

australian.
script
centre

ALICE OF HEARTS

by Bruce Hoogendoorn

EXTRACT

© 2008 Bruce Hoogendoorn

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

The script is protected by Australian and international copyright law. You have a legal obligation to obtain permission before either making copies of this script or performing the play. Contact details for further information are provided below.

MAKING COPIES

Your script purchase entitles you to print the script once only. Beyond this single use, copying or printing more than 10% of this script without permission is illegal, even if you are covered by a Copyright Agency Limited (CAL) copying licence.

Additional copies may be made with the purchase of a Copy Licence from AustralianPlays.org. For further information or to buy a licence please visit australianplays.org/copy-licence.

COPYRIGHT ADVICE

For general information on copyright issues contact the Australian Copyright Council copyright.org.au.

PRODUCTION RIGHTS

Before producing or performing any play you must obtain the permission of the relevant rightsholder. Your production enquiry for this play may be submitted through the AustralianPlays.org website by clicking 'Produce a Play' on the home page.

PRODUCTION FEES

Production fees vary according to the nature and scale of the proposed production. They are set at the discretion of the relevant rightsholder (usually the playwright or their agent). As a general guide, the Australian Script Centre recommends 10% of gross box office receipts or \$100 per performance, whichever is greater, as the minimum fee for amateur production.

PERMISSIONS FOR SOUND RECORDINGS & MUSIC

Some playscripts will require specific music or sound recordings. Producers are advised to contact the Australasian Performing Rights Association (APRA) for more information on licensing requirements. apra.com.au
Ph +61 2 9935 7900

AUSTRALIAN SCRIPT CENTRE

The Australian Script Centre has been selectively collecting and distributing outstanding Australian playscripts since 1979. The ASC owns and manages the online portal AustralianPlays.org in collaboration with Currency Press, Playlab and Playwriting Australia. For more information contact the ASC at:
Ph: +61 3 6223 4675
Fax: +61 3 6223 4678
E: admin@ozscript.org

READ SCRIPTS ONLINE

You can read the Australian Script Centre's entire collection online at AustralianPlays.org. Simply purchase a Library Pass to explore hundreds of scripts from Australia's leading playwrights and emerging talents. For further information or to buy a Library Pass, please visit australianplays.org/library.

Note on the script: This is an unedited manuscript as provided to us by the playwright. We distribute it in good faith; however it may contain layout inconsistencies or typographic errors which are beyond our control.

CAST

ALICE

DUCHESS

GEOFFREY

TWO OF HEARTS

THREE OF HEARTS

MAD HATTER

WHITE RABBIT

QUEEN OF HEARTS

DEATH

MOUSE

FISH FOOTMAN

DORMOUSE

CHESHIRE CAT

BLUE CATERPILLAR

The play requires a minimum of nine actors. To achieve this, the following doubling is suggested:

ACTOR I: QUEEN, DORMOUSE, CHESHIRE CAT

ACTOR II: DEATH, FISH FOOTMAN

ACTOR III: GEOFFREY, MOUSE

ACTOR IV: TWO, BLUE CATERPILLAR

SETTING AND TIME

ACT 1

Time: Present

Setting: i) **Wonderland.** A cluster of giant mushrooms, flowers and grass. These should be large enough for the actors to hide behind them. These remain on stage for the entire play.

ii) **Road Block.** A dining table with a boom gate attached to the end. This should be easy to wheel on and off stage.

iii) **Replica Garden.** This is on stage throughout the first act, but until the last scene of the act it is concealed by a curtain. When the curtain is finally opened it reveals a run-down garden: dead rose bushes; ugly, fake Flamingos and hedgehogs, and a large rotten mushroom. It is raised above the main stage. There are steps leading up into it.

ACT 2

Time: Present

Setting: i) **Wonderland.** The same as act one.

ii) **The Garden.** When the curtain is opened at the beginning of the second act, we discover the replica garden has gone, replaced by the Garden. However, it is far from beautiful. It is like a jungle, dark and overgrown, with wild bushes and huge mushrooms.

iii) **Wonderland cemetery.** An open grave, perhaps a tombstone or two.

iv) **An office.** A desk and chair will suffice.

Note: The only time it is essential to remove a set during the play is during intermission when the replica garden must be replaced with the garden.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

Pitch black. Sounds of a busy factory gradually fill the theatre. Lights up.

ALICE runs on dressed as she was when first in Wonderland. However, she is now a woman of twenty-five. She is wearing a bum-bag and holds a beautiful glass bottle with a tag reading 'Drink me'. She addresses the audience directly.

ALICE: Listen to me! All of you. Please! Stop working and listen.

The factory sounds cease.

ALICE: You no longer have to work in the factory. You no longer have to live in fear of being cut back. I have the magic potion. See?

She holds up the glass bottle.

ALICE: We can go into the garden and start a new life. You can do the things you really want to do. So come on. There's enough magic for everyone.

