravery gone in an instant.*) D-D-do you have any muffins?

BAKER: Nothing but scones!

MURK: No further questions. (*MURK runs away as he whimpers, bumping past ALICE and the MAD HATTER. He drops the QUEEN's glove on his way out.*)

ALICE: What is the matter with him?

HATTER: They must be out of muffins.

ALICE: (*Picking up the glove.*) Look what he dropped.

HATTER: Looks like we have even more questions for this so-called baker. (*They enter the BAKER's area.*)

BAKER: (*Murderous rage.*) What do you want?!

ALICE: Your scones smell lovely.

BAKER: (*Instantly changing attitude.*) Thank you, dearie. Have a free sample.

HATTER: Nice shop you have here. Settling into your new job?

BAKER: What new job? I'm a baker. I've always been a baker. It's the only job I've ever had in my whole life.

HATTER: Really? Weren't you working as an executioner just yesterday?

BAKER: I don't know what you are talking about.

ALICE: Then I suppose you don't recognize this. (*She reveals the ax.*)

BAKER: Ol' Chopper! (*Hugs and kisses the ax.*) I mean - I've never seen it before. I don't even know what it does.

HATTER: Oh come, come! We all know that as of this morning you were the royal executioner.

ALICE: And then the king forced you into an early retirement.

BAKER: Best thing that ever happened to me.

HATTER: You mean you don't miss the hacking? The slicing? The sweet sound of a lopped head dropping into a basket? *(While the HATTER says the above lines, the BAKER can be kneading dough or "hacking" things with the utensils. The BAKER obviously misses the old job.)*

BAKER: I don't miss it at all. I love being a butcher.

ALICE: You mean a baker.

BAKER: It doesn't matter if I was a candlestick maker - I am completely happy.

ALICE: I am not convinced.

BAKER: You're not?

ALICE: You look completely miserable.

BAKER: *(Suddenly sobbing.)* It's true! I am! I hate being a plumber!

ALICE: Baker.

BAKER: Whatever!

ALICE: It doesn't make sense. The queen loves nothing better than sending someone to your chopping block. Why would the king force you into an early retirement?

HATTER: Perhaps he wanted to make budget cuts. Rumor has it that the royal treasury is running low.

BAKER: I wouldn't know anything about that. You best ask the king.

ALICE: You mean you haven't heard?

BAKER: Heard what?

ALICE: The king has been murdered.

BAKER: *(Genuinely surprised.)* Murdered?!

ALICE: Beheaded.

BAKER: Beheaded? *(Sobbing again.)* But that's my job! Oh, the poor king. *(The MAD HATTER interrupts the BAKER's show of grief by clapping sarcastically.)*

HATTER: An impressive performance, but false nonetheless. You can fess up now, Executioner, we know exactly what happened.

ALICE: We do?

As the MAD HATTER tells his version of the crime, characters enter the stage to quickly recreate the events.

HATTER: This morning began with a visit from the king.

KING: *(Talking to the BAKER.)* Good morning. You're fired.

HATTER: You didn't know what else to do.

BAKER: What else am I to do?

KING: Why don't you open up a bakery?

HATTER: But you didn't take things so well. While the rest of the party guests were blindfolded, you led the king into your shop with your delicious smelling scones. Then, you pushed him into the bagel slicer and cut off his head! *(The KING is pushed off stage. Optional sound effects.)*

ALICE: Then, you rushed back to the party to hide the king's body. That's when you saw the Mad Hatter blindly staggering about. So you replaced his cricket bat with your old ax, hoping that he would be framed for your terrible crime.

BAKER: But I swear that's not what happened.

HATTER: Can you prove your innocence?

BAKER: Well, if I put the body under the table cloth, what did I do with his head?

HATTER: Elementary! You ground it up and mixed it into the scones.

ALICE, who has just taken another generous bite, suddenly spits out the scone.

ALICE: Disgusting! I found a bit of eyebrow.

BAKER: That's a raisin.

HATTER: Why don't you simply confess?

BAKER: Because there's something you didn't notice.

HATTER: What?

BAKER: I don't own a bagel slicer.

