

ALICE IN CYBERLAND

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

by Adrienne Ferguson

www.schooltours.at

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Author's Note

“Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” by Lewis Carroll has always been a favourite book of mine, even before I learned to read on my own. When I was 14 years old, I played Alice in a school play which only deepened my love for the story. Lewis Carroll uses language in such a playful way, and the imaginary world of Wonderland is so absurd and full of nonsense that it’s hard to believe there is anything to learn from the story, but there definitely is! First, “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” teaches us the importance of embracing curiosity and adventure which can lead to personal growth. When Alice follows the White Rabbit and journeys into Wonderland, she learns a new way of looking at the world and discovers her own strengths. She faces challenges on her own and stands up for what she believes, something she didn’t know she was capable of before her journey. Like Alice says, *“It’s no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then.”*

Another significant lesson we can learn from Lewis Carroll’s book is the importance of the imagination. It is Alice’s imagination that helps her navigate the strange new world she finds herself in. There is no online guidebook to Wonderland and Alice must think creatively on her own in order to overcome her obstacles and achieve her goals.

In our own lives, imagination can be a powerful tool for problem-solving. When we allow ourselves to think outside the box and explore new ideas, we open a world of possibilities. Imagination can help us cope with challenging situations by giving us a different perspective and helping us find hope in difficult times.

Unfortunately, with the rise of AI and the all-consuming pull of social media we are beginning to lose our global imagination. We no longer need to think outside the box because all information is delivered to us through our algorithms depending on what the internet thinks we want to watch, read or play. We no longer take the time to imagine how someone else’s point of view might be different from ours and most importantly why. If humans lose their capacity to dream and experiment with new things and think for ourselves „off-line”, we are in danger of not only becoming very isolated and boring but also totally dependent on someone (or something) else doing the thinking for us.

I hope that this modern-day re-imagining of “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” will inspire you to put your phone down, get off social media and interact more in the „real world”. Hug your friends, talk to animals and let curiosity be your guide. You just might find you are different tomorrow than you are today.

Happy adventures!

Adrienne Ferguson

Characters in the Play:

Actor 1 - Alice

Actor 2 - Olivia / The Cyber Bunny/ The Cryptic Cat /
The Dormant Mouse

Actor 3 - Nick / The Chatterpillar / The Viral Hatter / Voiceover

Actor 4 - Miss Anderson / Mom / The Scrolling Hare /
The Queen of Screens

Worksheet available online
www.schooltours.at

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Scene 1 – ReelAlice

ALICE: *(preparing to livestream, to her friend holding the camera on a selfie stick)* Ready, Olivia?

OLIVIA: Ready!

ALICE: Hold it higher. No double chins, remember! *(Olivia changes the angle and gives the thumbs up)* – Good morning, friends and followers. Thanks for tuning in to ReelAlice, coming to you live from the school hallway. #schoolspirit #nofilter. *(Olivia pulls a face.)* Ok, a little bit of filter. OMG, school is such a drag. Where a bunch of old people who can't even use their iPhones try to teach us about the "real" world. LOL. Little do they know *this* is the real world. Now, let me show you the new lip gloss I unboxed¹ this morning in *wakeupwithAlice*. Thanks to all of you who logged in and all the lovely comments. I would be nothing without you. A big shout out to LULU Luscious² Lips, for the Baby Blush Plum Plumper³. *(She calls Olivia in for a close-up as she applies lip gloss.)* Ooh feels... luscious. *(School bell rings.)* Ugh, almost time for English class.

Alice keeps rubbing at her lips throughout this last part. By the time she finishes the following speech she can hardly move her lips.

Stay tuned and don't forget to like, follow, and subscribe @ReelAlice. *(She signals frantically⁴ off camera for Olivia to stop filming.)* OMG! This stuff stings. I feel like my lips have been attacked by killer bees. Quick Olivia, tissues! *(Olivia pulls out some tissue from a huge overflowing supply pack she wears around her waist.)* Phone! *(Olivia pulls out a phone)* Space! *(Olivia takes a step away or takes out a measuring tape⁵ to measure out some distance.)*

Scene 2 – Nick the Noob

A young man enters.

NICK: Hey, are you Alice?

¹ auspacken

² voll, üppig

³ Lippenbooster

⁴ hektisch

⁵ Maßband

Alice waves at Olivia to intervene¹ as she frantically tries to scrub off the gloss using her phone as a mirror at the corner of the stage.

OLIVIA: Alice is busy right now. A lip gloss emergency.

NICK: Oh, are you a friend of hers?

OLIVIA: (*laughing*) Alice doesn't have friends IRL. She's way too busy. I'm Olivia, Alice's creative director/personal assistant.

ALICE: Olivia! Water please!

NICK: Slash servant²?

Olivia rushes over to Alice pulling a bottle of water out of her pack. Alice exits with the water. Olivia starts working on her phone.

NICK: Uh, excuse me. Could you please tell Alice...

OLIVIA: Oh, you're still here. Are you a fan?

NICK: A what?

OLIVIA: A fan. A follower. (*Nick still looks confused.*) Alice is an online influencer – followers in the thousands. We're expecting offers from big sponsors any day now. I'm working on a line of merch.

She points to her T-shirt which has a ReelAlice logo on it.

NICK: Well, I'm not on social media so...

OLIVIA: Sorry, what? Do you not own a phone? Wait, are you a noob³? Were you raised in a cult?

NICK: No, none of the above. I'm just not really into it anymore. I used to average over eight hours of screen time per day.

OLIVIA: Ha, amateur.

NICK: I did a digital detox⁴ last year and never went back. Best thing I ever did.

OLIVIA: I'm sorry about that.

NICK: It's true. I was turning into a real narcissist⁵; totally self-obsessed⁶. You know, there's a term for someone who's addicted to taking selfies, it's called selfitis.

OLIVIA: (*not listening...too busy taking a selfie with Nick*) That's nice. Say cheese!

NICK: Hey!

OLIVIA: Sorry, I just wanted a selfie with someone "off grid". It's like seeing a dinosaur in the wild – like Jurassic Park. (*She imitates a T-Rex.*)

NICK: Anyway, I'm on an exchange this semester living with my aunt. She went to school with Alice's mom, so...

¹ eingreifen, einschreiten

² Schrägstrich Dienerin (= ...*Personal Assistant und gleichzeitig Dienerin*)

³ Internet Slang für Anfänger/Neuling

⁴ digitale Auszeit (eigentlich „Entgiftung“)

⁵ Narzisst*in, eine selbstverliebte Person

⁶ ich-bezogen

ALICE: Olivia! I'm going to need some ice, STAT¹.

Alice has a hand over her swollen lips and can hardly talk. She sees Nick and stops momentarily. Oh, hi.

NICK: Hey there, I'm Nick. Your mom knows my... Oh my god, what's wrong with your lips?

