

ALICE IN WONDERLAND: URBAN EDITION

A ONE-ACT COMEDY PLAY

by
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(The play may be performed on a bare stage, or with a backdrop that indicates a graffiti wall, a subway or other urban environment. Downstage right is a park bench. Downstage center is a podium. Upstage is a formal chair, a café table and three café chairs, and a sofa or love seat which will be moved upstage and downstage during the play.)

SCENE 1: STORYTELLER AND STAGE MANAGER

STORYTELLER enters left, carrying a large book, and crosses to the podium. HE smiles, opens the book, clears his throat several times, and looks offstage left. SERVER 1 enters left with a glass of water on a serving tray. SERVER 2 enters behind SERVER 1 with a cloth napkin. SERVER 1 hands STORYTELLER 1 the glass. STORYTELLER drinks some water, then sloshes water around in his mouth and gargles. HE hands SERVER 1 the glass. SERVER 2 wipes STORYTELLER's mouth with the napkin.

SERVER 2: Man, that's gross!

(SERVERS exit.)

STORYTELLER: *(Reads to audience from the book ala kindergarten teacher.)* "Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, and what is the use of a book, thought Alice, without pictures or conversation?"

(STAGE MANAGER enters and crosses to STORYTELLER.)

STAGE MANAGER: Excuse me.

STORYTELLER: What?

STAGE MANAGER: Well ... I don't know how to say this ... but the director wants to replace you.

STORYTELLER: Why?

STAGE MANAGER: You're about as interesting as watching paint dry.

STORYTELLER: But I'm a professional storyteller!

STAGE MANAGER: Maybe so, but the director wants a version that has street smarts.

STORYTELLER: Street smarts? We're talking about "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland!" Not "Law and Order!" *(Or other familiar urban-setting story.)*

STAGE MANAGER: Sorry.

STORYTELLER: *(Begs on hands and knees.)* Please don't replace me! My Aunt Hilda came all the way from Cleveland *(Or other location.)* just to see me!

STAGE MANAGER: Look man, I only work here.

STORYTELLER: I won't be boring anymore! I promise! And I can make the story really interesting, and up to date.

STAGE MANAGER: I doubt that.

STORYTELLER: I'll prove it! Watch!

(Snaps fingers. SERVERS enter carrying a hoodie or jacket, sunglasses, and other "cool" accessories. STORYTELLER removes his jacket and glasses and puts on the new accessories. SERVERS exit with the podium and book.)

What'd ya think?

STAGE MANAGER: I think you're weird.

STORYTELLER: *(To audience.)* Okay, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, cats and dogs, Klingons and Vulcans ... *(To STAGE MANAGER.)* who else?

STAGE MANAGER: M and M's?

STORYTELLER: Right! You're gonna see the street-smart story of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

STAGE MANAGER: You can't be serious.

STORYTELLER: You're in the way. *(Shoves STAGE MANAGER off stage. To audience.)* One really fine Saturday morning Alice and her Sister went to the park. They'd been hanging around the house all morning and their mama was sick of their sass.

SCENE 2: DOWN THE SUBWAY

ALICE and SISTER enter right and sit on the bench. SISTER is talking on her cell phone. A magazine is in her lap. ALICE tries to get her attention.

STORYTELLER: Sister's kind of ticked because she's supposed to look after Alice instead of hopping on a crosstown train and hanging out with her friends. And Alice's kind of ticked because she wants a little attention and respect, and she ain't getting it. What happens is pretty weird. *(STORYTELLER exits left.)*

SISTER: *(On phone.)* I can't hang out with you. I'm stuck with Alice all afternoon.

ALICE: You're not stuck with me!

SISTER: *(On phone.)* I have to babysit.

ALICE: I don't need a babysitter!

SISTER: *(On phone.)* She was driving me crazy so I brought her to the park.

ALICE: I'm not driving you crazy!

SISTER: *(On phone.)* Little sisters are a real pain.

ALICE: I'm not a pain!

SISTER: *(To ALICE.)* If you don't shut your yap I'm going to feed you to the pigeons!

(ALICE pouts.)

ALICE: How are you going to do that?

SISTER: *(On phone.)* I'll talk to you later. *(Hangs up phone and tries to read her magazine.)*

ALICE: Can we go to the movies?

SISTER: No.

ALICE: Can we get some bagels?

SISTER: No.

ALICE: Can we feed the ducks?

SISTER: No.

ALICE: Can we ...?

SISTER: No.

ALICE: This is boring.

SISTER: It sure is.

(Cell phone rings. SISTER looks at caller ID.)

I'm going over there by the yogurt stand. *(Indicates offstage right.)* I won't take my eyes off of you. If you're good I'll bring you back a chocolate yogurt. If not, I'll bring back a chocolate yogurt and eat it in front of you.

(SISTER answers her phone and exits right, leaving the magazine. ALICE looks at the magazine, then tosses it down.)

ALICE: This is really boring. *(Looks around, pouts, then yawns.)* I wish there was something to do.

(RABBIT enters right and crosses to ALICE walking and talking very quickly.)

RABBIT: Late again! Always late! I can never be on time! That's the story of my life! I hate being late! *(To ALICE.)* Do you have the correct time?

(ALICE looks at her watch.)

ALICE: It's ten o'clock.

RABBIT: Why am I always late? Late is bad! On time is good! Early is better!

ALICE: What are you late for?

RABBIT: An appointment you silly little person! Which way to the uptown train?

(ALICE points left.)

Which way to the downtown train?

(ALICE points left.)

Which way to the crosstown train?

(ALICE points left.)

How do I know you're telling the truth?

ALICE: Do you see the sign that says "subway"?

RABBIT: *(Looking left.)* What sign?

(STAGE MANAGER enters left holding a sign that says "Subway." HE points left.)

Oh. That sign.

ALICE: Unless the sign's wrong, that's the subway. You can go uptown, downtown or crosstown.

RABBIT: Okay, here's a tricky question. Which way is the airport?

