



Reluctant Press presents:

ALEX IN WONDERLAND



Briana Vermont

A 'HER TV' E-BOOK

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Alex in Wonderland

By Briana Vermont
Illustrations by David McKinley

Chapter I: Down the Hutch

Alex was annoyed at having to stand for such a very long time. It was a beautiful evening, and he could be anywhere in the city. Instead he found himself here, in line, waiting to get into a club. There was no guarantee he would even get in before the evening was over. The line was quite long, moving slowly when it did, and not at all when it didn't.

Alex looked over the shoulder of the fellow who stood in line ahead of him, to see what he found so endlessly fascinating. The fellow simply looked at his PDA, flipping through pages of information.

'Words, just words,' thought Alex to himself. 'No pictures, and no conversation! How can anything hold someone's attention without pictures, or at least a decent conversation?'

It was about this time that a white rabbit walked down the street, passing by the long line of bored and disinterested potential club-goers. This was no ordinary white rabbit, though. Not that there actually was such a thing as an ordinary white rabbit in the city, but if there had been, this one would not be it.

This white rabbit was unusual in that it wore long white gloves, white heels, a frilly white skirt, and a white corset. It was also unusual in that it really wasn't a rabbit at all. Rather, it gave an impression of overall rabbitish-ness, owing to the white cottontail attached to its bottom and the pink-and-white rabbit ears seated upon its head.

Alex, like the others in line, paid little attention to the young lady (for, I hope you had gathered by this point that the white rabbit was indeed a young lady). Her appearance

was not that remarkable, and even when she stopped directly beside Alex he barely looked up until he heard her remark, 'Oh, dear! I shall be so late!'

In fact, Alex was prepared to ignore the entire incident until he notice – the white rabbit was using a pocket watch to check the time! Alex watched as she dashed to the end of the street and then disappeared around the side of the club.

'Well, that was rather curious,' Alex said aloud. 'A pocket watch, of all things!' he continued. Then realizing his words had attracted the attention of others, he returned to thinking his private thoughts privately. 'I'm quite certain she would have no pockets in that outfit. Where could she possibly keep a pocket watch?'

Alex was not the sort of person who could allow such a thought to linger. It was a question, and what is a question without an answer? Why, nothing whatsoever, and that would not do. So Alex followed the white rabbit, past the line, past the very large bouncer who guarded the doors to the club, and around to the side of the building.

Alex rounded the corner to find an empty alley. Empty, except for a single door in the side of the building. He looked back at the bouncer, to see if he would be stopped from approaching the door. However the bouncer was only interested in the front doors. Apparently his job description was very specific.

Alex proceeded down the alley until he stood directly in front of the door where the White Rabbit had disappeared. Above the door was a sign that read 'The Rabbit Hutch', and on the door was a piece of paper, held in place by a piece of sticky tape and protected from the rain (when there was rain, presumably) by a plastic cover which read, 'Bunnys Only'.

'Well, if one wishes to find a bunny, then this would seem to be the right place,' said Alex. It did not occur to him that perhaps the 'Bunnys Only' sign might pertain to him. Alex opened the door and stepped inside. It half-occurred to him that there might be another bouncer inside this door, and he might be required to leave without a satisfying answer to his question. However this worry was unjustified, and no bouncers were stationed behind this particular door. As Alex thought to himself, 'It would appear that bouncers respect the 'Bunnys Only' restriction.'

Alex was just in time to see the White Bunny (for he now thought of her as such, 'bunny' being a more apt descriptive than 'rabbit') turning a bend in the corridor. He ran after her, turning the bend to find another long corridor, leading ever so slightly downward.

And this is how they proceeded, for quite a long time. Corridor after corridor, bend after bend, slight decline after slight decline. Sometimes he would catch sight of the bunny, but she was always too far ahead, and she certainly paid no attention to his calls. But just when he was about to give up and turn back, a thought came to his mind concerning his geometry lessons from school.

'Now why should I be thinking of geometry lessons at a time like this?' thought Alex. However the thought was persistent and so he ran with it. 'Let's see. A corridor is like a rectangle, and a decline can be thought of as a triangle subtracted from that rectangle. So logically, repeated declines are the same as repeated triangular subtractions.'

