

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS AND WHAT ALICE FOUND THERE

SUMMARY

Chapter I: Looking-Glass House

Alice rests at home in an armchair, talking drowsily to herself as her black kitten, Kitty, plays with a ball of string at her feet. Alice lovingly scolds the kitten for unraveling the ball of string that she had been winding up. She goes on to scold Kitty's mother, Dinah, who is busy bathing the white kitten Snowdrop. Alice begins an imaginative conversation with Kitty, pretending that her pet talks back, and asks her to pretend that she is the Red Queen in a chess game. Alice attempts to arrange Kitty's forelegs to better resemble the chess piece. When Kitty does not comply, Alice holds her up to the mirror above the mantle and threatens to put Kitty into the world on the other side of the mirror, which she calls "Looking-Glass House." Alice thinks about what Looking-Glass House must be like, wondering aloud to Kitty if there might be a way to break through to the other side of the mirror. All of a sudden, Alice finds herself on the mantle, staring into the mirror. She magically steps through the mirror into Looking-Glass House.

On the other side of the mirror, Alice looks around and finds that the room she is standing in resembles the mirror image of the room in her own house. However, several parts of the room look quite different. The pictures on the wall near the mirror seem to be alive, and the mantle clock has the face of a grinning little man.

Alice notices a group of chessmen inside the fireplace among the cinders, walking

in line two-by-two. Alice examines them closely and determines that she is invisible to them. She hears a squeak behind her. Alice wheels around to find a White Pawn on the table. Out of the fireplace charges the White Queen, who knocks over the White King in her haste, rushing to grab her child. Alice helpfully lifts the White Queen onto the table, and the White Queen gasps in surprise as Alice grabs the Queen's child Lily. The White King follows, but he quickly grows impatient. Alice lifts him up, dusts him off, and places him down next to the White Queen. The White King lies on his back, stunned in surprise, which causes Alice to realize that she is invisible to the chessmen. Once the White King recovers, he pulls out a pencil and begins jotting his experience down, but Alice snatches the pencil from him and writes something down in his book. The White King comments that he must get a new book, since strange words seem to appear on the pages of his current one.

Alice picks up one of the books from the table and discovers that the text is backward. She holds the book up to the mirror to read it properly and reads the poem on the page. The poem, entitled "Jabberwocky," describes a knight's travels to vanquish a hideous monster known as the Jabberwock. Perplexed by the poem, Alice sets the book down and decides to explore the rest of the house. As she leaves the room and begins heading down the stairs, she finds herself floating until she finally catches hold of the door-post to the door that leads outside of Looking-Glass House.

Chapter II: The Garden of Live Flowers

Once outside, Alice climbs a nearby hill to get a better look at the garden near the house. However, every time she begins to follow the path to the hill, she finds herself back at the door to the house. Dismayed, she mentions her frustration to Tiger-lily, who surprises her by responding in perfect English. The Tiger-lily explains that all flowers can talk. The Rose chimes in and mentions that Alice does not look very clever. Alice asks them if they feel at all vulnerable. They explain to her that they are protected by a nearby tree that will bark at any approaching threats. The Daisies begin caterwauling and Alice silences them by threatening to pick them.

The Rose and the Violet continue to insult Alice, but the Tiger-lily reprimands them for their rudeness. Alice learns from the flowers that there is another person like her in the garden. They describe the Red Queen, who now looks human and stands a head taller than Alice. The Rose advises Alice to walk the other way, but Alice sets off toward the Red Queen, ending up back at the door of Looking-Glass House. Once she sets off in the opposite direction, she eventually reaches the Red Queen.