Pause. A few factory sounds resume.

ALICE: Didn't you hear what I said? We can get into the garden. Please, hurry, before it's too late.

More factory sounds resume.

ALICE: Don't you realise more of you will be cut back? None of you are safe!

The factory sounds return to full volume.

ALICE: What is wrong with you all?

The sound of a Police siren rises over the top of the factory sound. ALICE looks off stage. She looks back at the audience in disbelief then runs off.

SCENE 2

A croquet ball races across the stage. The FISH FOOTMAN, a fish dressed in livery, chases after it in an ungainly manner. He dives for it, but misses. It rolls off stage. The QUEEN OF HEARTS enters holding a croquet mallet.

FISH: Bad luck, your Majesty.

QUEEN: Bad Luck! You were making too small an arch. It's off with your -

FISH: Is this better, Your Majesty?

FISH makes a large arch. The QUEEN inspects.

QUEEN: Much better.

The QUEEN puts down another ball and has a wayward shot. He dives for it, but misses.

QUEEN: You've done it again.

FISH: Your Majesty, it was the best I could do.

QUEEN: In that case, I will put you out of your misery. Off with your -

GEOFFREY enters holding a brown paper bag.

GEOFFREY: *(bows)* Your Majesty.

QUEEN: Geoffrey! Finally. Give me the magic potion. I cannot play with this slimy fish a moment longer.

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty will have it shortly. Alice failed to inspire a revolt and has no hope of getting into the garden.

QUEEN: You haven't caught her yet?

GEOFFREY: *(gestures)* We are this close.

QUEEN: But I want to play croquet in my garden!

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty, I can assure you -

QUEEN: I cannot be assured! Alice has stolen my last bottle of magic potion. If I don't get it back, I can't play in my garden ever again.

The QUEEN sees FISH staring up at her.

QUEEN: What are you looking at?

FISH: Nothing, Your Majesty.

QUEEN: I am not nothing! I am the Queen! It's off with your head!

She tears the head off her mallet revealing an axe blade. She raises it above her head. GEOFFREY intervenes.

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty, as Wonderland's CEO, it's my duty to point out that you have already cut back everyone identified as superfluous.

QUEEN: I have?

GEOFFREY: You have taken Wonderland to its most productive and cost-effective size in half the time I thought possible.

QUEEN: One does one's best.

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty is too modest. I so enjoy your work it's with great sadness I beg you to pardon the Fish Footman, and return him to the factory.

Pause. The QUEEN puts the mallet head back over the axe.

QUEEN: You are pardoned. Be off with you.

FISH bows and runs out.

GEOFFREY: Very wise, your Majesty.

QUEEN: Well, we've done so much of it lately. I begin to wonder if we've gone too far.

GEOFFREY: The cutbacks will allow Wonderland to be more efficient and profitable.

QUEEN: If it wasn't for the cutbacks I would have all the magic potion I need.

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty, I didn't know it was made by the Mock Turtle. My advice was the bottles appeared magically.

QUEEN: That's what we thought. But if we hadn't been so gung-ho we may have discovered in time.

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty -

QUEEN: And some of those cut back I was quite fond of. The King, for instance. He was a grumpy, rheumatic old bugger, but there were certain things he did for me that -

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty, instead of dwelling on minor negatives, we should exult over the positives.

QUEEN: What positives?

GEOFFREY: Allow me to present the first of Wonderland's factory-produced, Queen of Hearts jam tarts!

He takes a tart out of the paper bag.

QUEEN: Wonderful! I've been looking forward to this.

She snatches it, takes a bite and spits it out.

QUEEN: Disgusting! It tastes nothing like my jam tarts! Nobody in their right mind would pay money for this. How can I buy a Rolls Royce like the Queen of England's without any money?

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty, this was mass-produced for the mass market. Their palates are not as sophisticated as yours, so certain ingredients have been excluded.

QUEEN: Like what?

GEOFFREY: Pepper.

QUEEN: No pepper in the Jam Tarts! Why would anyone eat them?

GEOFFREY: Because it's the Queen's very own recipe and she makes them herself! The tarts will make them feel like royalty.

QUEEN: But it's not my recipe. And I didn't make them.

GEOFFREY: They won't know that. And the tarts are from magical Wonderland. Where croquet is played using flamingos and hedgehogs, and where rabbits and cats can talk as well as you and me. Wonderland is a place where dreams come true. Your tarts will make their dreams come true.

QUEEN: *(pause)* Perhaps I'll try it again.

She takes a bite and chews thoughtfully.

QUEEN: Yes, it does taste better now that you've explained it.

GEOFFREY: I predict Queen of Hearts Jam Tarts will be a smash hit and you will have more Rolls Royces than the Queen of England before you know it.

QUEEN: Wonderful, Geoffrey! My good humour can only be improved by cutting off Alice's head.

