

THE TRIAL OF THE MAD HATTER



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

Clint Snyder

Inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll
Illustrations by John Tenniel

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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THE TRIAL OF THE MAD HATTER

FARCE. At the Wonderland “courthouse” everyone is assembling for the Mad Hatter’s trial. The Cheshire Cat is the prosecutor, Alice and the Caterpillar are witnesses, and the White Rabbit is supposed to be the court reporter but is too busy writing sad poems. When the Hare arrives with the Mad Hatter’s briefcase containing his defense, the Mad Hatter discovers the Hare has replaced the contents with chocolate bars. But it doesn’t matter since no one knows why the Mad Hatter is on trial anyway, and Alice is hauled away for committing the number-one crime in show business: She was boring!

Performance Time: Approximately 20-30 minutes.

Note: Combine with play with Clint Synder’s *The Mad Tea Party* for a full evening of Wonderland zaniness!

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A page from Lewis Carroll's original illustrated copy of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*; Lewis Carroll in 1855.

ABOUT THE STORY

English author Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), who wrote under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll, is best known for his children's novels. In 1856, Dodgson befriended the children of Henry Liddell—Lorina, Edith, and Alice. Dodgson liked to spend time with the children and tell them stories. Dodgson wrote and illustrated *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* and gave it to Alice Liddell for Christmas in 1864. This manuscript was then published as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865. Alice Liddell was the inspiration for the character of Alice in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871). Some critics believe Dodgson based the character of the Mad Hatter on furniture dealer Theophilus Carter, who John Tenniel used as an inspiration for his illustrations of the Mad Hatter.

Characters

(2 M, 2 F, 5 flexible, extras)

MAD HATTER: On trial but doesn't know what he is charged with; likes to make wild accusations and thinks multivitamins are a scam; wears a large hat with another hat underneath it; male.

DORMOUSE: Mouse who likes cheese but is on a cheese-free diet; flexible.

WHITE RABBIT: Court announcer/reporter who thinks his life would have been more fulfilling if he had been born as a duck or a desk lamp; flexible.

CHESHIRE CAT: Prosecutor who speaks with a fake southern accent; flexible.

HARE: Pretends to be a Realtor; thinks he will never be a success because of his large ears; hates music from the 1990s and wishes he was a time-travelling monk; flexible.

QUEEN: Too busy yelling at people to know what the Mad Hatter is on trial for; wears a queen's costume; female.

ALICE: Witness; female.

CATERPILLAR: Witness; flexible.

WAITER: Not a good waiter; male.

EXTRAS: As suspicious and strange-looking Jurors and Court Members.

Setting

Wonderland "courtroom."

Set

Wonderland "courtroom." There is a table and chairs.

Props

Briefcase

Hat with another hat underneath it, for Mad Hatter

Dollar

Corn chips

Cell phone

Teacup with water in it (or it can be filled with confetti or glitter.)

Teapot with water in it (or it can be filled with confetti or glitter.)

"YOU HAVE COMMITTED
THE NUMBER-ONE CRIME
IN SHOW BUSINESS...
YOU WERE BORING."

—QUEEN

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(AT RISE: Wonderland court. The Mad Hatter and Dormouse are sitting at a table together. There is a Jury of suspicious and strange-looking characters mumbling to each other.)

HATTER: *(To Dormouse.)* I don't understand why these things always take so long.

DORMOUSE: The trial has not even started yet.

HATTER: No, not the trial. Not the trial, you dunce. I was obviously referring to the cheese. I've been fermenting some Swiss cheese, and it just astounds me how incredibly long the fermentation process takes. I will tell you one thing: The Swiss have plenty of patience...patience and tulips.

DORMOUSE: And cheese!

HATTER: Cheese? Don't get off-topic here, Dormouse, it is incredibly distracting.

DORMOUSE: But you were just talking about cheese, and I really like cheese.

HATTER: Okay! Okay! Okay! Look, number one: The cheese is at home sitting under a hat, so get that out of your head. Number two: I'm incredibly selfish and would probably not share with you anyway. And number five: As I said previously, it is an incredibly long process, and the cheese is not yet ready.

DORMOUSE: *(Confused.)* What happened to numbers three and four?

HATTER: I don't like them! I find them incredibly rude and abrasive at parties! How many times do I have to tell you that?! And what sort of a mouse fantasizes about cheese all day anyway? Empty calories.

DORMOUSE: Actually, it is quite common for mice to fancy cheese.

HATTER: Fancy cheese, humdrum cheese...I don't care how sophisticated your cheese is. Tell the Swedes they can keep

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their heart attacks. I want to live until I'm at least a thousand.

DORMOUSE: That's not possible.

