

Alice

in Teresa's land

SCENE 1

ALICE AND LORINA PLAYING GALLINITA CIEGA.

ALICE:

If, when about to ascend the stairs, you find that a gentleman is going up at the same time, draw back and make a sign for him to precede you. He will bow and pass on before you... When conversing with gentlemen try not to fall into too common practice of talking to them nothing but nonsense.

LORINA:

Etiquette is as fanciful as dreamy stories.

ALICE: (CLOSING THE BOOK)

Mother has always given me wrong recommendations. No matter if the majority thinks likewise, it is wrong to think that it is injudicious for ladies to attempt arguing with gentlemen on serious topics, as if all the information that a woman can possibly acquire or remember is so small in comparison with the knowledge of men, that the discussion will not elevate them.

LORINA:

She was trying to protect you from men intolerance toward women. She knew men were very indulgent toward a modest and attentive listener, who only asks questions for the sake of information. Men like to dispense knowledge; but few of them believe that, they can profit much by the suggestions of women. That is why women are trained to disguise their intelligence. You should never attempt to rule, or appear to rule. They would feel degraded by you... She wanted you to find a good husband that is all.

THEY BOTH LAUGH.

ALICE: (IMITATING HER MOTHER)

"Alice, you must be agreeable and rational companion of the gentlemen of your acquaintance, as endowed with a sense of propriety and a natural modesty. You don't need to talk that much."

LORINA: (IMITATING HER MOTHER AS WELL)

I know, I know... "You have just to understand that your duties are obedience, complaisance and entire surrender of your will to that of your husband, and attention to his happiness is the first consideration. In everything reasonable way, you should comply with his wishes with cheerfulness, and even, as far as possible, anticipate them. You would avoid

all altercations or arguments leading to ill-humour, and more specially before company. Those are the simple rules to follow to have a good marriage."

BOTH LAUGHS.

ALICE:

The crazy spirit of the religious and civil idea of marriage!

LORINA:

So, tell me now: why did you marry Reginald Hargreaves? Was he worthy of your deepest love? Did you love him with your entire devotion?

SHE STANDS UP, BEING EVASIVE WITH HER SISTER QUESTIONING.

ALICE:

My love was made of Brussels lace over white satin, and a rich moiré-antique with point lace flounces.

LORINA:

I understand he asked you in a moment when there was much family pressure... But matrimony is more than an incident in life.

ALICE:

The offer of a man's heart and hand is the greatest compliment he can pay you.

LORINA:

It is the custom for man to choose; to propose; to take the initiative an all tender proceedings; and women have been educated to dress well, look pretty, and acquire accomplishments, and with a demure and modest reserve wait to be chosen. I know you like to be chosen but you also like to choose.

ALICE:

I didn't actually propose, perhaps, but it was me who gave the encouragement and permission to propose.

LORINA: (LOSSING HER PATIENCE)

Did you love him, Alice?

ALICE:

Why are you asking me this after all the years of marriage, children... after he left?

LORINA:

He left, what? This fashion of ending the phrases with the word "left" is so awkward and unsatisfactory. He left this world? ... He left you in bankrupt? Or left you with a broken heart?

ALICE:

He is dead, Ina. I am broke and tired. At 80, is to be expected, right? That means you are 83. Do you still want to talk about love?

LORINA:

Inside we are still young women when talking about love, everybody is young and beautiful.

ALICE:

Unfortunately that is not what you can see.

LORINA:

I can't see you differently. You are always going to be my little sister. Your spirit is exactly the same, lively, ingenuous... Your vivacity is intact. You are still a charming girl, conversable, sprinkling of wit and humour...

ALICE:

What do you want to know, Ina?

LORINA:

If you got to love him...

ALICE:

Are you testing my endurance and forbearance, when asking for the trials and tribulations of my married life?

LORINA:

I am trying to find out if you really wanted to marry Reginald Hargreaves?

ALICE:

In Westminster Abbey! Testimony of that are my three sons: Alan, Rex and Caryl...

LORINA:

Carroll?

ALICE:

Have you been reading Freud?

