

ALICE

Of all the unsatisfactory people I've *ever* met! Of all the unsatisfactory people I've *ever* met!

SCENE 7

THE WHITE KNIGHT

(~~† 45, 46 and 47.~~ * 18)

LIGHTS up. ALICE finds herself in the woods once more, as the clatter of hoofs heralds the approach of the WHITE KNIGHT from the left. He enters, riding on a white horse, crying "Ahoy! Ahoy! Check!" and ALICE sees that he is certainly not a good rider, as he tumbles forward and back and sideways on the horse. When he reaches center, he falls off altogether, and sits up, struggling to remove his helmet. ALICE approaches him timidly.

ALICE

May I help you off with your helmet? (*He nods his head emphatically, so she places one foot on his shoulder, and pulls the helmet off.*)

WHITE KNIGHT

Now one can breathe more easily. (*He brushes back his shaggy hair and turns his gentle face and large mild eyes toward ALICE, whom he finds staring in open wonder at the little box he has fastened across his shoulders, upside down with the lid hanging open.*) I see you're admiring my little box. It's my own in-

vention—to keep clothes and sandwiches in. You see, I carry it upside down, so that the rain can't get in.

ALICE (*gently*)

But the things can get out. Do you know the lid's open?

WHITE KNIGHT

I didn't know it. Then all the things must have fallen out. And the box is no use without them. (*He unfastens it and is about to throw it away, when an idea strikes him, and he hangs it instead on a nearby branch just out of sight, off right.*) Can you guess why I did that? (*ALICE shakes her head. The WHITE KNIGHT is pleased.*) In hopes some bees may make a nest in it—then I should get the honey.

ALICE

But you've got a beehive—or something like one fastened to the saddle.

WHITE KNIGHT (*in a discontented tone*)

Yes, it's a very good beehive, one of the best kind. But not a single bee has come near it yet. And the other thing is a mouse trap. I suppose the mice keep the bees out—or the bees keep the mice out, I don't know which.

ALICE

I was wondering what the mouse trap was for. It isn't very likely there would be any mice on the horse's back.

WHITE KNIGHT

Not very likely perhaps. But if they *do* come, I don't choose to have them running all about. (*He pauses thoughtfully.*) You see, it's as well to be provided for everything. That's the reason the horse has all those anklets round its feet. (*HORSE shows off its anklets.*)

ALICE

But what are they for?

WHITE KNIGHT

To guard against the bites of sharks. It's an invention of my own. And now help me on. I must be on my way. (*As he starts to mount the HORSE evades him, and finally knocks him over. So the WHITE KNIGHT takes a ladder which is fastened to upstage side of HORSE, and placing it against the downstage side of the beast, mounts into the saddle. When he is at last properly seated, ALICE puts the ladder back in place. The WHITE KNIGHT turns to her solemnly.*) I hope you've got your hair well fastened on?

ALICE (*with a smile*)

Only in the usual way.

WHITE KNIGHT (*anxiously*)

That's hardly enough. You see the wind is so *very* strong here. It's as strong as soup.

ALICE

Have you invented a plan for keeping the hair from being blown off?

STOP