(ALICE points upstage.)

(Very excited.) I mean the airport in Tokyo! Hah! Gotcha didn't I? *(Very calm.)* I would thank you for your help, but I don't have time. I'm late. *(Quickly exits left, dropping a glove.)*

ALICE: Wait! You dropped something! *(Exits left.)*

(STAGE MANAGER runs right and stands with the sign and points right. After a count RABBIT enters left and quickly crosses right.)

RABBIT: I know what they'll say! Late again! Always late! Never on time! *(Exits right.)*

(ALICE enters left and quickly crosses right.)

ALICE: Wait! You dropped your glove! *(Exits right.)*

(STAGE MANAGER points left. After a count RABBIT enters right and quickly crosses left.)

RABBIT: Late! Late! Late! Late! Late! *(Etc. Exits left.)*

(ALICE enters and crosses center. PASSENGERS enter right and left with chairs, newspapers, magazines, iPods, etc. Chairs are arranged center in rows to resemble a subway car. THEY sit, read, sleep, look bored, talk unheard on cell phones, etc.)

ALICE: The subway? I'm not supposed to ride the subway by myself! *(To PASSENGER 1.)* Excuse me. Is this an uptown train?

PASSENGER 1: "The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:

Of shoes – and ships – and sealing wax –

Of cabbages – and kings –

And why the sea is boiling hot –

And whether pigs have wings."

ALICE: What? *(To PASSENGER 2.)* What is he talking about?

PASSENGER 2: In summer when the days are long,

Perhaps you'll understand the song:

In autumn when the leaves are brown,

Take pen and ink and write it down.

ALICE: That doesn't make any sense!

PASSENGER 3: The train, the train goes underground,

And up above there is the town.

Down below is rock and dirt.
Careful, or you might be hurt.
OFF STAGE VOICE: This train has reached the end of the line! You must exit!

(STAGE MANAGER enters with a sign that says "Exit". ALL PASSENGERS exit right and left, leaving ALICE center. STAGE MANAGER and ALICE exit left.)

SCENE 3: SERVERS

The SERVERS enter right. THEY move the café table and two chairs downstage center. THEY exit left and return with ALICE.

SERVER 1: Your table is ready, madame.
ALICE: I didn't ask for a table.
SERVER 2: *(Rudely.)* You're wasting our time! Sit down!

(ALICE sits.)

Now what ya want?
SERVER 1: *(To SERVER 2.)* Allow me. *(To ALICE.)* We are at your service, madame. What do you desire?
ALICE: I ... I ... uh ... don't know.
SERVER 1: May I recommend the pigeon pie.
ALICE: *(Grossed out.)* I don't think so.
SERVER 1: Perhaps the earthworm quiche. The robins really love that one.
ALICE: Earthworm quiche?
SERVER 1: We also have excellent mud pies. Made with real mud.
SERVER 2: She's just wasting our time!
ALICE: I don't have any money. I came to the park with my sister and tried to give this glove back to a man in a white hoodie.

(SHE holds up the glove. SERVER 1 takes it.)

SERVER 1: This will go well in the soup.
ALICE: It's not yours!
SERVER 1: I know just what you need. You'll love it!
SERVER 2: She's not going to like it!

(SERVERS exit left. ALICE takes a cell phone from her pocket and dials. SISTER enters right talking on her cell phone.)

SISTER: Alice I'm talking to someone else! Leave me alone! *(Pushes a phone button.)* Where were we? Oh yes ...
(Exits right.)

ALICE: Wait! I went in the subway and I'm not sure where I am! ... Hello?

(SERVERS enter. SERVER 2 carries a large serving tray with a peanut butter cup or other small candy and a coffee cup. SERVER 1 serves ALICE the candy with a great flourish.)

SERVER 1: Your lunch, madame.
SERVER 2: I bet she doesn't like it!
SERVER 1: The chef's special tea cake that came all the way from England.
ALICE: That's a peanut butter cup.
SERVER 2: I told you she wouldn't like it!
ALICE: I like peanut butter cups.
SERVER 2: Then eat it!

(ALICE quickly eats the candy.)

SERVER 1: Isn't it simply delicious?

(ALICE nods.)

This is special coffee. *(SERVES the coffee.)*

ALICE: I don't like coffee.

SERVER 2: I knew she wouldn't like it!

SERVER 1: This is a very rare coffee made with beans from the highest altitudes of the Himalayas, harvested by monks who carry the beans in backpacks through the blinding snow and unbearable cold. It travels on the backs of camels through the blinding sandstorms of the Sahara, on river boats up the pirana-plagued waters of the Amazon, in the pouches of kangaroos across the Australian outback, through the swamps of south Florida ...

SERVER 2: He's making it up. It comes out of a can.

SERVER 1: You really should try it.

ALICE: Okay. *(SHE sips it, then makes a sour face.)*

SERVER 1: What do you think?

ALICE: It's really bitter.

SERVER 1: Well, I didn't say it was good. *(To SERVER 2.)* The bill.

(SERVER 2 takes a pad and pencil from his pocket and writes.)

SERVER 2: Let's see. A peanut butter cup and some cheap coffee. That'll be a thousand dollars.

(SERVER 2 tears off a slip of paper and hands it to SERVER 1, who hands it to ALICE.)

ALICE: *(Horried.)* I don't have a thousand dollars! I don't have any money at all! I told you that!

SERVER 2: I knew it! Cheap person!

SERVER 1: Then we'll just be on our way.

(SERVERS exit.)

ALICE: I told you I didn't have any money! *(Yawns.)* I'm getting sleepy. *(SHE puts her head down on the table and goes to sleep.)*

SCENE 4: RAT

RAT enters and sits at the table.

RAT: You look like something the cat tried to eat.

ALICE: *(Sits up startled.)* What?

RAT: I say that as someone who is very familiar with what the cat tried to eat. The cat tried to eat my entire family.

ALICE: That's horrible!