ALICE: He didn't do it, Mad Hatter. But before we go, I would like your thoughts on this. *(Shows him the QUEEN's glove.)*

BAKER: The Queen's glove.

ALICE: Covered in flour. From your bakery, I presume.

BAKER: It does seem like mine. But the queen has never been to my shop.

ALICE: Has anyone from the palace ordered a bag of flour?

BAKER: The March Hare picked up a bag. Said it had something to do with the Un-anniversary Party. I believe he was baking a red herring pie.

ALICE: Thank you, Baker. No further questions.

BAKER: In the meantime, if you hear about any other jobs where I can lop somebody's head off, please give me a call. This baker job just doesn't cut it. (*Snips off the head of a gingerbread man.*)

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

AT RISE:

Lights shift to the DUCHESS and the KNAVE. She is gardening while the KNAVE is writing a poem.

DUCHESS: Knave!

KNAVE: Yes, Duchess, darling?

DUCHESS: Did you bury a cricket bat in my garden?

KNAVE: Oh, I wish you hadn't dug that up. Put it back at once. We don't want anyone to see it.

The CHESHIRE CAT enters, still holding a wrapped present.

CHESHIRE: Pardon me, but do you know where the gift table is?

KNAVE: (*Hiding the bat behind his back.*) It's back that way, you silly cat. Shoo, shoo.

The CHESHIRE CAT exits. ALICE and the MAD HATTER enter.

HATTER: Good day to you, Duchess!

ALICE: What a beautiful garden.

HATTER: And what a beautiful cricket bat. I believe it belongs to me.

KNAVE: I don't see your name written on it. Oh wait. (*Glances at the bat, turns it around to reveal the name "MAD HATTER" written in large letters.*) So it would seem.

DUCHESS: I don't understand. Why would you bury the Mad Hatter's bat in my garden?

HATTER: I shall tell you why, good woman. The Knave has been playing with your heart. And that of the Queen's.

KNAVE: How dare you!

HATTER: We all know that you merely pretend to love the Duchess so that you can stay close to your real love.

ALICE: The Queen?

HATTER: No. The queen's money. Every chance you get, you visit the Queen to flirt with her, and steal whatever jewels you can get your hands on.

KNAVE: This man is a liar! *(He points his finger, and as he does a necklace shoots out of his sleeve. They all stare at it a moment.)* I don't know where that came from. *(He puts his hands behind his back. More necklaces and jewels spill from the back of his pants. Optional Line: "I need to eat more fiber.")*

HATTER: But your thievery could only gain you so much power. You needed to become king. And so, you absconded with the Duchess's gardening shears, sneaked up behind the king, and snipped off his royal cranium. All so you could gain his crown!

KNAVE: If that is true, then where did I hide his head?

HATTER: *(Lifting up a bag.)* Hidden in this bag!

The KNAVE grabs the bag, engaging in a tug of war.

DUCHESS: Don't be ridiculous. That's the mulching bag of leaves the Knave has collected for me. Tell them there's nothing to hide.

KNAVE: There's nothing to hide! *(The bag bursts open and hundreds of dollars fly out of it.)* Oh look, the leaves have turned into money.

DUCHESS: My love...does this mean that Mad Hatter speaks the truth? You killed the king to be with the queen and all of her wealth?

ALICE: Looks like we have our suspect.

KNAVE: Before you two idiots distort the truth any further, allow me to tell you what really happened. Yes. I have been stealing money from the Royal Treasury. And yes. I did hide the king's headless body under the table cloth. And, I did hope to frame the Mad Hatter for the king's murder. But I did not kill the king. I found his body in a field nearby when I was picking you some daffodils.

DUCHESS: Oh, how sweet.

KNAVE: I knew that the Mad Hatter had accused me of being a thief, so to get revenge, I attempted to frame him.

DUCHESS: So! You are a thief! You robbed my sister's treasure, and you stole my heart!

KNAVE: I may have stolen the money, but that's only so I could afford to buy you nice things.

DUCHESS: You aren't madly in love with my sister?

KNAVE: Of course not! She's hideous! I love you!