Alex was rather pleased with this logic, until he considered its immediate implications. 'So, what I am subtracting is in fact the floor on which I am standing,' he reasoned. In fact, looking down he realized the floor was at a very steep angle, such that stopping his forward momentum was not at all possible.

'Oh dear,' said Alex aloud, as he ran past the next bend to find the floor gone altogether.

Chapter II **Where Alex finds Himself in a Tight Spot**

Alex fell. And fell. At this point, not knowing what else to do and feeling out of options, he continued to fall.

'A hole like this should definitely be roped off, with signs to protect the public,' said Alex aloud, as he felt less alone when he heard his own voice. It made no sense, yet some things just never do, and so he continued to express his thoughts aloud.

'I mean really,' he continued, 'who digs a hole this deep, then does nothing to prevent another from falling in? It's just so inconsiderate.' He continued to fall for a very long time, and continued to speak his thoughts, for this was an excellent way of distracting himself from considering what would happen when the falling stopped. Which it did, rather abruptly...

'Oh!' exclaimed Alex on his second bounce, since his first bounce found him to be quite unprepared. By his third bounce he was settled and reacquainted with gravity, and so took a moment to take in his surroundings.

'Why, it's a bed!' he told himself. 'What an absolutely splendid idea, to place a bed at the bottom of this hole. I imagine I'm not the first to come down this way, so placing a bed at the bottom makes perfect sense.'

Alex hoped that the White Bunny had also landed on the bed. 'Although I suppose she must have, as she's no longer here,' he said. He looked around to see which way she might have gone, but this time there was no sign of her.

Alex dropped to the floor from the big bed, then set off to explore his new surroundings. 'Another corridor,' he said. 'I am getting so tired of corridors. Still if this one should slope down, I will be prepared this time.' The corridor never did slope down, but neither did it lead anywhere. Alex looked up and down both sides, all the way to the ends, and found nothing but locked doors.

'The White Bunny found a way out,' he said. 'And so I should be able to get out the same way.' But by the time he had explored all the way around to the large bed a second time he was less certain. Then he was startled to see something new.

A table. Beside the large bed there now stood a table, where none had been before. And on the table was a bottle.

'Really, if you're going to sneak in and leave something while my back is turned, couldn't you make it something useful?' said Alex. 'Maybe you could leave a key to one of the locked doors, for example. What am I to do with a bottle?' Alex turned his back, then spun around to take the little table by surprise, but it still contained only the bottle. Except now the bottle had a note tied around its neck that read, 'Drink It'.

'Drink it?' scoffed Alex. 'That seems a foolish thing to do. This could be anything. No, I will not drink it.' But no matter what he tried, nothing else appeared on the little table. And so after a few moments of waiting Alex drank.

Alex felt the liquid gurgle down to the pit of his stomach. He was rather embarrassed by this (even though he was quite alone) and was about to say 'excuse me', when the gurgling continued down his legs and into his feet!

'I must say, that has never happened before,' Alex said. Then as he watched, his feet gurgled right out of his shoes! Alex's feet grew and grew, until his shoes would barely fit on his big toe. Then he watched as his legs grew, and his arms and chest and head grew. Alex continued growing until he barely fit in the room.

Alex looked down at the tattered remnants of his clothes. 'Well this is a difficult spot! I still have no way of getting out of this room. In fact it's worse than before, as I can no longer fit through any of the doors even if I could get one open. And even if I could find a way out, I'm now completely naked!'

Alex considered calling for help, but felt at a loss to explain any of this to anyone who might respond. Then he noticed; the ceiling of this tiny room was not bare. There was a tiny table on the ceiling, set for tea with tiny plates and cakes. Alex realized he had not eaten in some time.

'As empty as my stomach was before, at this size it is that much more empty,' said Alex. He puzzled over what held the table, plates, and cake on the ceiling. 'Perhaps I fell so far that I passed through the center of the earth,' he suggested. 'In that case, everything would point the other way around.'

This explanation seemed to have some flaws. However, Alex felt that it would take a scientist to arrive at a proper answer. In the end, he decided it really didn't matter. Lifting up (or rather, down) one of the plates, he greedily stuffed the cake in his mouth and swallowed it whole.

Before he had a chance to feel satisfied though, Alex shrank and fell onto the table with a crash! Rolling off the table, he continued falling all the way to the ceiling where he lay, stunned, looking up at the table high above. Judging by other tables with which he was familiar, Alex judged himself to be about six inches tall.

