

SCENE FOR 2 ACTORS:

Adventure 5: Cheshire cat in a tree.

[At the UR wing, a section of leafy bough is seen. Attached to it is the head of the CHESHIRE CAT and a suggestion of its body and tail. The head is a lantern, which is a duplicate of the one used in the kitchen scene, electrified to blink on and off with its grin separately wired.]

CAT. *[Voice offstage]* Prrrow . . . meowwww . . . *[ALICE notices the CAT and goes URC to converse with it.]*

ALICE. Pussycat, they wouldn't take me with them to the palace. So would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go.

CAT. That depends on where you want to go.

ALICE. I don't care where . . .

CAT. Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

ALICE. . . . So long as I get somewhere.

CAT. Oh, you're sure to do that, if you only walk long enough.

ALICE. What sort of people live here?

CAT. To the east lives a Mad Hatter. To the west lives a Mad March Hare. Visit either you like.

ALICE. But I don't want to go among mad people.

CAT. Oh, you can't help that. We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.

ALICE. How do you know that I'm mad?

CAT. You must be or you wouldn't be here.

ALICE. This certainly is a strange country.

CAT. Purrfectly true. *[A few chords of soft music come under the dialogue.]* No one you meet here is quite what he seems — even to himself. That's why they call it Wonderland.

ALICE. I wish I'd never come here. It is a very frightening place.

CAT. Nobody will harm you.

ALICE. Truly?

CAT. Yes, truly. *[Music out]* Except, of course, the Queen of Hearts. She's the most bloodthirsty monarch that ever lived. Make an enemy of her and you're doomed!

ALICE. *[Downcast]* That's what I was frightened of.

CAT. Are you really going to the palace?

ALICE. *[Biting her nails]* I may — or I may not.

CAT. If you do go, you may see me there. Or you may not! *[The light in the CAT'S head fades out and it appears to vanish among the leaves. ALICE stares amazed. The CAT'S light brightens again, as it reappears.]* Bye-the-bye, what became of the baby?

ALICE. It turned into a pig.

CAT. I thought it would. *[Vanishes again among leaves. ALICE waits a moment to see if the CAT will reappear. As it doesn't, she turns and crosses to DLC. Then the CAT suddenly materializes once more.]* Did you say pig or fig?

ALICE. *[Turning back]* I said pig.

CAT. Darn!

ALICE. And I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly!

CAT. Bye bye. *[This time the head and eyes fade out, leaving the grin clearly visible. It remains there quite a while before it too disappears.]*

ALICE. Well, I've often seen a cat without a grin, but a grin without a cat! It's most curious! *[Sound: tinkle of teacups and laughter from offstage]* I hear cups tinkling and people laughing. The March Hare must be serving tea. Perhaps as this is May, he won't be raving mad . . . at least not as mad as he was in March.

[She starts to exit DL. Lights black out. NOTE: The table and chairs for the following scene should be put in position during the blackout and on the lower level as close to front as possible.]