ALICE: I don't believe him.

DUCHESS: *(To ALICE.)* Shut up. *(To the KNAVE.)* Tell me more.

KNAVE: What else is there to say, except that we should rake up all this money and run off together.

DUCHESS: But what about these two? They know that you've stolen from the queen.

KNAVE: *(Scooping up as much money as possible.)* That's why, we should get rid of them.

DUCHESS: Yes! Let's!

The KNAVE and the DUCHESS circle ALICE and the HATTER, backing them upstage toward the garden.

ALICE: I think we're in danger, Mr. Hatter.

HATTER: *(Sarcastic, unafraid.)* Oh dear, whatever will the duchess do to us? Sprinkle us with a watering can? Pelt us with dandelions?

DUCHESS: You look tired, Hatter. Why don't you take a rest in my bed...of roses!

The flowers and vines come to life and attack ALICE and the HATTER.

KNAVE: The Duchess has the deadliest garden in Wonderland.

Come, my sweet, we don't want you to see what happens next.

DUCHESS: You know, I almost feel sorry for them.

KNAVE: For those two?

DUCHESS: No. For my flowers. They are certain to get an upset stomach! *(The DUCHESS and the KNAVE exit, hand in hand.)*

HATTER: You'll be happy to know I'm organic!

ALICE: I remember these flowers from my last visit.

HATTER: Friends of yours?

ALICE: They called me a weed. And I threatened to chop them into bits.

HATTER: Chop them? Of course! We need an executioner!

The BAKER/EXECUTIONER enter, a bit glum.

BAKER: I'm retired.

ALICE: Then we need an ex-executioner! Hack these plants!

BAKER: Oh boy! I found a new job! The Gardener of Doom! *(He cuts down the flowers and vine puppets.)*

ALICE: Well done! You're a hero!

HATTER: *(Hand hidden up sleeve.)* Where did my hand go?

BAKER: Oops. Sorry. *(The BAKER exits.)*

HATTER: Aaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh! *(Pops hand out of sleeve.)* Oh, there it is.

ALICE: As much as I dislike the queen, I suppose we should tell her about the Knave. He did steal her jewelry.

HATTER: And he stole my cricket bat. Wait. That means the beaver didn't eat my cricket bat...which means...of course! Come along, Alice, it all makes perfect sense!

They exit.

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

AT RISE:

The QUEEN storms back and forth while the WHITE RABBIT, MURK and TINK stand back watching her.

QUEEN: You dull-minded detectives have been investigating all afternoon, and yet you have still failed to capture the culprit.

TINK: We are still gathering the evidence, your majesty.

The CHESHIRE CAT enters, still carrying the present.

CHESHIRE: Does anyone know where to set the present table is?

QUEEN: Ooh! Presents!

TINK: Just set it down over there.

CHESHIRE: Purrfect. *(The CHESHIRE CAT sets the present down on a table and exits.)*

QUEEN: Achoo!

MURK: Are you allergic to cats?

QUEEN: No. Incompetence.

MURK: *(Feelings hurt.)* There's no need to hurt our feelings.

TINK: She didn't hurt my feelings. Just yours.

QUEEN: You need to man up.

HATTER and ALICE enter.

HATTER: I hate to interrupt, but we have a mystery to solve. I am looking for a furry creature that gnaws on trees with its big buck teeth.

QUEEN: *(Referring to ALICE.)* And I see you have found her.

WHITE RABBIT: The beaver went home with a sore stomach.

HATTER: Which only confirms my theory. Wait. Why are there red drops on the ground?

ALICE: It looks like a trail of blood.

HATTER: *(Following the trail and looking off in the distance.)* Perhaps someone had a bloody nose and walked all the way from here to the CSI Crime Lab, and all the way back to that table... Where that present is now sitting. *(They all gather around the present box.)*

TINK: What...

MURK: Is in...

ALICE: The box...?

QUEEN: It's my present; I get to open it!

She lifts up the box to reveal the KING's head set upon the table. The actor playing the KING is actually poking his head through a hole in the table. Everyone screams. The KING's head screams. Then everyone screams again.

