Waiting for Tea, Waiting for Her

by DraconisHyperion

Summary

Alice seems to have returned to Underland, and Hatter couldn’t be more excited. He hasn’t changed much since she left, but has Alice? What went on while she was in China? Does she still have her Muchness? And just how long will she be staying this time?/ Originally a drabble, now a full-length work. / Posted on FanFiction.net under the same title.
Prologue: Mundane Repetitions

Chapter Summary

What could have been going through Hatter's head before Alice showed up again in Underland? Maybe his thoughts went something like this. / Just a little drabble that popped into my head. / Posted on fanfic.net under the same title.

A/N: This will be my first ever-finished fanfic, so regardless of whether you think it's good or bad, I am proud of myself. Feel free to do your worst when reviewing. Your flames shall keep me warm in the coming months. Also, I haven't decided yet if this is just going to be a one-off, or if I'll add chapters. We'll see.

Disclaimer: I do not own Alice in Wonderland in any way, except for the 2010 movie copy I bought legally. The original story belongs to Lewis Carroll, and the movie belongs to its respective owner(s) and affiliates.

Warnings: disjointed thoughts, general Hatter madness.

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Tap.

Tap. Tap. Tap tap tap taptaptaptap.


Continue tapping. March Hare twitches and throws a few biscuits. He and Mally giggle about it. But not me. I'm waiting. Stare down the end of the tables and into the shadowed path leading into the forest.

Soon. But not yet. I can feel it. Like when you have water in your ear. Or when the back of your throat tingles.

Check watch again. Still no change. Sigh, and look up at the sky. Getting dark; tea time is long over. Say farewell to Marchy and Mallymkun as they leave to their homes nearby. Dump leftover tea. Throw out remaining foodstuffs. Maybe she'll be here tomorrow. Go inside and sleep.

Wake repeatedly due to nightmares. Eventually give up around midmorning. Today is the day. I'm sure of it.

Fix holes in suit jacket. Add a pin to your hat. No, the blue one. Yes, that's better. Blue. Like her. Check the time. Go outside, bring tea pots, and cups, and plates, and utensils back inside. Wash everything. Make tea. Lots of it.

More more more. Good. Now food. Scones, biscuits, cookies, little sandwiches. Done. Take everything outside, arrange them on the tables. It's already halfway through tea time. But that's
okay, because today is the day.

Invite the March Hare over. Try to invite Mally, but she's not home. Oh, well. She'll show up sooner or later. Doze off in your chair for a little while. Wake up mid-evening. Way past tea time, but Mally and Marchy are still here. Having fun. Someone put some music on. Join their fun for a while, then get bored.

Late evening. Still nothing. Join the March Hare and the Dormouse in games lasting well into the night. Pass out in your chair until dawn. Thankfully no nightmares.

Come to suddenly, along with Mallymkun and Marchy. Movement at the edge of the woods. Blonde. Is it? Perk up; eyes wide. Lean forward.

Blue. It is. I knew it. Very, very late. But at last.

...  

Alice.
Chapter Summary

Summary/Teaser: Alice seems to have returned to Underland, and Hatter couldn't be more excited. He hasn't changed much since she left, but has Alice? What went on while she was in China? Does she still have her Muchness? And just how long will she be staying this time?

Chapter Notes

A/N: I'm sorry that this has taken so long, but my muse is a very fickle thing and has only allowed me to write small parts of this chapter here and there since I posted the prologue. With six votes against two (via a poll on fanfiction), this story shall be about Alice returning to Underland approximately two years after she went to China at the end of the first film. If you had wanted a retelling of the film, worry not, however, because I am also writing that version as well, titled "Never Lost". (Thanks to WhiteLunaNight on fanfic.net for convincing me to write both!)

Also, many thanks to all users and guests who left comments, bookmarked, and gave kudos on my story.

Please keep in mind that I began writing before Alice Through the Looking Glass, and this story will completely disregard that film. (Though you may find occasional, slight, similarities.)

Enjoy!

Chapter Warnings: Random skipping of time. (also, this is meant to be a Hatter-centric fanfic, but for proper plot and backstory, some chapters, like this one, will be in Alice's P.O.V.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter One: The Long Way Home

Alice let out a soft breath as she stepped out of the carriage she'd hired for the day, and took a long, hard look at the wrought iron gates intercepting the road that lead to the large home she'd grown up in. Similar to herself, her home hadn't changed much in the last two years, at least, on the outside; the gates seemed a little more rusted, and vines appeared to have engulfed the entire front of the Kingsleigh home. But that was fine; change was often a good thing, in her opinion.

