

ALICE IN CYBERLAND

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

by Adrienne Ferguson

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Neudeggergasse 14/17
A-1080 Wien

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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 Mad Streamer / A Guard /
Voiceover

Actor 4 - Miss Anderson / Mum / 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 #no filter. *(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