ALICE: Olivia! Ice! Please! Hurry!

They both rush off leaving Nick standing alone.

NICK: Wow!

Scene 3 – In the classroom

Alice is seated at her desk holding some ice to her lips and typing into her phone. Nick sees her and approaches².

NICK: The swelling seems to be going down a bit.

ALICE: *(not looking up from her phone)* Sorry, just a minute, I'm following a very important thread.

NICK: Oh, sure. It's just...

ALICE: *(sending a voice memo)* Reminder to self. Kylie Jenner's new perfume is out next week. Make sure to get a preorder to unbox for *wakeupwithAlice*.

Life goals! *(She looks up briefly and sees Nick staring at her.)* What? Are my lips still swollen?

NICK: No, I was just... You're very...

We don't know what he was going to say: pretty, strange, self-obsessed or all of the above.

OLIVIA: *(enters, pulling some papers out of her hip pack)*. Here's your homework. I left a couple of mistakes in, you know, for authenticity³.

ALICE: Thanks, Olivia. My hero.

NICK: You also do her homework for her?

OLIVIA: Hey, Rick.

NICK: It's Nick.

OLIVIA: Rick has no social media; can you believe it?

NICK: It's Nick actually...

ALICE: Wow! Really? How do you keep up with what's going on in the world?

NICK: Well, I *live* in the world.

ALICE: Yes, but where do you get your information from?

NICK: The newspaper.

ALICE/OLIVIA: Ew!

OLIVIA: Inky fingers. Gross!

¹ sofort, unverzüglich

² näher kommen

³ Echtheit, Glaubwürdigkeit

ALICE: I couldn't live without my algorithm.

She is still busy on her phone, not really looking at Nick. She's not being mean, she is just too involved in what she is doing online)

NICK: Are you sure that's a good thing? Being spoon-fed information¹.

ALICE: *(she genuinely believes this)* If you don't post online, how do people even know you exist?

OLIVIA: You're like a ghost. The walking dead.

Olivia finds her seat walking like a zombie.

NICK: Look, my aunt said I should say hi. So...hi, I guess. She and your mom were super close in school, and she thought maybe you could show me around.

ALICE: *(back to typing on her phone)* I'm sorry but if you want to talk to me, please send me a DM². I don't really do "in person communication". I have a lot more free time online.

NICK: *(disappointed)* Never mind. Don't worry about it.

Scene 4 – The Book Report

Nick finds a seat in the classroom and Alice goes back to her phone. The teacher enters.

MISS ANDERSON: Good morning, students. Phones away please. That means you, Alice.

Alice puts her phone away, but Olivia passes her a digital watch, and she keeps typing on that.

A warm welcome to our new student Nick Evans. Welcome Nick!

Nick waves, slightly embarrassed³. The others don't respond.

I hope you have received a warm welcome.

Nick shrugs⁴ and looks at Alice, but Alice ignores him, busy with her watch.

Olivia makes a zombie sound teasing Nick.

MISS ANDERSON: Today we'll be starting our new class book, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll.

OLIVIA: Isn't that a book for babies?

MISS ANDERSON: It's a classic coming-of-age story about a young girl who follows a white rabbit down a rabbit hole into a fantasy world full of nonsense, extraordinary characters and talking animals.

OLIVIA: Like I said – for babies.

MISS ANDERSON: Alice must work hard to find her way back home, learning a

¹ alles serviert bekommen, nicht selbst nachdenken müssen

² direct message: eine private Nachricht

³ verlegen

⁴ die Schultern zucken

lot about herself in the process.

ALICE: IMDb says it's a movie with Johnny Depp.

OLIVIA: Ooh, controversial.

MISS ANDERSON: Alice, can you get off the internet for five minutes?

ALICE: Sorry Miss, I can't miss any notifications.

OLIVIA: It's her actual job, Miss. You should celebrate the entrepreneurial spirit¹. #bossbitch

MISS ANDERSON: I have spoken to your parents and guardians, and we have agreed that for this assignment you are all forbidden to go online until you have finished writing a short book report. The topic will be "Alice in Wonderland and the Importance of the Imagination".

ALICE: Sorry, could you repeat that? I just want to put it into ChatGPT.

MISS ANDERSON: No! I mean it, no internet. We've noticed students relying far too much on online resources² to do their homework. You've forgotten how to think for yourselves.

NICK: (*looking at Alice*) No kidding!

Olivia takes something out of her hip-pack and hits him or pokes him with it, when the teacher is getting out a box.

Ow, geez!

OLIVIA: Sorry.

MISS ANDERSON: Now, please put all smartphones, smartwatches and tablets into this box. You will get your gadgets back once your assignment is on my desk.

ALICE: Sorry, Miss, but this can't be legal. Olivia, start filming! This will go viral, protests around the world. A cyber revolution.

NICK: It's not illegal if she has our guardians' consent³.

Alice looks at Nick. Olivia whacks him again.

OLIVIA: (*grinning apologetically*) Not sorry.

MISS ANDERSON: That's right Nick, thank you. Now, everyone please take a book.

ALICE: An ACTUAL book?

OLIVIA: What about our Kindles?

MISS ANDERSON: A real, bonified paperback book⁴. Handle with care.

OLIVIA: Ugh!

Olivia pulls some hand sanitizer out of her pack and exaggeratedly wipes down the books before passing one to Alice.

NICK: (*sarcastically*) You can always wear gloves while you read.

OLIVIA: Good idea, Rick.

¹ Unternehmergeist

² sich auf Onlinematerial verlassen

³ das Einverständnis der Erziehungsberechtigten

⁴ ein wahrhaftiges, echtes Taschenbuch

She pulls some rubber gloves out of her pack and gives a pair to Alice. She offers some to Nick but he declines¹.

MISS ANDERSON: I want these essays on my desk by tomorrow's lesson. It's a quick read if you put your mind to it. This will of course mean you may have to concentrate on one thing for more than 15 minutes.

OLIVIA: Ugh!

ALICE: But Miss, I have a live stream at noon so my followers can watch me eat. I need my phone.

OLIVIA: It's an ASMR² special.

NICK: If a tree falls in a forest and there is no one around to hear it, does it still make a sound?

ALICE: Pardon?

OLIVIA: Weirdo!

NICK: I mean you'll still get full even if there's no one watching. Your food will still taste the same.

ALICE: Sorry?

OLIVIA: Creep³.

MISS ANDERSON: Good point, Nick. Devices, Alice!

Alice gives up her devices one by one. She has a lot. A comic moment. The school bell rings and as they are packing up Nick approaches Alice again.

NICK: Okay, I'm going to make one last attempt. My mom used to read "Alice in Wonderland" to me when I was a kid. We could go to a café and read together. I can help you with the essay.

ALICE: (*shocked*) Meet up IRL?