RAT: It's okay. We're rats.

ALICE: You're awfully big for a rat.

RAT: Maybe you're awfully small for a ... what are you?

ALICE: I'm a person.

RAT: Then you're definitely small ... or maybe I'm large. Either way, what are you doing here?

ALICE: A couple of waiters tried to charge me a thousand dollars for a peanut butter cup and some nasty coffee.

RAT: I know those guys. They tried to put me in a casserole. And I thought the cat was bad.

ALICE: I should go back to the bench and wait for my sister. *(Stands, crosses left, then right.)* I don't know where I am!

RAT: That makes one of us.

ALICE: *(Distressed.)* I'm always supposed to be where my sister can see me! What am I going to do?

RAT: Whenever I'm stressed out I gnaw on electrical wire. Gives me a real charge. *(Laughs.)* Get it? A real charge!

ALICE: I've got to find my sister! I'm lost!

(RAT escorts ALICE to a chair.)

RAT: Sit down. Relax. Take some deep breaths. Do you not like my company?

ALICE: I guess you're okay.

RAT: I'm not just okay. I'm excellent. What's your name?

ALICE: Alice.

RAT: What's your favorite color?

ALICE: Green. What's your favorite color?

RAT: My favorite color is a light shade of ochre with a hint of fushia, a touch of violet and a tiny swirl of amber. But it really doesn't matter. I'm color blind. Now here is a very important question. Perhaps the most important question you've ever been asked. Are you ready?

ALICE: I think so.

RAT: Okay. Here goes. Brace yourself. *(Clears throat and makes a production of preparing to speak.)* What is the genus and specie of the wombat?

ALICE: What?

RAT: You heard me. The wombat. A native of New South Wales. A stocky little creature that resembles a bear.

ALICE: I have no idea.

RAT: You really don't know your marsupials, do you? Okay. Here's an easier question. What is the distance from the equator to seventy-five degrees latitude?

ALICE: I don't know.

RAT: Geography isn't your strong suit either. How about this? This is really easy. Who won the battle of Agincourt?

ALICE: I never heard of the battle of whatever-you-said!

RAT: You think just because I'm a bacterially infected rodent that I'm ignorant! Well, you're wrong! *(Stands.)* Maybe next time you'll think twice before you call an exterminator! Maybe that rat that you saw rooting through your garbage is also an expert on Shakespeare, or chemistry, or quantum physics!

ALICE: I don't know what you're talking about!

RAT: I'm talking about the right for a rat to live a life of happiness and fulfilment without cats! And without people thinking we're nasty ... even though we are! Am I upsetting you, little girl?

ALICE: Yes, you are!

RAT: Well, cry me a river!

(RAT exits right. ALICE leans over about to cry. SERVERS enter left and pull ALICE from the chair.)

SERVER 1: Sorry. We need these for paying customers.

SERVER 2: You ungrateful person!

(SERVERS take the table and chairs and exit left. ALICE tries her cell phone.)

ALICE: No signal! *(SHE sits on the floor and sobs.)*

SCENE 5: CAUCUS RACE

TRAINER enters left and crosses to ALICE.

TRAINER: Hi there. You look kind of sad. Know what will cheer you up? A good physical work out.

(Blows sports whistle startling ALICE.)

Okay! On your feet! *(Does jumping jacks, runs in place, etc.)* Let's get that cardiovascular system pumped up! Let's burn those carbs! Let's build those abs! LET'S FEEL THE PAIN, BABY! *(TRAINER stops.)* I take it you're not into physical fitness.

ALICE: I'm not in the mood right now.

TRAINER: So, what's the problem?

ALICE: I was insulted by a rat, a couple of servers took away the chair, my cell phone doesn't get a signal and I can't find my sister. *(Indicates off stage right.)* She's supposed to be beside the yogurt stand, but there isn't a yogurt stand anymore. Everything's changed.

TRAINER: Wow. That's almost interesting. Say, I know what would cheer you up. *(Takes a DVD from pocket.)* You can purchase my brand new slightly used DVD "Getting in Shape and Looking Silly." I'm an expert at both. This amazing offer is only \$19.95, and if you act now you'll receive absolutely free *(Takes a paperback from pocket.)* my "Guide to Inappropriate Remarks for All Occasions." See, in spite of my great physique, I'm not very smart, and sometimes I just can't come up with the wrong thing to say.

ALICE: You seem intelligent enough to me.

TRAINER: Do you really think so? Wow! That's the nicest thing anyone's said to me. *(Sits beside ALICE.)* I've had a very difficult life. At least it would have been difficult if I'd been intelligent enough to know how difficult it was. It all started with my ancestors. Our family crest is the dodo.

ALICE: Dodo?

TRAINER: Yes. An extinct bird known for its lack of common sense and basic survival skills. That kind of sums up my family, except we're not extinct yet. I figure as long as we're going to be foolish and ignorant why not get in shape. So I operate Dodo's Gym, specializing in personal training for the truly dim-witted.

ALICE: Do you have a lot of customers?

TRAINER: I don't know. I never noticed. I have learned that if you ignore your problems they'll go away.

ALICE: But don't they come back?

TRAINER: Yes, they do. But you've had some peace and quiet without them. Now, what can I do to cheer you up?

ALICE: Can you help me find my way back to the park?

TRAINER: I'm not good with directions.

ALICE: Can you help me find my sister?

TRAINER: That would be another negative.

ALICE: *(Sobs.)* I don't know what to do!

TRAINER: I know! We'll have a caucus race! That'll be fun!

(TRAINER jumps up and pulls ALICE to her feet.)

ALICE: Uh ... what's a caucus race?

TRAINER: You'll love it! We need some runners. I'll see if I can find any. *(Crosses left and yells offstage.)* CAUCUS RACE!

(RUNNERS enter left.)

RUNNERS: *(Random.)* All right! Caucus race! Can't wait! *(Cheering, whistling, etc.)*

TRAINER: Is everyone ready?

