

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Book & Lyrics by Chris Blackwood

Music by Piers Chater Robinson

SCRIPT EXTRACT

Act I

Scene I – The Drawing Room

The curtains open on the drawing room of a large Victorian house. There is a fireplace over which is a mantle. Above this is a large looking glass. Two high backed leather chairs sit near the fireplace. One with its back to the audience; one next to a small table upon which is a chessboard. ALICE sits upon the chair at the chessboard. She is playing chess with herself. Next to her is a toy Humpty Dumpty. A music box, displayed prominently, is playing ‘What is in a Name?’

Alice There it is again! It’s always the Red Queen! Checkmate! Oh dear, whatever will the White Queen do without a throne to sit upon? She’ll have to go a-wandering until the throne is empty again. And to lose to such a sourpuss as the Red Queen!

Alice picks up the Red Queen and studies her.

What an expression you have! So stern and upright! One would think you weren’t happy to have won again. Look at her, Humpty, what has put her into such a sulk? I wish she could see how miserable she looks!

Alice takes the Red Queen to the mirror and holds her up.

There now! Look at yourself! Such a face! You’re almost as stern and mean as Miss Prickett!

Alice laughs to herself as Miss Prickett, her governess, enters.

Look, Humpty, how she scolds!

Miss Prickett (*snapping the lid of the music box closed, stopping the music abruptly*)
What do you think you are doing, girl? Standing next to the fireplace! You will dirty that dress before the guests arrive. Come away from there this instant.

Alice I was just...

Miss Prickett *(Taking the chess piece away from her)* This is not a toy! This is the drawing room not a nursery, you should do better to remember that, girl. *(Putting the Red Queen back on the chess board)* You have left this in such a state! Look! Where are the rest of the pieces?

Alice They have been taken. The bishops are at tea in the vestry, the pawns are taking a day by the sea....

Miss Prickett Don't talk nonsense, girl. It's most vulgar to talk nonsense.

Alice Why? I never understand a word that the guests say. It never seems vulgar for them to talk gobbledegook to me.

Miss Prickett Don't say gobbledegook! It's a most vulgar term.

Alice They talk it nonetheless.

Miss Prickett Children should be seen and not heard. Remember that.

Alice It is so very tedious, Miss Prickett. Waiting on them to come.

Miss Prickett You are not a baby. Not everything is a game. Some things we do because we have to. There are things we don't wish to do but they are expected of us. This is expected of you.

Alice But...

Miss Prickett *(picking Humpty from the chair)* This you can do without! Do you want them to think you a child?

Alice Humpty was just sitting there minding his own business. Let him be!

Miss Prickett Clutter! That's what it is! It is time you set aside foolish things, girl. You need to grow up.

Alice I wonder why we say grow up. Some people grow out. I grew out of my summer dress.

Miss Prickett That is a different thing entirely.

Miss Prickett puts Humpty onto the mantle.

Alice Oh, not so close to the edge. He'll topple, you know.

Miss Prickett Enough of this foolishness. The guests will be here to meet you in due course. Look up, speak nicely and don't twiddle your fingers all the time!

Alice *(looking at the chessboard)* The White Knight is missing.

Miss Prickett And don't forget to curtsy while you're thinking what to say. It saves time.

The drawing room doors open and the guests enter. MAMA and PAPA, MAJOR REDDINGTON, a haughty upright military type, LEWIS CARROLL, a rather out of place, quiet gentleman, MR DEEDLE and MR DUMBLE, two lawyers, REVEREND KINGSTON, a slow and sleepy aged man, and MR HUMPHREY, a rotund talkative fellow. REVEREND KINGSTON makes his way to a chair and sits, promptly falling asleep. LEWIS CARROLL moves to the window to stare out.

Mr Humphrey It was absolutely dreadful. Of course, I had to be one of the first. An omnibus under the Thames, of all things!

Mama Oh, Mr Humphrey, it must have been frightful!

Mr Humphrey It was like being in the belly of some great beast, Ma'am. A great beast, I tell you. First and last, I can assure you. Never again!

