

(Members of the ensemble create a garden door by setting two cots upright. ALICE and the WHITE RABBIT stand, bathed in the golden light of afternoon. The ensemble members transform into a tree in a Wonderland garden, waving torn pages like leaves.)

**START**

ALICE

So there you are!

WHITE RABBIT

And there *you* are.

ALICE

I'm just so... pleased to see you.  
*Here, that is.*

WHITE RABBIT

So pleased to see you too.

*(Enjoying his role)*

In brief: I'm late. You know?

ALICE

Oh. I know. Sorry. Sorry.  
It's all just been so...

WHITE RABBIT

Of course. Of course.  
Oh my ears and whiskers! I must go.

ALICE

No!

*(This is out of the ordinary. Throughout this scene, the WHITE RABBIT regards ALICE with a tender curiosity.)*

WHITE RABBIT

What?

ALICE

I don't know what. Honestly.  
It's... just...

WHITE RABBIT

What?

*(Catches himself, checks his pocket watch.)*

(WHITE RABBIT)

It's time—it's well past time—you know.

*(The WHITE RABBIT starts away. But the page-leaves sway, sending him back to ALICE.)*

ALICE

But... here we are.

WHITE RABBIT

Yes—what? How long can we spend on this same page?

ALICE

One moment. Please.

WHITE RABBIT

And then?

We stop, when it's the end.

In the beginning, we *begin*.

ALICE

But surely, books are made to linger in.

*(The WHITE RABBIT taps his watch, shakes his head "No.")*

Come, we'll find that tiny golden key and enter that loveliest garden...

WHITE RABBIT

The key is key, yes.

But not yet.

ALICE

But why not?

It's still the story.

We're still here *in* the story.

WHITE RABBIT

No. If we're here in the story, we must be *in* the story.

And so... if so, I better go. I mean, that *is* the story...

ALICE

Is it?

*(Neither one moves. Such a strange new chemistry between them.)*