“Mummy, what’s Wonderland?”

Alice looked up from her sewing. Her five year old daughter, Kira, was staring at her with wide blue eyes.

“I don’t have the faintest idea what you’re talking about, sweetheart,” she lied.


“Give me that, dear. I haven’t looked at this in years.” She flipped through the pages of the journal. There were pictures she’d drawn on nearly every other page: giant caterpillars, smiling cats, and baby pigs.
“Where did you find this?” she asked in a whisper.

“It was on the bookcase, Mummy. What’s Wonderland?”

“You know better than to go through my things, Kira. Why were you snooping?” Alice put the journal on the coffee table and turned her eyes to her daughter.

“I wasn’t snooping! I was trying to find my book, the one about the birds, and I found it. So what’s Wonderland?” she asked again with the tenacity only a child could have.

“Nothing, darling. It’s nothing. Just a product of my imagination,” she said, dismissing the subject.

“Tell me about it, Mummy! Even if it isn’t real,” she begged. Alice sighed.

“Very well. When I was a little girl, my older sister used to take me to the park for lessons. It was horribly boring. Even my kitten, Dinah, didn’t do much to entertain me. Aunt Lorina was very serious about my studies, but she really was no good at teaching. She would read out of this giant book that must have weighed at least ten pounds! I can remember complaining that the book didn’t have any pictures, and therefore didn’t have any worth. She would shake her head at me and tell me to pay attention, but I imagine she couldn’t have enjoyed it much more than I did. Anyway, it was on one of these days, during a history lesson, that I first went to Wonderland.

“I saw a curious little white rabbit hopping along, looking at his pocket watch. I couldn’t imagine what in the world he was doing. I tried talking to him, but he only mumbled on about how he was late. He went down a little hole and I decided to follow him. He led me straight to Wonderland. It was amazing, darling. Terrifying as well, but amazing. There were small cakes declaring ‘eat me’ and bottle saying ‘drink me’. The details are hazy to me now, but one made me shrink until I could fit through a keyhole, and the other made me grow until I was larger than a house. Isn’t that the strangest thing? I met a strange caterpillar outside. I believe he was smoking and wearing a hat. There are things much too scary for me to tell you at this age, darling, and it was so very long ago, so forgive me if my story is spotty.

“I met many strange creatures in Wonderland. I mentioned the caterpillar and the rabbit already, but they were only the beginning. I spoke to a mouse, ah yes; I forgot to tell you about the mouse. There was a mouse swimming in a river—how the river came to be is a story for another time—and I spoke to this mouse in French. He was rather unpleasant! Swam away without saying anything back. Now where was I? Right, the creatures. There was a dodo bird. You don’t know what dodo birds are, do you darling? I didn’t think so; they’ve been extinct for many years now. I met the oddest little man. He was wearing a tall hat and sharing tea with a hare. They were the maddest beings I have ever met! What else was there? Oh, you’ll like this dear, there was a cat. He wasn’t a normal cat, he had purple stripes and his smile remained long after he left.

“There was a queen as well. Yes, darling, Mummy met and spoke to a real queen. The Queen of Hearts, she was. There’s another story there, but you’re much too young now. And that was Wonderland. A strange, curious place filled with the most imaginative things a child could think up. That’s all, darling,” Alice finished.

“So Wonderland is a real place, Mummy?” Kira asked. Alice shook her head.

“No, dear. Wonderland is nothing more than a product of a bored little girl’s wild imagination. I told you that already.”

“But Mummy, if you went to Wonderland, can’t I go to Wonderland?”
“Oh, Kira. I can’t imagine why in the world you would want to go to Wonderland, it really was a rather frightening place, but yes. I suppose if you really wanted to go to Wonderland you could find a way. I don’t suggest it, though. Honestly, it would be much more fun to go to the zoo or the circus.” With an air of finality, Alice picked her sewing back up.

“Mummy?” Kira started.

“Kira, darling, I’m trying to mend your skirt. It has a terrible rip in it from goodness knows where and you know this is your best skirt. Go play with your dolls or something.”

“But Mummy, I want to go to Wonderland. Just tell me how to get there and I’ll leave you alone, I promise!” Kira exclaimed.

“Kira, I already told you. Wonderland is not real. There is no such thing. I was bored with my history lessons and I fell asleep. Wonderland was a dream. Now please, let me be. You’re really becoming quite a bother.”

“Mummy! You told me I could go to Wonderland if I wanted to. I want to!”

“Kira, go to your room. You’re old enough to know better than to have a fit like this. Please. Stop acting like a child. I told you that Wonderland was a dream. If you really want to go to Wonderland, go take a nap. Whatever you do, stop disturbing me until I finish this skirt.”

With instructions on how to reach Wonderland, Kira bounded off. Alice shook her head and looked at her journal.

“Oh, Wonderland. You were real, weren’t you?”

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