Papa But it must have been exhilarating. A wonder of modern engineering.

Mr Humphrey If God had wanted me to be under the Thames, sir, he would have made me a fish.

Maj Reddington Give me dry land any day. All these new inventions! They won't last, you know. It won't see out the year.

Mr Deedle On the contrary, sir, there must be a need for it.

Mama I understand your law firm has shares in the tunnel, Mr Deedle.

Mr Dumble On the contrary, ma'am, we were to invest but we didn't.

Mr Deedle Nohow. Though we should have.

Mr Dumble But we didn't.

Mr Deedle Nohow.

Alice *(to herself)* What nonsense!

Miss Prickett *(aside to Alice)* Stand up straight, girl!

Alice I am standing as straight as I can. I'm standing straighter than Reverend Kingston. I should rather be in his position than where I am now. Asleep is the best place to be.

Miss Prickett Don't be rude! Rudeness shows vulgarity, girl.

Papa There will be fireworks later. I have had them sent up from London. I'm assured that they are the very best.

Alice *(suddenly excited)* Fireworks! Oh, Papa!

Papa *(smiling)* My daughter, gentlemen. Alice.

The gentlemen bow to her. Alice looks to Miss Prickett who frowns at her. Alice curtseys.

Mama Have you nothing to say, Alice?
Alice Children are to be seen and not heard.
Mr Deedle Though in telling us that, we have heard you.
Mr Dumble A winning argument, sir.
Mr Deedle On the contrary, it was a statement.
Alice Do you always contradict each other?
Miss Prickett Alice, you will apologise immediately.
Papa It is fine, Miss Prickett, Alice is only saying what we have been thinking all evening.

The guests laugh good-naturedly. Major Reddington remains stern.

Maj Reddington Though there is something to be said for politeness.
Papa Oh, come, Reddington, you're not in the army now, you know.
Maj Reddington Discipline should always be first and foremost.

Major Reddington smiles at Miss Prickett who curtseys slightly. The dinner gong is heard. A servant enters.

Servant Dinner is served.
Papa Just in the nick of time. Shall we?

As the guests start to exit. Alice watches Lewis Carroll, who continues to look out of the window.

Mr Humphrey I have heard that your cook is the best in the region, Ma'am.
Mama You shall see for yourself, Mr Humphrey.
Mr Humphrey I shall do more than see, I hope.
Papa Could you help Reverend Kingston to the dining room, Miss Prickett, if you please?

Miss Prickett wakes Reverend Kingston and guides him from the room.

Alice You'll miss dinner, you know.

Carroll And I hope it shall miss me. I am very well acquainted with Leg of Mutton and I should be very sad to hear that he didn't realise that I wasn't there.

Alice What a strange thing to say!

Carroll I have said stranger. And strangers shouldn't be strangers for too long. I should rather be friends. I am Reverend Dodgeson.

Alice I thought you were Mr Carroll.

Carroll I have two names, you know. One for the beginning and one for the end.

Alice I have two names, too.

Carroll Two names two? That's four.

Alice I meant I have two names as well.

Carroll As well as what?

Alice As well as you.

Carroll I am very well indeed.

Alice *(looking at him strangely)* I'm not allowed to talk nonsense.

Carroll And why not? Sometimes nonsense is as sensible as a dictionary. And who is it that tells you it is nonsense at all? *(Pause)* Alice, would you like to see something that is rather puzzling? Come to the looking glass. What do you see?

Alice I see me.

Carroll Are you sure?

Alice Of Course. There is my face. It's me. Alice.

Carroll But there are two Alices. Another Alice. I'm very fond of Alices, you know. And two heads are better than one.

Alice But I only have one head.

Carroll I see two. This one and that.

Alice Nevertheless, they are both me. They both look like me at the very least. Oh, I am sure that this is nonsense and I oughtn't to be talking it. I oughtn't to be talking it at all.

Carroll And why not? Sometimes the most interesting things are found in fantasy. Nonsense is one step away from invention. And invention moves us ever onward.

