

SETTING: *A river bank – and then, the amazing world of a young girl’s imagination.*

AT RISE: *The sounds of birds chirping on a summer day. ENSEMBLE enters, taking in the beautiful day. UNCLE CHARLES, wearing a frock coat and a top hat, steps forward and discovers the audience.*

#1 Wonderland

UNCLE CHARLES

*Look around
What do you see?
A field of flowers
A bumbling bee
Mushrooms growing
Near the stump of a tree*

UNCLE CHARLES/ENSEMBLE

It’s a typical countryside

UNCLE CHARLES

*The day is sunny
Pleasantly warm*

(UNCLE CHARLES continues to sing under as FREDDY and LORINA erupt into a game of tag. LORINA chases TEDDY. He eludes her.)

*And here and there
Some children swarm...
Playing tag on
a summer morn*

UNCLE CHARLES/ENSEMBLE

In a typical countryside

UNCLE CHARLES

Nothing is ever what it seems

ENSEMBLE

Ohhhhhhhh

(ALICE enters with a basket. She crosses to an old stump and crouches down next to the base of it, picking mushrooms.)

UNCLE CHARLES (cont.)
*Not when a young girl shuts her eyes
 And dreams her dreams*

ENSEMBLE (cont.)
Ohhhhhhhhh

UNCLE CHARLES/ENSEMBLE
*Everything you think you understand
 Turns into a mystifying Wonderland...
 Wonderland!*

(ALL except UNCLE CHARLES and ALICE disappear.)

UNCLE CHARLES
(To audience)
 And so the scene is set. A typical summer morning in the countryside.

Or is it?

(He pulls a pocket watch out of his pocket and looks at it.)

Oh goodness! I'm late again. I must be off – but have no fear, you'll see me later. Until then, please – enjoy yourself....

(He starts off then turns back.)

Our story begins.

(He exits.)

FREDDY (O.S.)
 Alice?! Alice, where are you?!

(FREDDY runs on and sees her.)

FREDDY
 There you are. She's over here, Lorina!

(LORINA enters behind him.)

What are you doing, Alice?

ALICE
 Picking mushrooms. Look how big this one is!

(She holds it up.)

Mushrooms, smushrooms.

FREDDY

Freddy wants you to play tag with us.

LORINA

Oh, Freddy – tag is for children.

ALICE

But I *am* a child. And so are you, Alice!

FREDDY

I'm older than *you*.

ALICE

Barely.

FREDDY

Well, I'm older than both of you! Today I turn twelve which means I'm practically a grownup.

LORINA

It's not officially your birthday until we've had tea.

ALICE

Come on, Alice – one game of tag. Please?

FREDDY

What do you say, Alice?

LORINA

(ALICE puts down her basket of mushrooms.)

I say...

ALICE

(She tags FREDDY.)

Tag! You're it!

#2 Tag (underscoring only)

(An enthusiastic game of tag ensues. FREDDY gives chase to LORINA.)

ALICE
Watch out, Lorina!

(FREDDY tries to tag LORINA but misses.)

FREDDY
Tag! You're it, Lorina!

LORINA
No, I'm not.

FREDDY
Yes, you are!

LORINA
You missed me!

FREDDY
No, I didn't!

LORINA
Yes, you did!

FREDDY
No, I didn't. I tagged you fair and square.

LORINA
Alice – did Freddy tag me?

FREDDY
I did, Alice! Tell her I did!

LORINA
No, you didn't! You're lying – and I have proof.

FREDDY
What proof?

LORINA
You're grinning.

(FREDDY covers his mouth with his hands but continues to grin behind it.)

FREDDY

No, I'm not.

LORINA

Yes, you are. I can see it through your fingers. You're grinning ear to ear – isn't he, Alice?

ALICE

I'm afraid he is.

LORINA

Which is how I know you're lying, Freddy. You grin every time you tell a falsehood.

FREDDY

I do not!

LORINA

Yes, you do.

ALICE

It's true, Freddy. Your eyes twinkle and you get a big, silly grin on your face.

(He removes his hand and grins even bigger. ALICE points.)

See? There it is!

LORINA

You shouldn't be chasing me, anyway. It's my birthday, after all. You should be chasing Alice!

ALICE

What??

FREDDY

All right.

(He tags ALICE.)

Tag! You're it!