Alex lifted himself to a sitting position. And as he sat, he was amazed to discover there were still things that could amaze him.

'My hair!' he said in amazement, as previously discussed. The very amazing thing was, his hair now reached halfway down his back. Thinking logically he considered, 'If my hair was three inches long when I was six feet tall, and remains three inches long when I am only six inches, then it appears that it neither grew nor shrank with the rest of me!'

Alex was now in a room with no apparent exit, meant for people much larger than himself. However being very small does have some advantages, such as being able to leave rooms through unconventional means. With a small amount of exploration, Alex found a mouse hole leading out of the room. He didn't know where it might lead, but anything would be better than remaining tiny and naked in this strange room.

Chapter III Mouse House and a Convincing Story

Alex entered the mouse hole, expecting to find a dingy and dirty passage. However he was pleasantly surprised to find it instead led to a small but neat apartment. There was a tiny bed and chest of drawers against one wall, and a clothes tree with a single blue dress hanging from it, with a pretty blouse, a freshly starched crinoline, and a pretty white apron. Alex puzzled over what to do.

'I can't continue on naked,' he considered. 'And I'm getting quite cold. On the other hand, I shouldn't take things that don't belong to me. And a blue dress, well, it isn't even appropriate.'

After due consideration, Alex decided that the lady who lived here would most likely be more upset to find him naked in her apartment than to find him wearing her dress. And so he took the clothes down from the clothes tree, and laid them out on the bed.

Alex put on the blouse and did up the tiny buttons. He stepped into the crinoline, pulling it up to his waist, then slipped the blue dress over his head and fastened it up the back.



He found a pair of white cotton panties in a drawer, and felt that if the dress was forgiven then these certainly would be as well.

'I suppose I should also wear the apron,' he said as he put it over his head and tied a bow at his back, 'To make sure the dress stays clean.' Then finding his feet were quite cold on the tile floor, he slipped on a pair of black, patent leather Mary Janes he found under the bed.

Alex searched through the chest of drawers, hoping to find a pair of scissors. There were none, but he did find some combs and brushes. 'If I can't be rid of this excess hair,' he said, 'then at least I can keep it under control.' Alex sat at a little table with a mirror, and worked out the knots from his long hair. Then he brushed it till it nearly shone like gold.

'Now that I'm clothed and no longer look like a stack of hay,' he said, 'I suppose I should go out and see if I can find some men's clothes to wear.' But no sooner had he uttered these words than he found himself lying in the little bed, sound asleep.

Alex had no idea how long he slept. He had been very tired, what with his long run, then even longer fall. Then there had been a lot of shrinking and growing, which can take a lot out of a person as you can well imagine, and still more falling. He must have had a very good sleep indeed, however, as he woke refreshed with the sunlight streaming in the window.

Alex considered getting up, and had just decided it was a bad idea and he would rather sleep a while longer, when the door opened. Alex sat up quickly, readying an explanation of sorts, when a huge mouse walked into the tiny apartment.

'What are you doing here?' exclaimed the Mouse in surprise. 'Get out! Get out at once!'

'If you please,' said Alex, 'I would like to speak to the lady who lives here first.'

'Then speak up, as I am the closest you will find to a lady who lives here,' replied the Mouse. 'Then you can remove my clothes and get out.'

'Oh! I'm very sorry. I had no idea this was your apartment. But believe me, there is a very good reason why I am here, in your clothes.'

'So, speak up girl!'

'One point of confusion at a time,' thought Alex to himself as he decided to deal with the 'girl' comment later.

'You see,' he began. 'I was following a white rabbit, then slid down a very steep corridor and fell to the centre of the earth where I grew quite large until I could eat a cake from the ceiling, then shrank and fell to the ceiling where I found myself naked as my clothes were hopelessly tattered and completely the wrong size anyway and so hid in a mouse hole, where I wore what clothes I could find and combed and brushed my hair since apparently it did not shrink with the rest of me.'

The Mouse waited a moment before responding. 'And this is your idea of a good reason?' she asked.

'Um, yes,' responded Alex, finding no easy way to expand on this explanation.