NICK: Well, I don't know anyone else. It's hard to meet new people these days.

ALICE: Sorry, I really am, but I'm just too busy with my online community for real friends.

NICK: What about her?

OLIVIA: Oh, I'm not a friend, I'm a colleague.

ALICE: You should really get back on social media so we can chat online. There's no way I'm reading this book anyway. I'll watch the movie and FaceTime with Olivia to help me with the essay.

NICK: You do realize you need the internet for both those things.

ALICE: (*laughing with Olivia*) Oh, I'll have the internet. My parents would never do that to me.

Alice and Olivia exit, leaving Nick alone. He shakes his head and exits.

¹ ablehnen

² Entspannungsmethode

³ seltsamer Typ

Scene 5 – Digital Withdrawal¹

Alice is in her room and has her laptop open, trying to get online.

ALICE: Mom! There's something wrong with the internet connection. Mooom! Mom comes running in, thinking something is wrong. She is a bit high-strung,² but kind.

MOM: What's wrong. Are you okay?

ALICE: The internet isn't working!

MOM: I know, honey. Miss Anderson told us to turn it off for the evening. We'll turn it back on once you finish this assignment.

ALICE: This is terrible. I already missed two scheduled streams³, my fans are going to think I died. What am I supposed to do, send smoke signals?

MOM: A short break from social media might do you good.

ALICE: But I'm going crazy.

MOM: I'm sure you'll figure it out. *(She picks up the book and passes it to Alice.)* Good luck, hon. Your dad and I are going to the neighbours later to watch Netflix.

ALICE: *(to herself as her mom exits)* Great! I can turn the Wi-Fi back on while they're gone.

MOM: *(offstage)* Oh, and we changed the password. Sorry hon! See you in the morning.

ALICE: This sucks. I would much rather watch Netflix than read a book. *(She picks up the book.)* Ugh! This has stains on it. Okay, here goes.

She opens the book up to the first page and starts to read.

“Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do.” - I guess she had no internet either – “Once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, ‘and what is the use of a book’, thought Alice ‘without pictures or conversation?’” Smart girl, Alice. Must be the name. *(She puts down the book and goes to the door again)* Mom! Can I please have the internet for five minutes so I can download an audio book. My eyes hurt! I can't possibly read anymore.

MOM: *(offstage)* Sorry, honey.

ALICE: This is against my human rights. As soon as I get my phone back, I'm going to get myself a lawyer and sue the pants off that school⁴.

Alice sighs heavily, picks up the book and starts to read again.

“So, Alice was considering in her own mind⁵ (as well as she could, for the hot

¹ digitaler Entzug

² gereizt, nervös

³ geplanter Livestream

⁴ ...ich werde die Schule sowas von verklagen...

day made her feel very sleepy and stupid)” - I know how she feels - “when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.” Pink eyes? Eww, nature is so weird. What happens next?

The clock ticks as Alice reads and struggles to stay awake. Suddenly a hole opens in one of the flats and a rabbit wearing pink sunglasses - who looks a lot like Olivia - enters through the hole. It is covered in large phones around its neck and is holding a large iPad.

Scene 6 – The Cyber Bunny

The Cyber Bunny stops in the room, frantically sending messages on each of the phones and the iPad. There is a constant sound of notifications binging.

ALICE: What in the “digital withdrawal symptoms,” is that? This must be a dream.

CYBER BUNNY: No time, no time.

ALICE: Uhm... excuse me... Rabbit person thing?

The Cyber Bunny still ignores her working away on his devices.

Are you for real?

CYBER BUNNY: Not enough likes! Never enough. Oh dear.

ALICE: Wait! Are you an AI bot¹? Did Olivia send you to help me? That girl is a cyber genius.

CYBER BUNNY: No, no bot. Must get more likes. She'll have me deleted². Oh my!

ALICE: Who will have you deleted? What are you talking about?

CYBER BUNNY: The Queen, of course!

ALICE: The Queen? Hey, can I borrow one of your devices?

CYBER BUNNY: No time! Sorry! No Time!

ALICE: But you have so many.

The Cyber Bunny reacts to loud alerts on the devices.

CYBER BUNNY: Ahh! Too late. Goodbye!

The Cyber Bunny runs back out through the hole.

ALICE: Wait, come back! I really need one of your phones. It disappeared into that hole. Should I follow? Well, anything is better than reading a book.

“Mysterious cyber rabbit appears in influencer’s room”. This would make great content. Come back, Bunny! I need your dataaaaaaaa!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Alice follows through the hole. Everything changes around her; the world is filled with the sounds of the internet, voice memos, clips of her live feed, and the sound of endless notifications pinging through the air.

⁵ ...Alice dachte über etwas nach...

¹ virtueller Assistent

² gelöscht

Scene 7 – Alice in Cyberland

ALICE: Where am I? Did I fall asleep wearing VR glasses?

The Cyber Bunny runs by again, still mumbling about not having enough likes and getting deleted.

Excuse me, Bunny, I have no idea where I am. Is this a game? Am I an avatar? I told Olivia I wasn't into gaming, but she must have...

No answer from the Cyber Bunny who has stopped and is busy with its devices again.

Could you please look up from your phone for one minute? I'm new to this game, I don't know the rules.

CYBER BUNNY: No game. No time. Here take this, press follow and like.

Follow and like! Quick.

It passes her a large phone. Alice grabs it and immediately tries to log in.

ALICE: Amazing. I can post a reel from wherever this place is. "Influencer follows Cyber Bunny down hole and ends up in weird metaverse¹." This will break the internet.

CYBER BUNNY: Hurry! Hurry! No time!

ALICE: Wait, I can't log on anywhere. I can't get into any of my socials.

There is a noise and a voice comes across a loudspeaker. The Cyber Bunny freezes, suddenly very alert².

VOICE OVER: Citizens³ of Cyberland! There is only a short time left until the final counting will take place in the palace courtyard outside the Viral Vaults⁴. Any citizens who have not gathered the appropriate number⁵ of likes will be deleted in the elimination ceremony⁶. Now is your last chance.

CYBER BUNNY: Last chance! Last chance! Hurry up! Follow and like!

ALICE: I'm sorry, but I can't do anything on this device, it's not letting me log in. It's like I don't exist online.

CYBER BUNNY: No use! No use!

ALICE: Rude!

CYBER BUNNY: Quick, off to market to buy some likes. I hope there are some left. No time. No time.

ALICE: Wait...please!

The Cyber Bunny runs off forgetting to take back his device.

