***Through the Looking Glass***

***Chapter 10***

***“It’s My Own Invention”***

***Summary:***

* Alice picks up the Red Queen and says that she'll shake her into a kitten. The Red Queen begins to change shape and size, and then …

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part***

***Summary Part 1:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) is thrilled. She scolds herself in an imperious tone and says that it's not queen-like to loll on the lawn. She gets up and walks stiffly, feeling somewhat uncomfortable with the [crown](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/symbols/alice-s-crown) and worried it'll fall off. She decides to practice and, if she really is a queen, she'll be fine. The [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) and the [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) suddenly appear next to her. She wants to ask them how, but the question seems improper to Alice. Instead, Alice starts to ask if the game is over. The Red Queen interrupts her sharply and says to only speak when she's spoken to. Alice argues that if everyone abided by that rule, nobody would say anything. The queen deems this ridiculous and remembering that Alice questioned if she was really a queen, says that there's an examination to be a queen.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Deciding that she needs to practice with the crown makes it even clearer that adults don't have everything figured out—as an adult, Alice has to figure things out just like the other adults in her life and in her dream. When she thinks that asking the queens how they arrived would be impertinent, it shows again that the laws of etiquette keep Alice from gathering important information. It keeps Alice in the dark at the expense of keeping the queens comfortable.

***Summary Part 2:***

Concerned, [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) insists that she just said "if," which makes the [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) and [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) exchange looks and shudder. The White Queen moans that Alice said more than that, and the Red Queen tells Alice to tell the truth and write everything down. Alice attempts to clarify her intention, but the Red Queen scolds that she needs to mean something, just as a joke needs to mean something. She says that children are more important than jokes and she says this is something that Alice can't deny, even if she tried to "with both hands." When Alice points out that she doesn't deny things with her hands, the Red Queen says that this is the point. The queens remark that Alice has a temper and just wants to deny something.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The Red Queen's insistence that jokes need to mean something is silly given the fact that this statement appears in this novel, where few jokes make sense but are still funny. This makes her insistence even funnier, especially given that her tone is so severe and serious as she scolds Alice about making jokes make sense. When the queen gives Alice directions as to how to be a proper queen, it indicates that Alice wasn't properly prepared to become a queen, just as it's hard to prepare to be an adult in the real world.

***Summary Part 3:***

The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) invites the [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) to [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice)'s dinner party later. The White Queen invites the Red Queen in turn. Alice suggests that if it's her party she should invite people, but the Red Queen insists they gave her the opportunity but that Alice hasn't had lessons in manners yet. Alice says that she learns math in lessons, not manners. To this, the queens give Alice addition and subtraction problems that Alice can't solve or follow, and then begin giving her "math" problems that are riddles. They ask what she gets when she divides a loaf by a knife—bread and butter. Alice attempts to solve what would happen if they took a bone from a dog, but she gets it wrong—the dog's temper would remain, according to the Red Queen, since if the dog left, it'd leave its temper behind.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Alice's assessment of how one learns manners could explain why she's missing things, especially since she seems decidedly less charmed by the queens' attempts to teach her how to be a queen. Giving her the riddles allows the queens to feel more superior and, besides, the riddles are fun for the reader to puzzle out as they go—but for Alice, they make her feel even more lost and alone as she tries to figure out how she's supposed to make this whole queen thing work.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) thinks that this is all nonsense. The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) and the [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) moan that Alice is hopeless at sums. Alice asks the White Queen if she can do sums, which offends the queen. She says she can do them slowly, but she can't subtract and can read words all of one letter. The Red Queen asks Alice how bread is made. Alice thinks she knows this one, so she says that one starts with flour. The White Queen interrupts and asks where Alice picks the flower. Alice says that it's ground, and the White Queen asks how many acres of ground. The queens declare that Alice must be feverish after thinking and they rapidly fan her head.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Bringing up the flour/flower joke hearkens back to Alice's conversations with the Gnat—nobody is purposefully trying to make a joke here, but the effect is still humorous, if frustrating for Alice. Alice's frustrations again speak to the difficulty of being an adult in the world: Alice can't figure out how she's supposed to act, though she knows that she's missing something. Adults, the novel suggests, don't know as much as children think they should.

