

The Mad Tea Party



Clint Snyder

Inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

Illustration by Gordon Robinson

Norman Maine Publishing

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*For
Barbara, Sara, Monica,
and Joe.*

The Mad Tea Party

FARCE. Audiences will love this witty, modern sequel to the Mad Hatter's tea party in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Like the infamous Alice, Allie follows the White Rabbit down a rabbit hole into Wonderland and encounters the Mad Hatter and March Hare at their never-ending 6 o'clock tea party with their only guest, the sleepy Dormouse. The Mad Hatter and March Hare are annoyed by Allie and consider her a rabbit stalker and party crasher. However, after chit-chatting for several hundred years about the weather and the Mad Hatter's mother, the hosts are excited by Allie's arrival and bombard her with riddles, puns, poems, and wordplay. They have fun insulting Allie by making fun of her clothes and hair and forcing her to play games like "The Funny Hat" and "What Am I Looking At?" In the end, the hosts deem Alice smarter and a better conversationalist than Allie. Unable to escape, Allie must learn from the Dormouse how to cope with their endless chatter and pointless conversations.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

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Photo of Alice Liddell, 1858, by Lewis Carroll,
and Lewis Carroll, 1855.

ABOUT THE STORY

Lewis Carroll is a pseudonym for Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), who taught math at Christ Church in Oxford, England. Dodgson was partially deaf and spoke with a stammer but was a gifted mathematician, storyteller, and photographer. As a boy, Dodgson entertained his five younger sisters and three younger brothers with his stories and puppet shows. In 1856, Dodgson befriended the children of Henry Liddell, who served as the dean of Christ Church. Dodgson spent much time with Liddell's children—Lorina, Edith, and Alice—telling them stories and taking them on frequent afternoon boat trips on the river. Alice Liddell was the inspiration for the character of Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871).

Characters

(1 F, 3 flexible)

ALLIE: Curious girl who, like Alice, has become lost in Wonderland after following the White Rabbit down a rabbit hole; female.

HATTER: Wonderland's Mad Hatter who loves puns, riddles, silly games, and reciting poems; wears a large hat; flexible.

HARE: Wonderland's March Hare who loves to ponder "important" concepts like toe jam; flexible.

DORMOUSE: Hatter and Hare's sleepy companion who loves cheese and is terrified by cats; flexible.

Setting

Wonderland, the Mad Hatter's tea party, 6 p.m.

Set

The Mad Hatter's tea party. There is a large table surrounded by many chairs. The table is covered with a tablecloth and has teacups, teapots, and many condiments on it including butter, sugar, etc.

Props

Tablecloth
Butter
Jam
Sugar
Cream
Teacups
Teapots
Tea
Plate of crackers
Plate of cheese
Biscuits
Plate of toast
Flour
Broom
Dustpan
Watch

"Didn't that other
Wicked girl's name
start with an "A," too?"

—Hare

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(AT RISE: Wonderland, the Mad Hatter's tea party, 6 p.m. There is a large table surrounded by many chairs. The table is covered with a tablecloth and has teacups, teapots, and many condiments on it including butter, sugar, etc. The Mad Hatter is holding two teacups up to his eyes, trying to look through them.)

HATTER: I always thought it was such a strange way of looking at things.

(Hare is playing with his tea.)

HARE: What was that, Hatsy?

HATTER: I said, it is a strange way of looking at things, you know, through teacups. Because on the one hand, you have a nice view of the tea grains; but on the other, you never really see anything but the tea grains, which I suppose would be a plus if you are surrounded by ugly things all the time like I am.

HARE: What?

HATTER: Good gravy, Hare! Pay attention once in a while, why don't you?

HARE: Gravy?

DORMOUSE: (Groggy.) We've been out of gravy for years.

HATTER: Didn't we know a Gravy? (Thinking.) Gravy, Grave-y, Grally... (Remembers.) ...Gary! Gary. That was his name. Came straight down that rabbit hole and, oh, boy, was he in for a shock. He actually thought people rode around on mechanical horses called "cars." Silly concept! What a nut!

HARE: What a butter! (Holds up the butter.)

DORMOUSE: What a gravy!

HATTER: Good gravy! (All laugh wildly.) Have a care, Dor, pass me down the jam.