The Red Queen is friendly but overbearing when she strikes up a conversation with Alice. Alice explains her plight to the Red Queen and mentions the garden, which prompts the Red Queen to remark that she has seen gardens that would make this one seem like a wilderness. When Alice mentions the hill, the Red Queen states that she has seen hills to make this hill look like a valley. Frustrated, Alice tells the Red Queen that she speaks nonsense, but the Queen

responds that she has heard nonsense that would make her claims seem as sensible as a dictionary. The Red Queen takes Alice to the hill, where she notices that the surrounding countryside resembles a giant chessboard. Alice spots a game of chess happening on the chessboard and expresses her desire to join the game. The Red Queen tells Alice that she may stand in for the Tiger-lily as a White Pawn. The two begin a brisk run but remain in the same place. Once finished with their run, the Red Queen explains the chess game to Alice. Alice starts at the second square and must travel through the other squares. A different character owns each square, and once Alice reaches the eighth square she will become a queen herself. With a few final words of advice, the Red Queen bids Alice goodbye and disappears.

Chapter III: Looking-Glass Insects

Alice surveys her surroundings, spotting a group of elephants in the distance that seem to be pollinating flowers and making honey. She sets off in the direction of the elephants, but changes her mind and starts heading down the hill in the other direction. Before she knows it, she finds herself riding inside a carriage, and she explains to the Guard present that she doesn't have a ticket. She hears various voices in the carriage badgering her, as the Guard examines her with a telescope, a microscope, and opera glasses. The other passengers in the carriage begin to discuss Alice. A man dressed entirely in white paper comments that she ought to know where her ticket is, while a goat interjects that she should know the location of the ticket office. A beetle comments that Alice will have to make the

return journey as luggage. Alice hears a hoarse voice in her ear that suggests various jokes she can make using wordplay. As the train prepares to jump over a brook, Alice speaks back to the voice. The train jumps and Alice finds herself sitting quietly in the shade of a tree.

The strange voice turns out to be the voice of a gnat, who has grown to the size of a chicken since they landed in the forest. Alice and the Gnat discuss the difference between the insects in Alice's world and Looking-Glass World. He explains that the horsefly becomes a rocking horsefly, the dragonfly becomes a snapdragon fly, and the butterfly becomes a Bread-and-butter-fly. Alice wonders what would happen to the Bread-and-butter-fly when it cannot find its chosen diet of weak tea and cream. The Gnat informs her that this is a regular occurrence, which means that Bread-and-butter-flies frequently die. The Gnat then warns Alice that she will lose her name if she travels into the wood. The Gnat discusses lost names and then vanishes as mysteriously as he appeared.

Alice journeys into the wood and finds that she cannot remember the name of anything. In her confusion, she thinks that her name begins with the letter "L." She comes across a Fawn, who helps her through the wood. Once they exit the forest, the Fawn runs away now that it remembers that it is a fawn and Alice is a human. Alone again, Alice notices a series of signs pointing the way to Tweedledum and Tweedledee's house. She heads off in that direction but bumps into them before she reaches her destination.

Chapter IV: Tweedledum and Tweedledee

Alice approaches the portly twins Tweedledee and Tweedledum, who stand side by side with their arms around each other's shoulders. Upon seeing them, Alice begins reciting a poem that she knows about them. The poem describes Tweedledee and Tweedledum fighting over a broken rattle until a crow frightens them, causing them to forget their argument. They deny that this has ever happened, and though they ignore Alice's questions about how to get out of the wood, they do extend their hands to her in greeting. Alice does not want to choose one over the other, so she grabs each man's hand and the three begin dancing in a ring. After a short dance, they stop, and though Alice continues to ask how to get out of the wood, Tweedledee and Tweedledum ignore her.

Tweedledee begins reciting "The Walrus and the Carpenter," a poem that describes the story of a Walrus and a Carpenter who trick a group of young oysters into leaving their home underwater and coming to shore with them. Once the oysters get to shore, the Walrus and the Carpenter eat them. When Tweedledee finishes, Alice states that she prefers the Walrus because he feels sympathy for the oysters. Tweedledee points out that the Walrus ate more oysters than the Carpenter, and Alice changes her mind, stating her new preference for the Carpenter. Tweedledum observes that the Carpenter ate as many oysters as he could, which causes Alice to doubt her feelings.