LORINA:

I am trying to talk about love here.

ALICE:

"One is very crazy when in love". Love is not a matter you can decide on nor plan. It happens to you, like climate, and diseases...

LORINA:

Diseases happen when love is a disappointment, either because of an unrequited attachment or a misplaced one...

ALICE:

So you want to talk about the first love! It is so very common for women to be disappointed in their first loves, that it has been considered the loss and recovery of the heart to be to the mind, what the whooping-cough or measles is to the body – a necessary disorder to be gone through, after which come maturity and health.

LORINA:

Do you believe you can really recover from the wretchedness of the first love... as you recover from flu?

ALICE:

It is a decision, not a possibility.

LORINA:

So, if you decide not to think of men and love, you'll stay safe to fall in love and escape the suffering?

ALICE:

No. You can't possibly be happier when skeptical on the subject of being loved, than to love with all our heart, no matter the suffering. (EVOQUES) When one person is becoming uppermost in your thoughts... if his society is more and more necessary to your happiness... what he does and says seems more important than that of any one else... Could you decide to deny yourself the dangerous pleasure of his company and turn your thoughts to something else?

LORINA:

The beginning of such a preference becomes unmanageable by indulgence.

ALICE:

Or because the attachment is reciprocal, and has gain ground before the necessity arrives to combating it. In that case the struggle would be harder and greater the suffering, it is true... but is worth because the pleasure is greater too.

LORINA:

Do you think the cure for a wounded heart which piety affords is so complete that it makes it possible for the tenderest and most constant natures to love again?

ALICE:

You did.

LORINA:

Because it is not true that the great end of existence may be equally attained in married or single life.

ALICE:

If a kindred spirit presents itself as a partner for life, and is accepted, the union is likely to be such as will make you rejoice that the former predilection was over-ruled. I always understood why you married your husband. How it is so difficult for you to understand why I married Reginald Hargreaves, the father of my three boys?

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 2

ALICE AND LORINA COME FROM SHOPPING, CARRYING PLENTY OF SHOPPING BAGS FROM MODERN STORES. THEY GO THROUGH THE BAGS, SEEING THE ITEMS THEY BOUGHT, DELIGHTED.

ALICE:

When 3 people are walking together is better for one to keep a little in advance of the other two, than for all three to persist in maintaining one unbroken line, isn't it right, Ina?

LORINA:

Also three people walking abreast occupy too much of the pavement, and therefore, incommode the other passengers.

ALICE:

It is not possible to have a conversation without talking across each other. Where did you meet her?

LORINA:

I just met her once in a party. I had merely a little conversation with her.

ALICE:

She didn't seem to have much interesting to say. "Trust me. I know a thing or two about liking people, and in time, after much chocolate and cream cake, 'like' turns into 'what was his name again?'"

LORINA:

Well, if she didn't obtrude our way today, I wouldn't have recognized her at all.

ALICE:

She had to call across the way for you to notice her, and she speaks loudly in the middle of the street, so unladylike, in execrable taste... She is definitively not from our circle.

LORINA:

This is not like you to say, my dear Alice.

ALICE:

I am sorry... I am already talking like mother. I am very grateful, thank you for all this beautiful gifts.

LORINA:

In 3 more days is your birthday!

ALICE:

You know what is the worst about Martha? She didn't intend to buy anything! She was merely looking round, without telling the salesman, who by the way, was so attentive to her. After having given him so much trouble in showing her different articles that she was never going to buy, it was only right she make some compensation, don't you think?

LORINA:

Yes, at least by making one or two small purchases before leaving, a few articles of those that will always come into use.

ALICE:

Instead, she started cheapening, beating down the price! Nobody do that anymore! Nowadays tradesmen have fixed prices for everything and will not abate. It was so embarrassing, she asserting that at other store she can get exactly such thing infinitely lower... If she really liked the article, why she didn't gratify the salesman saying so?

LORINA:

It is so difficult to some people to adhere to the truth.

ALICE:

She knew the price was a fair one.

LORINA:

The problem was the amount...

ALICE: (INTERRUPTING HER)

... the amount of years... the appropriate age?

