

WHEN SUMMER SUNS WERE GLOWING

Excerpt

ACT I: STARTING OUT

Sc.i

(An elderly Oxford don sits at his desk in his study at the University, reading. He slams a book closed and he addresses the audience.)

OXFORD DON

That confounded Charles Dodgson can never speak the truth. He supports Charles Darwin's idea that we are descended from apes. He is, a Mathematical Lecturer at the Christ Church College of Oxford and invents fanciful stories. Then he signs his book with a fictitious name: "Lewis Carroll". He is not a serious man! He is an ordained deacon of the church but does not pursue becoming a priest as is required of his position, perhaps because he cannot tell the truth. Then he says that he has "child-friends". A grown man! Whoever heard of that, I ask you? His books are filled with rubbish. Let me show you, oh here it is:

"All in the golden afternoon

Full leisurely we glide;

For both our oars, with little skill,

By little arms are plied,

While little hands make vain pretence

Our wanderings to guide.

Ah cruel Three! In such an hour,
Beneath such dreamy weather,
To beg a tale of breath too weak
To stir the tiniest feather!
Yet what can one poor voice avail
Against three tongues together?

Imperious Prima flashes forth
Her edict “to begin it”:
In gentler tones Secunda hopes
“There will be nonsense in it!”
While Tertia interrupts the tale
Not *more* than once a minute.

Anon to sudden silence won,
In fancy they pursue
The dream-child moving through a land
Of wonders wild and new,
In friendly chat with bird or beast –
And half believe it true.”

Scene ii

(Lorina, Alice and Edith are playing by themselves in the nursery. Lorina and Edith are holding hands facing each other and forming a bridge. Alice is going around Lorina and under the “bridge”. They are singing the song “London Bridges”. The girls have on ruffled dresses, lacey socks and black shoes.)

LORINA AND EDITH LIDDELL

“LONDON BRIDGES FALLING DOWN,
FALLING DOWN, FALLING DOWN.
LONDON BRIDGES FALLING DOWN,
MY FAIR LADY.

(Lorina and Edith lower their arms and catch Alice)

TAKE A KEY AND LOCK HER UP,
LOCK HER UP, LOCK HER UP.
TAKE A KEY AND LOCK HER UP,
MY FAIR LADY.

BUILD IT UP WITH GOLD AND SILVER,
GOLD AND SILVER, GOLD AND SILVER.
BUILD IT UP WITH GOLD AND SILVER,

MY FAIR LADY.

ALICE LIDDELL

GOLD AND SILVER I HAVE NONE,

I HAVE NONE, I HAVE NONE.

GOLD AND SILVER I HAVE NONE,

MY FAIR LADY.

LORINA AND EDITH LIDDELL

THEN OFF TO PRISON SHE MUST GO,

SHE MUST GO, SHE MUST GO.

THEN OFF TO PRISON SHE MUST GO,

MY FAIR LADY.

BREAK THE LOCK AND SET HER FREE

SET HER FREE, SET HER FREE,

BREAK THE LOCK AND SET HER FREE

MY FAIR LADY.

(They break apart laughing)

Scene iii

(A servant opens the door and asks two young men to come into the Liddell's parlor. They are dressed in white linen suits and straw "boater" hats.)

SERVANT

Won't you good gentlemen please come in?

CHARLES DODGSON

Thank you very kindly. Would you be so good as to tell Mrs. Liddell that the Reverend Robinson Duckworth and Charles Do-Do-Dodgson – are here?

SERVANT

I will do so right away, Sir.

CHARLES DODGSON

Th-Th-Thank you so much!

ROBINSON DUCKWORTH

Charles what are we going to *do* with them?

CHARLES DODGSON

We'll walk to the river, rent a boat at Folly Bridge and then boat up-upstream to Godstow or thereabouts.

ROBINSON DUCKWORTH

But they shall get very fidgety in a short time.

CHARLES DODGSON

Non-non-nonsense. There will be lots to look at and they can dip their hand in the water to cool off if it gets too warm. We can even go ashore and wander about some fields if it suits us. I have seven sisters, five younger and I know that girls are very good at finding things to amuse themselves. Really better than boys you know.

ROBINSON DUCKWORTH

Well, I certainly hope you are right! It is a beautiful day that's sure, sunny and warm.

CHARLES DODGSON

It is.

(Mrs. Liddlell enters)

MRS. LIDDELL

The girls are almost ready and will be here in a minute. Thank you both so much. Their nursemaid had the day off today, and Mr. Dodgson was very kind to offer to help out. The Dean and I simply *must* attend a garden party given at Marlborough, it is a sort of a command performance you know, and of course the children could not go. They have been looking forward to their outing with the two of you today. I do hope it will not be too much trouble for you.

CHARLES DODGSON

No trouble at all, we are looking fo-fo-forward to our little excursion.

MRS. LIDDELL

Ah here they are at last: Lorina, Alice, and Edith. You know Mr. Dodgson, but do you know his friend Mr. Duckworth? Please curtsy and thank him for looking after you today 'til I get back.

(The girls each curtsy and say "Thank you, Mr. Duckworth and Mr. Dodgson.")

CHARLES DODGSON

We shall be back before dark. We plan to take a boat on the river and row a bit up stream and sort of drift back and enjoy the scenery, converse and tell stories.

MRS. LIDDELL

Thank you both again.

Sc. iv

(The party gets into a rowboat. The three girls sit in the back and Alice holds the tiller, Mr. Duckworth sits facing them in the next seat with one set of oars and Mr. Dodgson sits in the seat behind him holding another set of oars. They push off from the bank.)

ROBINSON DUCKWORTH

Alright now Charles, you must synchronize your strokes with mine. Can you do that?

CHARLES DODGSON

I will try.

ROBINSON DUCKWORTH

Good. And Alice, you are responsible for steering us so that we don't bump into the banks of the stream.

ALICE LIDDELL

I know.

LORINA LIDDELL

It is getting quite warm I think.

CHARLES DODGSON

Lorina, just put your hand in the water and let it sit there a bit and it will cool you off.

EDITH LIDDELL

How long will it take to get us to where we shall have lunch?

ROBINSON DUCKWORTH

(To Charles)

I told you they would get restless.

CHARLES DODGSON

Edith, it will only take us an hour or so. We'll lunch near Godstow. Let's play a game.

How many cows can we find? The first one to twenty wins.

(The girls use their hands as a visor and look intently)

LORINA LIDDELL

I see seven over there.

EDITH LIDDELL

That is not fair, I saw them too.

CHARLES DODGSON

Well, you both deserve credit.

ALICE LIDDELL

I see three coming out from behind the barn.

CHARLES DODGSON

Indeed. So

LORINA LIDDELL

Can we row?

ROBINSON DUCKWORTH

Oh it is much too difficult. One has to get into a rhythm and pull the oars together. Going upstream the current is fighting against one the whole time. You would not last a minute at it.

CHARLES DODGSON

Maybe the girls could try it on the way back when we are going down stream.

EDITH LIDDELL

Oh could we?

ROBINSON DUCKWORTH

Yes that might be possible. We could try it on the way home if you are not too tired by then.

ALICE LIDDELL

Oh... I think I just saw a bunny... over there. (she points)

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