***Summary Part 5:***

The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) asks [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) how to say "fiddle-de-dee" in French. Alice declares that "fiddle-de-dee" isn't English and offers to give the French if the queen can tell her what language it's in, but the queen severely says that queens don't make deals. They then ask Alice for the cause of lightning. Alice starts to say that thunder causes lightning, but when she changes her answer, the Red Queen tells her she needs to deal with the consequences of her incorrect answer. The queens then discuss how days work in Looking-glass World: they experience multiple days at a time and multiple nights, which makes the nights warmer and colder. Alice tries to participate in this riddle, but she thinks that it has no answer.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Especially here, when Alice gives an answer to the lightning riddle and then tries to change her answer, the novel suggests that the stakes are higher in adulthood—though the Red Queen doesn't tell Alice what the consequences are, Alice has to deal with them in a way that she didn't have to when she's gotten answers wrong throughout the rest of the novel. When Alice recognizes that the discussion of days and nights is a riddle, it shows that she is learning how to think more in line with how Looking-glass World operates.

***Summary Part 6:***

The [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) says that [Humpty Dumpty](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/humpty-dumpty) saw "it" when he showed up with a corkscrew looking for a hippo. The White Queen says that there are only hippos in the house on Thursdays. [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) starts to say that Humpty Dumpty came to punish the fish, but the White Queen interrupts and goes on about how she forgot her name in a thunderstorm. Alice privately thinks that remembering one's name in an accident is useless, but she doesn't want to hurt the queen's feelings. The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) explains to Alice that the White Queen wasn't brought up well and so she says foolish things. She invites Alice to pat the White Queen on the head, but Alice is too afraid.

***Analysis Part 7:***

The exchange about Humpty Dumpty makes little sense. Alice again shows that she wants to understand when she suggests that he came to punish fish, just as in the poem that he recited for her, but when the queens don't listen to her or acknowledge that she spoke, it shows that this kind of analysis isn't welcome in Looking-glass World or, possibly, in the adult world more broadly.

***Summary Part 8:***

The [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) complains of being sleepy and puts her head on [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice)'s shoulder. The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) instructs Alice to give the sleepy queen her nightcap and sing her a lullaby. Alice insists that she can't; she doesn't have a nightcap and doesn't know any lullabies. The Red Queen sings a lullaby and says that Alice needs to sing to both of the queens. The queens fall asleep with their heads on Alice's lap. Alice thinks this is the strangest thing that's ever happened to her. The snoring begins to turn into a tune and suddenly, the queens vanish and Alice finds herself in front of a door. She reads "Queen Alice" at the top and on either side of the arched doorway, there are bells marked for visitors and servants.

***Analysis Part 8:***

The queens falling asleep reads much more like a childish occurrence than an adult one, showing again that Alice is the most adult character even if she is a child. Recognizing that what's happening is strange suggests that Alice is starting to come out of her dream and see the nonsensical nature of her dream for what it is. As Alice begins the process of waking up, she begins to regress and return to a childlike state.

***Summary Part 9:***

[Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) decides to wait until the song ends and then ring the bell, but she can't figure out which bell to ring. She thinks that there should be one for the queen. A creature opens the door, pokes its head out, and tells her that they won't let her in for two weeks. Alice knocks and rings until an old [Frog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) hobbles over and asks what's going on. Alice wants to know where the servant is who answers the door. The Frog is confused and asks what the door has been asking. When Alice expresses confusion, the Frog says that he speaks English and she should understand. Alice says that she knocked at the door and the Frog says she shouldn't do that. He kicks the door and tells Alice to leave it alone, and then it will leave her alone.

***Analysis Part 9:***

Alice's inability to figure out how to get into the building where (presumably) her dinner party is taking place shows again that the rules of the adult world don't make logical sense. The Frog's attempt to help Alice isn't helpful at all, since she doesn't understand what he's getting at. No matter what the Frog says, having a language in common doesn't mean that two individuals will be able to understand each other—this entire novel is proof of that, since Alice spends most of the novel in the dark about what's going on.

