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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Lewis Carroll

Alice in Wonderland (2/12): the pool of tears

"How strange! Oh my!" said Alice, "I'm so tall! And all at once too! Goodbye, feet." (For when she looked down at her feet they seemed so far away, she thought they would soon be out of sight.) "Oh, my poor feet, who will put on your shoes for you now, dears? I'm sure I can't do it. I am too far off to take care of you! But even if I can't take care of them, I have to be nice to them" thought Alice, "or they won't walk the way I want to go! Let me see: I'll give them a pair of new shoes each Christmas."

She stopped to think how she would send them. "They must go by the mail," she thought; "and how funny it'll seem to send shoes to one's own feet. How odd the address will look!"

Alice's Right Foot,

On the rug,

Near the Fire.

(With Alice's love.)

"Oh dear, there's no sense in all that."

Just then her head struck the roof of the hall; in fact she was now almost three meters high, and she at once took up the small key and went back to the door.



Poor Alice! Now she was so tall that she could only lay down on one side, to look through to the garden with one eye: but she definitely couldn't not get through, so she sat down and had a good cry.



"Shame on you," said Alice, "A great big girl like you. To cry in this way! Stop at once, I tell you!" But she still cried and shed tears till there was a large pool all round her, and which reached half way down the hall.

Then she heard the sound of feet not far off, so she dried her eyes in great haste to see who it was.

It was the White Rabbit that had come back, dressed in fine clothes, with a pair of white kid gloves in one hand, and a large fan in the other. He trotted on in great haste, and talked to himself, "Oh! the Duchess, the Duchess! Oh! won't she be in a fine rage if I've made her wait?"

Alice felt so bad and so in need of help from some one, that when the Rabbit came near, she said in a low timid voice, "If you please, sir—" The Rabbit was startled, dropped the white kid gloves and the fan and ran off into the dark as fast as his two hind feet could take him.

Alice took up the fan and gloves and as the hall was quite hot, she fanned herself all the time she went on talking. "Dear, dear! How strange all things are today!

Could I have been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up today? Seems to me I didn't feel quite the same. But if I'm not the same, then who in the world am I?" Then she thought of all the girls she knew that were of her age, to see if she could have been changed for one of them.

"I'm sure I'm not Ada," she said, "for her hair is in such long curls and mine doesn't curl at all; and I'm sure I can't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh! she knows so little! How strange it all is! I'll try if I know all the things I used to know. Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is—oh dear! that is not right. I must have been changed for Mabel! I'll try to sing one of my favorite songs" and she placed her hands on her lap, as if she were at school and tried to say the lyrics, but her voice was hoarse and strange and the words did not come the same as they used to do.

"I'm sure those are not the right words," said poor Alice, and her eyes filled with tears as she went on, "I must be Mabel after all, and I will have to go and live in that stinky house and have no toys to play with. No, I've made up my mind; if I'm Mabel, I'll stay down here! It'll be no use for them to put their heads down and say, 'Come up, dear!' I shall look up and say, 'Who am I, then? Tell me that first, and then if I like it, I'll come up; if not, I'll stay down here till I'm some one else'—but, oh dear," cried Alice with a fresh burst of tears, "I do wish they would put their heads down! I am so tired of this place!"

As she said this she looked down at her hands and saw that she had put on one of the Rabbit's white kid gloves while she was talking. "How can I have done that?" she thought. "I must have grown small once more." She got up and went to the glass stand to test her height and found that she was now not more than sixty centimeters high, and still shrinking quite fast. She soon found out that the cause of this, was the fan she held and she dropped it at once, or she might have shrunk to the size of a gnat.

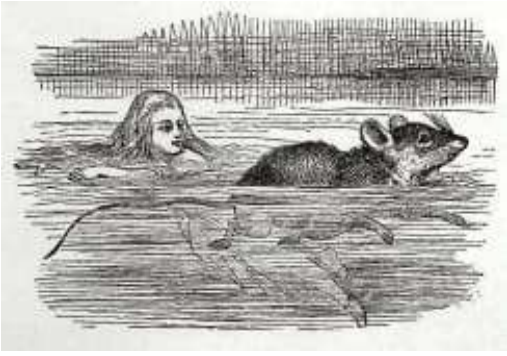


"Now I can fit into the garden!" and she ran with all her speed back to the small door; but the door was shut, and the key lay on the glass stand, "things are worse than ever," thought the poor child.

As she said these words her foot slipped, and splash! she was up to her chin in salt water. At first she thought she must be in the sea, but she soon made out that she was in the pool of tears which she had wept when she was three meters high.

"I wish I hadn't cried so much!" said Alice as she swam round and tried to find her way out. "I will now be drowned in my own tears."

Then she heard a splash in the pool a little way off, and she swam near to make out what it was; at first she thought it must be a whale, but when she thought how small she was now, she soon made out that it was a mouse that had slipped in the pond.



"Would it be of any use to speak to this mouse? All things are so out-of-way down here, I should think maybe it can talk, at least there's no harm to try." So she said: "O Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool?"

The Mouse looked at her and seemed to her to wink with one of its small eyes, but it did not speak.

"It may be a French Mouse," thought Alice, so she said: "Où est ma chatte?" (Where is my cat?) which was all the French she could think of just then. The Mouse gave a quick leap out of the water, and seemed in a great fright, "Oh, I beg your pardon," cried Alice. "I quite forgot you didn't like cats."

"Not like cats!" cried the Mouse in a shrill, harsh voice.

"Would you like cats if you were me?"

"Well, I guess not," said Alice, "but please don't get mad. And I wish I could show you our cat, Dinah. I'm sure you'd like cats if you could see her. She is such a dear thing and she sits and purrs by the fire and licks her paws and washes her face—and she is such a nice soft thing—and she's really good at catching mice—Oh, dear!" cried Alice, for this time the Mouse was in a great fright and each hair stood on end. "We won't talk about her if you don't like it"

"We talk!" cried the Mouse, who shook down to the end of his tail. "As if I would talk of such low, mean things as cats! All rats hate them. Don't let me hear the name again!"

"I won't," said Alice, in great haste to change the theme. "Are you fond—of—of dogs?" The mouse did not speak, so Alice went on: "There is such a nice dog near our house, I should like to show you! A tiny bright-eyed dog, you know, with long curly brown hair! And it'll fetch things when you throw them, and it'll sit up and beg for its meat and do all sorts of things—I can't tell you half of them. And it kills all the rats, and m—oh dear!" cried Alice in a sad tone, "I've made it mad again!" For the Mouse swam off from her as fast as it could go, and made quite a stir in the pool as it went. So she called it in a soft, kind voice, "Mouse dear! Do come back and we won't talk of cats or dogs if you don't like them!" When the Mouse heard this it turned round and swam back to her; its face was quite pale (with rage, Alice thought), and it said in a low, weak voice, "Let us get to the shore, and then I'll tell you why it is I hate cats and dogs."

It was high time to go, for the pool was by this time quite crowded with the birds and beasts that had slipped into it. Alice led the way and they all swam to the shore.