

The Day Dreamland Opened its Doors

After a facsimile of the original Alice's Adventures Under Ground

I

"In a moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again."

Did you know, little Alice, when the wonders of drowsy
boredom and patterings of proper rabbit feet
seduced you into that long fall—longer and slower and longer—
Did you know you would land like an atom bomb,
mushrooming into a history of dreams?
Did you know you'd lose yourself, confuse yourself
for ignorant Florence, just for a while?
Did you know—How could you?—that you'd whisper the usual
double talk in a dozen sizes, giraffing over that gentleman
hare, considering the snuffed out candle flame:
what would you be if that bottle blew you out,
if your shivering reds and crown of white lost grip
of the wick and dissolved like burnt off fog at midday?
And did you know you'd tread your own tears and nearly drown,
sucked up like a sponge and carried away
in a salty torrent of homespun sorrow?
No, you couldn't have known any of these,
or that all this near catastrophe would cast
you like ancient clay of an unearthed world
into the curiouser adventure of timelessness.

II

"They were indeed a curious looking party that assembled on the bank."

"I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole, and yet, and yet—it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life."

After their quick swim through the tears, the group unfolded
on the bank: the erudite dodo and Alice,
eye to eye, sunken in soggy feathers and hair,
and the rest—sensitive mouse and birds now grounded,
water-logged and worried about drying themselves.
So the mouse caroused the critters around his tail,
slick and snaking on the sand. He began his tale,
a dry one indeed, of royal lives since folded
and tucked away like last year's linens, or the selves
hidden inside the curious mind of Alice—

debaters of gray matter fit for the underground,
slumbering now below her saturated hair.

The dodo proposed another end to this hairy
situation, tired of the impotent text book tale.
He led them to a nearby cottage to dry around
a rousing fire, where the birds finally unfolded
their wings like crisp paper fans; and little Alice
fancied a serpentine story, losing herself

in musings of Dinah, her perfect killer. Self-
interested and scared of the deadly cat, the harem
of birds scattered to safety, leaving poor Alice
alone again to lament—until she spied that tail,
like a tiny cloud sprouted from behind the fold
of a familiar waistcoat. With his eyes to the ground,

the white rabbit wailed his misfortune, darting around
like a jarred bumblebee, crazy in streaks of self-
preservation—an ephemeral spool folding
into itself again and again. And the hare
sent Alice, with a shot of its paw, to curtail
the frantic search. Off on her errand ran Alice,

only to explode the size of ten Alices,
having swallowed more than was safe. Wedged from ground
to ceiling, a monster caught in a house tailored
of an animal much smaller than herself.
A mob of rodents joined the excitable hare,
unwilling to wait as she shrunk in the unfolding

of time. Mere inches again, Alice freed herself,
no longer surrounded or in service to the hare—
and wondering, no doubt, how her tale will unfold.

III

*“At last the caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and languidly
addressed her.”*

Who are you? The question in slow
baritones floated on circles
of smoke from the caterpillar’s mouth.

And Alice felt herself being swallowed

the executioner queen!

An underground uprising—
the headline bold
in whatever gibberish
font your newspaper prints.

The time has arrived
(carried in crinoline by a little girl)
to shuffle up this monarchy
of madness.

Prophecy? Perhaps—
but of what time? whose life?
This is no ordinary vision
Alice.
A fever dream for sure.

At least you resurfaced,
with a gasp no doubt:
like a diver
who dove too deeply into the ocean,
who swallowed the bottom's
thick purple & flooded
his lungs.

Remember this dream—
sleep won't often bring
such wild
haunting scenes.