Alice herself was about the same, though, appearance-wise. She was still slim, and pale-skinned, with wild blonde locks, though they had definitely grown longer. Not that one could really tell at the moment, as her hair was pulled up into an intricately braided bun and held together by two jade hair sticks decorated with butterfly shapes on the tops, as well as a silver hair comb embedded with small aquamarine jewels. Her eyes were bright with faint mischief and a world of impossible
things. And, of course, those eyes were accented by the faint, but ever-present, dark circles around her eyes.

She wore her powder blue long coat, the same she had worn on the journey to China. Though, instead of a blouse and skirts, Alice now wore a cream blouse tucked into slightly darker men's trousers, which in turn, were tucked into a pair of tall, well-worn travel boots. Long months of travelling throughout China had proven that skirts were too much of a hassle, and so she had switched to trousers around six months into her venture. That was likely to change again, now that her journey was finally over.

Letting out another soft sigh, Alice readjusted the strap of her knapsack against her shoulder before grabbing another small bag from the carriage and heading through the gates and up the short path, leaving the carriage driver and his assistant to follow after with the rest of her luggage. Taking a deep breath of fresh, spring air, Alice smiled to herself. She was happy to be able to see her mother again, instead of the occasional letter, but she was far more excited for what she planned to do after reuniting with her mother and sister.

Now that she had established business and trade in China for her late father's company, Alice had to fulfill her promise to a certain orange-haired madman. She was going back to the beautifully dark place that had helped her rediscover who she was, and what she wanted to do with her life.

Alice was returning to Underland.

WFT. WFH.

One week.

One entire week Alice had been home, and she had decided that now was the time.

Originally, she had only planned on staying two, maybe three days, but her mother had gotten so upset, that Alice had been let with almost no choice but to compromise by staying for a week. Her mother had still been upset by how short a time her youngest daughter would be back, but Alice, much like her father would, had stubbornly refused, so she had relented. Bags packed, Alice told her mother that she was going to visit Lord Ascot briefly before leaving, and with a tearful hug, Helen Kingsleigh said goodbye to her daughter.

"I am sorry, Mother, but I really have to go," Alice insisted, even as her mother held her in a tight hug for far too long.

"So you've said many times," Helen said with a small huff as she released her daughter. "I only wish that you would stay longer."

"I know. I love you," Alice replied, smiling gently in farewell as she picked up her luggage and walked out the door, leaving her mother to watch her leave from the doorway.

Stepping into another hired carriage with her somewhat large travel bag and smaller suitcases, Alice looked back upon her home for what could very well be the last time and let a few sad tears escape. When the carriage suddenly jerked forward, she turned away and wiped the salty water from her face before taking a deep breath to calm herself and steel her emotions. True, she was leaving her home and family, but she was also going back to a place that had made her happy, despite the dangers she'd faced two years ago.

Alice looked down to her booted feet and grinned at the two medium-sized suitcases full of clothing and gifts. She'd have brought her biggest suitcase with her instead, but from what she remembered about the door, her large suitcase wouldn't fit through. She planned on spending an
extended time in Underland, and it just wouldn't do for someone to be constantly providing her with clothes.

"Speaking of," Alice murmured to herself, opening up a suitcase to pull out a powder blue top hat out and place it on her braided top knot. It clashed wonderfully with her burnt orange waistcoat, and her peach coloured blouse and trousers. Not to mention her seemingly ever-present powder blue long coat to top it all off, and make it appear as though her outfit matched at least a little bit.

**WFT. WFH.**

Luck was apparently on Alice's side, as there seemed to be a party going on at the Ascot Estate, making her entry onto the grounds hardly noticeable at all. Well, as unnoticeable as one can be wearing a gaudy, blue-peach-and-orange ensemble. While carrying two small-ish suitcases. Those few party-goers who did take notice of Alice, however, merely assumed they contained gifts for the Ascot family.

The young woman made her way gently but purposefully through the crowd, past the flower garden, and the gazebo, and finally into the forest beyond. She was stopped only once, briefly, in the garden, by someone her mother knew welcoming her back.

As soon as she couldn't be seen by any other party-goer, Alice broke out into a hurried walk, bordering on a light jog. Making her way along the faint forest path, she couldn't help but crack a small, excited smile. Though she'd only ever made two short visits there, she felt as though she were going home.

In almost no time at all, Alice was standing before the hole in the ground at the base of a gnarled, dying tree. Suddenly, she felt quite nervous. How long had it been for everyone else in Underland? Did they even want her back?

Huffing at her silly thoughts, Alice squared her shoulders. *'Of course they'll be glad to see me. At least, Hatter will…'*

"And in any case, I promised I’d be back," she said, finishing her thoughts aloud. Hesitations put to rest, Alice tightened her grip on the handles of her smallish suitcases and took a light jump forward, down into the darkness below.

**Chapter End Notes**

I had contemplated continuing on with this chapter, but I feel like right here is the perfect place to stop. It's been too long since I've updated this story and I'm quite sorry about that. Next chapter will be picking up just moments after the end of this one.

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