GEOFFREY: Excellent, Your Majesty. I will attend to the final stage of her capture.

QUEEN: Before you do, send over another croquet arch from the factory. But not one as useless as that horrible fish.

GEOFFREY: Your Majesty, I am sorry, but I must ask you to do without an arch for a short time.

QUEEN: What?

GEOFFREY: I'm afraid I need all hands on deck at the factory. We have only three more days until we have to deliver our first supermarket order. If we fail to deliver, the supermarket will cancel their order and Wonderland will be finished. As will your dream of owning a Rolls Royce.

QUEEN: I won't have that!

GEOFFREY: Then you'll try to make do without an arch?

QUEEN: *(pause)* Yes, Geoffrey.

GEOFFREY: Thank you, your Majesty.

GEOFFREY bows and exits. The QUEEN puts down a ball, hits it half-heartedly and sadly watches it roll off stage. Blackout.

SCENE 3

A distant Police siren is heard. ALICE runs on stage. She stops, puffed, and looks back towards the siren. She looks around for a hiding spot. She hides behind a giant mushroom which is surrounded by bushes, plants and flowers.

The TWO and THREE of HEARTS, dressed as playing cards, enter on a hotted-up, tandem Police bike. It has a red flag with a heart on it. The red Police lights are flashing. TWO is at the front. They ride across the stage and exit. The sound of the siren fades. ALICE pops up above the mushroom and looks around cautiously. She is about to come out when the siren roars back into life. She ducks back down. TWO and THREE ride back on. TWO brakes and turns off the lights and siren.

THREE: Why have we come back?

TWO: I saw something.

THREE leaps off the bike, draws his gun and stalks around the stage. TWO does the same. Finally they find themselves on opposite sides of the mushroom with their backs to it. There is a rustling in the grass. They whirl around.

THREE: Go on. I'll cover you.

TWO disappears into the bushes.

TWO: *(out of sight)* There you are!

The mushroom begins to shake violently.

THREE: Have you got her?

TWO: *(out of sight)* Almost. Stop being so stubborn. Out you come!

TWO bursts out holding a red rose.

TWO: Got it!

THREE: Where's Alice?

TWO: I don't know. But look at this. A red rose. Isn't it beautiful?

THREE: You stopped the woman-hunt to pick a rose?

TWO: The Duchess loves them. She'll be thrilled.

THREE: You are the softest heart I've ever met!

TWO: I can't help it, I'm in love.

THREE: Don't ever let me hear you talk about love again! We were lucky to get this job with our reputation for being soft and emotional. Geoffrey only gave it to us because I promised him we were new-age hearts and didn't give a toss about poetry, love songs or flowers!

THREE *throws down the flower and stamps on it.*

TWO: How can you do that? You're a heart!

THREE: Yes, a new-age heart. Not an old-fashioned one like you.

GEOFFREY: *(off)* Three!

THREE: Don't say a word.

GEOFFREY *hurries on.*

GEOFFREY: Where's Alice?

THREE: In the vicinity, Geoffrey. She can't possibly -

GEOFFREY: You haven't captured her yet?

THREE: *(pause)* No.

GEOFFREY: Then why are you standing around here doing nothing?

THREE: Because -

TWO: Because I found the loveliest -

THREE: Because this bike's too slow! We need a car.

GEOFFREY: Wonderland can't afford cars until the factory starts to make a profit.

THREE: Well, it makes it very difficult for us to do our job.

GEOFFREY: She's on foot. How fast can she go? *(beat)* This job's going to have to be outsourced.

THREE: What?

GEOFFREY: I'm transferring you both to the factory.

THREE: But Geoffrey -

GEOFFREY: She's already stolen the magic potion from under your noses!
(pause) I'm going to hire someone with experience. Report to the factory immediately.

GEOFFREY *hurries out.*

THREE: This is all your fault! If it wasn't for you being a lovey-dovey, flower-picking heart we'd have Alice by now and we'd be heroes. Now we're in danger of being cut back.

TWO: No, we're not. We've just been transferred, that's all.

THREE: To the factory! Another mistake and we're finished. We have to win back his confidence.

TWO: How?

THREE: *(pause)* We have to get Alice before the new guy. Get on.

THREE *gets on the bike.* TWO *hesitates.*

THREE: Do you want to be cutback?

He gets on. They ride off, siren blaring, lights flashing. The siren fades into the distance. ALICE pops her head above the mushroom and looks around warily.

ALICE: That was a narrow escape.

She comes out.

ALICE: I have to get into the garden before it's too late. There must be more than one way to get in.

She opens her bum bag and takes out a map. It's a strange shape and has all sorts of odd shapes cut out of it. Not an ordinary map at all. She studies it, turning it this way and that, more and more angrily, until...

ALICE: This is the stupidest map I've ever seen!

She tears up the map. She surveys the torn pieces around her.