¹ virtuelle Parallelwelt

² wachsam, auf der Hut

³ Bürgerinnen und Bürger

⁴ im Schlosshof der virtuellen Gewölbe

⁵ eine angemessene Anzahl von Likes sammeln

⁶ Auslöschungszeremonie

Hey, you forgot this. Oh dear. I guess this isn't a game after all. I need to find my way out of this curious place. But first I should probably find that rabbit at the "like" market, whatever that is, and give this back; it's no use to me anyway. Maybe if I just follow in the direction it was heading, I can do both at once. *(Alice starts to walk.)* Geez, I would do anything for Google maps. *The clock ticks and time moves forward with the sounds of clicks, and notifications again filling the air.*

Scene 8 – The Chatterpillar

ALICE: I feel like I've been walking for ages, and I haven't seen a single sign of that bunny.

The Chatterpillar has a stream deck, a microphone, a headset and an oversized handheld device. He can make sound effects on the deck to underline what he is saying.

CHATTERPILLAR: Whooo are youuu?

ALICE: Oh, hello.

CHATTERPILLAR: Whoooo are youuuu?

ALICE: Well, that's a very good question.

CHATTERPILLAR: Then answer, please. I'm recording for my podcast: "The Chatterpillar Chat. And now YOU are my special guest.

ALICE: Oh okay.

She pulls herself together, she is a professional after all.

Well, you see, I knew who I was when I got up this morning and when I got home from school.

CHATTERPILLAR: And whooooo was THAT?

ALICE: A student, a daughter, an influencer with thousands of fans, but now I don't know where I am, I can't get online and I'm talking to a giant uhm... insect?

CHATTERPILLAR: Caterpillar obvs¹.

ALICE: Oh, sorry, obviously.

CHATTERPILLAR: Explaiiiiiin YOURSELF!

ALICE: I can't explain myself because I don't know where I am, you see?

CHATTERPILLAR: I don't see. Doooo YOU?

ALICE: You certainly ask a lot of questions.

CHATTERPILLAR: Doooo I?

ALICE: Listen, I really need your help...

CHATTERPILLAR: *(He holds up its fabulous giant device.)* Maybe I can find you on heeere!

ALICE: Yes, please. Search for my handle @ReelAlice.

¹ obviously (offensichtlich)

CHATTERPILLAR: ReeeeeeelAliiiiiice.

ALICE: Yes. Reel with e-e-l. It's a play on words.

CHATTERPILLAR: Nope, doesn't exist.

ALICE: Are you sure?

CHATTERPILLAR: Yes, I'm suuuuure. Hmmm. If you don't exist online, do you exist at all? (*He makes a mind explosion sound and action.*)

ALICE: Well...of course I exist. I am standing right here. I have arms and legs and...

CHATTERPILLAR: Sorry, I can't hear you. According to this (*he points at his device*) there's nobody theeeeeeere.

ALICE: This is ridiculous.

CHATTERPILLAR: If you don't exist in the cyber world, then you don't have any likes, and if you don't have any likes, then you don't exist. It's as simple as that. It's the royal coooooode bro.

ALICE: The royal code?

CHATTERPILLAR: Listen.

He starts up a beat box on his stream deck and makes a sound like a school bell.

The classroom is open at the Chatterpillar school of wizz-dom¹, now let me fill you in on the rules of Queen-dom.

The queen lays out the royal creed²

And the citizens of Cyberland follow her lead.

Each citizen is singular and valuable and right,

But only if they're gathering a large amount of likes.

Now me, I'm the Chatterpillar, followers galore³,

YouTube, podcasts, tik tok, more.

I react to reactions and I comment on posts.

When it comes to followers, bro, I got the most.

But if there's a sucker without enough likes,

They're gonna get deleted, that's it, good night.

ALICE: But in the real world I have thousands of followers.

CHATTERPILLAR: But in Cyberland you have none. You'd better be careful, if the Queen finds out, she'll have you deleted.

ALICE: What does that mean? Deleted?

CHATTERPILLAR: Did somebody say something?

ALICE: I am usually surrounded with things that make me feel good. I have perfectly curated⁴ an online profile of things that bring me joy. But YOU, you're making me want to... scream!

CHATTERPILLAR: And whooooo ARE YOU?

¹ Wortspiel: *wisdom* (Weisheit)

² Glaubenssatz, Ideologie

³ unzählige Follower

⁴ etwas organisieren, betreuen

Alice covers her face and screams. By the time she opens her eyes again the Chatterpillar is gone.

ALICE: (*looking around*) Oh, it's gone. Well, good. That Caterpillar could chat, but it was a terrible listener. One day, it will find itself in a chrysalis¹ turning into a butterfly and *then* it will know what it's like to suddenly feel different! Hey, I can't believe I remembered the word *chrysalis* without asking Google. Go, Alice! I guess I *was* paying attention in biology. This is such a strange situation. I don't even know if I am dreaming or awake. I usually record everything that happens in my life. But now something major² is happening and I have no way of sharing it.

Scene 9 – The Cryptic Kitty

Suddenly a strange colorful cat appears, it pulls out a sign from a pile and holds up a waving hand emoji on a screen shaped sign. The cat keeps moving around like it is appearing and disappearing.

ALICE: Oh, hello there. What a sweet-looking cat. First a talking rabbit, then a caterpillar and now a cat? I feel like Dr. Doolittle³.

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a sign with the “laughing crying face emoji”.

ALICE: I'm glad someone has a sense of humour around here. You're so cute.

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a sign with the “cat face with heart eyes emoji”.

ALICE: All the other creatures here seem to be able to talk. Why can't you speak?

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a sign with the “embarrassed emoji”.

ALICE: Don't be embarrassed.

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a sign with the “crown emoji”.

ALICE: The Queen!?

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a sign with the “thumbs up emoji”.

ALICE: Wait, is it because you didn't have enough likes? Were you deleted?

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a sign with the “loudly crying face emoji”.

ALICE: Oh, you poor thing! Who does that Queen think she is?

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a sign with the “poo emoji”.

ALICE: (*laughing*) Why would anyone want to delete you?

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a sign with the “shoulder shrug emoji”.

ALICE: Should your value⁴ really be based on how popular you are on social media? Oh dear, if you asked me that just a little while ago, I think I would have said...yes. But now I am not so sure.

¹ Schmetterlingspuppe

² etwas richtig Großes

³ Märchenfigur: ein Arzt, der mit Tieren sprechen kann

⁴ Wert

The Cryptic Kitty holds up sign with a “celebration emoji”.

ALICE: I really need to get back home, but maybe I should talk to that Queen first about this deleting business.

The Cryptic Kitty holds up the “strong arm emoji”.

ALICE: How do I get to the palace gardens?

The Cryptic Kitty holds up a series of emojis all pointing in different directions, and eventually holds up a sign with a teacup on it.

ALICE: *(trying to make sense of the signs)* Left? Right? Up? Down? Teacup?

Wait, what? Sorry but you have a terrible sense of direction.

The Cryptic Kitty holds up the “kissing face emoji” and disappears for good.

ALICE: People keep coming and going so quickly around here.