HATTER: You mean not *probable*. It's all a game of chance and keeping a relatively cheese-free diet.

(Pause. Dormouse ponders this.)

DORMOUSE: Now, wait. If you're so categorically against cheese, then why are you fermenting some right now?

HATTER: They're called *enemies*, Dormouse. I ferment cheese for my enemies, and you'd better wisen up quick or you're liable to become one of them.

DORMOUSE: What does that mean?

HATTER: Whatever you want it to mean. *(Shouts.)* Waiter! Waiter! Can I get some service here?! *(To Dormouse.)* How incredibly rude. I think I will leave them an awful review online.

DORMOUSE: This isn't a restaurant, you know.

HATTER: You're telling me!

DORMOUSE: It's a courthouse.

HATTER: Well, it may as well be an outhouse with their quality of service.

(Waiter enters.)

WAITER: *(To Dormouse and Mad Hatter.)* My sincerest apologies sir and/or madam. Will you be having anything to drink today?

DORMOUSE: I'll have a water with lemon.

HATTER: Hmmmm, let me think about this...

DORMOUSE: We don't have all day here.

HATTER: Well, apparently we do. The court isn't in session, and, frankly, I'm parched, so why don't you hold onto your trousers because we're going to be here awhile, all right, cupcake?

DORMOUSE: *(To himself.)* I don't know why I get dragged into these things...

HATTER: *(To Waiter.)* I will have a... *(To himself.)* Hmm...oh, my! That would be nice... *(Thinks.)* ...but then I think that is what killed my Aunt Sue. Oh, well, so much for my diet... *(To Waiter.)* I'll have a water with lemon in it. *(Waiter starts to exit. Shouts.)* Actually, scratch that! I think I'll just have a glass of melted butter, hold the lemon. *(Thinks. To Waiter, shouts.)* No, keep the lemon, keep the lemon. I have to get my vitamins somewhere.

DORMOUSE: I take multivitamins.

HATTER: That's a scam! The whole industry is a scam!

DORMOUSE: Are you making wild accusations again?

HATTER: Of course! When do I not?!

DORMOUSE: Good question.

HATTER: Have you ever seen a multivitamin commercial before? One minute, they're eating breakfast; the next, they are in the swimming pool, then walking their dog! Nobody should be in the pool right after eating! You have to wait 30 minutes, or you turn inside out and explode. It is a well-documented law of nature.

DORMOUSE: I thought you just got a mild tummy ache.

HATTER: Ha! Shows what you know! That's exactly how they got my Aunt Sally. Ate a bag of pork rinds, then took a dip. Next thing you know, she was inside out and went kaplewy!

DORMOUSE: I thought she was alive and well. You told me she just went to Martha's Vineyard—

HATTER: Who cares where she went?! She wore white after Labor Day. That woman is dead to me.

DORMOUSE: Seems harsh.

HATTER: Aye! Fashion is a harsh mistress. You know what they say if you...

(Hare enters.)

HARE/HATTER: ...wear white after Labor Day, "You're dead to me!"

HATTER: Ha! Hare, you sly old dog!

DORMOUSE: Dog! Dog! Dog! Dog! (*Hare "kicks" the Dormouse, and he falls to the floor, gripping his stomach. To Hare.*) Thank you.

HARE: You're always welcome to as many roundhouse kicks as my feet can provide.

DORMOUSE: You're a true friend.

HARE: No, I'm not. I'm a hare.

HATTER: I thought you were a rabbit.

HARE: Ubuh! Ubuh! Ubuh! Ubuh! Ubuh!

DORMOUSE: (*To Hatter, indicating Hare.*) Watch out! It's going to blow!

HARE: (*To Hatter.*) How dare you call me a *rabbit*! Do I look like I have a stupid, happy carrot sticking out of my mouth? Do I look like I want to be hippity-hoppiting down the bunny trail!?

HATTER: It was a joke.

HARE: Oh, well, then...ha, ha. How silly. I feel much better now.

HATTER: Do you have my briefcase?

HARE: Your briefcase has arrived. (*Holds up the briefcase as if it were a crown presented to a king.*)

HATTER: Excellent. I was beginning to worry. My entire defense is in there.

HARE: No, it's not.

HATTER: What?

HARE: (*Shouts.*) No, it is not!

DORMOUSE: (*Looking inside briefcase.*) Hey, there is just a bunch of chocolate in here!

HARE: (*Shouts.*) Stay away from there, you! This is very sensitive information...extremely sensitive!

HATTER: Hare, a moment, please. (*To Hare, aside.*) Did you just happen to empty the defense out of my briefcase and fill it with chocolate?

HARE: Well, let's say I did not *not* do that.

[END OF FREEVIEW]