As she tries to sort out her feelings, Alice becomes distracted by the Red King sleeping under a tree and snoring like a train engine. Tweedledee tells Alice that the Red King is dreaming about her, and if he stops, she will vanish. Alice

starts to cry at the thought that she is real, and Tweedledee and Tweedledum try to comfort her by telling her that her tears are not real.

Alice decides that Tweedledum and Tweedledee are talking nonsense and that she is indeed real. Alice changes the subject and starts to leave when Tweedledee grabs her wrists and points to a broken rattle on the ground. Tweedledum recognizes it as his new rattle, and explodes in anger while Tweedledee cowers in fear. Tweedledee calms down and the two agree to a battle to determine ownership of the rattle. Alice helps them put on their battle gear, but before they can begin fighting, a great crow comes and scares them off, and Alice slips away into the wood alone.

Chapter V: Wool and Water

As Alice runs through the forest, she comes across a shawl blowing about in front of her. She grabs the shawl and bumps into the White Queen, who has been chasing through the wood after her missing shawl. In thanks, the White Queen offers Alice a job as her maid, promising “twopence a week, and jam every other day.” Alice respectfully declines. The White Queen tells Alice that she lives backward and remembers events before they happen. She goes on to inform Alice that the King’s Messenger will be in prison the week after next, that his trial begins next Wednesday, and that his crime will come last of all. As the two discuss the merits of punishment for a crime that may not be committed, the White Queen starts screaming like an engine whistle. She tells Alice she will prick her finger, and then pricks it as she refastens her shawl.

Alice feels lonely and begins to cry. The White Queen cheers her up by telling her to consider things such as her age before admitting that she is over one hundred years old. When Alice states that to live to a hundred is impossible, the White Queen counters that Alice cannot believe the impossible because she has not had any practice. The White Queen's shawl blows away again, and she chases after it over a brook. As Alice crosses the brook to catch up with her, the White Queen transforms into a sheep, and Alice finds herself suddenly in a shop.

The Sheep asks Alice what she would like to buy and Alice begins looking around the shop. Though filled with curious items, every shelf that Alice sets her eyes upon appears to be empty. The Sheep then tells Alice she must begin "feathering," which means rowing. Alice looks around and finds herself in a boat with the Sheep on a river. Alice rows until the boat reaches sweet-scented rushes, which she pulls up from the water and lays at her feet. She begins rowing again, but the oar gets caught, jarring the boat so that Alice falls down to the floor of the boat. When she stands up again, Alice finds herself back in the shop, where the Sheep asks her again what she would like to buy. Alice pays for an egg, which the Sheep places on a shelf for her. Every time Alice moves toward the egg on the shelf, it seems to get progressively farther away from her. She continues to walk toward the egg as the shop transforms back into the wood.

Chapter VI: Humpty Dumpty

Alice approaches the egg, which has grown large and transformed into Humpty Dumpty. Humpty Dumpty idly sits on a wall, taking no notice of Alice

until she remarks how much he resembles an egg. Irritated by this remark, Humpty Dumpty insults Alice. She starts to softly recite the nursery rhyme about Humpty Dumpty, and he asks for her name and requests that she state her business. Alice tells Humpty Dumpty her name and he tells her that her name is stupid. In Humpty Dumpty's opinion, names should mean something, offering his own name as an example since it alludes to the shape of his body. He goes on to remark that with a name like Alice, she could be any shape at all. Concerned for his safety, Alice asks Humpty Dumpty why he sits atop the wall. He replies that the King made him a promise, which spurs Alice's memory of the rhyme stating that the King's horses and the King's men put Humpty Dumpty back together again. Alice's allusion to the poem angers Humpty Dumpty, who insists that he is well protected and changes the subject.