LORINA:

The amount of money! What are you talking about?

ALICE:

I am trying to get your unconscious to talk.

LORINA:

Your fascination with Freud is leading you too far.

ALICE:

Freud "*couldn't think of any need in childhood as strong as the need for a father's protection*". Maybe that is why I've spent my whole life looking for a father.

LORINA:

But you had a father.

ALICE:

I had YOUR father, and that wasn't enough. Anyway, I think you shouldn't have invited her to accompany us shopping.

LORINA: (UNWILLINGLY PRETENCIOUS)

She is always wearing low-priced ribbons, flimsy, tawdry, of ugly figures and vulgar colors. You know this kind of ribbons are soon fading and soon getting into a string, to be ashamed to wear. I thought she needed to do some shopping.

ALICE: (CINIC, TOUCHING HER IN AN INVASIVE WAY, CRITIZISING HER SOMEHOW, BECOMING PRETENCIOUS AS WELL, IMITATING MARTHA)

If it is a fair question, where did you buy this lace, dear? It is so beautifully delicate! I don't mean to be rude, but I would love to buy one exactly like this: how much did you pay for it?

LORINA DISGUSTS AND STANDS UP, AND PREPARES HERSELF TO GO.

LORINA:

Excuse me from answering. I have to go. I don't want to keep my party waiting for me or to arrive to the theatre in retard. That is the worst!

ALICE: (ASHAMED)

Don't go... please.

LORINA:

To make an entrance after the performance has begun is very embarrassing. It excites the attention of all around, diverting attention from the performance. In addition, to secure a good seat at the theatre, it is a must to go early. Even an hour before the performance begins.

ALICE:

But it is 4 o'clock! We haven't have tea yet!

LORINA:

The time of waiting will soon pass away in conversation with friends. And I'll have time enough to leave the hat in the apartment set apart for ladies.

ALICE: (CARRESING HER, ADORING HER)

You have so many beautiful hats...

LORINA:

I always think of others: it is so painful and fatiguing for those behind moving the head from side to side, and stretching the neck this way and that...

ALICE: (FOLLOWING HER)

... and peeping wherever a tantalizing glimpse can be obtained between the hats or bonnets of ladies seated immediately in front.

LORINA:

A lady that does a late entrance, wearing a hat is more likely to be the type of woman who laugh daringly and whisper unfavorable remark during the performance, talking audibly in ridicule of the performers...

ALICE: (FOLLOWING HER THREAD)

... the performers being, in all probability, near enough to hear this vexatious remarks, and to be disconcerted by them.

LORINA:

If you like the play, it is also a gross breach of good breeding to anticipate the "good things" according to the particular criteria of who speaks, destroying the interest of others in the plot of the play, for the annoyance of those who really wish to enjoy what they came for.

LORINA GETS A CALL IN HER CELL PHONE. SHE ANSWERS.

LORINA: (BY PHONE)

Hello... yes, of course, how are you? ... Well, no... The thing is that I am running late to the theatre... yes, tonight... I don't think so... maybe... I don't know yet... let me give you a call if... No, I don't know if I am going to be at home... sorry for that... ok... ok... yes, I'll try... see you... bye.

SHE CLOSSES THE CELL AND EXHALES OF IMPATIENCE.

LORINA:

There are certain unoccupied ladies so over-friendly... generally ultraneighbourly neighbors, who run in at all hours of the day and evening.

ALICE:

Who was it?

LORINA: (UPSET)

Never for a moment does she seem to suppose that her hourly visits may perhaps be inconvenient or unreasonable; or too selfish to abate her frequency even when she suspects her to be so, these inveterate sociablists make her incursions at all avenues.

ALICE:

There is always a friend who sees all, hears all, and knows all your concerns... as well as a friend, from whom you want to see all, hear all and know all his concerns, right?

LORINA:

Her talk to me is chiefly gossip.

ALICE:

Therefore her talk about you must be chiefly the same.

LORINA:

She calls whenever, in the middle of my life, intruding my private space and timing... I am being overwhelmed by the sociability of this idle neighbor.

