

Wonderland: A Girl in Three Parts

Paul Legault

I. Alice

All we know of England isn't worth your
Little finger. If you let it
In, then let it in completely.

Cheshire is a good place where
Each thing you know, you know. It isn't worth your
Pinky though. Never. Never, never, never. Little

Life, you are the girl that swallowed the girl to know
Each good thing slowly. In your dreams,
An old cat-stripe comes to you, fugitive,

Striped—a stripe can be striped—
And saying how it broke the cat. You should
Never unstripe a stripe. An unstriped stripe

Cannot be unstriped. And a cat that is striped cannot
Ever be unstriped if it cannot be a cat. Do or do not
Let it in. Or do, and

If you let it in
Don't let it out unless you—or else
Don't let it in in the first place—when did they say that

Every good
Little girl
Loves her mother?

III. Liddell

And you could know a place
Like Alice's would never last.
Instead there is a serious land where you

Couldn't find a talking walrus
Even if you settled for a senator.
Please, anyway, they're much too busy.

Leave a pact along the trail with every
Evening. Have your cake
And meet it too as though it were

Some long lost uncle.
Auntie Jane has lost her mind and she will never
Need it back, because this place

Creates a thing so much more—
Even though you think it not as—necessary.
Little thing, a little thing

It was to be a little thing, and then they
Dropped you off before you even knew it.
Dear, deary, deary little thing,

Every day will come to you like a hatchet.
Lop it off. The queen's great head.
Learn to love it and the smell of it.

II. Pleasance

All's well, and Alice
Lives her whole life that could very well fit
Inside of a boat or a thimble. There are no

Cities here, only a land and a wonder or two—then
Every cat's as stray as found. Would it
Please your mother to be

Little here, a little inch? No,
Every photograph of her's a bore:
A woman on a couch with teeth.

Shall we go, all hidden in the dark, you
And I then to be led on by the storm?
Never have I dreamt of you in a teacup, in a new

Coat of flowers, but I would like to. By the water's
Edge, pledge to me awfully, that you will be this
Lone happiness of mine, the only fetch of blue

In a murky place of—a wonder at each inch—
Diaphonous things—chance and sea and oysters—
Dying not for you but dying—

Each one spent
Like a penny, willingly, the smoke of day
Lilting toward a crowded sky—angelical.