Song: Look Deep in the Mirror – Carroll and Alice

Carroll *Nonsense is one place where sense can be found
When you travel through mirrors the other way round
And if you are puzzled by all that you see
Look deep in the mirror and who knows where you'll be
Look through the mirror where left becomes right
Though things can be diff'rent, they're the same but not quite
Things you thought nonsense can awaken the mind
Look deep in the mirror and who knows what you'll find*

Alice *There in the mirror I'm looking right back
And everything seems just the same
But in that mirror, it's not quite on track*

Both *You're one of the pieces, you're part of the game*

Carroll *And who knows what's in there, that Looking Glass World
Flags may be waving and banners unfurled*

Alice *I'm a queen there*

Carroll *So you've been there
Just what do you know?
Your heart must be yearning
To know what you're learning
Now you are returning
To a land long ago*

Carroll picks an orange from a bowl and gives it to Alice.

Carroll Come. Here. Hold this. Now, tell me, in which hand do you hold the orange?

Alice The right.

Carroll And with which hand does the other Alice hold it?

Alice Other Alice?

Carroll The one in the looking glass.

Alice *(looking at the reflection)* Why, it's the left!

Carroll Exactly. How do you explain that?

Alice *(a short pause)* If I were there, in the Looking Glass world, I should be holding the orange in my right hand too.

Carroll In the Looking Glass world? A very satisfactory answer indeed!

Both look into the mirror.

Both **There in the Looking Glass World I can see**
A strangely familiar reflection of me

Alice **The girl in the mirror is silent and strong**

Both **If you just return there**
The lessons you learn there
You know that you'll earn there
A chance to belong

Both **Look at that vision a world out of reach**
But what are the lessons it's waiting to teach

Alice **But, Looking Glass, tell me which image is true?**

Both **That swirling sensation**
It's vivid temptation
This mirror creation
Will show the real you

Alice How very curious! Look, Mr Carroll, the looking glass!

The looking glass becomes mist as Alice draws closer to it.

Carroll (slightly concerned) Curious indeed.

Alice (climbing up to it) If I could just... there is something in there... just out of reach...

Carroll Alice... wait...

Alice steps close to it. She is kneeling on the mantle and, suddenly, as she peers closer, many white hands thrust from the mirror, grab her and drag her through. Carroll steps forward as the lights change and a bright shard of light bursts through the mirror. The mirror lifts into the flies and the light creates the effect of a searchlight as it is lifted into the flies casting its rays across the stage. The light cuts through the mist of the mirror growing ever stronger.

Scene II – The Chessboard

The Chessboard world. A chequered floor is broken like the tiles of a great hall. Roots break through pushing the tiles up into strange angular shapes. Gnarled trees cast eerie shadows amongst the ruins of arches and in the distance looms a great angular set of turrets which give off a hellish crimson light. Dark crimson figures creep about the ruins picking through the rubble, searching. The main figure stands and watches.

Red Knight She has to be here. Faster, you dogs. She will not escape us. She will be taken. When she is found, the way to the king will be clear.

R.Pawn There is nothing, sir. We have nothing.

Red Knight (*grabbing him by the chest*) Do you want to go back to the Queen and tell her the very same thing? Do you?

R.Pawn I'm... It's...

Red Knight I thought not. Search!

The screech of a great siren is heard. The figures look up. Alice appears through a wall and looks about her. She gasps and makes to go back but there is no way back. The wall is solid. The figures hear the gasp and their heads turn in her direction. She cowers.

R.Pawn Over here!

As the Pawns (the red figures) start to move toward Alice, who is just out of sight of them, a White Pawn appears at the pinnacle of one of the broken floor tiles. He is ragged and torn as if having been through many trials.

W.Pawn Down with the tyrant! Down with the Red Terror!

Red Knight You will pay for that with your head! Guards!

W.Pawn She will never have full rule while even one of us remains!

The White Pawn runs as the guards and the Red Knight give chase. A bedraggled white crowned head appears from behind one of the roots.

W.King Psst!

Alice looks round.

W.King Psst!

Alice That is very rude, you know. Kings should know better.

W.King I do know better. If you value your head, listen.

Alice My head?