Lights out. End of Act One.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

AT RISE:

The CATERPILLAR sits in the shadows. Two SNAILS carefully approach as though the CATERPILLAR was some great leader and they were lowly soldiers.

SNAIL #1: General Caterpillar, we bring news!

CATERPILLAR: What... took you so long?

SNAIL #2: Forgive us, General.

SNAIL #1: We crawled as fast as we could.

CATERPILLAR: I suppose it is my own fault for relying on snail mail.

SNAIL #2: The Cheshire Cat has delivered the package.

CATERPILLAR: How...delightful. Soon the Kingdom of Wonderland will fall into chaos, and our time will finally come.

SNAIL #1: Do you think they have opened up the package yet?

CATERPILLAR: Why...don't we wait and listen?

SNAIL #2: What are we listening for?

CATERPILLAR: Why... the screams, of course.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

AT RISE:

Lights on the Mad Tea Party set as the QUEEN, WHITE RABBIT, MURK, ALICE, and the HATTER scream as they toss around a prop of the KING'S head. TINK, by the way, is the only one trying to calm people down. They toss it back and forth to each other until finally the QUEEN catches it and throws it far off stage.

TINK: Stop! Why did you do that? We need that head! That's an important piece of evidence.

QUEEN: That piece of evidence is my husband, and if I want to fling his head into the sky, I am his wife, I can do that sort of thing.

TINK: Murk, let's go find it.

MURK: Way ahead of you. *(MURK and TINK exit.)*

QUEEN: Come along, White Rabbit.

WHITE RABBIT: Right behind you, my queen. *(Turning up her nose, the QUEEN exits, followed by the loyal WHITE RABBIT.)*

ALICE: I cannot fathom how you Wonderlanders can live your whole lives in utter nonsense.

HATTER: Oh we are very serious about our nonsense.

BEAVER enters, still wearing her blue bib, and still suffering from a belly ache.

ALICE: Mrs. Beaver!

BEAVER: Oh, my aching belly!

ALICE: We wanted to ask her some questions, remember?

HATTER: Ah yes. Why is a raven like a writing desk?

ALICE: Questions about the case.

HATTER: Of course. Mrs. Beaver. Why did you murder the king?

BEAVER: What?

HATTER: Not “what”—“why”?

BEAVER: But I didn't.

HATTER: Oh, but you most certainly did. I can picture it now. The king is at the party, walking around blindfolded. *(During this optional staging of the flashback, the KING walks in blindfolded.)* Like the diabolical predator you are, you stalked down his majesty, and when everyone else was out of earshot you pounced! With your sharp beaver teeth you chewed into his neck! *(The BEAVER attacks in slow motion. The KING shrieks in slow motion. The BEAVER, acting almost like a vampire, drags the KING behind the table. Optional: The BEAVER might bounce back up, triumphantly holding the KING's prop head.)* It was all over for the king. But you were still hungry. So, you decided to spread some jam on the battle ax for dessert. But that's when I stumbled into the scene, spoiling your plans.

BEAVER: You are mad!

HATTER: Thank you for noticing.

ALICE: But she doesn't have a motive.

HATTER: She doesn't need one. She is a blood thirsty beaver. A carnivore. She hunts down humans every day!

BEAVER: I do not!

HATTER: Fine, every other day.

ALICE: But Mrs. Beaver is not a carnivore. She is an herbivore.

HATTER: Then she mistook the king for a head of lettuce. Work with me!

BEAVER: Hatter, you are a terrible host. Your food gave me an upset stomach and now you treat me like a criminal.

ALICE: Are you feeling unwell?

HATTER: It's her own fault, she gorged herself on my cricket bat. *(Suddenly remembering.)* The cricket bat that you didn't eat! Of course, that's what I wanted to ask you about. If it wasn't a cricket bat, what did you gobble up?

BEAVER: I don't know. I was blindfolded.

ALICE: What did it taste like?

BEAVER: Wood, mostly. But I did spit out a lot of nails.

ALICE: Nails? So it was some type of construction.

BEAVER: It was big, whatever it was. I still can't believe I ate the whole thing.

