

SCENE 1

ALICE sits at a makeup table, wearing white. She is applying makeup and examining herself in the mirror. THE RED QUEEN mimics her movements.

ALICE

Well, you look fetching on your wedding day. Ro-bear is lucky to be marrying such a tasty treat. We're famished, of course, but down 20 pounds heading into the wedding. That's ten off of me and ten off of you, and it shows on us both. You minx.

ALICE combs her hair to the left but THE RED QUEEN straightens her blouse instead.

ALICE

No, no, no, looking glass. I must demand that you behave. A lot of money has been spent on this evening.

The THE RED QUEEN combs her hair, but ALICE is onto other things.

ALICE

Wait, don't comb your hair.

The THE RED QUEEN stops.

ALICE

Excellent. Now, we will commence combing our hair...

ALICE combs her hair. The THE RED QUEEN combs as well, but differently.

ALICE

Stop. You do what I do. This is a big day and I need the laws of physics obeyed to the letter. All deposits are non refundable. We hired a fifer. Those aren't cheap. We hired a troupe of mimes. They're doing vocal warm-ups in the garden. There are hors d'oeuvres from land and sea, salads with new world tomato, curry from India, roast suckling pig and there's wine and cake and then port and chocolates. There's a man who will be my husband. So behave. Reflect and that's all.

ALICE goes back to applying her makeup. THE RED QUEEN mimics her again. But now, ALICE is disturbed.

ALICE

There's something wrong. You're not really me. I know it's crazy to say, but you're not. I'm looking into a mirror and seeing somebody else. Uncanny.\*

THE RED QUEEN

Uncanny.\*

\*Deliver "Uncanny" at the same time.

ALICE

You speak?

THE RED QUEEN

Knight to F3.

ALICE

Chess? Without a board? Pawn to D5.

THE RED QUEEN

Pawn to G3. You don't recognize me, do you?

ALICE

No, no, no, no. Bad mirror! Bishop to G4. When I bought this dresser I insisted that the woodsmith assure me that it would act in a normal and predictable manner. He put it in writing. "This mirror will just be a mirror, I swear."

THE RED QUEEN

It's not a dresser, it's a vanity. Pawn to B3

ALICE

It's a dresser. Knight to D7.

THE RED QUEEN

You look stunning. Bishop to B2.

ALICE

Really? Pawn to E6. A rare compliment from my own misbehaving reflection.

THE RED QUEEN

See? It is a vanity. Bishop to G2.

ALICE

My dress blue and white, why is yours red and black? Knight F6.

THE RED QUEEN

Impossible. Castling on the King's side.

ALICE

Darn! Pawn to C6. Two people can't see the same dress as being two different colors. It's impossible. You should be wearing what I'm wearing. You're the reflection. I have priority.

THE RED QUEEN

When you dressed yourself in white, did you even think about what I might want to wear? Pawn D3.

ALICE

Reflections don't want anything. Bishop D6.

THE RED QUEEN

A girl looks into a mirror and wishes that her reflection looked ten pounds lighter. Knight moves to D2. What do you think the reflection wants of the girl? I want, you want, you want, I want. It doubles and doubles. Ten pounds is twenty, forty, eighty, one sixty and soon losing the weight of a grain of sand is the loss of a mountain between us.

ALICE

Reflections don't want. The girl wants. I castle kingside. Phew!

THE RED QUEEN

There's the error of your mistake. Pawn to H3, threatening your misplaced bishop.

ALICE

Bishop to H5. And if you want the wedding to go well, you'll behave.

The THE RED QUEEN leaves the mirror.

THE RED QUEEN

Pawn E3.

ALICE

Get back in that looking glass, pawn H6.

THE RED QUEEN

It's all about Ro-bear and I'll put myself, I mean, my Queen, on E1.

ALICE

I live in the normal world. I'm all grown up and about to marry a tax collector. Get used to it. He doesn't spend a lot of time in the mirror so you won't have to see him much.  
Queen A5.

THE RED QUEEN

He's a tax collector? I thought he bred Basset Hounds. Pawn A3.

ALICE

Where did you get that idea? Bishop C7. When I win, you get back in the mirror.

THE RED QUEEN

You know how people wind up looking like their pets... Knight H4.

ALICE

Pawn G5. He does not look like a basset hound! Your knight is imperiled.