ALICE:

You should have discouraged her first indications of undue intimacy by making your visits rather few and far between... always in moderation.

LORINA:

But she invited me!

ALICE:

You have to consider that many invitations are "mere words of course", without meaning or motive, designed only to make a show of politeness, and not intended to be taken literally, or ever acted upon.

LORINA:

As when he invited me to go to a picnic in a rowing boat?
"A boat beneath a sunny sky,
Lingering onward dreamily
in an evening of July..."

ALICE:

Oh, please, Ina: he invited me, Harry and Edith as well. What else could we do in the Oxford summer?

LORINA:

He only wanted you in that boat!

ALICE:

What?

LORINA:

You were the only one in the pictures... Alice was no bird as the rest of us... Alice in Wonderland... she was born on May 4th as yourself, has the same age... "A Christmas Gift to a Dear Child in Memory of a Summer's Day", the book was dedicated to you!

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 3

ALICE IS PREPARING THE SET TO RECEIVE HER SISTER, WITH FLOWER, SOME TOYS AND DOLLS, A DOLL HOUSE, A SMALL TEA SERVICE...

ALICE:

I knew her silent was not from dullness or indolence. It is not her habit of taciturnity. Her silent came from love deception. That is why she didn't help me deny mother's suspicion. What else rest behind her silence?

I don't want to overstep the bounds of courtesy though; I have to wait until she speaks first... I don't want to say anything she wouldn't say by necessity.

After she speaks, we are going to share more than a secret, as good sisters. Because I am bound to keep silent of all I could become acquainted with her way of feeling that is not known and which would not raise them in public estimation if disclosed. As her confidant and partaker of the hospitality of her soul, I am bound in honour, to keep silent of what would injure her in the smallest degree, if repeated. I promise. No matter if she was responsible for what I was punished. She is my very beloved sister.

I invited her so it is my duty, for my own sake as well as hers, to treat her well in everything. I hope there will not be any deficiencies, or intrigue, or suspicion... Nothing is polite that can possibly incommode or embarrass...

SHE SEES HERSELF IN THE MIRROR. SHE SEES A RABBIT INSTEAD. SHE GET RID OF HER ACCESORIES

ALICE:

Maybe I should wear a quieter dress to begin with. It is no genteel to wear any costume approaching to full dress in this occasion... There must be no flowers or ribbons in the hair. Otherwise it may be suspected I have no other place in which to display them. A profusion of jewellery at a tea table is in very bad taste particularly if the jewellery is palpably false. A large imitation gem always betrays its real quality by its size.

SHE TRIES A SIMPLER HAIRDO. SHE IMITATES TWO WOMEN MAKING COMMENTS OF HER, WHILE PLAYING WITH A FAN.

WOMAN 1: (ALICE)

There is a vast difference between laudable economy and mean economy.

WOMEN 2: (ALICE)

The mean shows themselves in bad food, bad fires, bad lights and bad servants. It is never excused in a person who dress extravagantly and live surrounded by costly furniture, and is known to be wealthy and able to afford comfort as well to show.

WOMAN 1: (ALICE)

She used to go in a rowing boat travelling on the Isis, from Folly Bridge, Oxford, to Godstow... with all her brother and sisters... and Mister Dodgson did the storytelling.

WOMAN 2: (ALICE)

Was she really interested in the storytelling... or in the man telling the story?

ALICE:

“There is a place. Like no place on Earth. A land full of wonder, mystery, and danger! Some say to survive it: You need to be as mad as a hatter.”

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 4

ALICE IS FRIGHTENED, LYING IN A CORNER, LOOKING AT IMAGINARY PEOPLE, WITH RESENTMENT.

ALICE:

You shouldn't have invited those women. If you mix the dull and stupid with the bright and animated, the cold and formal with the frank and lively, the professedly serious with the gay and cheerful, the light with the heavy, and above all, those who pride themselves on their birth with those boast of “belonging to the people”, as myself... none will enjoy each other's society. I knew this afternoon was not going to go off agreeably, and I had the worst of it. The pleasantest people in the room naturally congregated together... and I was not among them.