'Well then, you've been through quite a lot, for a young girl. Now, don't you worry about that old dress, it's yours to keep. The shoes as well. After all, what am I going to do with them? I'm a mouse! I don't wear dresses or shoes. Can't imagine why I kept them around the place all this time. Now the best thing is for you to be getting along, but please come back and visit soon.'

Throughout this speech the Mouse had escorted Alex to the door, led him outside, and closed the door behind him. 'I'm a boy,' was all Alex could think to say to the closed door.

'Girl,' Alex heard spoken behind him. Turning around, he found himself to have been addressed by a very large (or perhaps not, it was becoming so difficult to cope with questions of size) canary.

'Pardon?' asked Alex.

'You said boy, where you meant to say girl,' replied the Canary.

'She does seem quite confused on the subject,' said the Mouse, poking her head out of the window.

'I know, it does seem confusing,' said Alex.

'There, you see?' said the Mouse. 'She admits to being confused. I dare say, it has not even been suggested that anyone else is confused on the subject. Take my advice dear, and listen to those who know about these things.'

Alex was incensed. 'I am not confused! I merely meant to suggest...'

'Is there a problem here?' interjected a passing crab.

'It's just a young lady,' replied the Canary, 'who has become confused and thinks she's a boy.'



'Well, she's not like any boy I've ever seen,' said the Crab as he relit his pipe. 'It's the long hair and the dress which are the real clues. Typical for girls, you know. I suggest, young lady, that you stop this nonsense and admit that the evidence concludes you are in fact a girl.'

'It is rather frustrating to know a thing for certain, and yet be so unable to convince anyone,' said Alex.

'Convincing!' said the Crab. 'That's what she needs. Logic and convincing. Perhaps if we have her speak to the Dodo. He was able to convince me that one was two and black was white just last week.'

'Yes, he's a lawyer you know,' interjected the Mouse.

'Fine,' said Alex. 'If he is so very good with logic, perhaps he can explain to you all, and to me as well, how a boy can end up in a mad world with long shiny gold hair and wearing a blue dress.'

And so the group set off to the home of the Dodo, which turned out not to be far at all. And after a round of introductions, as the group had grown quite large and very few knew all of the others, the nature of the problem was set before the Dodo.

'The problem as I see it,' began the Dodo, 'is that you believe you can fall through the earth, change size and shape through the eating of cakes, turn up to down, then sleep in a mouse's bed, and not have it affect who you actually are. With everything about you constantly changing, you somehow continue to believe you have not changed at all.'

'Well, yes,' said Alex sheepishly (although only like a sheep; he was still a tiny girl). 'I mean, it sounds improbable when you say it that way.'

'People change all the time,' continued the Dodo. 'And for much less reason than you have suggested.' He then proceeded to tell a story:

A man once woke up in his bed,
'For where else would I wake?' he said.
'Enough of this,' he then replied,
'We've things to do! Get up!' he cried.
'But wait, let's rest here in our bed,'
He told the thoughts within his head.
'Those things will wait, why they will keep,
So let us now go back to sleep.'

But he was cunning, and not deterred.

A plan to change his mind occurred.

'Tell me sir,' he softly spoke,

'Who was in your bed when you awoke?'

'Just you and I, you know that's true,'

He told himself without a clue.
'And might you wake up with a man?'
He asked, for this was in his plan.
'Most certainly not!' he almost spat,
'Not that there's anything wrong with that.'
'So now you know that I'm a girl,'
He told himself, his lips a-curl.

'The logic's right, it must be true.
But you are me, and I am you.
And so a woman you must be,'
He told himself with evil glee.
'And so it's time, get up!' he said.
'Get out of bed you sleepy head.
There's much to do, don't waste the sun!
A woman's work is never done.'
And so she rose to start her day,
Determined in a woman's way,
With frilly these, and lacy those,
And shaven legs in pantyhose.

Then, when day was done, with stars above her,
Dressed in her nightgown beneath the covers,
She thought, 'We worked, and did our best,
And so I feel I can suggest,
When morning breaks but we're still tired,
We might be a little less inspired?'
'Sleep in?' she said. 'Yes, I suppose,
We've earned a rest, a brief repose.'
And so sleep came, with all it brings,
And she dreamed her dreams of girlish things.

'Bravo!' shouted the multitude of birds and other woodland creatures. Alex couldn't help but join in the applause, for it had been an excellent story, with rhymes which were hardly forced at all.