THE RED QUEEN

Floppy ears Ro-bear. Knight moves swiftly to F3.

ALICE

Tax collector. It's a good living. Taxes must be collected. Pawn E5.

THE RED QUEEN

Sounds dreary. I enjoy the drama of confrontation. Pawn E4. Now we're engaged.

ALICE

You want me to take the pawn. I'll be sensible and move the Rook to E8 first. I'll be sensible in choosing Ro-bear and having a house in the country and one in town.

THE RED QUEEN

Two houses? Knight H2. Between the two of us, that's four houses. We'll never not be doing housework. What's a country house to girls who have seen invisible cats, chased the White Rabbit, conversed with the March Hare and cavorted with mock turtles, broken eggs, and mad hatters? Now we're going to take up gardening?

ALICE

I'm a respectable woman and so it would make sense for me to garden and decorate and entertain company, in both the town and country, rather than arguing with ~~gullotine-happy,~~ ~~animate playing cards.~~ ~~chess pieces.~~ Queen B6.

THE RED QUEEN

Instead of that, let's go back. Queen C1.

ALICE

Back where? Pawn A5.

THE RED QUEEN

Through the vanity! Rook E1.

ALICE

Through the vanity? Through the vanity? That's... vain. Bishop D6. Eighteen moves and nobody has taken a piece.

THE RED QUEEN

I'm just pointing out that we could take our lives in an entirely different and unconventional direction and that, of course, all of your happiest times were on my side of the mirror. Knight to F1.

ALICE

~~Everything there is backwards! And while I learned the names of all the new flowers and insects, I nearly forgot my own name.~~  
I was put on trial, on capital trial, mind you, for stealing tarts. Pawn to E4 and I take draw first blood, capturing your pawn.

THE RED QUEEN

~~Societies evolve.~~ Pawn to E4. An eye for an eye. Two pawns down at the start of move twenty.

~~I started out as a pawn, remember?~~ ALICE

~~I never stole any tarts.~~ Bishop C5. ~~And I became the Queen.~~

THE RED QUEEN

~~So is everything backwards in here, or is everything backwards out there? You didn't have to pay taxes here. I would say your system is arbitrary.~~  
~~Well, that's why they had a trial. It would be barbaric to execute an innocent person without putting them on trial first. The system out here is easily as arbitrary. You jail people for falling behind on taxes.~~ Knight to E3.

ALICE

Taxes are the obligation of the patriot. A society's rooks and bishops aren't free you know. Rook to D8.

THE RED QUEEN

You jail people for stealing bread to feed their families! *Quelle damage. Quelle miserable!* Knight F1. I just keep moving that piece back and forth...

ALICE

I have to get ready to get married. Go back to being my reflection and please be accurate about it. Pawn G4, which I think is a mistake. We can finish the game later.

THE RED QUEEN

My pawn takes yours at G4. He cannot force you into this marriage any more than I forced you to move that pawn.

ALICE

I'm not being forced into anything. Knight to G4, capturing your pawn, evening our score. I want to marry Ro-bear.

THE RED QUEEN

But I don't! A French tax collector! *Quelle miserable* again! Why not just forget this whole bad idea and hop back into the vanity with me? Pawn F3, threatens your Knight.

ALICE

My fleet knight captures yours at E3, the first major take of our scrimmage.

THE RED QUEEN

My knight takes yours at E3, now the bloodiest square on the board.

ALICE

Not marry Ro-Bear? No, no, this has always been my problem, I'm too reflective. My bishop withdraws to E7.

THE RED QUEEN

Reflective? Keep trotting down this bridal path and you'll wind up the unpopular dowager of a French tax collector in Britain. King H1. What will you do when there's nothing but a fat, balding, middle-aged tax collector in between you and a vicious jabberwock in a dark alley?

ALICE

Ro-bear will pull out his audit book, snicker-snack! Look who's back in the game? Bishop to G5.

THE RED QUEEN

You don't have to stay here and marry the French tax monkey. Trust me. Country houses all have termites. City houses have mice and prowlers. Besides, you're not the domestic type. Rook E2.

ALICE

I am the domestic type. Pawn A4, sparking a new engagement.

THE RED QUEEN

You trip on cake. Pawn B4.

ALICE

I just have a light constitution. Pawn F5. Now I am the aggressor.

THE RED QUEEN

Here lies ALICE, wife of the tax collector, who nobody liked because, tax collector. I capture your pawn on F5.