WE DISCOVER TERESA SITTING FURTHER, SERVING TEA WITH A TOY SERVICE, SO THEY LOOK LIKE GIANTS, OUT OF PROPORTION.

LORINA:

Come, Alice. Tea is ready... Drink me... I brought some cookies... eat me...

ALICE COMES TO JOIN HER SISTER.

LORINA:

“Would you like a little more tea?”

ALICE:

“Well, I haven't had any yet, so I can't very well take more.”

LORINA:

“Ah, you mean you can't very well take less.”

ALICE:

“Yes. You can always take more than nothing.”

LORINA SERVES HER SOME TEA. ALICE EATS ONE OF THE COOKIES.

ALICE:

“... you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see!'”.

LORINA:

Is no need to be a genius to be a good conversationist but some qualifications are requisite: there must be knowledge of the world, knowledge of books and a facility of imparting that knowledge; together with originality, memory and intuitive perception of what is best to say, and best to omit, good taste, good temper, and good manners.

ALICE:

That is why you are such an agreeable and instructive talker, Ina.

LORINA:

You have the faculty of going from grave to gay, from lively to severe, without any apparent effort, neither skimming so slightly over a variety of topics as to leave no impression of any, or dwelling so long upon one subject as to weary the attention of the hearers...

ALICE:

Are you talking about him?

LORINA:

Alice! You suffer of monomania, your whole mind is absorbed into one prevailing idea: Lewis Carroll.

ALICE: (CRUEL)

What about yours? Well... maybe your mind is not obsessed because it wasn't Lorina in Wonderland.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 5

ALICE IS WALKING IN CIRCLES, IN DESPERATION.

ALICE:

"You're not the same as you were before. You were much more... "muchier" You've lost your "muchness"."

You soon discover your limits so you started avoiding placing yourself in opposition, no matter what you thought.

But now we are living our last days, sister... we don't have anything to loose... You may controvert every opinion of mine; I can doubt every fact you recall. I know you are trying to get me in some discrepancy that will invalidate my testimony; fixing your scrutinizing eyes upon my face, like pushing me prove my words.

The subject of our secret argument is of great consequence... The whole world want to know what was our relation with Lewis Carroll made of. Maybe you want to irritate me to force me to say what you don't have the courage to say.

What is certain is that you don't want to carry the weight of the secret to the grave.

ALICE PULLS OUT THE RABBIT CLOCK WITH IMPATIENCE.

BLACK OUT.

SCENE 6

ALICE IS READING A BOOK BY FREUD, WHILE IS WAITING, WEARING A HAT, HOLDING A PICNIC BASKET.

ALICE:

"There is distressing contrast between the radiant intelligence of the child and the feeble mentality of the average adult".

SHE CLOSSES THE BOOK. EVOQUES.

ALICE:

Lewis Carroll, Charles Dodgson, Do-Do, Dogson, Dodo only stammered in adult company. He speaks free and fluent with us...

LORINA APPEARS WITHOUT ALICE NOTICING HER. SHE APPROACHES.

ALICE:

It is true that he has an asymmetrical walk, by his six feet tall persona of curly brown hair, slender with a long regard of grey eyes that develop blue when on my account...

LORINA: (COMPLETES)

He was such an engaging entertainer. He sang tolerably well and was not afraid to do so before an audience. He loved mimic and storytelling, and he was the best at charades.

ALICE: (EXCITED)

Lorina! Oh, Ina, I am so happy you came. I thought you were mad at me. I was afraid you wouldn't visit today. Well, "sometimes I believe in as many as six impossible things before breakfast". Six, it is six o'clock!

LORINA:

Our time has stopped at teatime; I brought a cranberry tart.

ALICE:

I hope is the kind of cake that make you grow.

LORINA:

We are grown ups, long ago, Alice.

THEY START MAKING THE PICNIC IN THE MIDDLE OF HER ROOM.

ALICE:

Then we can say whatever we want, without containments, right?

LORINA:

What do you want to speak about?

ALICE:

No. You ask me. Whatever you want to know. Just ask.