VOICEOVER: Citizens of Cyberland! An important broadcast¹ from the Queen of Screens herself, her marvellous² majesty: The Queen of Cyberland.

Sound of fanfare, and the Queen appears as if on giant screens all around Cyberland.

QUEEN: My dearest cyber citizens. As the time for the great counting and collecting of *likes* approaches I would like to remind you of the importance of reaching our “ultimate goal”. To achieve power, one must gain control of the flow of information. And once I have collected all the *likes* in Cyberland, that is exactly what I intend to do. *(She laughs but then starts to jerk³ uncontrollably.)* Sorry about that, there must be a little glitch⁴ in the system. We’ll get that fixed. *(Regaining her composure)* Harvest⁵ as many *likes* as possible, after all, nobody wants to be...De-le-le-ttttt-ed!! *(She freezes with an awful expression on her face.)* We really must fix that glitch.

She disappears from the screen.

ALICE: So that’s why she’s collecting all the *likes* – to gain ultimate control of the internet. This is terrible, I can’t let that happen. There must be something I can do. Oof, my brain hurts. I’m not used to thinking for myself. Come on, Alice! You don’t need a search engine. You can figure this out. I just need to rest for a minute and collect my thoughts.

Scene 10 – The Mad Virtual Tea Party

Alice is interrupted by shouting, singing and general chaos as the Mad Streamer enters carrying several chairs. He is followed by the Dormant Mouse who quite

¹ Sendung

² großartig, fantastisch

³ sich ruckartig bewegen

⁴ Fehler, Störung

⁵ ernten, sammeln

precariously carries a tray of tea as she struggles to stay awake. They are both wearing VR goggles on top of their heads or around their necks.

MAD STREAMER: This way! This way! Right here! Yes, YES, the perfect place to set up for the Virtual Tea Party.

DORMANT MOUSE: Perfect place.

The Dormant Mouse sits in a chair and promptly falls asleep balancing the tea tray while the Mad Streamer gets things ready. Finally, the Scrolling Hare rushes in carrying a Like-o-meter¹ and another chair.

MAD STREAMER: There you are, Hare. Put the like-o-meter over here. Wake up, Mouse, you're in charge of it².

He puts the like-o-meter on top of the Dormant Mouse, which almost crushes him.

ALICE: Excuse me, sorry to interrupt, but would you mind...

SCROLLING HARE: Ready to start?

MAD STREAMER: Ready to start! But first... we need to find our seats!

SCROLLING HARE: Musical chairs!

DORMANT MOUSE: Oh no.

MAD STREAMER: Start the music.

Loud dance music plays and they begin to dance around.

When the music stops, take a new seat and if you don't have a seat, YOU'RE OUT!!

Alice gets pulled into the dance. The music turns off and they all go to sit. Alice and the Mad Streamer go to sit in the same chair, but he bumps her off and she ends up on the floor.

MAD STREAMER: You're out!

SCROLLING HARE: Out!

ALICE: Ow! That's cheating.

MAD STREAMER: Okay! Ready?

SCROLLING HARE: Wait, who will pour the tea?

MAD STREAMER: Ah, that's right, the tea!

DORMANT MOUSE: (*waking up and almost dropping the teapot*) The tea!

MAD STREAMER: You there, yes, you! Come and pour our tea.

ALICE: Doesn't anyone have any manners³ around here?

MAD STREAMER: Manners? Who joined musical chairs when she wasn't even invited. (*Alice goes to react but is interrupted again.*) Now pour the tea, girl!

We need to get started.

She begrudgingly⁴ takes the teapot and pours the tea. There is nothing in the pot.

ALICE: But there's no tea in here, it's empty.

¹ Gefällt-mir-Anzeiger

² dafür verantwortlich sein

³ Manieren, gutes Benehmen

⁴ widerwillig

SCROLLING HARE: That's because it's virtual tea.

MAD STREAMER: It's all for show, don't you know. Hah! I'm a poet¹ and of course I know it. Now quiet down, we're about to go live.

SCROLLING HARE: Live.

MAD STREAMER: Wake up, Mouse!

The Hare bonks the Mouse on the head, and he jerks awake.

DORMANT MOUSE: I'm awake!

MAD STREAMER: Goggles on!

SCROLLING HARE and DORMANT MOUSE: Goggles on!

MAD STREAMER: Ohhh, look at all the beautiful decorations – a simply wonderful décor.

ALICE: What decorations?

MAD STREAMER: You don't see it because you don't have your VR goggles on. Just because it isn't really there, doesn't mean it isn't true.

ALICE: Sorry, but that doesn't make any sense.

MAD STREAMER: Silence! Dormant Mouse, count us down!

SCROLLING HARE: Hold the camera!

The Scrolling Hare puts the camera in Alice's hands. She is now the camera person.

DORMANT MOUSE: 5, 4, 3

The Mouse falls asleep, the Hare bonks him on the head, he wakes up and keeps counting.

3, 2, 1.

SCROLLING HARE: And we're live!

The Hare points at Alice who presses record.

MAD STREAMER: It's the Mad Streamer here at the Cyberland Live Stream Tea Party Extravaganza!

He gestures for the others including Alice to clap and cheer.

SCROLLING HARE: The comments are pouring in.

DORMANT MOUSE: 100 likes.

He moves the pointer on the like-o-meter.

SCROLLING HARE: Not enough. We need a boost!

MAD STREAMER: Let's start with a dance! Nothing boosts activity better than dancing!

The Mad Streamer, the Scrolling Hare, and the Dormant Mouse perform a TikTok style dance number. Alice gets pulled into the dance, as she is trying to film.

DORMANT MOUSE: (*exhausted*² after the dance) 1,000 likes.

*He moves the pointer on the like-o-meter again, yawning*³ *and struggling to stay awake.*

¹ Dichter

² erschöpft

SCROLLING HARE: They loved it. What's next?

MAD STREAMER: A game!

SCROLLING HARE: Yes! A game!

MAD STREAMER: We'll invite some of our viewers to join us.

SCROLLING HARE: Their followers will become our followers which equals more likes! That's brilliant!

MAD STREAMER: I know! Look at all these glorious virtual humans joining us here today, aren't they marvellous!

They all turn out to look at the audience.

DORMANT MOUSE: (*squinting¹ into the audience half asleep*) Marvellous!

SCROLLING HARE: You could almost believe they were actually there!

MAD STREAMER: Now, would any of you like to come onto our platform and play a game with us?

Audience participation. They pull students from the audience to play a game. Alice gets pulled reluctantly² into the game as well. The "like-o-meter" goes almost all the way to the top. The Virtual Tea party is a great success, and the participants return to their seats.

DORMANT MOUSE: 10,000 likes. The like-o-meter is almost full!

SCROLLING HARE: The viewers loved those kids. They're viral stars!

MAD STREAMER: I can't believe they were logging on all the way from Austria.

