

The Lobster Dance

by Mrs. J.C. Gorham

The Mock Tur-tle sighed, looked at Al-ice and tried to speak, but for a min-ute or two sobs choked his voice. "Same as if he had a bone in his throat," said the Gry-phon, and set to work to shake him and punch him in the back. At last the Mock Tur-tle found his voice and with tears run-ning down his cheeks, he went on:

"You may not have lived much in the sea"—("I have-n't," said Al-ice) "so you can not know what a fine thing a Lob-ster Dance is!"

"No," said Al-ice. "What sort of a dance is it?"

"Why," said the Gry-phon, "you first form in a line on the sea-shore—"

"Two lines!" cried the Mock Tur-tle. "Seals, tur-tles, and so on; then when you've cleared all the small fish out of the way—"

"That takes some time," put in the Gry-phon.

"You move to the front twice—"

"Each with a lob-ster by his side!" cried the Gry-phon.

"Of course," the Mock Tur-tle said: "move to the front twice—"

"Change and come back in same way," said the Gry-phon.

"Then, you know," the Mock Tur-tle went on, "you throw the—"

"The lob-sters!" shout-ed the Gry-phon, with a bound in-to the air.

"As far out to sea as you can—"

"Swim out for them," screamed the Gry-phon.

"Turn heels o-ver head in the sea!" cried the Mock Tur-tle.

"Change a-gain!" yelled the Gry-phon at the top of his voice.

"Then back to land, and—that's all the first part," said the Mock Tur-tle.

Both the Gry-phon and the Mock Tur-tle had jumped a-bout like mad things all this time. Now they sat down quite sad and still, and looked at Al-ice.

"It must be a pret-ty dance," said Al-ice.

"Would you like to see some of it?" asked the Mock Tur-tle.

"Oh, yes," she said.

"Come, let's try the first part!" said the Mock Tur-tle to the Gry-phon. "We can do it without lob-sters, you know. Which shall sing?"

"Oh, *you* sing," said the Gry-phon. "I don't know the words."

So they danced round and round Al-ice, now and then tread-ing on her toes when they passed too close. They waved their fore paws to mark the time, while the Mock Tur-tle sang a queer kind of song, each verse of which end-ed with these words:

"Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?"

"Thank you, it's a fine dance to watch," said Al-ice, glad that it was o-ver at last.

"Now," said the Gry-phon, "tell us a-bout what you have seen and done in your life."

"I could tell you of the strange things I have seen to-day," said Al-ice, with some doubt as to their wish-ing to hear it.

"All right, go on," they both cried.

So Al-ice told them what she had been through that day, from the time when she first saw the White Rab-bit. They came up quite close to her, one on each side, and sat still till she got to the part where she tried to say, "You are old, Fath-er Wil-liam," and the words all came wrong. Then the Mock Tur-tle drew a long breath and said, "That's quite strange!"

"It's all as strange as it can be," said the Gry-phon.

"It all came wrong!" the Mock Tur-tle said, while he seemed to be in deep thought. "I should like to hear her try to say some-thing now. Tell her to be-gin." He looked at the Gry-phon as if he thought it had the right to make Al-ice do as it pleased.

"Stand up and say, 'Tis the voice of the Slug-gard,'" said the Gry-phon.

"How they do try to make one do things!" thought Al-ice. "I might just as well be at school at once." She stood up and tried to re-peat it, but her head was so full of the Lob-ster Dance, that she didn't know what she was say-ing, and the words all came ver-y queer, in-deed:

"'Tis the voice of the lob-ster; I heard him de-clare,
'You have baked me too brown, I must su-gar my hair.'
As a duck with its eye-lids, so he with his nose
Trims his belt and his but-tons, and turns out his toes."

"That's not the way I used to say it when I was a child," said the Gry-phon.

"Well, I never heard it before," said the Mock Tur-tle, "but there's no sense in it at all."

Al-ice did not speak; she sat down with her face in her hands, and thought, "Will things nev-er be as they used to an-y more?"

"I should like you to tell what it means," said the Mock Tur-tle.

"She can't do that," said the Gry-phon. "Go on with the next verse."

"But his toes?" the Mock Tur-tle went on. "How could he turn them out with his nose, you know?"

"Go on with the next verse," the Gry-phon said once more; "it begins 'I passed by his gar-den.'"

Al-ice thought she must do as she was told, though she felt sure it would all come wrong, and she went on:

"I passed by his gar-den and marked with one eye,
How the owl and the oys-ter were shar-ing the pie."

"What *is* the use of say-ing all that stuff!" the Mock Tur-tle broke in, "if you don't tell what it means as you go on? I tell you it is all non-sense."

"Yes, I think you might as well leave off," said the Gry-phon, and Al-ice was but too glad to do so.

"Shall we try the Lob-ster dance once more?" the Gry-phon went on, "or would you like the Mock Tur-tle to sing you a song?"

"Oh, a song please, if the Mock Tur-tle would be so kind," Al-ice said with so much zest that the Gry-phon threw back his head and said, "Hm! Well, each one to his own taste. Sing her 'Tur-tle Soup,' will you, old fel-low?"

The Mock Tur-tle heaved a deep sigh, and in a voice choked with sobs, be-gan his song, but just then the cry of "The tri-al is on!" was heard a long way off.

"Come on," cried the Gry-phon. He took her by the hand, ran off, and did not wait to hear the song.

"What trial is it?" Al-ice pant-ed as she ran, but the Gry-phon on-ly said, "Come on!" and still ran as fast as he could.

Source:

Gorham, J.C. "The Lobster Dance." *Alice in Wonderland, In Words of One Syllable*. New York: A.L. Burt Company Publishers, 1905. Electronic.