



The Lewis Carroll Writing Competition 2021

The Other Alice

By Jonathan David Dixon

Jonathan is an actor, writer, composer and illustrator. He was a member of the Theaterwork company in Santa Fe for many years and also travelled to New York and the Edinburgh Festival with the Arden Shakespeare Company's, "God's Fool". As a songwriter/composer, he is currently working on songs and the score for the Wickey animated feature "Plummet to Adventure", as well as finalizing songs for his album of "pop" songs, "Otherwhere". As an illustrator, he has contributed to a number of books, many related to Lewis Carroll, including "The Hunting of the Snark", "La Guida Di Bragia", and "The Tale of the Mouse's Tail". He's currently collaborating with classical composer Daniel Steven Crafts on the librettos for a series of "Operas from the Crypt" for the Gonzo Opera company (serious opera music, but in a fun vein). His collection of short stories relating his made-up adventures in his dreamlike version of Santa Fe, "Santa Fe Tales: Eleven Absolutely True Stories of Wonder and Imagination", will be available in the near future.

Jonathan says the inspiration for "The Other Alice", started "years ago, when I was immersing myself in Mr. Dodgson's works, letters, diaries, and biography in preparation for illustrating "The Hunting of the Snark", to try to capture something of his spirit, my brain kept spontaneously coming up with little Carrollian jokes and incidents that might happen to Alice — usually in the middle of the night. I would jot them down, but never thought they would lead anywhere. One of them involved Alice meeting someone who looked exactly like herself — who turned out to be not quite what she seemed. Thanks to the Lewis Carroll Society, now those long-ago notes have indeed led to something. I went back to them to develop this "missing chapter." The paradoxical joke — "That's the difference between us right there: You look exactly like me, but I look nothing at all like you" — the Other Alice's name, and the two poems became the foundation.

His story starts immediately after the "Lobster Quadrille"...

The Lobster Quadrille

“Chorus again!” cried the Gryphon, and the Mock Turtle had just begun to repeat it, when a cry of “The trial’s beginning!” was heard in the distance.

“Come on!” cried the Gryphon, and, taking Alice by the hand, it hurried off, without waiting for the end of the song.

“What trial is it?” Alice panted as she ran; but the Gryphon only answered “Come on!” and ran the faster, while more and more faintly came, carried on the breeze that followed them, the melancholy words:—

“Soo—oop of the e—e—evening,

Beautiful, beautiful Soup!”

The Other Alice

“I ca’n’t keep up! I haven’t wings like you!” called Alice to the Gryphon as they flew along the sand at great speed.

“Come on! The trial!” shouted the Gryphon again, never once looking back; but Alice simply couldn’t keep pace with it and at length her hand slipped from the Gryphon’s paw. The Gryphon continued on, unaware it had left Alice behind, and still calling out “Come on!”, until finally Alice was left standing alone on the beach, trying to recover her breath.

“It never even told me what the trial is about,” she said: “I hope it isn’t its own trial, as he was quite the nicest Gryphon I’ve ever met.” (Since Alice had never met any other Gryphons, that would have been true even if the Gryphon had been extremely rude and unkind.) “Well, I might still make it without arriving too late, I think; but I suppose I should probably tidy myself in this looking-glass first. I don’t want to appear in a courtroom looking a fright.”

Alice walked over to a looking-glass that was standing within a circle of large rocks that surrounded a small inlet pool of water.

“What an odd place for a looking-glass,” thought Alice. She stood before it and smoothed the front of her dress, brushing away some stray particles of sand that had got there, and then reached up to straighten her hair. Strangely, however, the looking-glass Alice didn’t return these gestures, but simply stared back at her.

“How very curious! The other me seems to have a mind of her own,” said Alice.

“What are you looking at?” said the looking-glass Alice, whom Alice suddenly realised wasn’t a reflection at all, but a real live girl.

Alice jumped back. “Oh! I’m sorry! I thought you were a looking-glass!”

“Do I look like a looking-glass?” asked the Other Alice.

“No,” said Alice: “I just meant that you—you look just like me!”

“Why? Do you think *you* look like a looking-glass?” asked the Other Alice.

“No,” said our Alice, who was beginning to realise she wasn’t quite sure what a looking-glass *really* looks like. “I just meant that we look the same. It is really—it’s quite remarkable.”

“No, it isn’t. You see, that’s the difference between us right there,” said the Other Alice: “You look exactly like me, but I look nothing at all like you.”

A thought occurred to Alice. “Do you—” she began; “Do you suppose we might be sisters?” Alice had once read a story about two little girls who looked exactly alike, but who didn’t know they were sisters until their lockets fit together at the end.

“Maybe,” said the Other Alice: “I hope not.”

“What is your name?” asked Alice.

“Celia,” said the Other Alice (whom we will now call “Celia”).

Alice waited for Celia to ask her *her* name. She didn’t. Alice decided to press on.

“My name is Alice.” She thought it best to spell it out: “A—L—I—C—”

“Yes, yes, I see as well,” interrupted Celia; “but what is your name really?”

“My name really is Alice,” said Alice.

Celia looked doubtful, but said nothing.

“And what is your last name, Celia?” asked Alice.

“I never changed it,” said Celia.

“I meant what is your *family* name,” said Alice, who was beginning to feel more than a little annoyed that this other little girl didn’t seem the least bit impressed that they looked exactly

alike. "If I had meant that you used to have a different name, I would have said, 'What *was* your last name'."

"No, you wouldn't have," said Celia; "you would have said, 'What *is* your last name,' or 'What *was* your name.' If I had changed my name, my last name would continue to be my last name. Even if I had one. Which I don't."