Humpty Dumpty seems to make a riddle out of every part of their conversation. Alice compliments his cravat, which he explains he received from the White King and Queen for his un-birthday. He explains that an un-birthday is a day that is not his birthday. Humpty Dumpty declares that un-birthdays are better than birthdays and starts to use words that make no sense in the context of what he says. Alice questions what he means, to which he retorts that he can make words do anything that he wants, though he pays words extra if he requires them to do a lot of work. Alice remembers the poem "Jabberwocky," and she asks Humpty Dumpty to explain the words to her. She recites the first stanza, which he picks apart word by word. Humpty Dumpty then begins his own poem for her, which abruptly ends with a goodbye. Annoyed, Alice walks off, complaining

about his behavior when a great crash resounds through the wood.

Chapter VII: The Lion and the Unicorn

Alice sees soldiers and horses running through the forest as she walks into the wood. She comes across the White King, who is jotting notes down in his memorandum book. He delightedly tells Alice that he has sent out all of his horses and men, with the exception of two horses needed for “the game,” and his messengers, Haigha and Hatta, who are in town on errands. The White King asks Alice if she passed Haigha or Hatta on the road, but she declares that she has seen nobody. The White King expresses amazement that she can see “Nobody” at all, admitting that he has difficulty seeing real people. Confused, Alice looks around, and finally catches sight of Haigha wriggling toward them. When Haigha (the March Hare) arrives, the White King asks him for a hand sandwich. After devouring the sandwich, the White King munches on hay given to him by Haigha and asks his messenger if he passed anyone on the road. Haigha says he passed “nobody,” prompting the White King to declare that Alice saw Nobody too, and that Nobody must be a slow walker. Haigha asserts that he is sure that nobody walks faster than he does. The White King disagrees, explaining that Nobody would be with them now if Nobody did indeed walk faster.

Haigha informs the White King that the Lion and the Unicorn are fighting in town. As they run to town to watch, Alice repeats a nursery rhyme about the Lion and the Unicorn. In the rhyme, the Lion and the Unicorn fight for a crown, stop to eat bread and cake, and are then drummed out of town. When they arrive

in town, Alice and her companions stand with Hatta (the Mad Hatter). Hatta informs them of the events of the fight thus far. The Lion and the Unicorn stop their fighting for a moment. The White King calls for a refreshment break, so Hatta and Haigha pass bread around. Alice notices the White Queen dart through, observing that someone seems to be chasing her. The White King realizes that Alice has caught sight of the White Queen and points out that she runs so quickly that following her would be fruitless.

The Unicorn approaches Alice, staring at her in disgust as it asks her what she is. Alice states that she is a child, but the Unicorn decides that she is a Monster. The Unicorn strikes up a bargain with Alice that they will believe in each other now that they have seen each other. The Unicorn calls for cake, which Haigha produces. The Lion joins them, and orders Alice to cut the cake. Despite her repeated slicing, the cake persists in coming back together. The Unicorn explains that Alice must pass the cake around first and cut afterward. Alice begins passing the cake, and it splits into three pieces, leaving her with nothing to cut. Just then, she hears a deafening drumbeat that scares her and causes her to run off in terror. She crouches on the other side of a brook, imagining that the noise also caused the Lion and the Unicorn to flee.

Chapter VIII: “It’s My Own Invention”

As the pounding of the drums dies away, Alice starts to wonder if she still exists as part of the Red King’s dream. At this moment, the Red Knight barrels toward her, screaming “Check!” The White Knight comes to Alice’s rescue, and

the two chess pieces fight furiously until the Red Knight gallops off. The White Knight happily tells Alice that he will bring her safely to the next brook, explaining that once she crosses the brook she will become a queen. As they walk, the White Knight describes all of the items that he carries with him. He carries a box to keep clothes and food, a beehive for keeping bees, a mousetrap to protect his horse from mice, and horse-anklets to guard against shark-bites. As he speaks to Alice, he repeatedly falls off of his horse. She questions his riding ability, which offends him. The White Knight explains that he has practiced riding frequently, which is the key to good horsemanship. Alice finds his claims to be ridiculous.