***Summary Part 10:***

The door suddenly flies open and [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) hears someone singing that Alice invited everyone to dine with her, the [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen), and the [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen). Other voices join in the chorus. The voice sings the second verse and Alice steps into the room. Everyone stops singing. She notices about 50 guests and thinks that she's glad the queens invited them; she wouldn't have known whom to invite. Alice takes a seat at the head of the table between the queens. The Red Queen explains that Alice missed two courses and it's time for the joint. A waiter puts a leg of mutton down. The Red Queen introduces Alice to the [Mutton](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters), which bows. Alice offers the queens a slice, but the Red Queen says it's rude to cut anyone she's formally met. Waiters carry the Mutton away.

***Analysis Part 10:***

At this point, Alice's experience of adulthood is being totally at a loss as to what to do—as far as she knows, mutton is for cutting and eating and food doesn't speak. In this situation, Alice is up against all sorts of rules and regulations that she's never heard of, which makes her experience as an honorary adult even more anxiety inducing for her. With this, the novel suggests that having the crown doesn't make Alice an adult in the way she thinks an adult should be: she's still just as lost, if she's not even more lost than she was before entering the Eighth Square.

***Summary Part 11:***

Waiters bring out a pudding. [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) asks that the [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) not introduce her to it, but the Red Queen sulkily introduces Alice to the [Pudding](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters) anyway. She commands that the waiters take it away. As an experiment, Alice asks for the Pudding back and cuts a slice for the Red Queen. The Pudding scolds Alice and she stares at it in shock. The Red Queen tells Alice to respond. Everyone at the table stops talking as Alice says that every poem she's heard today had something to do with fish. She asks why everyone loves fish here. The Red Queen suggests that the [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) tell Alice a riddle about fish.

***Analysis Part 11:***

Alice's speech in response to the Red Queen's scolding notably makes little sense given what she's been asked to do—that is, speak to the pudding. Asking about the fish is a perfectly logical thing for Alice to do, but the queens' response to Alice's query suggests again that there's really no use in trying to make Looking-glass World make logical sense. Instead, Alice needs to understand that everything is going to be a riddle, if she can understand it at all.

***Summary Part 12:***

The [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) recites her riddle. It begins by saying that catching and cooking the fish is easy, but then says that it's almost impossible to take the dishcover off of the fish. She asks whether it's easier to take the cover off the fish or figure out the riddle. While [Alice](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/alice) thinks about it, the [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) raises a toast to Alice. Guests begin greedily eating the roast and gravy, and the Red Queen tells Alice to give a speech. The queens reprimand Alice, who obediently stands to speak.

***Analysis Part 12:***

The way that the guests greedily dig into the feast shows again that adults aren't as beholden to rules as Alice, as a child, may have been led to believe—like children, they can be greedy and selfish. Alice's obedience speaks to the fact that she's still a child in many important ways. She wants to please, even if it doesn't make sense how she's going to make a speech under these circumstances.

***Summary Part 13:***

The [Red Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-red-queen) and the [White Queen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/through-the-looking-glass/characters/the-white-queen) push on either side of Alice, lifting her up in the air. The White Queen screams that something is happening and, suddenly, the candles grow and the table settings turn into odd birds and fly around. Alice sees the Red Queen's face in the soup tureen and, fed up, pulls the tablecloth off and dumps everything onto the floor. She turns on the Red Queen, who is now doll-size. Alice grabs the queen and threatens to shake her "into a kitten." Alice shakes the queen and the queen begins to transform into something short, round, and soft.

***Analysis Part 13:***

The mayhem here makes it very clear that adulthood isn't all that great—per this scene, it's one big mess that makes little sense, and is obnoxious and frustrating besides. Losing her temper with the Red Queen and shaking her allows Alice to finish the process of waking up and returning to a childish state where she can use her imagination and make sense of her experience with wonder and delight.