DORMANT MOUSE: (*sleepily scratching his head*) I didn't even know they had the internet there.

SCROLLING HARE: I thought there were only kangaroos and killer spiders in Austria.

ALICE: That's Australia.

MAD STREAMER: Did you say something, girl?

ALICE: They were from Austria, not Australia.

MAD STREAMER: Whatever, same thing.

ALICE: Excuse me, but I really can't stay much longer. I'm on my way to the Virtual Vaults. It's very important that I ...

MAD STREAMER: Who invited the party pooper?

SCROLLING HARE: Party pooper.

DORMANT MOUSE: Pooper.

MAD STREAMER: Help yourself to some cake girl and keep quiet. They can hear you.

ALICE: But there is no cake. I don't see any cake.

MAD STREAMER: It's a virtual cake. You idiot!

SCROLLING HARE: Look in the comments! They want to know about the girl.

³ gähnen

¹ blinzeln

² ungerne

They want to know who she is.

MAD STREAMER: Who are you, girl? The viewers are asking.

ALICE: I've already been asked that question today.

Again, her professional instincts in front of the camera kick in but by the end of the speech she seems slightly less sure of herself, losing her cool.

I'm Alice, but the truth is I am losing track of who I really am. For example, I used to think that being popular online and having lots of followers was the most important thing. But now...well...I'm, I'm not so sure anymore.

DORMANT MOUSE: *(suddenly a bit more alert)* 100 dislikes! *(He moves the pointer down the like-o-meter.)* 200!! *(Then down again.)*

SCROLLING HARE: We're losing followers!

MAD STREAMER: They don't like the girl!

SCROLLING HARE: Do something, quick!

MAD STREAMER: A RIDDLE!

SCROLLING HARE: A riddle! Yes!

MAD STREAMER: *(Clearing his throat and preparing dramatically for the riddle.)*

"I have no brain but know it all.

My thoughts are safe behind a wall

I never sleep, I'm always near,

I shape the things you see and hear.

Bit by bit I fill your feed

With all the things you think you need.

Who am I?"

DORMANT MOUSE: 500 new likes! *(He moves the pointer back up the like-o-meter.)*

SCROLLING HARE: It's working. They're back!

ALICE: Did anyone answer the riddle?

SCROLLING HARE: I beg your pardon?

ALICE: In the comments. Did anyone answer the riddle?

MAD STREAMER: Of course not, nobody cares about the answer. It's all about "the entertainment".

ALICE: The algorithm¹.

MAD STREAMER: The what?

SCROLLING HARE and DORMANT MOUSE: Huh?

ALICE: The answer to the riddle. "I have no brain but know it all" - the internet.

"My thoughts are safe behind a wall" - the firewall. "I never sleep, I'm always near. I shape the things you see and hear." - It sees the things you follow online. "Bit by bit I fill your feed. With all the things you think you need." - It feeds you content based on what you already like and follow.

"Who am I?" - The algorithm.

¹ Algorithmus (hilft Computern, Entscheidungen zu treffen)

MAD STREAMER: She's lost her mind.

SCROLLING HARE: She's officially mad.

DORMANT MOUSE: Mad!

ALICE: I'm not mad. You are.

MAD STREAMER: (*trying desperately to keep the party going*) Yes, that's true, we're all mad here. Mad for the follows, mad for the likes. Keep it coming, folks. Ignore the girl!

DORMANT MOUSE: 1,000 dislikes.

SCROLLING HARE: They're starting to leave. They're starting to troll.

DORMANT MOUSE: 2,000 dislikes!

The pointer is way down at the bottom of the like-o-meter.

SCROLLING HARE: WE'RE GOING DOWN!!

MAD STREAMER: Go away girl, you are creating a bad buzz, a social media crisis.

ALICE: But it's the truth.

ALL: The truth!

MAD STREAMER: Our followers don't come here for the truth; they come here for the tea!

ALICE: But the tea's not even real. Nothing is.

MAD STREAMER (*losing his temper*) It's virtual reality. What do you expect?!

ALICE: But what good is tea if you can't even drink it, a cake you can't taste, and riddles you don't want the answers to?

SCROLLING HARE: Everyone is leaving the platform.

MAD STREAMER: Wake up, Mouse! You need to sing. Entertain the fans.

SCROLLING HARE: Yes, everyone loves a song!

The Scrolling Hare holds the Dormant Mouse up and he starts to sing. The actor can take a contemporary¹ pop song and change the lyrics, so it is about double clicking on the like button and subscribing. The Mouse is quite good, just a bit burnt out, the effort is clearly taking a toll².

ALICE: Stop! Poor mouse. He's clearly exhausted.

MAD STREAMER: Of course he's exhausted, we've been doing this for three days straight.

ALICE: But that's mad, even I don't create so much content.

SCROLLING HARE: We don't want to be deleted.

MAD STREAMER: (*putting his hand over the Hare's mouth*) Shhh!

DORMANT MOUSE: (*momentarily stopping the song*) Deleted!!!! Noooo!
He passes out in the Scrolling Hare's arms and falls deeply asleep.

ALICE: So, that's what this is about. You're trying to get enough likes before the Queen's gathering.

¹ aktuell

² *der Einsatz kostet Energie*

Alice is interrupted by the sound of a siren. The Dormant Mouse wakes up and runs off in a panic.

VOICE OVER: Citizens! It has come to our attention that there is a virus in the Cyberland system. This is what has been creating “the glitch.” Beware of the virus, username: Alice.

MAD STREAMER: Alice?

The Mad Streamer and Scrolling Hare slowly turn to Alice.

MAD STREAMER and SCROLLING HARE: “VIRUS!”

They grab the phone, the like-o-meter and chairs and run out.

VOICE OVER: We must remove this bug from the Cyberland network immediately. (*Alice reacts to the word ‘bug’.*) There is a 5,000 likes reward for any information leading to an arrest. Previously deleted citizens not included, since, well, you no longer exist. The gathering ceremony will be postponed¹ until the Cyberland software has been scrubbed clean and re-booted².

The Cyber Bunny runs past Alice and stops abruptly.

CYBER BUNNY: Ah, there you are. I was looking for you.

ALICE: And I was looking for you. This is yours. You dropped it. (*She holds out the device.*) This place is....

CYBER BUNNY: (*interrupting her*) Never mind that. Follow me.

ALICE: Where?

CYBER BUNNY: Uhm, where? ...well... Never mind, you’ll see. Follow me!

The Cyber Bunny pulls Alice off and the scene transitions to the Palace Gardens; we see a sign for “The Viral Vaults”.

Scene 11 – Under Arrest

ALICE: The Viral Vaults! We’re at the palace! That’s great, now I can speak to the Queen. Wait a minute. Why did *you* bring me here? I thought you were avoiding³ the Queen.

