

In Through the Looking Glass, Lewis Carroll's sequel to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Alice steps through a mirror into an imaginary world on the other side. She soon finds herself in a strange, special flower garden, where she encounters the Red Queen. The Red Queen suggests Alice take the place of Lily, the white pawn, in a game of chess.

from *Through the Looking Glass*

by Lewis Carroll

1 "Where do you come from?" said the Red Queen. "And where are you going? Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time."

2 Alice attended to all these directions, and explained, as well as she could, that she had lost her way.

3 "I don't know what you mean by YOUR way," said the Queen: "all the ways about here belong to ME—but why did you come out here at all?" she added in a kinder tone. "Curtsey¹ while you're thinking what to say, it saves time."

4 Alice wondered a little at this, but she was too much in awe of the Queen to disbelieve it. "I'll try it when I go home," she thought to herself, "the next time I'm a little late for dinner."

5 "It's time for you to answer now," the Queen said, looking at her watch: "open your mouth a LITTLE wider when you speak, and always say 'your Majesty.'"

6 "I only wanted to see what the garden was like, your Majesty—"

7 "That's right," said the Queen, patting her on the head, which Alice didn't like at all, "though, when you say 'garden,'—I'VE seen gardens, compared with which this would be a wilderness."

8 Alice didn't dare to argue the point, but went on: "—and I thought I'd try and find my way to the top of that hill—"

9 "When you say 'hill,'" the Queen interrupted, "I could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley."

10 "No, I shouldn't," said Alice, surprised into contradicting her at last: "a hill CAN'T be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense—"

11 The Red Queen shook her head. "You may call it 'nonsense' if you like," she said, "but I'VE heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!"

12 Alice curtsied again, as she was afraid from the Queen's tone that she was a LITTLE offended: and they walked on in silence till they got to the top of the little hill.

13 For some minutes Alice stood without speaking, looking out in all directions over the country—and a most curious country it was. There were a number of tiny little brooks running straight across it from side to side, and the ground between was divided up into squares by a number of little green hedges, that reached from brook to brook.

- 14 “I declare it’s marked out just like a large chessboard!” Alice said at last. “There ought to be some men moving about somewhere—and so there are!” She added in a tone of delight, and her heart began to beat quick with excitement as she went on. “It’s a great huge game of chess that’s being played—all over the world—if this IS the world at all, you know. Oh, what fun it is! How I WISH I was one of them! I wouldn’t mind being a Pawn,² if only I might join—though of course I should LIKE to be a Queen,³ best.”
- 15 She glanced rather shyly at the real Queen as she said this, but her companion only smiled pleasantly, and said, “That’s easily managed. You can be the White Queen’s Pawn, if you like, as Lily’s too young to play; and you’re in the Second Square to begin with: when you get to the Eighth Square you’ll be a Queen—” Just at this moment, somehow or other, they began to run.
- 16 Alice never could quite make out, in thinking it over afterwards, how it was that they began: all she remembers is, that they were running hand in hand, and the Queen went so fast that it was all she could do to keep up with her: and still the Queen kept crying “Faster! Faster!” but Alice felt she COULD NOT go faster, though she had not breath left to say so.
- 17 The most curious part of the thing was, that the trees and the other things round them never changed their places at all: however fast they went, they never seemed to pass anything. “I wonder if all the things move along with us?” thought poor puzzled Alice. And the Queen seemed to guess her thoughts, for she cried, “Faster! Don’t try to talk!”
- 18 Not that Alice had any idea of doing THAT. She felt as if she would never be able to talk again, she was getting so much out of breath: and still the Queen cried “Faster! Faster!” and dragged her along. “Are we nearly there?” Alice managed to pant out at last.
- 19 “Nearly there!” the Queen repeated. “Why, we passed it ten minutes ago! Faster!” And they ran on for a time in silence, with the wind whistling in Alice’s ears, and almost blowing her hair off her head, she fancied.
- 20 “Now! Now!” cried the Queen. “Faster! Faster!” And they went so fast that at last they seemed to skim through the air, hardly touching the ground with their feet, till suddenly, just as Alice was getting quite exhausted, they stopped, and she found herself sitting on the ground, breathless and giddy.
- 21 The Queen propped her up against a tree, and said kindly, “You may rest a little now.”
- 22 Alice looked round her in great surprise. “Why, I do believe we’ve been under this tree the whole time! Everything’s just as it was!”
- 23 “Of course it is,” said the Queen, “what would you have it?”
- 24 “Well, in OUR country,” said Alice, still panting a little, “you’d generally get to somewhere else—if you ran very fast for a long time, as we’ve been doing.”
- 25 “A slow sort of country!” said the Queen. “Now, HERE, you see, it takes all the running YOU can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!”

¹Curtsey: a formal greeting made by bending one’s knees and bowing slightly

²Pawn: the least powerful piece on a chessboard that can only move forward one square at a time

³Queen: the most powerful piece on a chessboard that can move any number of squares in all directions