ALICE

But I won't die alone. Pawn E4. Your knight is pinned, you know. It's all that protects your Queen, which must be a special piece for you. Off with her head!

THE RED QUEEN

I say that the French tax collector and his wife wind up first against the wall when the revolution comes. Pawn F4. Pressing my advantage, removing your pin.

ALICE

The other bishop, yes the other one, takes your rook at E2!

THE RED QUEEN

You need a cupcake. Pawn captures bishop at G5. You're not doing as well as you think.

ALICE

I don't eat cupcakes anymore. Knight E5.

THE RED QUEEN

You are too thin. It's unhealthy. Pawn G6.

ALICE

Bishop F3. I have not ingested a morsel in three days. I have been on a diet.

THE RED QUEEN

Yet you can play chess, without a board. What a mind you have! Bishop C3. All you need are psychedelic cupcakes and you'll see the light.

ALICE

I'm sure the game makes no actual sense. Queen to B5.

THE RED QUEEN

But you enjoy playing. Queen F1. You can't help it. We could play together all the time, you know.

ALICE

My Queen captures yours at F1. I know you'll take mine with the next move so why don't we just say--

THE RED QUEEN

Rook takes your Queen at F1. We have knocked the most beautiful, valuable pieces right off the board, Alice.

ALICE

We might be better off without them. Pawn to H5. Advancing towards promotion against its better judgment.

THE RED QUEEN

King G1. Ro-Bear play chess?

ALICE

No, he hates losing. King F8.

THE RED QUEEN

Bishop H3. I also hate losing. But you never do, do you?

ALICE

At chess? I can be pretty lucky or clever, it's true. Like I have a talent from out of the deep blue. Pawn B5. He must keep moving forward, no matter what he sees ahead.

THE RED QUEEN

King F2. That a girl who can do this with her mind, who can hold all of these thoughts, who can play chess against her own reflection would ever consider --

ALICE

King G7. This is all just hunger hallucinations. And you are not my reflection.

THE RED QUEEN

Pawn G4. And who am I?

ALICE

You know who you are, your highness. King H6. The King is to be protected but it can be a weapon as well, you know.

THE RED QUEEN

Rook G1. So you know that I am the Red Queen. When did you figure that out?

ALICE

The dress is a giveaway. You not looking like me is a giveaway. My pawn takes yours at G4. Another bloody square.

THE RED QUEEN

Why do you play? My bishop takes your pawn at G4. A square that will live in infamy. Why do you play?

ALICE

My bishop takes yours at the accursed square, G4. There should be an inquiry. So much bloodshed in such a tiny space. Bishops and pawns red in tooth and claw.



THE RED QUEEN

Why do you play? Knight to G4, capturing the bishop, checking your King!

ALICE

I play to win! My Knight takes yours at G4, checking your King!

THE RED QUEEN

Rook takes Knight at G4! Why, Alice? Why can't you pull yourself away from it?

ALICE

Rook to D5. I cannot not play. My mind won't stop the game. Do I run my mind or does my mind run me? Why would I play chess with a mortal enemy?

THE RED QUEEN

Pawn to F6. A bit of a letdown after all of that activity.

ALICE

Rook to D1, to control the middle and bottom files.

THE RED QUEEN

Pawn to G7 to advance. Within three moves, one or another of my pawns will be promoted to Queen and your diminished forces will stand no chance.

The THE RED QUEEN opens the vanity and pulls out a very special cupcake. ALICE examines it.

ALICE

"Eat me."

THE RED QUEEN

Well?

ALICE

Gluten.

THE RED QUEEN

What about the game?

ALICE

There are expectations. The mimes must be paid. There's a fifer. There's Ro-bear.

THE RED QUEEN

It's just a cupcake.

ALICE

I find that's almost never true.

THE RED QUEEN

What about the game?

ALICE

You're right, of course. The outcome is inevitable. I concede.

ALICE eats. Ecstasy. Then, almost a trance.

THE RED QUEEN

Right, then. Through the vanity with you. We can have endless rematches, you and I.

She guides ALICE through the mirror, but remains on the other side. ALICE is happy.

THE RED QUEEN

Endless rematches. ~~After the trial. I know you stole my tarts back then. We'll get to the bottom of that, you'll see.~~ And I'll beat you this time, Alice.

Lights down.