

DONYA CURRIE ARIAS

I Am Alice



You are dying to be Alice, and you go to auditions in a white dress with a blue sash just like on the cover of the book. You sing your heart out. The music teacher, Mrs. Franklin, who obviously has no star vision, casts you as the Cheshire Cat.

“It’s a wonderful role, dear, and with your voice the song will just carry across the auditorium,” Mrs. Franklin’s long nose hairs flutter at you as she says this. “Put some comedy into it.” Her belly hangs over the waist of her plaid polyester pants. You pray you don’t grow up to be a woman who looks like her, who probably drinks cooking sherry.

“’Twas Brillig, and the Slithy Toes,” you warble, trying to act thrilled at your second-rate casting. The boys still love Alice, who is of course the blonde and skinny Shelly Fricks. During rehearsals they try to sneak a peek up her dress. You make them laugh by dabbing your eyes with your tail while crying during the tortoise’s song.

“God, Ronnie, you’re a riot,” says the jockish Trent Stanley, whom you’ve had your eye on since sixth grade, who now is dressed as Tweedle Dee, who has been circulating a limerick about diddling Shelly Fricks.

At home the garbage disposal looks like the rabbit hole. If you reach your hand down the hole, you can feel the edge of the Queen of Hearts. “Come on in, my dear,” she beckons in a butterscotch voice. “You’ll be pretty here.”

You squint your eyes and dive in, down into the disposal rabbit hole. Aside from some wet lettuce stuck to the sides and a bit of eggshell, it’s not so bad. Your hair falls out. You arrive bald and naked.

“Here you go,” says the Mad Hatter, and he gives you the Alice dress to wear. There are soft white patent leather shoes with daisy buckles. And lace-edged socks like you had when you were six.

“But where is my purse?” you ask.

“Maybe you should talk to that centipede thing,” the Mad Hatter answers. He fades into a fog that smells like vanilla.

“Hi, Alice,” says the rabbit.

“But I’m the Cheshire Cat,” you insist, looking down at your now-prettied feet, wondering what’s on your head that feels like cotton candy.

“That’s what you think.” A mirror pops up out of a low mushroom, and you are Alice, with long blonde hair held back by a blue ribbon, which matches the blue sash of your white dress. Your fat belly is flat. Your flat boobs are perky. You are Alice.

“Kiss me, my dear,” says the Mad Hatter, who is now naked and crouching behind a potted fern. “All of the young boys love Alice.”

“I’ve always known that,” you tell him. “But you aren’t a young boy. You’re the Mad Hatter.” You tell him you dressed as the Mad Hatter for Halloween one year. Your mother put red lipstick on your lips but had you dressed in white gloves so when your mouth itched, you smeared lipstick on your glove. The cardboard hat she made hurt your head.

“What does that have to do with true love?” And now you can see you’ve upset him, but you have to run away quickly before you are forced to see the Mad Hatter’s penis, something you are not ready for. The flamingos are wading lazily in a purple pond, unaware that the queen will soon use them as croquet mallets.

“Please, fly away,” you whisper into their ears. They don’t listen. They look for silverfish and whistle the “Ride of the Valkyries.” “I didn’t know flamingos could whistle. What can penguins do?”

“Ronnie! Get those dishes washed or you’ll be late for rehearsal!” Your mother’s voice is not as lilting as it once was, but she gave you your musical talent. Just enough musical talent to be cast as the Cheshire Cat. She doesn’t realize you are really Alice. Only the Mad Hatter knows.



Donya Currie Arias is a part-time journalist and full-time mom who earned her MA in fiction writing from Johns Hopkins University. Her fiction has appeared in several local literary magazines, and she is currently co-editing a mother/baby anthology.