Even as she traversed from one black and white square and onto the final corner of the gigantic chess board Alice could tell that a certain indefinable quality in the air or the ground had changed. It could have been just due to her own flagging wind or resolve, but the change was unmistakable. In a world where everything that she had known to be as true and as regular as supper bread no longer applied, such a fundamental changed was hardly surprising.

She’d encountered any number of eccentric characters and creatures throughout her journey, some had been helpful, encouraging, others less so; and yet others had been outright perplexing, yet
oddly intriguing in their own way. And should she emerge from this world, that felt real as her own hands at the end of her arms, but at this point distinguishing reality from a dream no longer seemed as important as it had been when she had begun this journey.

She felt her way along the row of orderly hedges that ringed an elaborately cobbled courtyard fronting on a grand palace in the distance.

When she chanced to around from admiring the view, she caught sight of what at first appeared to be a whirling funnel of wind and white cloth, like a storm cloud in miniature, rushing toward with incredibly speed; but even as she marveled at this, the funnel gradually became larger and larger until it stood only a head higher than she, and came to a stop with the sound similar to that of a tea kettle coming to a full boil.

The funnel cloud stopped to draw in ragged gasps of air, and that done, reached up with slender white hands to fuss with the ivory and ebony pins in its pale hair. It was only then that Alice recognized the White Queen.

Alice smiled and then executed an elegant curtsey as she said: “Good morning, your Majesty.”

“Good morrow to you as well, my dear, Alice,” replied the White Queen. “We’ve been expecting you.”

“You have?” Alice exclaimed.

“Indeed,” the other replied, “Although, I must say that others who shall remain nameless were in quite adamant that this should never come to pass, or that they doubted your determination. She sniffed and then added. “I knew better. I saw it in you from the moment we first met.”

“How better about what?” asked Alice.

“I knew that a pawn could become a queen, given the right set of circumstances.”

Alice shook her head, “Me, a queen?”

“Why not, you’ve successfully completed the board and according to the rules of the game, anyone who does so can become queen for a day.”

“I should like that,” remarked Alice thoughtfully, “As long as it’s just for a day. I should not want to step on anyone’s toes, or know what to do with myself should I have to make decisions for everyone.”

“I could not agree more,” remarked the White Queen, “sometimes I have offered that same opinion to my counterpart, but honestly I sometimes feel that my words simply go in one ear and out the other. She can be very, shall we say, intolerable at times.”

With that, she grasped Alice’s elbow in a gentle but firm grip and escorted up to and through the wrought-iron gate and somehow slipped in between the bars in a sliding fashion that Alice could not quite grasp, for one moment they were standing on the outside and in the next they were thorough and onto the cobbles of plaza.

And in the next breath, they were standing outside of the wide double-doors of the palace. In the back of her mind, Alice wondered if once she was officially crowned queen for a day if she too would be able to travel around like that.

In a rush of time that Alice only dimly registered the White Queen turned her over to a small army
of maids who bathed her and primped and powdered and exclaimed over her appearance and raiment. For the life of her Alice could not ever recall a time when anyone had gone to so much trouble over her appearance. As she stood to wait for the seamstress to make some last minute adjustments to her the hem of her silk ivory-colored gown Alice had leisure to regard her own reflection in the floor-length mirror and had to admit that it did look very becoming if a trifle too lacy for her tastes.

The White Queen came into the room just then and cooed over how lovely she looked and that she would be splendid, quite splendid.

Alice smiled and walked out of the dressing room on the White Queen’s heels.

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They put on her a marble throne that had been scaled down to match her size and slender frame.

It was a bit chilly on even through the layers of silk and chiffon and lace but she figured it would be impolite to mention that fact, so she determined to make the best of it.

Sooner than she had expected the elegantly decorated throne room began to fill with a growing crowd of Wonderland inhabitants, the White Knight trooped in with a clank and a clatter and stood at parade rest with the butt of his halberd thumping onto the floor of the throne room with a loud and echoing thud.

He caught her eye as he paused for a moment and offered her an encouraging grin that seemed to say that he was proud of her for making this far. She might have been mistaken but she could also faintly detect the smallest glimmer of suspicious moisture at the corners of his eyes as well.

The next person to enter was the Duchess and then, with tea-cups and saucers balanced precariously, the March Hare and the Mad Hatter came in followed almost immediately by the White Rabbit, muttering all the while about how this would set his schedule back.

Other creatures trooped in and took up positions without any of the jostlings and shoving for favorable vantage spots that they might otherwise have done under different circumstances.

The Queen of Hearts, with her flamingo croquet mallet clutched less than one elbow swept into the throne room looking imperiously all around her and refusing to meet Alice’s eyes.

The White Queen cleared her throat and yelled, “Silence!” There a stir around the room that sounded to Alice much akin to the murmuring drone of a buzzing beehive, before the commanded was heeded.

“Ladies and gentlemen and assorted gentle-beings,” exclaimed the White Queen, thank you all for coming, we find this highly gratifying. This is a day long in coming, and some might have said one that was never going to be, but as we all know that hope springs eternal, and at long last, one has come to us who had the wit and the determination to not only make it from square one but also all the way to the last and final square! And at long last, I give you, Alice, your Queen for the Day!” All hail, Alice!”

“Hail, hail! Alice!” a chorus of mingled voices shouted.

“Hip, Hip, Hooray! Exclaimed the White Knight as he let his halberd fall to the floor in order to reach up and wipe away the tears of joy that fell from his eyes.

“Pay up,” whispered the March Hare to the Mad Hatter.”

“I don’t owe you a thing, you poor excuse for a bad luck charm,” the Mad Hatter replied.
“Yes, you do, fifteen sand dollars, you promised to me,” replied his friend.

Alice smiled and waved at the diverse crowd as she felt was only proper, under the circumstances, and then said, once the initial hubbub had died down to a dull roar; “Thank you, thank you all, so much for coming to my coronation. Truth to tell, I never thought it would happen, I shall remember this day forever. Thank you ever so much.”

“Hooray for Alice!” cried the Mad Hatter and he was echoed by many others.

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