W.King This is not the time or the place to be out in the open. The Red Guards have orders to imprison anything that is not red.

Alice What a silly place this is! I thought this side of the Looking Glass would be much tidier.

W.King There is no order any more. Nothing is the same as it was.

Alice I don't understand.

W.King You should. You are another Alice.

Alice (quite indignant) I am not! I'm the same one I have always been.
W.King And yet you are different. You're the other way round.
Alice Kings are not supposed to talk nonsense. They have it bred out of them. I read that somewhere. In a book I should think.
W.King We need an Alice.
Alice Nobody needs an Alice. One can need a person but not a name.
W.King Nevertheless, it is Alice we need. You know more than you think.

Song – The Other Alice – The White King

Alice How can I know more than I think? If I know something, I know it, whether I think it or not.

W.King But you need to think it to know that you know it. It's logic.

Alice It's nonsense. And I want to go home.

W.King

Alice

Home is not so far it's ever out of reach

But Alice

There's a lot you'll find this world has yet to teach

Though things are out of order

Back to front and upside down

You will make it clear if you can only win and take the crown

So Alice

Though you may feel just a tiny little speck

Alice

Only you can put this world right back in check

And your path is dark and stony

Where the night is bright as day

Home is right back where you started

Only you can find the way

You can change the world, it's there, it's in your power

It's your turn to move, it's time to prove

You can win the game and make your name mean something now

Be the queen and take the crown, the other Alice.

Alice Please stop calling me that. It's rather bothersome. If it's all the same to you, I should like to go back.

W.King It isn't the same to me. There *is* no way back. If you go back, you go forward and if you go forward you'll go back. So the only way to go back is to go forward. This is the Looking Glass.

Alice Then I want to go forward to go back.

W.King Good, then that's settled. You will help us.

Alice Help you?

W.King ***Alice***
There's a world that needs you more than you can know
Alice
Find the courage as you did so long ago
In your heart you know the answer
Know the things that make it right
There's no time for foolish questions
Take up arms and join the fight
And Alice
Nothing ever is as simple as it seems
Alice
There's a nightmare where there once were only dreams
In that wonderland you found us
Now that wonderland is sour
See the things that now surround us
Help us in our final hour
You can change the world, it's there, it's in your power
It's your turn to move, it's time to prove
You can win the game and make your name mean something now
Be the queen and take the crown, the other Alice.

W.King You have no way back and we have no way forward. We are both the same you and I. Our world is dying, Alice. The Red Queen has stopped the game. She has taken the throne and has imprisoned nearly all of the chess pieces.

Alice The Red Queen?

W.King Yes, the game must always be played or the chessboard will crumble, and when there is no chessboard, there will be no us. There is a balance to be maintained. Without balance, all is lost.

Alice But what can *I* do?

W.King You must become Queen. You must break the reign of the Red Queen.

Alice You make it sound so easy. If it is that easy, why doesn't someone else do it? I should rather go home.

W.King And that's just it, Alice, the way home is in the court of the Red Queen. The Looking Glass stands behind the throne.

Alice The Looking Glass?

W.King You have to return the way you came. Home is waiting, Alice, you have only to cross the chessboard.

Alice But it seems such a long way. And you said yourself that anyone found by the Red Queen is beheaded.

W.King And that is why we need to keep moving forward. Your way is clear. Keep the turrets in sight and you shall soon reach the Court of the Red Queen.

W.Pawn *(entering, out of breath)* Your majesty, they are near. I tried to lead them away but each path turned me back this way.

W.King The Chessboard is turning against us, Alice. We need to move fast.

W.Pawn Alice? The other Alice? Truly?

The siren is heard again. The White King runs to the top of an angled tile.

W.King They search for the White Queen. She is out there somewhere, Alice, find the White Queen and you shall know what to do. Keep the red turrets in sight!

The Red Knight and the Red Pawns enter once more and the White King rushes away. The White Pawn draws them.

W.Pawn Down with the Red Queen! End the reign of the Red Terror! *(As the Red Knight and Pawns draw near to him grabbing him, he cries out)* Alice! Run! Into the wood! Run! Alice, Run!