'It was a very convincing story, don't you think?' suggested the Mouse.

'So are you saying,' Alex asked the Dodo, 'that I should simply think that I am a girl, and then I shall actually be one?'

'Not at all,' replied the Dodo. 'What I am saying is, you will be a girl whether you think you are one or not. We are all agreed on that. However, you could make it much easier on everyone if you believe it as well.'

Well then, I shall give it a try,' said Alex.

'Hurray for Alex!' shouted the woodland creatures.

'Good lord, is that your name?' asked the Dodo.

'Yes, if it please you, sir,' said Alex with a curtsy. 'Alex, short for Alexander.'

'That's a bit of a boy's name, don't you think?'

'There are many girls named Alex,' said Alex crossly.

But Alex, short for Alexander? It won't do. From now on, we shall call you Alice, short for Alice.'

'Hurray for Alice!' shouted the woodland creatures.

Chapter IV

Alex Doesn't Live Here Anymore

So Alice finally came to terms with who she really was. She was about to take charge and suggest a fun morning activity, as little girls are wont to do in the mornings (and then again the rest of the time), when she once again spotted the White Bunny.

'Oh look,' she cried. 'Why, there she is!'

'There is whom?' replied the woodland creatures. For all woodland creatures, in spite of the prejudiced views of them, are in fact quite fanatical about proper grammar.

'Why, the White Bunny!' said Alice. 'Oh please look, she's almost gone again. I simply must catch her.'

'I don't see how,' said the Mouse dismissively. 'She's all the way on the other side of the pond. By the time we could get there she will be far away.'

'We shall take my boat,' declared the Dodo.

And so the Dodo led Alice and the woodland creatures to the water's edge, where his rowboat was to be found. Alice was first, and so climbed into the very center. The Dodo placed himself at the bow, this being a place of prominence where he could properly take charge of the expedition. The Mouse sat at the back, where she felt there was slightly more room for her to continue with her knitting, and the various other birds, rodents, arthropods, mollusks and such fit themselves in as they could.

'Man the oars!' called out the Dodo.

'Who shall row?' asked the Canary.

'Alice!' called out the others.

'Why Alice?' was asked by someone stuffed tight beneath the seat.

'Because she's the one with arms!' was the reply.

And so Alice grabbed the oars, and although rowing does not come easily to little girls, she did the best she could to row the overloaded boat through the water.

'Hard a-port!' the Dodo would call. And when Alice would stop with a questioning look on her face, the Mouse would interpret for her, 'He means left, dear.'

'Put your backs into it, men! Fasten that jib! Hard alee! Prepare to come about! Master Gunner, report!' called out the Dodo ('Swab the poop' might have been a useful command, considering the number of birds on board).

With so many orders, Alice was hard-pressed to keep up. Yet she was determined to catch that White Bunny and so continued rowing, until she noticed the sky had turned dark.

'That's odd,' she said. 'It can't be night, even though it does feel as if I have been rowing for a very long time. How far are we from the shoreline? Surely we must be close! Oh please, could some of you move so I might have a look?'

Alice put aside the oars, and the creatures rearranged themselves so that she could see out. And what she saw did not please her! They were in the middle of the ocean, with no land in sight.

'But we were on a pond,' she said. 'It was no more than a few hundred feet across! How could this happen?'

'So easy to criticize those in command after the fact,' replied the Dodo. 'Looking back over every decision, though, I would have to say they were right, and I would repeat them without hesitation.'

'Well that's the most foolish thing I've heard in a long time,' said Alice. 'And that's saying a lot, especially in this place!'

'Storm coming in from the south east, captain!' someone called from the crow's nest (probably a crow).

No sooner had the storm been announced than it was upon them. Huge waves tossed the tiny boat, tearing the oars from Alice's frightened grip. Water poured over the sides, and within moments it was clear to one and all that they were sinking.

'Oh please, everyone!' cried Alice. 'Please my friends, save yourselves!'

And so they did. The birds flew off, the Mouse and others swam quite easily in a direction Alice could only believe they knew was the shore, and even the Crab was safe as he slowly sank to the ocean floor (although Alice did hear him say, 'Damn, my pipe's gone out again').

'Well, if I had known it was that easy for them,' said Alice, 'I would instead have said 'Save me'!'