Outside the house, Alice saw a table under a tree. The March Hare and the Mad Hatter were sitting at it, drinking tea. A fat Dormouse sat between them with his eyes closed. He looked sleepy.

The table was very large, with teacups and saucers set out all around it. But when the March Hare and the Mad Hatter saw Alice, they cried, ‘There’s no room! No room!’

Alice was confused. ‘But there’s lots of room!’ she replied. She sat down at the end of the table.
'Would you like some cake?' asked the March Hare. Alice looked round the table. ‘I can’t see any cake,’ she replied.

‘There isn’t any!’ said the March Hare.

‘Why did you ask me if I wanted some, then?’ asked Alice.

‘Why did you come to a tea party when you weren’t invited?’ answered the March Hare angrily.

The Mad Hatter spoke for the first time. ‘Your hair is too long,’ he said to Alice.

‘And you’re very rude,’ she replied.

Next came a riddle. ‘Why is a raven like a writing desk?’ asked the Mad Hatter.

‘Oh, good! I like riddles,’ said Alice. ‘I’ll try to guess the answer.’

But then the Mad Hatter took his watch from his pocket and shook it. ‘It’s broken,’ he said angrily to the March Hare. ‘Did you put butter on it?’

‘Yes, I did. But it was the best butter,’ replied the March Hare sadly.

‘Did you put it on with the bread knife?’ asked the Mad Hatter. ‘There are some breadcrumbs in it, too.’

The March Hare looked sadly at the watch and put it in his tea. He looked at it again. ‘It was the very best butter,’ he said, shaking his head sadly.

Then the Mad Hatter said, ‘The Dormouse is asleep again.’ He put some jam on the Dormouse’s nose. ‘That will wake him up!’ he said.

He turned to Alice. ‘Have you guessed the riddle yet?’ he asked.
‘No,’ she sighed. ‘Tell me the answer.’

‘There is no answer!’ replied the Mad Hatter.

Alice sighed again. ‘You’re wasting time,’ she said, ‘asking riddles that have no answers.’

‘Long ago,’ said the Mad Hatter, ‘Time was my friend. When I asked him to, he changed the time for me. One day, when it was nine o’clock in the morning, Time changed it to half-past one. Time for lunch!’

‘Time for lunch!’ whispered the March Hare.

‘But were you hungry when it was really only nine o’clock?’ Alice asked the Mad Hatter.

‘No, but it was half-past one for a long time,’ he replied. ‘Anyway, Time and I had an argument. It was in March, just before the March Hare went mad.’ The Mad Hatter pointed his teaspoon at the March Hare. ‘We were at the Queen of Hearts’ party and I had to sing a song,’ he said. ‘It went like this:

Twinkle, twinkle, little bat,
How I wonder what you’re at.
Up above the world you fly,
Like a tea tray in the sky,
Twinkle, twinkle, little bat,
How I wonder what you’re at!’

The Dormouse woke up and started to sing, ‘Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle …’

The Mad Hatter pushed him to make him stop. ‘Do you
know that song?’ he asked Alice.
‘I think I do,’ she replied.
‘After the first verse, the Queen shouted, “He’s killing the time!” She meant that I was singing to the wrong rhythm. But after that, Time was my enemy! He thought I was trying to kill him. He won’t do as I ask him and it’s always six o’clock here! Always tea time,’ said the Mad Hatter.
‘So that’s why you need lots of cups and saucers!’ Alice said.
‘Yes,’ said the Mad Hatter. ‘When we’ve finished our tea, we move round the table and start again.’
‘What happens when you reach the beginning of the table again?’ wondered Alice.

The March Hare yawned. ‘I’m bored,’ he said to Alice.
‘Will you tell us a story?’
‘I’m sorry, but I don’t know any stories,’ said Alice quickly.
‘Then the Dormouse will tell one. Wake up!’ the March Hare said.
He pushed the Dormouse, who slowly opened his eyes.
‘Tell us a story before you go to sleep again!’ said the March Hare.
‘Once upon a time,’ the Dormouse began, ‘there were three little sisters. Their names were Elsie, Lacie and Tillie, and they lived at the bottom of a well …’
‘What did they eat?’ asked Alice.
‘Jam,’ said the Dormouse.
‘That can’t be right!’ replied Alice. ‘If you only ate jam, you would be very ill.’
‘They were very ill,’ the Dormouse told her.
Then the Mad Hatter said to Alice, ‘Would you like some more tea?’
‘I haven’t had any yet, so I can’t have more,’ said Alice, pouring some tea into a cup. Then she asked the Dormouse, ‘Why did they live at the bottom of a well?’
‘It was a jam well,’ said the Dormouse.
‘I’ve never seen a jam well!’ said Alice. ‘You made that up!’
‘If you’re going to be rude,’ said the Dormouse, ‘you can finish the story yourself.’
‘I’m sorry,’ said Alice. ‘Please continue.’
‘The three little sisters were learning to draw,’ the Dormouse said.
‘What did they draw?’ asked Alice.
‘They drew jam,’ he replied.

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Then the Mad Hatter said, ‘I want a clean cup. Let’s all move round the table.’
He moved to the place on his left, the Dormouse moved to the Mad Hatter’s place, the March Hare moved to the Dormouse’s place and Alice moved to the March Hare’s place.
Of course, the only one who had a clean cup was the Mad Hatter. And poor Alice now had a saucer full of milk that the March Hare had spilt.
The Dormouse sleepily continued with his story. ‘They were learning to draw other things, too. Not just jam. Things whose names begin with “M”.’

‘Why “M”?’ asked Alice.

‘Why not?’ replied the Dormouse, closing his eyes. The Mad Hatter pushed him to wake him up again.

‘Ouch!’ said the Dormouse. ‘They drew a mouse, the moon, madness and much …’

‘I don’t think …’ Alice began.

‘Then don’t talk!’ said the Mad Hatter.

Alice thought this was so rude that she stood up and walked away.

When she looked back, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare were trying to put the Dormouse in the teapot.
‘I won’t go back there,’ said Alice to herself as she walked through the forest. ‘What a strange tea party!’

There was a big tree on her left and she saw that there was a door in it. ‘I think I’ll go through that door,’ she said. ‘I’m sure something strange will happen.’ So she opened the door and went through it.

Alice was now in the long room again and she could see the glass table with the tiny gold key on it. She picked up the key and unlocked the little door to the beautiful garden.

‘I’m too big to go in,’ she thought. ‘But I still have a piece of the mushroom in my right pocket.’ She started to nibble it and soon she was small enough to go through the door. At last, she was in the beautiful garden, among the pink and white flowers, the fruit trees and the cool water fountains.