RUNNERS: YEAH!

TRAINER: Okay ... Ready ... Set ...

ALICE: Wait! I don't know the rules.

RUNNER 1: I don't either.

RUNNER 2: Me either.

RUNNER 3: I don't think I was ever in a caucus race.

TRAINER: Okay. I'll show you. Watch carefully. I'm going to walk off the course. *(TRAINER walks in a large circle around the stage.)* Now. Did everyone see the circle I made?

(ALL nod.)

When I say GO everyone runs, but no one goes outside of the circle. Does everyone understand?

(ALL nod.)

Good. Ready. Set. GO!

(ALL but ALICE and TRAINER run around aimlessly in the circle.)

Isn't this fun? I can't wait to find out who wins.

ALICE: What's the point?

TRAINER: The point is to win the race. What a silly question. And I'm an expert on silly questions ... and meaningless answers.

ALICE: How will you know who wins?

TRAINER: I'll show you. *(Blows whistle. Shouts.)* Okay! The race is over!

(ALL stop, exhausted.)

RUNNER 1: I'm exhausted.

RUNNER 2: Me, too. That was the hardest I've ever run in my life.

RUNNER 3: That was some race, wasn't it?

RUNNERS: IT SURE WAS!

ALICE: But who won?

(RUNNERS scratch their heads in confusion.)

TRAINER: Hmm. How about this. Everybody won!

(RUNNERS cheer.)

RUNNER 1: What about prizes?

RUNNER 2: Yeah. We gotta have prizes!

RUNNER 3: The winner always gets a prize.

TRAINER: I didn't think about prizes.

RUNNERS: *(Chanting.)* PRIZES! PRIZES! PRIZES!

TRAINER: This whole thing was her idea! *(Indicates ALICE.)* She has the prizes!

RUNNER 1: Give me a prize!

RUNNER 2: Give ME a prize!

RUNNER 3: Give me a bigger prize than them!

ALICE: I don't have any prizes!

TRAINER: No prizes?

(ALICE shakes her head.)

Then you've wasted our time.

RUNNER: 1: What a rip off!

RUNNER 2: I'll say!

RUNNER 3: All that racing ... and for nothing! *(RUNNERS exit left, grumbling.)*

ALICE: Why did you tell them I'd give them a prize?

TRAINER: I told you I wasn't very smart! And I'm glad I could help. *(TRAINER exits left.)*

SCENE 6: RABBIT AND CATERPILLAR

RABBIT enters right and crosses to ALICE.

RABBIT: There you are. I've been looking everywhere for you. You can take my luggage to the hotel suite. My tuxedo is to go to the dry cleaners, and you are to take my sweat pants and hoodies to the laundry mat. For dinner I will have carrot cake, followed by carrot stew and a glass of carrot juice. Carrots on the half shell would make a nice appetizer. Well? Get on with it!

(HE points right. ALICE exits right and returns with an armful of luggage.)

ALICE: Where do you want this?

RABBIT: Don't you listen? What is with servants these days?

ALICE: I'm not your servant!

RABBIT: Then why are you carrying my luggage? Hurry up! I'm late!

(RABBIT exits left, followed by ALICE. CATERPILLAR enters right, sits in lotus position and meditates.)

ALICE: *(Off stage.)* I'm not carrying your luggage!

(Crashing sound as SHE drops the luggage. SHE enters not watching where SHE's going, and trips over CATERPILLAR.)

Oh. Excuse me. Do you know how to get to the park?

CATERPILLAR: "You are old, Father William," the young man said,

"And your hair has become very white;

And yet you incessantly stand on your head –

Do you think, at your age, it is right?

ALICE: What?

CATERPILLAR: "In my youth," Father William replied to his son,

"I feared it might injure the brain;

But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,

Why, I do it again and again."

ALICE: Are you alright?

CATERPILLAR: Perfectly. I have been sitting on this mushroom for weeks ... well, for days ... actually I just said down ... but I've been contemplating the meaning of my existence and the existence of my meaning. You may join me if you wish, or you may wish if you join me.

(ALICE slowly sits beside CATERPILLAR.)

ALICE: What do I do?

CATERPILLAR: Empty your mind of all negative energy. And empty your energy of your negative mind. Like this.
(Closes eyes and chants.) Ommm. Ommm.

(ALICE tries joining in.)

ALICE: Ommm. Ommm. *(SHE stops.)*

CATERPILLAR: Did you reach a higher plain of awareness?

ALICE: No. I feel silly, and I'm afraid someone's going to see me.

CATERPILLAR: If you were in alignment you wouldn't care what anyone thought. And if you thought you wouldn't be in alignment. You'd be creating the poetry of the cosmos, and the cosmos of poetry. Would you care for a mushroom?
(HE takes a jar of mushrooms from his pocket, opens it and offers it to ALICE.)

ALICE: You eat them out of the jar?

CATERPILLAR: How do you eat them?

ALICE: On pizza.

CATERPILLAR: Have one.

(HE hands her the jar. SHE sniffs, wrinkles up her nose and hands it back.)

Go on. They're delicious.

(SHE reluctantly takes a mushroom and eats it, making a sour face.)

ALICE: It's kind of boring.

(HE eats a mushroom and returns the jar to his pocket.)

CATERPILLAR: You're welcome. Now, for another poem. You'll love this one.

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might:
He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and bright –
And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the night.

ALICE: That's kind of ... unusual.

CATERPILLAR: There's more.

The moon was shining sulkily,
Because she thought the sun
Had got no business to be there
After the day was done –
"It's very rude of him," she said,
"To come and spoil the fun!"

ALICE: Could you give me directions to the park?

CATERPILLAR: It's all a state of mind, and a mind of state.

ALICE: *(Standing.)* I think I'll be running along now.

CATERPILLAR: But you need to recite a poem.

ALICE: I don't know any poems.

CATERPILLAR: Close your eyes and concentrate.

(ALICE closes her eyes.)