"Well," said Alice, "my first name is Alice, and my family name is—"

"You have very thick ankles," interrupted Celia.

"I do not!" said Alice; "and it's very rude of you to— Oh! You're a mermaid!"

Alice was surprised that she hadn't noticed this obvious fact before, but, sure enough, in looking down to see how thick were Celia's ankles, she found that Celia not only didn't have ankles, she didn't have any legs at all, but instead, a long, beautiful blue tail like a fish.

"I'm a *what?*" said Celia.

"I just said that you're a mermaid," said Alice. "I didn't mean any offense."

"No, I am not," said Celia: "I am just a maid. You're a terremaind."

"I'm a *what?*" said Alice, who didn't think herself a terror at all. "I am not!"

"Oh, ho!" laughed Celia: "Now whose shoe is on whose other foot?"

"Well, if that's how you're going to be, I will just be on my way!" Alice turned on her heel and started toward the road.

"Stop, you girl," commanded Celia.

Against her own best intentions, Alice found herself stopping. She turned back.

"Where were you going with that bird?" asked Celia.

"With the Gryphon, do you mean?" said Alice. "It said there was a trial. We were trying to get to it before it started, but the Gryphon is ever so much faster than I."

Celia looked deeply sceptical: "If there *was* a trial, how could you get to it *before* it started? Even a very fast bird couldn't do that."

"I meant, of *course*," said Alice, becoming even more annoyed, "that there *is* a trial, right now, starting at this moment."

"You don't want to go to that," said Celia.

"Why don't I?" asked Alice.

“You just don’t. You should come with me under the sea. I could show you the most lovely things that would broaden your outlook.” Celia pointed to the waves.

“But I wouldn’t be able to breathe under the sea!” protested Alice.

“That would only be a problem for a minute or two,” said Celia: “We could ride the currents.”

“Merm— I mean, you ride currants under the sea?” Alice didn’t even know that currants grew under the sea, let alone that it was possible to ride them.

“Oh, yes, all the time,” replied Celia carelessly. “It’s lovely.”

“How very peculiar!” said Alice. “That does sound lovely; but, really, I must go to the trial. It sounded to be very important.”

“No, you mustn’t. I want you to stay here,” said Celia.

A thought occurred to Alice. “I suppose you have a song or a poem for me?” she asked.

“Why would you suppose that?” said Celia.

“It just seems that almost everybody here has a song or a poem,” said Alice.

“As a matter of fact, I do have a poem, *and* a song,” said Celia: “Many, in fact; but they are not for you. They are for art.”

“Well, in that case, if they aren’t for me, I will be going—” said Alice, turning away again.

“It is an epic poem, in the style of Lord Denizen,” continued Celia, taking no notice of Alice’s clear desire to be gone. “It is very romantic, but tragic. Would you like to hear it? I’m sure it will be far above you.”

“I’m sure you haven’t the time—” said Alice, taking another step away.

“Perhaps its nobility will raise her up,” said Celia to herself. She folded her hands and began: “An epic poem entitled ‘On the Death and Lamentable End of a Truly Noble but Quite Insufferable Whelk, as Told to One Fine Octopus in his Childhood; or, A Crustacean without a Shell.’”

Here Celia cleared her throat and, lifting her hands wanly and using them to fan her hair out on either side of her head, began: —

*Lo! upon the heartened grandy never took,
The seasoned whelk did sink below!*

Here she let her hair fall, and, pressing the back of one of her hands to her forehead, she held the other out before her, as if in futile protest:

*Alas! For what? 'Tis that we sometime overlook:
Our seaweed left in splendoured flow!*

Here Celia crossed her hands before her face, and lowered her eyes. She remained in that attitude, unmoving, for several long moments.

“Was that the introduction?” Alice asked finally.

“No, that was it,” said Celia, dropping her hands; “It is a very short epic poem. I knew it would be above you. Here is one more to your level, I think. This is the song.” Then, with a beautiful soprano voice (much better than Alice’s own, Alice had to admit), she began: —

*Shall I compare thee to a dishcloth rag?
Thine eyes are still more green!
And yet I find they do not get
The table half so clean.*

*Shall I compare thee to a broken comb?
Thy face, more radiant fair!
And yet I find it cannot work
The tangles from my hair.*

*Shall I compare thee to a rusty gate?
Thy voice more lilting far!
And yet it will not keep the pig
From —*

At that moment there came another cry of “The trial’s beginning!”, this time followed by the sound of a trumpet.

“I’m sorry, but I really must go!” said Alice, tearing herself from Celia’s song and running toward the road as quickly as her legs could carry her. She heard a splash behind her, glanced back, and saw that the Mermaid was gone.

“Well, I ca’n’t say I’m sorry to get away from her,” thought Alice as she ran: “even though she did look like me, she wasn’t a very pleasant person.”

The Gryphon was by now only a dot far, far ahead and Alice had to run her very fastest to try to catch up with it. When she did finally reach the Gryphon, she found it in heated conversation with several other of the animals, standing before the entrance to the courtroom, and they all walked through together.

WHO STOLE THE TARTS?

The King and Queen of Hearts were seated on their throne when they arrived, with a great crowd assembled about them—all sorts of little birds and beasts, as well as the whole pack of cards: the Knave was standing before them, in chains, with a soldier on each side to guard him; and near the King was the White Rabbit, with a trumpet in one hand, and a scroll of parchment in the other. In the very middle of the court was a table, with a large dish of tarts upon it: they looked so good, that it made Alice quite hungry to look at them— “I wish they’d get the trial done,” she thought, “and hand round the refreshments!” But there seemed to be no chance of this, so she began looking at everything about her, to pass away the time.