CYBER BUNNY: I’m sorry, sold out of likes at the market.

ALICE: And...?

CYBER BUNNY: I need the reward.

ALICE: You’re turning me in⁴?

CYBER BUNNY: I’m terribly, uhm, sorry, but uh...yes? ... you’re under arrest. *There is a loud siren, and the fabulous figure of the Queen of Screens appears followed by a palace guard who takes hold of Alice, tying up her arms. The*

¹ verschieben

² die Software wurde gründlich geputzt und neu aufgesetzt

³ hier: jem. aus dem Weg gehen

⁴ hier: jem. verraten, ausliefern

guard starts to stick electrodes onto Alice's head which are attached to a machine with a big switch. The Cyber Bunny bows¹ down before the Queen.

ALICE: Hey! Let me go! What are you doing?

QUEEN: So, this is the mole that has infiltrated my network². Congratulations, Cyber Bunny. You have saved yourself from deletion and I might even promote you to Head of the Cyberland Security. A job well done!

ALICE: What do you mean "a job well done"?

CYBER BUNNY: Thank you, Your Majesty. But...um...what will happen to the girl?

QUEEN: Girl? I see only a nasty virus that must be removed...permanently. Guard, go and prepare the machine.

The guard salutes and exits.

ALICE: Please, this isn't necessary. Just tell me how to get back home and you will never see me again.

QUEEN: Oh, I know exactly where you are from. Why do you think you're here? I needed a way to link up with your world. You know "the takeover." That's why I opened that worm hole in your room.

ALICE: Wait, did you send the Bunny in on purpose? Because you knew I would follow?

She looks at the Cyber Bunny who bows its head in shame.

QUEEN: An internet addict³ will always follow the devices. You were an easy target⁴.

CYBER BUNNY: Sorry. I...I...had no choice.

QUEEN: Stop yapping, Bunny! It is my plan to use all the Cyberland "likes" to infiltrate the network in YOUR world. All thoughts will be my thoughts, all content will be approved and generated by me! No more need for creativity or free thinking, just following and agreeing. I am the algorithm! (*She laughs an evil laugh.*)

ALICE: But that sounds like brainwashing!

QUEEN: That's because it *is* brainwashing, Einstein.

ALICE: Creativity and freedom of thought are what make us human. The internet wouldn't even exist if someone hadn't created it, hadn't used their imagination to turn it into reality.

QUEEN: Don't pretend⁵ you aren't just as addicted to social media and being online as anyone in Cyberland.

ALICE: I was, but now I...

QUEEN: Well, it's too late anyway. (*Shouting to the guard offstage*) Turn on the

¹ sich verbeugen

² *der Maulwurf/Spion, der sich heimlich in mein Netzwerk eingeschleust hat*

³ Internetsüchtige*r

⁴ hier: leichte Beute

⁵ vortäuschen

“unalive machine”!

CYBER BUNNY: Oh no.

QUEEN: Username: Alice will soon be IRRELEVANT!

Alice struggles to get away. We hear a generator being switched on. The Queen picks up the box and is about to pull the switch, the Cyber Bunny looks on in guilty horror.

CYBER BUNNY: Wait! Your Majesty, maybe there is some other way to fix this.

QUEEN: Oh, keep your whiskers on, Bunny, or you’ll be next. Delete!!
The Queen is about to push the button when suddenly a voice is heard calling from off stage.

NICK: *(offstage)* Alice! Alice, where are you?
The Queen stops pushing the button and they all look around.

ALICE: *(recognizing his voice)* Rick?
Nick enters searching for Alice.

Scene 12 – Nick in Cyberland

NICK: Alice!

ALICE: Rick?

QUEEN: Who’s Rick?

NICK: It’s Nick actually.

ALICE: What are *you* doing here?

NICK: I went to your house to see if you needed any help and your mom let me up to your room. She was on her way to your neighbours. I noticed your book lying in front of a strange hole in the wall...

QUEEN: Apparently, I forgot to close the worm hole. Oops, my bad.

NICK: *(he looks at the Queen, confused)* ...I crawled through and well, here I am. Dude, this place is unhinged¹.

ALICE: Wait, you did that...for me?

NICK: Yeah, well, my aunt offered me twenty pounds to try again.

Alice smiles. She is happy to see him.

QUEEN: Whatever, Rick. Nobody cares.

NICK: It’s Nick.

QUEEN: I’m sooo sorry to break up this romantic reunion...

NICK: *(embarrassed)* No, it’s not like that...

ALICE: *(also feeling a bit flustered²)* We’re uh...we’re just...uhm...friends.
Nick and Alice look at each other and smile embarrassed.

QUEEN: But THIS is Cyberland and YOU are an intruder³! I guess I have two

¹ verrückt, aus dem Gefüge geraten

² verwirrt, durcheinander

people to delete instead of one. Double the fun! Don't move, kid, or I will pull the switch right now and your girlfriend will be deleted immediately.

NICK and ALICE: (*blushing and embarrassed, talking over each other*) Wait, no. What? She's not my girlfriend/he's not my boyfriend.

QUEEN: You, Bad Bunny, go and get another set of electrodes.

CYBER BUNNY: But Your Majesty!

QUEEN: NOW!! (*The Cyber Bunny runs out.*) I should summon¹ the Mad Streamer and his gang of weirdos; we can livestream the deletion.
#queenoftheinternet #slayqueen
The Queen holds up a selfie stick and takes a few shots of this triumphant moment. While she poses Nick notices something strange.

NICK: (*in a low voice*) Alice, look at that cable.

ALICE: It looks like a charger.
The Cyber Bunny reappears with another set of electrodes. He overhears their conversation.

NICK: She runs on a USB charger? What does that mean?

ALICE: The Queen's an android! She's not real. We've got to pull the plug², drain her batteries!
Nick looks at her impressed.

ALICE: What?

NICK: The last time I saw you, you couldn't lift your eyes from your phone.

ALICE: Cyberland's had an influence on me.

NICK: (*impressed*) Clearly!

ALICE: Now, how can we reach the cable?

CYBER BUNNY: (*suddenly interrupting*) Your Majesty, wouldn't you like to ...uhm...create some content with the prisoners before they're deleted? Build up hype for the main event: Queen of Cyberland Vanquishes³ Viruses.

QUEEN: Hmmm. Not a bad idea. But I am a little low on...batter...I mean energy. (*Not wanting to give away her secret.*) I am just recharging, you know...my social battery.

CYBER BUNNY: Too bad. Could be the ultimate take-over; wouldn't even need to do the gathering.

QUEEN: (*convinced⁴*) Let's do it!
She passes her selfie stick to the Cyber Bunny and moves towards Nick and Alice. The Cyber Bunny winks at them and unplugs her charger giving Nick and Alice a sneaky thumbs up.

QUEEN: Shoot from above, Bunny. No double chins!