Think about words that rhyme and rhymes that word. Think about the rhythm of language and the language of rhythm. Listen to the beating of your heart. That's a hard one for caterpillars. We don't have beating hearts.

ALICE: Okay. Now what?

CATERPILLAR: Respond with poetry. Say the first words that enter your mind.

ALICE: Uh ... Twinkle, twinkle little star / How I wonder what you are ...

CATERPILLAR: Boring!

(ALICE opens her eyes.)

ALICE: You said the first thing that enters my mind!

CATERPILLAR: Obviously I gave you more credit than you deserve, and more deserve than you credit!

ALICE: *(Insulted.)* Well, I'm sorry!

CATERPILLAR: I don't have time for you. I'm about to enter a greater level of existence, and an existent level of greater. And you're not part of it!

(SHE quickly exits right.)

What a strange little person. I believe I'll find another mushroom on which to sit. *(CATERPILLAR exits left.)*

SCENE 7: SERVERS, DUCHESS, JUNIOR, COOK AND GRINNING CAT

SERVERS enter and move the formal chair downstage left, facing upstage. JUNIOR enters, sits in the chair and plays a video game. His face remains unseen by the hoodie. SERVERS move the café table downstage right. COOK enters right with a large cooking pot and a stirring spoon. HE tastes the soup. SERVERS stand nearby awaiting his instructions.

COOK: MORE PEPPER!

SERVER 1: More pepper coming up!

(SERVER 1 exits right. DUCHESS left talking on her cell phone.)

DUCHESS: *(Jersey accent.)* I tell ya, Carmella, I'm losing my mind! Duke is never home! He has to work late! He has to go outta town! He has to go to a meeting! And where does that leave me? Home all day with Junior, that's where!

JUNIOR: *(Growls.)* STUPID GAME!

(SERVER 1 enters with a jar of pepper.)

SERVER 1: Pepper!

(COOK removes the lid, dumps the contents into the pot and stirs.)

DUCHESS: I'm supposed to golf with the Queen of the Park this morning. But can I ever get out of the house? Can I find anyone in this town crazy enough to babysit Junior for a couple of hours? Of course not! Nothing can ever be that easy! It's all Duke's fault! He buys Junior everything he wants! I tell ya, the kid is spoiled rotten!

JUNIOR: I HATE THIS GAME! I WANT GAME BOY ESP! *(Or other current video game.)*

DUCHESS: *(To JUNIOR.)* You just got that game yesterday!

JUNIOR: IT'S STUPID!

DUCHESS: Then we'll take it to the store and get our money back!

(COOK tastes the soup.)

JUNIOR: NO!

COOK: MORE PEPPER!

SERVER 2: More pepper on the way! *(SERVER 2 exits left.)*

DUCHESS: *(On phone.)* Did you hear about the cook? Duke thought a cook would make my life easier. I don't know where he found this guy.

(SERVER 2 enters with a large jar.)

SERVER 2: MORE PEPPER ... *(Under his breath.)* you warthog.

(COOK dumps the contents into the pot, stirs and tastes.)

DUCHESS: We're talking about the worst cook on the planet! All he makes is soup for crying out loud! How much soup is a person supposed to eat?

COOK: MORE PEPPER!

SERVER 1: More pepper on the way! *(SERVER 1 exits left.)*

DUCHESS: Not that a person could actually eat the soup! It's like trying to choke down molten lava from a volcano!

(SERVER 1 enters with a bucket.)

SERVER 1: Lots more pepper!

(COOK dumps the content of the bucket into the pot and stirs.)

DUCHESS: *(On phone.)* Between Junior and the Cook I'm losing my marbles!

JUNIOR: I HATE THIS STUPID GAME!

DUCHESS: *(To JUNIOR.)* Then I'm gonna break it into a thousand pieces and dump it down the garbage disposal!

JUNIOR: NO YOU WON'T!

COOK: This soup needs something else!

SERVERS: WHAT?

COOK: I don't know! Find it!

(SERVERS exit right. Meowing is heard offstage.)

DUCHESS: I need to let the cat in. *(Exits left then returns, followed by the GRINNING CAT.)* Duke got the cat for Junior but will the kid pay any attention to it at all? Of course not! It's just like everything else.

(GRINNING CAT gets down on hands and knees and rubs against DUCHESS's legs ala cat.)

Would you stop that? You're getting cat hair all over the house! Junior! Why don't you play with the nice kitty?

JUNIOR: I DON'T WANNA!

(DUCHESS bends down and rubs the GRINNING CAT's head.)

DUCHESS: *(Baby talk.)* You're such a good kitty cat! Yes you are! You're just mommy's good little kitty cat, aren't you? Yes you are!

(GRINNING CAT looks at audience and grins broadly. SERVERS enter each carrying a grocery bag.)

COOK: What did you find?

(SERVER 1 hands ingredients to cook, who tosses them, jars and all, into the pot.)

SERVER 1: Oregano!

COOK: Oregano!

SERVER 1: Spicy mustard!

COOK: Spicy mustard!

SERVER 1: Birdseed!

COOK: Birdseed!

SERVER 1: A very old jar of mayonnaise!

COOK: Old mayonnaise!

DUCHESS: *(On phone.)* Someone's at the door. *(Exits left.)*

(GRINNING CAT grins at JUNIOR.)

JUNIOR: DON'T LOOK AT ME!

(GRINNING CAT grins, licks paws and cleans face, and grins at JUNIOR.)

STOP IT!

(DUCHESS enters followed by ALICE.)

DUCHESS: *(On phone.)* Hey Carmella. Guess what? That stupid babysitting service found someone crazy enough to babysit Junior. It looks like I'll make the golf game after all.

ALICE: I'm sorry. I'm kind of lost. Can you tell me how to get to the yogurt stand in the park?

DUCHESS: I kind of feel sorry for her. Junior's gonna turn her into oatmeal.

(GRINNING CAT meows and grins at ALICE.)