As the White Knight and Alice continue traveling toward the brook, he explains several of his inventions to Alice. He has developed a new kind of helmet, several ways to jump a fence, and a new kind of pudding, which he considers to be his greatest invention. All of the White Knight's inventions seem to have something wrong with them. Alice becomes increasingly puzzled by his explanations as they approach the forest's border. The White Knight mistakes Alice's confusion for sadness, and proposes that he sing a song that has several different names. Upon finishing the song, the White Knight points to the brook that she must jump over to become a queen. He asks her to wait to jump until he reaches a turn far off down the road. Alice waits for him to pass out of sight, waving her handkerchief after him, and jumps over the brook. On the other side, she finds herself sitting on a lawn wearing a crown.

Chapters IX–XII: Queen Alice; Shaking; Waking; Which Dreamed I?

After realizing that she has become a Queen, Alice finds herself in the company of the Red Queen and the White Queen. The two queens begin questioning her relentlessly, telling her that she cannot be a queen until she passes the proper examination. They ask her strange questions about manners, mathematics, the alphabet, how to make bread, languages, and the cause of lightning. The Red Queen frustrates Alice by correcting every incorrect answer. Alice mistakenly remarks that thunder causes lightning, but when she attempts to reverse her statement, the Red Queen snaps that once she says something, she must live with the consequences. The White Queen changes the subject to a thunderstorm that occurred on the last set of Tuesdays. Confused, Alice listens to a sneering explanation that in Looking-Glass World, days are taken two or three at a time. The White Queen continues her foolish story, while the Red Queen apologizes to Alice for the White Queen's behavior, explaining to Alice that the White Queen wasn't brought up well.

The Red Queen asks Alice to sing a lullaby to the White Queen, but Alice claims that she doesn't know any. The Red Queen begins singing instead, causing the White Queen to fall asleep on Alice's shoulder. Soon, the Red Queen falls asleep, too, and both queens slump their heads into Alice's lap. The snoring sounds like a song to Alice. She becomes distracted by the music and doesn't notice when the two queens vanish inexplicably. When Alice looks up, she finds herself standing in front of a door emblazoned with the words "QUEEN ALICE." Alice wants to enter but only finds a visitor's bell and a servant's bell, and no bell

for guests. She knocks on the door and it flies open. The words “NO ADMITTANCE UNTIL THE WEEK AFTER NEXT!” boom out of the open door. Alice continues to knock to no avail, until eventually an old frog approaches from behind her and asks her what she wants. Alice explains that no one will answer the door. The confused Frog asks what the door has been asking and whether it would need an answer. The door flies open again and Alice hears a song about Queen Alice’s grand party.

Alice finds a large table set before her with fifty guests seated around it. She sits down at the head of the table between the White Queen and the Red Queen. A servant brings out food and the Red Queen formally introduces Alice to the food. After the introduction, the Red Queen sends the food back to the kitchen, commenting that it is impolite to eat something after one has made acquaintance with it. Alice becomes frustrated and asks to get the pudding back, which she slices and serves to the guests. As the pudding is passed around, Alice asks the guests why there are so many poems in Looking-Glass World on the subject of fish. The White Queen responds by telling a riddle that asks whether answering the door or uncovering a dish of fish is more difficult. The queens toast Alice, who rises to give thanks to her guests. As she stands up, the room spontaneously erupts into chaos. Candles rise to the ceiling, guests become stuck to their plates, the White Queen tumbles into a soup tureen, and a soup ladle storms around the table. Alice grabs the tablecloth and tugs it off of the table, sending all of the guests flying to the ground.

Alice turns to the Red Queen, whom she considers responsible for the chaos, and grabs her. The Red Queen shrinks down to the size of a doll and Alice begins shaking her. Before Alice's eyes, the Red Queen seems to transform into her kitten Kitty. Alice realizes that she has woken up. She scolds Kitty for waking her up and then grabs the small Red Queen off of the nearby chess table, trying to get Kitty to admit that she had transformed into the Red Queen. Alice addresses Snowdrop, stating her suspicion that the white kitten is the White Queen. Lastly, Alice tries to guess who Dinah might be before deciding that she's probably Humpty Dumpty. She turns back to Kitty and tells her all about the fish-themed poetry she heard in her dream.