LORINA:

Your youngest son...

ALICE:

His name 'Caryl' was in any way associated with Charles Dodgson's pseudonym, Carroll.

LORINA:

... is expecting a child. I want him to have this.

LORINA GIVES ALICE A WRAPPED BOX. ALICE IS VERY HAPPY TO UNWRAP IT.

ALICE: (EXCITED)

If it is a girl... maybe he will name her Alice...

LORINA:

Could be a boy...

ALICE:

Don't you like Charles?

LORINA:

Charles? After Charles Lutwidge Dodgson?

ALICE:

... After the man who show us a way out, Ina.

LORINA:

You still think so? Are you trying to deceive me or you are still that innocent?

ALICE:

Until he invited us to the boat, I was always second, couldn't do anything but well behave...

LORINA:

What are you trying to say?

ALICE;

He showed us we could escape through the rabbit hole, don't you see? To a wonderland of freedom... far from rules and Victorian containment... He showed us we could defeat the queen of hearts!

LORINA:

We? It was only Alice who could grow and shrink... Alice the brave who hold the sword... He showed us the worst of adulthood, the worst of humankind.

ALICE:

It was important for us to know that there is a queen of hearts with an army of cards; that caterpillars may smoke and seem indifferent and rabbits are always in a rush but could be best friend, while the Cheshire cat seems to have fun all the time no matter what... That is why *"time spent with cats is never waste!"*

LORINA:

Oh, please, Alice! We are too old to keep the fantasy going. Why don't we speak, for once, of what really happened?

ALICE: (WITH THE SAME SUSPICIOUS TONE)
Why don't we? You were already 13... what were you up to?

ALICE STOPS INQUIRING BECAUSE DISCOVER THE GIFT IN THE PACKAGE. IT IS HER SISTER'S FIRST TOY, A WHITE RABBIT. SHE LOVES IT.

ALICE:
Oh! You are giving your very dear white rabbit to my grandson? Oh, Ina, that is so kind of you. Do you think animals are really capable of appreciating good conversation so to be understood?

LORINA:
Animals can't talk, Alice.

ALICE:
I know what you mean. You think that to keep them awake and interested, you have to talk down to the capacities of those hearers. That isn't an easy task, if you don't want they find you out and be offended. It isn't advisable to introduce quotations from the poets or references to books with which those hearers were unacquainted, lest they wonder what they mean. But it is important to keep in mind that they also hate stories when written in an affected didactic style!

LORINA:
Stop talking nonsense, Alice. All of it was so tiresome, mawkishly sentimental and foolish!

ALICE:
Lorina, remember you believed once... Remember you couldn't sleep without your white rabbit. Wonderland existed, was a reality for us little girls.

LORINA:
No. I was already 13 as you just said! I was blossoming; my heart was always hammering behind my raised breasts. My blood was always hot... While you were adventuring in wonderland, Alice, I was in Hell!

ALICE:
I don't understand you. You seemed to enjoy it.

LORINA:
Of course you don't understand. You were in the text... I was in reality.

ALICE:
Don't be so egoistic. What did you want me to do? What was wrong about believing in fantasy? What was wrong about believing I was the best, courageous and fortunate and capable of defeat the queen of hearts?

LORINA:

If you were the best it was because I was worse. If it was a lovely white queen it was because she had a bad red sister. Don't you see? Who gave you the sword? Who decided you were the one? Why not me? Why did I have to live from then on, with that feeling of misplacement in my heart?

ALICE:

Of course I thought I deserved all Dodo's commendations. For once I was the favorite! At home you were the first daughter, the first baby walking, speaking, the first in school, the first in everything! And do you pretend that I give up on Dodo's preference? I was delighted. And I deserved it.

LORINA:

He chose you! And you were his accomplice. After that I was left with no trace of innocence. I understood very soon how cruel a man could be... He destroyed my... our childhood.

ALICE:

You didn't need the story of wonderland to be jealous of me. You were jealous since the very moment I was born.

LORINA:

Why would I be jealous of you if not because of his preference?