ALICE: What a nice kitty.

(SHE bends down and rubs GRINNING CAT's head. COOK tastes the soup.)

COOK: It's still not right! *(To SERVER 2.)* What did you bring?

(SERVER 2 takes the RABBIT's glove from his bag and hands it to COOK.)

What's this?

SERVER 2: It's a glove, you nitwit! What do you think it is?

COOK: What am I supposed to do with it?

SERVER 2: Toss it in the soup.

(COOK tosses the glove in the pot and stirs.)

DUCHESS: *(On phone.)* I'll call you after the game. *(Hangs up phone. To ALICE.)* I think you're outta ya mind, but there's the kid, *(Points to COOK.)* and there's the soup. I'll be back in a couple of hours. Or maybe a couple of days.

ALICE: I'm not here to babysit or eat soup!

DUCHESS: You can't back out now! This will be the first time I've gotten out of this house in months!

ALICE: But I need to find the yogurt stand!

DUCHESS: Okay. I'll double your usual fee. What is it? Fifty cents an hour? I'll go as high as a buck twenty-five. But that's it! Just because I'm a duchess does not mean I'm gonna throw away money on babysitters!

(COOK tastes soup.)

COOK: Perfect!

(HE ladles soup into a bowl and crosses to ALICE. SERVERS shake hands with each other and freeze.)

ALICE: I'm not here to babysit!

DUCHESS: Listen cupcake! I have a previous engagement! You stay here and take care of Junior. You'll like him ... eventually. Or you'll hate him as much as you do at first.

(COOK hands ALICE soup bowl and spoon.)

COOK: *(Proudly.)* Soup!

DUCHESS: And ya get a free lunch. What could be better.

ALICE: I'm not hungry.

(COOK looks disappointed.)

DUCHESS: Ya hurt the Cook's feelings. Take the soup.

ALICE: Well. Okay. *(SHE reluctantly takes the soup.)*

DUCHESS: Eat it. It's good for ya.

(COOK crosses to the SERVERS. THEY move the table, pot and other items upstage and exit. ALICE tastes the soup. SHE gags.)

By the way. There's something I forgot to mention. Junior's a pig.

(DUCHESS quickly exits left. JUNIOR stands and pulls back the hood. HE wears a pig snout. ALICE gasps.)

JUNIOR: Oink! Oink! Oink!

(HE snorts and exits left. ALICE sinks to the floor.)

GRINNING CAT: Hi.

(ALICE looks at GRINNING CAT, who grins.)

ALICE: Why are you doing that?

GRINNING CAT: Doing what? *(Grins.)*

ALICE: Grinning like that?

GRINNING CAT: I'm not grinning. *(Grins.)*

ALICE: You're kind of creeping me out.

GRINNING CAT: I don't mean to. *(Grins.)* You seem to be in distress. You'd probably like to have your mind back, wouldn't you? *(Grins.)*

ALICE: Well ... yes.

GRINNING CAT: Then the best advice I can give is for you to find it.

ALICE: How do I find my mind?

GRINNING CAT: Take the subway up to 116th Street, cross over to Amsterdam Avenue, take a bus south to 14th Street, cross over to Eighth Avenue, take a cab to Columbus Circle, and cross the street. You'll see some trees and some benches. *(Grins.)*

(ALICE thinks for a moment.)

ALICE: That's the park! Why should I ride all over town and end up back where I started?

GRINNING CAT: I didn't say it would be easy. *(Grins.)* Is it better to lose your mind and not know it's gone, or to know it's gone when it wasn't there in the first place? These are important questions we need to ask ourselves. Meow. *(Grins, exits left.)*

ALICE: Wait! If I get my mind back will I find my sister? *(Exits left, leaving the soup bowl on the floor.)*

SCENE 8: SKATER, CYCLIST AND R.P.

SERVERS enter. THEY turn the formal chair around and remove the soup bowl. THEY move the café table and two chairs downstage center. R.P. (RICH PERSON) enters left, sits in the formal chair and reads the "Wall Street Journal". SKATER and CYCLIST enter left, cross to the table and sit. SKATER wears headphones and listens to music. CYCLIST reads a cycling magazine. SERVERS stand beside the table.

SERVER 1: May we offer you a cool refreshing beverage?

SERVER 2: They don't want anything!

CYCLIST: I'll have a raspberry flavored energy drink.

SERVER 2: I hate raspberry!

SERVER 1: *(To R.P.)* And you sir?

R.P.: I'll have a double espresso with a touch of butterscotch, a tiny hint of cinnamon, and a smidgen of skim milk. No foam, extra hot.

SERVER 1: Excellent.

SERVER 2: It sounds awful!

SERVER 1: *(To SKATER.)* How about you?

(SKATER nods head to music, not hearing SERVER 1.)

Do you care for a cool refreshing beverage?

SERVER 2: He can't hear you.

SERVER 1: *(Louder.)* May I bring you something to drink?

SERVER 2: Oh, good grief! *(Rips headphones off SKATER and shouts in his ear.)* CAN WE BRING YOU SOMETHING?

SKATER: *(Startled and in pain.)* Oh, man! That was a cool song! Why'd ya do that?

SERVER 2: *(Shouting.)* BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T HEAR US!

SKATER: Why are you yelling, man?

SERVER 2: *(Stage whisper.)* Because you couldn't hear us!

SKATER: I hear you. Uh ... what was the question?

SERVER 1: Something to drink perhaps?

SKATER: A cola.

SERVER 1: We have a carbonated high fructose corn syrup, flavored caffeine with sugar and sodium, and a really repulsive espresso. Anything else?

SKATER / CYCLIST / R.P.: Nope!

SERVER 2: Tacky people!

(SERVERS exit left. SKATER puts on headphones. ALICE enters, looks around and crosses to the table.)

ALICE: Excuse me. Could you help me please?

R.P.: Do you wish to make a significant financial investment?

ALICE: I want to find my sister.

R.P.: Do you have any money?