HATTER: Are you still wearing a bib?

BEAVER: Oops, I forgot to take it off.

HATTER: What is this writing?

ALICE: This isn't a bib. These are blue prints.

HATTER: Instructions that detail precisely how to construct...

ALICE/HATTER: A guillotine!

BEAVER: A guillotine? Sounds like French food. No wonder I have a stomach ache. *(The BEAVER exits.)*

ALICE: Look here. Read this!

HATTER: "To my dear wife, Happy Un-anniversary."

ALICE: This was the king's present to the queen.

HATTER: A machine that could execute the queen's enemies with ease.

ALICE: That's why the executioner was forced into retirement.

HATTER: It seems that this is our murder weapon. Someone placed the poor king into his own device. Sliced off his head, and then hid the body under the table cloth. Which reminds me, didn't the king's head scream back at us when we found him?

HATTER: Oh, he probably doesn't even know that he's dead. He's a tough old king, but not very bright. Which must mean that someone helped him construct the guillotine before the gluttonous beaver devoured the evidence.

ALICE: Do you know anyone who is good with a hammer?

ACT TWO, SCENE 3

AT RISE:

Lights shift. MURK is interrogating the CHESHIRE CAT, who doesn't seem intimidated in the slightest. TINK stands by trying to let MURK do most of the work.

MURK: Oh, I am real good with a hammer, let me tell you. And believe me, you don't want me to use it on you. So, are you going to tell me why you killed the king?

CHESHIRE: (*Flirtatious.*) I already told you, I am completely innocent. (*Bursts into laughter.*)

TINK: Listen you mangy alley cat—

MURK: Ahem. Good cop, remember...

TINK: I mean, excuse me, my feline, uh, friend...but we found his head in a box that you wrapped.

CHESHIRE: (*Yawns and stretches.*) I thought to myself, "What do you get the man who has everything...how about his own head?"

MURK: That's it! I am using my hammer.

TINK: Lt. Murk—

MURK: Too late. Here I go.

MURK hammers against the wall, pretending to put in a nail that is already there. Then, he hangs a picture on the wall. After making sure it is even, he abruptly tilts the picture frame.

MURK: There, it's crooked. Deal with it!

CHESHIRE: You aren't very good at this, are you?

MURK: All right, you want to see mean, you are going to see mean! Unless you start talking, mean is what you are going to see! Tink, do something mean. (*TINK slaps him over the head with her notebook.*) Ow!

CHESHIRE: (*Flirtatious again.*) I am just now noticing, you are quite cute when you are pretending to be angry.

MURK: I am?

CHESHIRE: (*Moving in closer, leaning across the desk.*) You certainly are.

MURK: (*Falling under her spell.*) I certainly are?

CHESHIRE: Mmm-hmmm.

MURK: MMm-hmmm???

TINK: (*Explosive.*) I can't take this any longer!

MURK: (*Equally explosive.*) Neither can I! (*MURK suddenly adjusts the picture so that it is straight.*) There, that's better! (*To Cheshire.*) Now, I believe we were talking about my attractiveness. (*TINK hits him on the head with the notepad.*) We were talking about the case. Uh, please?

CHESHIRE: Look, I will tell you what little I know. I found the king's head in the mailbox of the Mad Hatter's home. The king was quite relieved to be recovered.

TINK: The head was talking to you?

CHESHIRE: Oh yes, though he didn't say much. He was quite in shock, as one might expect from a recent decapitation. But I did hear him say that, "The thief is trying to steal my only precious jewel."

TINK: Did he say anything else?

CHESHIRE: I don't know. That's about the time I realized I needed to bring a present to the party, and then I couldn't hear him through the gift wrapping. But I would imagine that whoever put him in the mailbox wanted to send the king's head far, far away. And, now, detectives, I believe I shall make my exit, but I do hope I will see you again Lt. Murk.

MURK: Uh, I hope so too.

CHESHIRE: Meow.

She exits, MURK gazes at her as she leaves.

TINK: (*Just a bit jealous.*) What are you looking at?

MURK: Nothing!