ALICE

Oh you!

(LORINA and FREDDY start running as ALICE gives chase. Suddenly MAMA and PAPA enter. PAPA smokes a big pipe. MAMA carrying a beautiful hatbox.)

MAMA

Children! Children, that's enough, now! No more game-playing.

(Music out.)

ALICE

But, Mama – I haven't tagged Lorina yet!

MAMA

Nevertheless, it's time for Lorina to open her birthday present.

FREDDY

I thought we were waiting for Uncle Charles to get here before we opened presents.

MAMA

Your Uncle Charles is late – as usual. Someone needs to give that man a pocket watch.

PAPA

My dear Pigeon, we *gave* him a pocket watch for Christmas, remember? It hasn't helped his punctuality one bit.

LORINA

What's in the box, Mama?

(MAMA holds it out.)

MAMA

Happy birthday, dear girl.

FREDDY

Is it a kitten? Oh, I do hope it's a kitten!

ALICE

Lorina doesn't like cats, Freddy.

FREDDY

I know – but I do.

ALICE

Oh, Freddy...

MAMA

Open it, Lorina.

(LORINA takes the lid off the hat box and gasps.)

LORINA
Oh, Mama – it's beautiful...

(She pulls a beautiful hat out of the box.)

... the most beautiful hat I've ever seen!

MAMA
You really like it?

LORINA
More than anything! Thank you, Mama!

(She hugs MAMA.)

MAMA
Don't forget your Papa – he paid for it.

(LORINA hugs PAPA.)

LORINA
Thank you, Papa.

PAPA
Happy Birthday, Lorina.

MAMA
Here, let's put it on you...

(She places the hat on LORINA's head.)

Oh my. Look at her, Henry. Isn't she lovely?

PAPA
She's all grown up.

MAMA
All right, children – it's time to head back to the house. Freddy needs to take his nap.

FREDDY
But I'm not sleepy!

MAMA
Nevertheless...

FREDDY

But I hate naps! Why do I have to take one?

MAMA

Because you're a little boy.

FREDDY

Why don't Lorina and Alice have to take naps?

LORINA

Because I'm all grown up – Papa just said so.

FREDDY

What about Alice? She's not a big girl yet!

ALICE

I may not be as big as Lorina, but I'm not as little as you, either, Freddy.

PAPA

It's true – Alice is somewhere in the middle...

MAMA

Enough! Freddy, it's time for you to take a nap and that's that!

FREDDY

But Mama...

MAMA

And when you wake up, we'll have our tea, plus a special treat.

LORINA

Special treat?

MAMA

Raspberry tarts.

LORINA

My favorite!

ALICE

I do so love raspberry tarts. May I have two tarts, Mama? Or perhaps three?

MAMA

Now, Alice, we've talked about this – enough is as good as a feast.

FREDDY

And after the tea party, we can play croquet, right? You said we could play croquet with Uncle Charles.

PAPA

If your Uncle Charles ever shows up, we shall play croquet.

FREDDY/LORINA

Hoorah!

MAMA

But first, young man – a nap.

FREDDY

All right, all right – I shall take a nap... as a birthday present to Lorina.

LORINA

Thank you, Freddy.

MAMA

Come along, now.

(MAMA and PAPA lead FREDDY off. LORINA starts to follow them. ALICE hangs back. LORINA notices and turns back.)

#3 No Gift

LORINA

Are you coming, Alice?

(ALICE turns away.)

Alice, what's the matter?

Alice, you look upset

ALICE

*It's your birthday, dear Lorina
It's time to celebrate – and yet
In spite of the excitement
All the fuss and whoop-de-do
I find myself despondent
Because I have no gift for you*

Oh, Alice...

LORINA

ALICE

*The hat that Papa bought you
Sits proudly on your head
And Mama's in the kitchen
Baking tarts of raspberry red
Even Freddy's nap is dedicated
To you this day...*

LORINA

... it's true!

ALICE

*Which leaves us with just Alice
Who has no gift for you*

LORINA

Now that you mention it, there *is* something I would especially like – a gift that only you could give me.

ALICE

What is it?

LORINA

Well...

ALICE

You're not going to make me guess, are you? You know I hate riddles.

LORINA

No, no – nothing like that.

(She slips a small journal out of her pocket.)

Here.

ALICE

A book?

LORINA

A gift – for you.