ALICE: No.

R.P.: Then I don't wish to talk with you.

ALICE: *(To CYCLIST and SKATER.)* Excuse me!

CYCLIST: Do you mind? I'm trying to read a magazine here!

ALICE: *(To SKATER.)* Could you help me please?

(SKATER sways to his music.)

Excuse me! *(Louder.)* HEY! *(Pulls the headphones from his ears.)*

SKATER: Hey, man! That hurt!

ALICE: Sorry. I just wanted some help.

SKATER: Get a job! That's what my mother says to me every time I ask for help.

ALICE: I'm looking for the park.

SKATER: The park ain't no good. They won't let you skate there.

CYCLIST: Don't sit down! You're not invited.

SKATER: Yeah, man! Don't sit down!

ALICE: I don't want to sit down. I'm just asking for directions.

R.P.: *(Reading.)* I see Consolidated Oil is up and Consolidated Computer is down. That's good news and bad news. But I feel sad.

"Oh, what to do?" the banker moaned,

His mood became infernal.

"I want to look, I want to find

My face in the Wall Street Journal!"

CYCLIST: I really need some new cycling shoes. These Nikes look good.

A cyclist rides and rides and rides,

And rides with greatest ease.

He needs to watch for cars and trucks,

And all those pesky trees.

SKATER: *(Ripping off his headphones.)* Hey! I can make up poems too! Listen to this! *(Stands, clears throat, takes deep breath.)*

I like to skateboard when it's June,

And all the flowers are in bloom.

I rode my skateboard down the track;

I never got my skateboard back.

CYCLIST: That was awful.

R.P.: Worst poem I've ever heard.

SKATER: *(Offended.)* Well ... what do YOU know?

CYCLIST: I know about pushing yourself to the finish line!

R.P.: I know about money!

SKATER: Well ... I can ollie off of the steps at Dunkin' Donuts! And I did the handrail at the bus station ... until the police made me stop.

CYCLIST: *(Unimpressed.)* Your mother must be proud.

ALICE: Is the Dunkin' Donuts near the park?

(SERVERS enter with a tray with three coffee cups. THEY shove ALICE out of their way.)

SERVER 1: *(To CYCLIST.)* A high energy drink, complete with sodium and lots of calories.

SERVER 2: He won't like it.

SERVER 1: *(To R.P.)* A double espresso with a touch of butterscotch, a tiny hint of cinnamon, and a smidgen of skim milk. No foam, extra hot.

SERVER 2: He'll probably barf.

SERVER 1: *(To SKATER.)* An ordinary cola.

(SKATER, CYCLIST and R.P. toast.)

SKATER / CYCLIST / R.P.: CHEERS! *(THEY sip their drinks and start to gag and cough.)*

SERVER 1: Is something wrong with your beverages?

SKATER / CYCLIST / R.P.: *(Random.)* Oh, no! Delicious! Everything's fine! Couldn't be better! *(Etc.)*

SERVER 1: I thought so. *(To ALICE.)* Would you care for a refreshing beverage? Oh, it's you.

SERVER 2: Cheap person!

SERVER 1: *(To SERVER 2.)* The bill.

(SERVER 2 takes a pad and pencil from his pocket and writes.)

SERVER 2: Let's see. Three cups of muddy water. That'll be a thousand dollars.

(SERVER 2 tears off a slip of paper and hands it to SERVER 1, who tries to hands it to R.P.)

R.P.: I left my small bills at the mansion. *(Indicating CYCLIST.)* He'll have to cover it.

(SERVER tries to hand the bill to CYCLIST.)

CYCLIST: I'm saving up for a new bike. *(Indicates SKATER.)* He'll take care of it.

SKATER: Hey, man! I'm broke! Give the bill to the funny looking girl.

SERVER 1: *(To ALICE.)* I don't suppose there's any chance you'd take care of their bill.

ALICE: They weren't even nice to me!

SERVER 2: Neither are we, you awful person!

(SERVERS exit.)

R.P.: I need to get back to Wall Street. This has almost been fun. Let's not do it again. *(Exits.)*

CYCLIST: The Tour de France is calling my name. Don't forget to write. *(Exits.)*

SKATER: I got ... like ... some sweet jumps to do. *(Exits.)*

ALICE: WAIT!

(JOGGER enters left, jogging center.)

Excuse me! Which way is the park?

JOGGER: *(Stops and jogs in place. Speaking rapidly.)* Are you a jogger? I'm a jogger. I love to jog. I jog till it hurts.

And then I wonder why it hurts so bad. Wanna jog with me?

ALICE: Not really.

JOGGER: Then I shall recite a poem for you. I wrote it myself. *(Clears throat and sings or recites.)*

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!

How I wonder what you're at!

Up above the world you fly,

Like a bagel in the sky ...

Perhaps you'd like to join in the refrain.

ALICE: I don't know the refrain.

JOGGER: It goes like this:

Bagel, bagel burning bright,

In the forest of the night.

With cream cheese and nova lox,

Bagel tastes like dirty socks.

Isn't that a beautiful poem?

ALICE: It's kind of disgusting.

JOGGER: I don't believe you care for my poetry!

ALICE: I just want to find my sister.

JOGGER: Try the park. That's a good place to look for sisters.

ALICE: Where is the park?

JOGGER: Follow me! Try to keep up!

(Jogs right and exits. ALICE runs after him. JOGGER enters right jogging and exits left. ALICE follows, but starts falling behind. JOGGER enters left, jogs right and exits.)

ALICE: Wait! I can't keep up with you!

(ALICE exits right. JOGGER enters right, jogs left and exits. ALICE enters, and falls down center exhausted.)

Please wait!

SCENE 9: QUEEN OF THE PARK

QUEEN enters pushing shopping cart full of stuff. SHE mumbles to herself, sees ALICE and crosses to her.

QUEEN: You can't sleep there! This is MY park!

ALICE: Excuse me?

(QUEEN takes a paper crown from her cart and puts it on her head.)