Alice, who has been frozen in fear, springs into action and tears off into the woods. The Red Knight turns swiftly to see her and they see each other plain before Alice runs into the wood. The Red Knight turns slowly to the White Pawn.

Red Knight *(darkly)* Alice?

W.Pawn The time is here. She has come.

Red Knight *(hissing into the White Pawn's face)* Another Alice?

There is a hideous fanfare at which all cower. The Red Queen swoops in, flanked by a pair of strange dark creatures, something between boars and bears. They growl and claw.

R.Queen Ah, run to ground! There is nothing better than a great hunt to start the day. Wouldn't you say?

R.Knight I would, your majesty.

R.Queen (*sharply*) And what makes you think I would care one jot about what you think? (*To the W.Pawn*) What do you say, my pretty prey?

The White Pawn stands in terror as the Queen's beasts snarl and claw at him.

R.Queen (*To the beasts*) Enough! (*To W.Pawn*) Where do you come from? And where are you going? Answer the first last and the second first. And while you're about it, why are you here in the first place?

The White pawn is silent. The Queen nods and the guards press him to his knees.

R.Queen It's time for you to answer now. Open your mouth a little wider when you speak, and always say 'your majesty'.

W.Pawn I will never recognise you as my queen! Your time is almost over. Your reign at an end.

R.Queen Obviously an imbecile! But better a half wit than no wit at all. Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time. Where is the king?

W.Pawn The king is safe.

R.Queen (*turning on Red Knight*) You mean to say you let him escape?

R.Knight My Queen, Alice...

R.Queen (*violently*) What?

R.Knight The other Alice...

R.Queen What do you know of the other Alice? Tell me! Instantly or I shall set the Momeraths upon you.

The beasts start to snarl and claw once again, this time turning on the Red Knight.

W.Pawn She has come to free us from your tyranny! She will free the chessboard!

R.Queen Free the chessboard? I shall see it crumble to dust before that girl takes the crown. Everything to dust, do you hear me?

R.Knight She has returned, your majesty. I saw her with my own eyes.

R.Queen What right has she to come back? What right has she to concern herself with our affairs? This will stop before it has begun. You!

R.Knight Your majesty?

R.Queen If she is not found this very day, I shall have all your heads lined on spikes on the turrets of the Red Court. Is that understood?

R.Knight Yes, your majesty. (*Pointing to the White Pawn*) What about him?

R.Queen Easily remedied. (*To the beasts, snapping her fingers*) Darlings? Dinnertime!

As the Red Knight and guards run in the direction Alice left, the slavering beasts move toward the cowering White Pawn and the lights go down. There is a bloodcurdling scream that turns into some loud squawk.

Scene III – The Forgotten Forest

The forest has grown thicker and Alice enters in a clearing. She hears the end of the squawk.

Alice (*frightened*) What was that? Such a dark and dismal place! There could be all manner of strange things in these woods. I should much rather be back in the drawing room in front of the fire. Look at me, mixed up in some sort of war. And they can be such tedious things. I read somewhere that there was once a war that lasted one hundred years.

The voice of the Red Knight is heard.

R.Knight She has to be here somewhere. Find her. Our heads depend upon it.

Alice cowers behind a tree as the Red Knight enters. He hacks away before him with his sword.

R.Knight Damnation! This forest gets thicker by the day. Every path changes by the hour. The other Alice could be anywhere. I can smell her... I smell her in the air.

The Red Knight moves closer to Alice. Suddenly, a red guard enters.

R.Pawn Sir, there are signs that she has gone to the second square.

R.Knight Already? Then after her! What are you waiting for? She must be found by nightfall. Out of my way!

The Red Knight rushes off pushing the Red Pawn out of the way. The Red Pawn looks about him and follows.

Alice (*coming out of her hiding place*) Oh, why did I ever go near the Looking Glass? So far from home and hiding from chess pieces! Whatever am I doing here? And where am I?

Slowly a sign appears on what looks like a railway platform. It reads 'From Here to There'.

Alice (*reading the sign*) Well, that's no help whatsoever. Where is here?