ACT TWO, SCENE 4

AT RISE:

Lights go out on MURK and TINK. Lights up on ALICE and the HATTER.

ALICE: What are you looking at?

HATTER: Something.

ALICE: I thought we were searching for a carpenter.

HATTER: I am looking for carpenter ants.

ALICE: Dare I ask why?

HATTER: Ants, those wonderfully intrusively uninvited dinner guests always crawl over my table during each and every tea party. I am certain they were crawling around when the guillotine was being constructed. They can tell us who murdered the king! Oh look, there's an ant. Excuse me, sir, have you seen anything suspicious this afternoon? Huh? Could you speak up? I can't hear you. Oh, if only they were somehow bigger or we were somehow smaller.

ALICE: *(Revealing small tea cakes from her pockets.)* I cannot believe that I am going to suggest eating this...

HATTER: More scones?

ALICE: No. These are magical tea cakes. A bite of this one makes you shrink; a nibble of this one makes you grow. I found it on a table while I stumbled about in the darkness of the White Rabbit hole.

HATTER: Aha, so that's how you escaped from their handcuffs. You shrank out of them and then embiggened yourself before the lights came back on. Well, you know what that means?

ALICE: It means I don't have an alibi. Which is all the more reason we need to solve this case so that I can be free of this place. Come along, eat up.

HATTER: This would be lovely with a spot of tea.

ALICE: No time for tea - I feel it working!

HATTER: I do too! We're shrinking!

MUSIC CUE / SOUND EFFECT CUE. ALICE and the HATTER spin around.

ALICE: I think it worked. We've become teeny tiny.

HATTER: Or else the rest of the world has become largey wargey.

ALICE: Look! Ants!

Several ANTS enter. COSTUME NOTE: All that is required is black clothing (perhaps tights) and antennae. They carry large berries (dodgeballs) on their backs.

ANT #1: How long until we reach the colony? This huckleberry is killing my back!

ANT #2: How should I know where the ant colony is? I've been following you!

HATTER: Excuse me, carpenter ants, my colleague and I would like to ask you a few questions.

ANT #1: Humans!

ANT #2: Intruders!

ANT #1: How dare you enter the kingdom of the insects!

ANT #2: We must summon the general at once!

ALICE: These creatures seem hostile.

HATTER: No, they are perfectly harmless. (*The ANTS pelt the HATTER with the berries/dodgeballs.*) Ouch! These huckleberries are painfully delicious!

The CATERPILLAR enters.

CATERPILLAR: Enough!

ANTS: It's the general!

The ANTS bow. The CATERPILLAR marches up to ALICE and the HATTER.

CATERPILLAR: Who...are...you?

ALICE: A, my name is Alice, and B, we have already met. Don't you remember?

CATERPILLAR: Why should I bother remembering a silly little girl? Or a mad hatter? Or any other human, for that matter? You humans do not take the time to say hello to the bugs beneath your feet. Too long you have trodden upon the insect world, but no more. We are taking over. Soon, Wonderland will belong to us. *(Laughs evilly. The ANTS join in.)*

HATTER: *(Joining in the laughter.)* Yes, soon it will be ours! *(They all stare at the HATTER.)* Oh, I'm sorry, I got caught up in your evil plan.

ALICE: Let me guess, you plan to embiggen yourselves and take over the kingdom. Sorry to disappoint you, but there isn't enough tea cake.

CATERPILLAR: Impudent girl! We do not need to raise ourselves to the level of you humans. Thanks to two traitors within the royal court, we have already set into motion a terrifically terrible sequence of events. Soon, very soon, the queen will perish!

ALICE: Quickly, we must warn Agent Tink and Lt. Murk.

The ANTS try to stop them from escaping. (Optional: The snail characters try to stop them but they are way too slow.)

CATERPILLAR: Struggle, flee, try to escape, it makes no difference! *(HATTER and ALICE exit. The ANTS gather around the CATERPILLAR.)* My soldiers and I have formed an unstoppable force! We are an army! An empire! Victory is immanent. Defeat is impossible. We will triumph - wait - what's that shadow, up in the sky, getting closer and closer and closer—

BY WADE BRADFORD

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