QUEEN: I'm the Queen of the Park! *(Offers ALICE a brownie from her cart.)* And no one can sleep here but me! Care for a brownie?

(ALICE looks at it with disgust.)

I found it in the dumpster behind the bakery. That's the best place in town to shop.

ALICE: No thanks.

(QUEEN takes a bite of the brownie.)

QUEEN: Hmm. Delicious. *(Tosses it back in the cart.)* I just enjoyed a round of golf with the Duchess. *(SHE takes a golf club and a mini muffin from the cart and takes a few practice swings.)* The first hole is tricky. You have to tee off in front of the statue of the man on the horse before the police can arrest you.

ALICE: *(Indicating the muffin.)* What is that?

QUEEN: A mini muffin. When they get too old to eat we use 'em as golf balls. We used to use gophers, but they're getting hard to find.

ALICE: I need to find my sister.

QUEEN: Well, let me see. I might be able to help. *(Shows ALICE objects in her cart. Directors may use objects of their choice.)* Back pack, a shoe, 4 liter bottle of Dr. Pepper, old telephone, old t-shirt, my high school diploma, someone else's high school diploma ... *(Etc.)*

ALICE: If you could tell me how to get to the yogurt stand I would really appreciate it.

QUEEN: *(Continuing her search.)* A McDonalds bag, a waffle *(takes a bite)* ... an old waffle ... a Barbie doll. Here. This might help. A map. *(Hands ALICE a map.)*

ALICE: It's a map of China.

QUEEN: Well? They have parks in China, don't they? Here I am trying to help, and you're complaining!

(Suddenly the KNAVE enters right, whoops, takes the grocery cart and quickly exits left.)

HEY! HE TOOK MY STUFF! HELP! POLICE! *(Calmer.)* Actually, don't call the police. I'm not on their happy list at the moment. THIEF! CROOK! CRIMINAL! *(To ALICE.)* Maybe what you need is a doctor. *(Hands her a card.)* Here. Try my doctor. *(QUEEN exits shouting at the KNAVE.)* YOU DIRTY ROTTEN CRIMINAL! COME BACK WITH MY STUFF!

ALICE: Dr. Turtle? Who's Dr. Turtle?

(SERVERS and STAGE MANAGER enter and move sofa and formal chair downstage.)

SCENE 10: DR. TURTLE

SERVER 1: The doctor will see you now.

SERVER 2: And she won't like you!

(SERVERS exit right. DR. TURTLE enters, wearing a lab coat and carrying a clipboard.)

TURTLE: Good morning. I'm Dr. Turtle. I see you have a ten o'clock appointment. Please, *(Indicates the sofa.)* make yourself comfortable.

(ALICE sits on the sofa.)

Don't just sit there.

ALICE: What am I supposed to do?

TURTLE: Have you ever been to a psychiatrist before?

ALICE: Psychiatrist? No.

(TURTLE leaves the clipboard on the chair, crosses to ALICE, takes her by the ankles and pulls her down so that SHE'S laying on the sofa.)

There. Are we comfy?

ALICE: Not really.

(TURTLE returns to her chair and makes notes.)

TURTLE: Good. When did you start having these dreams?

ALICE: What dreams?

TURTLE: The dreams about hating your mother.

ALICE: I don't hate my mother!

TURTLE: Do you feel like your parents love your brother more than you?

ALICE: I don't have a brother!

TURTLE: Do you have a fear of high places?

ALICE: Not really.

TURTLE: A fear of low places?

ALICE: No.

TURTLE: A fear of door knobs or SUVs?

ALICE: I don't think so.

TURTLE: You don't think so? You aren't sure?

ALICE: I don't have a fear of door knobs or cars.

TURTLE: I specifically said SUVs, not cars.

ALICE: But SUVs are cars.

TURTLE: Where were you born?

ALICE: Here.

TURTLE: On that sofa?

ALICE: No! In the hospital!

TURTLE: You specifically said here. Then you said "in the hospital". We are not in a hospital.

ALICE: *(Sitting up.)* I don't understand what you're saying.

TURTLE: You need intensive treatment! You'll be institutionalized for months ... years! The bills will be astronomical!

You may never get out alive!

ALICE: I'm not crazy!

TURTLE: Then I'd say you're cured. That'll be a thousand dollars.

ALICE: But all you did was ask some silly questions!

TURTLE: You only thought they were silly questions. In fact, they were very good questions to which you gave silly answers. Or perhaps it was the other way around.

SCENE 11: TRIAL

SERVERS enter left.

SERVER 1: It's time for the big trial!

ALICE: *(Jumping to her feet.)* What big trial?

SERVER 1: The People vs. the Knave of the Park. The charge is stuff-napping.

SERVER 2: Not that you care!

(SERVERS and STAGE MANAGER move the sofa upstage, the formal chair center and the café table in front of the formal chair. A café chair is left of the table. The CAST, ALL but RABBIT and QUEEN, enter left each bringing a folding chair. THEY make two rows left and sit. A chair is brought in for ALICE, who is made to sit downstage right. The KNAVE sits downstage right next to ALICE. The SERVERS stand behind the formal chair.)

SERVER 1: The case of the People vs. the Knave of the Park. The Honorable Queen of the Park presiding.

SERVER 2: Not that any of YOU care!

KNAVE: *(To ALICE.)* I hope you're as good as they say you are.

ALICE: What are you talking about?

KNAVE: At defending people like me. You know ... people who are guilty.

ALICE: I'm not a lawyer!

SERVER 1: All stand.

(ALL stand. KNAVE pulls ALICE to her feet. QUEEN enters left wearing a robe and carrying a gavel. SHE sits in the formal chair and bangs the gavel on the table.)

QUEEN: Sit down! *(Looks around.)* Where is the prosecutor?

(RABBIT enters bringing a chair.)

RABBIT: Here I am! Late again! Always late! Late! Late! Late!

END OF FREE PREVIEW