³ Eindringling, ungebetener Gast

¹ herbeirufen (eher feierlich)

² den Stecker ziehen

³ besiegen

⁴ überzeugt

The Queen stands with Alice and Nick and puts herself in position of dominance and victory. The Cyber Bunny gives a thumbs up and begins to record.

QUEEN: *(throughout the speech the Queen starts to glitch and slow down as she runs out of power)* Citizens of Cyberland and the land formerly known as “the real world”! I joyously announce¹ that our advanced spyware has detected two unknown entities² that have infiltrated our system and they will soon be eradicated. *(Alice and Nick wave to the camera.)* I would also like to announce that with the help of the Citizens of Cyberland and their generous³ contributions of followers and likes I will soon be the most influential person⁴ on the internet.

NICK: No more thinking for yourselves!

QUEEN: *(getting excited)* Yes!

ALICE: No more using your own imaginations!

QUEEN: That’s right!

NICK: Her dreams, will be your dreams.

ALICE: Her thoughts will be your thoughts.

QUEEN: I AM THE AL...GO...RI...mmmmmmmmmm. Wait what...is... that sssssssound? *(She has begun slurring her words)*

VOICE OVER: Warning! Battery power at 1%. System shutting down in 10, 9, 8, 7....

QUEEN: *(overtop of voiceover)* Wait, but I just plugged.... innnnn. *(She sees the Cyber Bunny standing with the USB cable in hand.)* Delete the runny babbit...delete them...aaalllllll....

VOICE OVER: 6,5,4,3,2,1

The Queen has slumped over in silence.

NICK: We did it. Her power is gone!

ALICE: Thanks to the Cyber Bunny. You saved us.

Alice gives the Cyber Bunny a big hug, it is happily embarrassed. They are interrupted by a loud siren.

VOICE OVER: Attention, all citizens! Our main power source has been eliminated; Cyberland will now be powering down. Prepare for sleep mode.

ALICE: What does that mean?

NICK: Cyberland is powering down?

CYBER BUNNY: We’re free!

There is a sound like a big generator powering down. Alice and Nick look around afraid, but the Cyber Bunny seems happy and relieved.

CYBER BUNNY: Quickly, back to the real world before the worm hole closes. Follow me!

¹ feierlich verkünden

² unbekannte Objekte/ Einheiten

³ großzügig

⁴ die einflussreichste Person

The sound increases and Cyberland begins to fall away as Nick and Alice follow the Cyber Bunny. They are surrounded by the sounds of notifications and beeps and sound bites from earlier parts of the play. Then there is nothing but the sound of a clock ticking and we are back in Alice's room. Alice is asleep, alone at her desk. There is a book in front of her and a notepad full of handwritten words.

Scene 13 – Back in the Real World

MOM (*offstage*): Alice!

Alice lifts her head and rubs her eyes looking around the room. She is disoriented and confused.

ALICE: Mom?

MOM: (*entering*) Good morning! It's time to get ready for school. You've been up here working away all night. Did you get the assignment finished?

ALICE: (*looking down at the papers in front of her*) Oh...uh... yeah, I guess I did.

MOM: Well done! I hope your friend Nick was helpful. His aunt and I were besties in school. We had some wild times.

ALICE: Nick was here?

MOM: Yes, he came to help you with your homework. Congratulations, you are now officially back online.

ALICE: Oh yeah...uhm...great.

Mom exits and Alice sits staring at her laptop that is sitting beside her. She picks it up not sure what to do with it. She doesn't turn it on. She looks at the papers in front of her, picks up a pen and continues writing. There is a sound of a school bell, and we transition into the classroom.

Scene 14 – The Book Report

Olivia enters carrying a pile of boxes. She sees Alice and hurries to her.

OLIVIA: OMG, there you are. I have scheduled double the amount of posts for today to get you back on track. We can start now with some unboxing. We are a little behind, look at all this merch.

ALICE: Actually, Olivia, I think I might give the live streams a break for a while.

OLIVIA: You're kidding, right?

ALICE: No, I'm serious. Thank you though, you're a good friend.

Olivia is shocked and drops the boxes. Nick enters and helps pick them up. Nick and Alice almost bump heads reaching for the same box. They smile at each other, embarrassed.

NICK: Good morning.

ALICE: Good morning, Nick.

OLIVIA: Wait, I thought his name was Rick?

ALICE: If you still need someone to show you around, I'm free this afternoon.

NICK: That would be great. Thanks.

OLIVIA: But what about ReelAlice?

ALICE: I think this IS the real Alice.

OLIVIA: Are you feeling okay? Seriously, did you like bump your head on the way to school?

ALICE: I had a strange dream last night. You were both in it. Except you were dressed as a Rabbit, Olivia.

OLIVIA: Like I said, ARE YOU OKAY?

NICK: That *is* weird, because I swear, I dreamt about you as well.

They smile at each other and laugh awkwardly. Alice is about to say more but is interrupted as the teacher enters.

MISS ANDERSON: Hello, class! Please hand in your essays and your books, and you will get back your devices. I hope you haven't suffered too much from withdrawal.

OLIVIA: We have been off grid for almost 24 hours, of course we have suffered. Alice has lost her mind. Do you know how easy it is to become irrelevant online?

ALICE: Olivia, just because you are not present online doesn't mean you're not relevant.

OLIVIA: Do you see what I mean, Miss!

ALICE: I've been thinking about what Nick said yesterday. You know: If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to see it...

NICK Does it still make a sound.

OLIVIA: Okay?

ALICE: Well... we don't need constant approval online for things to be meaningful.

OLIVIA: Do you think you might have a virus?

ALICE: I didn't write a book report Miss. but I wrote a story instead. It's called "Alice in Cyberland."

MISS ANDERSON: Let's hear it.

ALICE: Really?

MISS ANDERSON: Yes! You used your imagination and that's what the assignment was about. I'm thrilled.

Alice looks at Nick who nods at her encouragingly¹. She stands up and picks up her papers. As she begins to read Olivia picks up her phone and starts to film, but soon she is so involved in the story she puts the phone down, leans in and just listens.

¹ ermutigend zunicken

ALICE: “Alice was beginning to get very tired, sitting in her room, with nothing to do. She had no internet connection; nothing to click, or scroll, or binge. Once or twice, she peeped into the book open in front of her, but it had no pictures, no QR codes or links to the internet, “and what is the use of a book,” thought Alice “without any links to the internet”. Alice was considering in her own mind (as well as she could since she really wasn’t used to thinking for herself), how she was going to catch up on all her feeds, when suddenly a strange rabbit-like creature entered her room through a hole in the wall”...

As Alice reads Nick, Olivia and Miss Anderson slowly change back into their Cyberland characters and enter through a hole in the classroom wall. Eventually they repeat the Virtual Tea Party Dance for the bows.

The End.