ALICE:

You tried always to keep me out of the sight of my parents. I became almost invisible at home... you were the best and the first. And Edith was the smallest and sweetest... Why you kept going to picnic with us? You agreed in everything and seemed to be enchanted!

LORINA:

I was, trying to be... indeed. It is not possible to understand unrequited love.

ALICE:

So, you were in love with him?

LORINA:

I insisted... I thought that maybe Lory was going to have a better ending in the story, being "Prima" in the book's prefatory verse...

ALICE:

I was "Secunda"... Edtih, "Tertia"...

LORINA:

I never lost the temper neither the hope... Perhaps at the end, he would transform my character in the protagonist... at least of his story...

ALICE: (UNDERSTANDING)

You were in love with him...

LORINA:

It is impossible to understand ever why someone doesn't love you!

ALICE:

Now I understand why you didn't complain, not at once. You knew you wouldn't gain anything by attempting to undeceive him because he would impute you dissenting of his opinion to envy, jealousy, a love to detraction, or ill- nature, and there fore the only impression you could make will be against yourself, never myself. What amazed me is to discover that this is still an issue for you, after all this years. Do you still want to be the main character of this story?

LORINA:

It is an issue for anyone who approaches the book. I think of him as much as you do: he taught me that no matter what I did, I didn't deserve to be more than Lory, a bird.

ALICE:

Lorina... tell me something: it was you who told mother the story of Carroll being in love with me?

LORINA:

After all this years, people still wonder what the real story is. Was Lewis Carroll in love with little Alice Liddell? I am not responsible for that. I am the victim here.

ALICE:

The scandal came just after knowing that the book was dedicated to Alice Pleasance Liddell and not to Lorina Charlotte Liddell. Everything was broken because of your jealousy! You were so egoistic!

LORINA:

He was abusing of all of us!

ALICE:

How you dare! He never touched me, neither you! What are you talking about? Who is the perverse here?

LORINA:

He didn't even see me! Don't you understand? No matter if I wear the most beautiful dresses and ribbons, I tried my best, making clever comments, playing creatively, and even imitating your attitudes... But he didn't choose me! Of course he didn't touch me... but with his indifference.

ALICE:

He didn't have to touch you for seducing you.

LORINA:

Now we are speaking! You can make love with words, with glances... and it is as sexual as touching or even moreover! You know that!

ALICE:

Did you tell mother the story about Dodgson being in love with me?

LORINA:

Whispers are always overheard and glances are always observed.

ALICE: (LOOSING CONTROL)

Did you?

LORINA:

He opened a Pandora box from where he pulled out as many wonders as monsters. He opened a very dangerous door... the door that leads to sexuality. He is responsible of that.

ALICE:

So it was you who accuse him?

LORINA:

No, Alice.

ALICE:

When alive you are always in danger to die. To be in love is dangerous as well... there is always the risk of being left with a broken heart or simply mistreated. Risk is part of life. You couldn't blame Dodo for that.

LORINA:

The problem is I was the one who dealt with all the bad consequences of that risk.

ALICE:

Why you say so?

LORINA:

Because I didn't arrived to be the one who defeat the queen of hearts. And that could not be changed. You both owe me that. The egoistic of this story is you.

ALICE:

Egoistic? It does not matter if your nose is in fact too small; your eyes are too large as too wide is your mouth. Your complexion may be fine but your features are not regular and I wouldn't tell anybody that you are more than 80 years old that you are wearing false hair, have an artificial tooth and tings your cheeks with rouge. I won't tell anybody your intimate truth. I have been always loyal to you.

LORINA:

We are not talking about false hair, here, or the rouge in our checks, Alice. We are talking about sex, abuse, and cruelty...!

ALICE:

No, in fact, we are not talking about false hair but about false testimony. Tell me: did you tell mother that...?

LORINA:

I didn't have to. It was long suspected that mother disapproved Dodgson's interest in you, seeing him as an unfit companion for an 11-year-old girl!

ALICE:

It is incredible that you are as jealous as you were then. It is always easier to blame one than to understand and question the whole system that justifies the blaming.