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DORMOUSE: I've been telling you for years, my name isn't "Dor." It's "Dormouse."

HARE: Would someone kindly explain to me the concept of toe jam? The name is very deceiving when you think about it, which I constantly do.

DORMOUSE: *(To Hatter.)* I would have thought you would have gotten my name right by now. It isn't really complicated if you think about it.

HARE: I constantly do. Toe jam. It really isn't a jam at all. At least, it doesn't really taste very well with toast like any sort of real jam should. Real jam goes great with toast. I should write a letter.

HATTER: To whom?

HARE: The dictionary people, of course. They have people set aside for these kinds of mistakes that review thousands of letters every day from unsatisfied customers.

HATTER: You bought a dictionary?

DORMOUSE: *(To Hare.)* Why wasn't I told about this?!

HARE: No, no, no, I haven't actually bought anything yet, but that doesn't mean I can't send a letter.

HATTER: It does mean that you're not a customer.

HARE: I plan on writing them about the definition of the word "customer" as well.

(Dormouse falls asleep and his face lands in a plate of crackers.)

HATTER: *(Shouts.)* Oh, no! Dor has fainted into the crackers again!

HARE: *(Shakes head.)* That's how my grandmother went. Somebody made an edgy comment about dictionaries and then she keeled right over into a pile of crackers.

(Hatter and Hare rush over to assist Dormouse. They violently shake and slap Dormouse and then suddenly stop.)

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HATTER: *(Realizes.)* Wait! *(Hatter and Hare drop Dormouse back into the pile of crackers.)* He's only sleeping.

(Hatter and Hare brush themselves off.)

HARE: Glad we cleared that up.

HATTER: The space in front of me is definitely not clear.

HARE: What do we do?

HATTER: I propose we move and that we all get *clean cups!*

(Hatter and Hare pick up Dormouse by his arms and move him. Hatter and Hare then seat themselves at different seats.)

HARE: I like the view from here.

HATTER: Why?

HARE: It was like the one over there, but more this way.

HATTER: That was very clever.

HARE: But would you say it was "as clever as a cat"?

HATTER: "As clever as a cat"? Who says that?

HARE: I don't know...people do.

HATTER: I don't trust these people with their cat references.

DORMOUSE: *(Awakens, terrified, shouts.)* Cats! Ahhhh!

(Dormouse runs around the table, screaming. Hatter and Hare catch Dormouse and slap him across the face. Then Hatter throws spoonfuls of sugar in Dormouse's face.)

HATTER: Sleep! Sleep! Why aren't you relaxing!

HARE: What is that you're doing?

HATTER: What does it look like? I'm putting him to sleep by throwing sugar in his eyes.

HARE: That's sand. You're supposed to throw sand in their eyes to make them sleep.

HATTER: Whoever heard of that before? *(Dormouse's struggling becomes weaker and weaker until he falls asleep.)* Besides, my idea worked just fine, now didn't it?

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(Allie enters without being noticed.)

ALLIE: Hello?

HATTER: *(Startled, screams.)* Ahhh!

(Hatter and Hare jump up and drop Dormouse. To defend himself, Hare holds out a piece of toast as if it were a sword.)

HARE: *(To Allie.)* Back away, you, you fiend!

HATTER: *(To Allie.)* You wicked, wicked child!

(Hare throws a handful of sugar at Allie.)

ALLIE: I'm sorry. I...I didn't mean to startle you.

(Allie holds out her hand for a handshake. Hare sniffs her hand and grimaces.)

HARE: *(Aside.)* I don't like this, Hatsy, not at all.

HATTER: *(Aside.)* Look at her clothes...it's like she woke up this morning and threw a potato sack over her head.

ALLIE: My name's Allie. You are?

HATTER: Offended by your tone, quite frankly. Who do you think you are barging in here like a...barge...with your clothes and your attitude like that.

HARE: *(To himself.)* Allie? *(To Hatter.)* Didn't that other wicked girl's name start with an "A," too? *(Remembers.)* "Alice." That was it.

HATTER: *(To Allie.)* You should be ashamed of yourself, starting your name with a horrible letter like "A."

HARE: *(To Allie.)* The worst things in the world start with the letter "A."

HATTER: They do, indeed.

[END OF FREEVIEW]