LORINA:

I was hurt for life, Alice. I was the one who had to live with that scar. I was the victim, not the prosecutor.

ALICE:

You made mother suspect. And for her it was too difficult not to believe in your innocence, right? Not to believe you were looking after your younger sister...

LORINA:

That is right: you were too innocent to contempt your sensuality. But I was conscious...

ALICE:

Where are the pages missing from Dodgson's diary recording from 27 through 29 June 1863? Where are the pages written in the days of the break between our family and Dodgson, Lorina?

LORINA:

I don't know. How could I?

ALICE:

Speculation is still centered on the idea that I was, somehow, the cause of the fracture. But it was you! Now I understand. That is why those pages disappeared. In those pages lies the truth!

LORINA:

That is literature, storytelling. Reality is much more complex and diverse than that. Nothing happens ever so straight forward.

ALICE:

Oh, yes, very complex! Who could anyone suspect that Lorine Liddell became too attached to Dodgson and, not the other way around? You

know what? I knew it. Somehow I knew it in an unconscious way. Perhaps I remained silent with the unconscious intention to prevent my dear sister Lorina from being offended or humiliated at having her feelings for Dodgson made public.

LORINA:

Of course, the good Alice, always doing the right thing! You remained silent because you were guilty of having surrendered to his seduction. He flattered you and you gave him yourself as the prize, no matter the rest of us. There are plenty of books written about the subject. Many biographers have understood that Dodgson was romantically or sexually attached to you when you were a child... a child that didn't have the tools to defend herself from the adult.

ALICE:

There has never been any direct proof for this! I was sweeter and more open, with a more lively imagination than yours. That is why he preferred me. That is all.

LORINA:

The most benign accounts assume at least a platonic fondness.

ALICE:

There would be always a shadow of suspicion over him, only because of your jealousy. If we could only read the missing pages of his diary...

LORINA:

What for? Don't you understand that he was the only one who could disappear the pages of his own diary? Precisely the pages of the days of the fracture... Definitely he had something to hide.

ALICE:

It has never been safe to leave what you are dreaming to the regard of others who might misunderstand your intentions, or understand your torments. *"Men are more moral than they think and more immoral than they imagine."*

LORINA:

And children are dreamier than they think and more creative than they imagine. This is the truth! Ourselves invented the story we lived! We created everything, don't you see? Freely dreaming... Edith was the one saying it was always teatime! I saw cats everywhere, brother was always playing cards, building entire cities and armies with the cards... you always carried your white rabbit...

ALICE:

But it was him who invited us to play our dreaming.

LORINA:

Alice, what did happen, really?

ALICE:

I don't know. That is why I didn't want to play it again when John Ruskin appeared in our lives.

THEY EMBRACE EACH OTHER.

ALICE:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little bat,
How I wonder what you're at,
Up above the world so high,
Like a tea tray in the sky..."

LORINA:

Alice... who is Teresa?

ALICE:

The woman who is thinking about us trying to understand the story, maybe, she is sitting in the theatre, after all this years, facing us, judging us, judging him... Now is for others try to understand according to their circumstances and beliefs.

LORINA:

"The great question that has never been answered, and which Freud confessed wasn't been able to answer, despite his thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is 'what does a woman want?'"

SHE GOES TO THE TABLE WHERE IS A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS.

ALICE:

So, you are in fact reading Freud!

LORINA:

Yes. And I agree: *"Flowers are restful to look at. They have neither emotions nor conflicts."*

BOTH LAUGH IN COMPLICITY.

ALICE:

"If youth knew..."

LORINA:

..."if age could...". Do you still need the loan?

ALICE:

Thank you sister, but I sold my copy of "Alice's Adventures Under Ground".

LORINA:

Oh, you shouldn't!

ALICE:

Oh yes. The manuscript fetched £15,400... I finally got the best of it. I saved my house. It is finally over.

Based on the “Complete Etiquette for Ladies”, first published in 1876 and in “Alice in Wonderland”, Alice Liddell and Lewis Carroll life, and Freud quotes.

Lupe Gehrenbeck

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