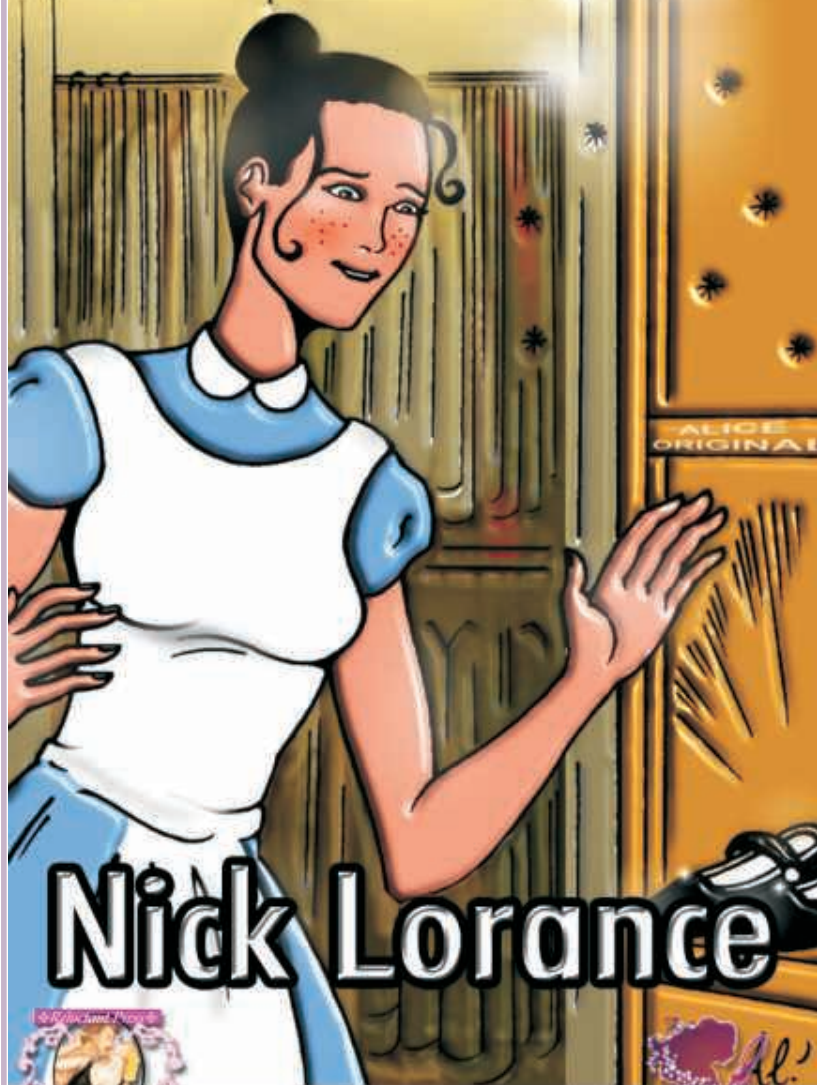


Al(ice) in Wonderland



Nick Lorange



A "New Woman" Novel



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Al(ice) in Wonderland

By Nick Lorange

Down the Rabbit hole or: Our hero finds out what's really happening

Al pulled his Daihatsu Mirage up against the curb, then cut the engine. He was a man of medium height, rail thin, but wiry. His greasy black hair hung down and he flicked it up out of his eyes.

His fingers played over the pistol in his pocket. The boss had given specific directions for this job. Follow the delivery truck; find where the driver delivered the cargo. If possible find out who this 'Queenie' was.

He snorted at that. What kind of idiot set up a smuggling operation in this city without giving the local boss his cut?

There was a flash of headlights in his rear view mirror, and he dropped lower in the seat. It was a big step van with a white rabbit emblazoned on the side. WHITE RABBIT DELIVERY; WE HOP RIGHT TO IT!

Al started the engine and followed with his lights off. The truck seemed to be weaving aimlessly through the street, but it suddenly sped up, pulling to a stop in the middle of a deserted street. A husky man in brown shorts, a baseball cap with floppy rabbit ears and a vest over his shirt stepped down, pulling out his watch.

"Boy, am I late. Queenie will be pissed!" he muttered. There was a steel hook with a handle on it; he hooked a notch in the manhole cover, pulling it up and to the side. The sliding back door slammed up, and he began to take packages from the back, dropping them down the manhole.

Al sat in the shadows watching. A drop off in the middle of the street? He drew the revolver, and began stalking forward.

The driver was muttering to himself as Al got closer. "Not like they can't just come out and pick up their own things. Cat food, playing cards, maid's uniforms, tea bags, KY jelly, wine, dildos, butt plugs, golf, and croquet balls. No, I have to bring it in." He dropped another package down and turned to meet the pistol coming the other way. He froze, staring past the gun into Al's eyes.

"Is this the storehouse for Queenie's operation?" Al demanded.

"Storehouse?" The guy was staring at the gun as if expecting it to grow fangs and bite him. "There isn't a storehouse. Everything I bring in is for use right away. You think I like making these trips every night?"

"Shut up." Al snapped. Tell me where it is or—

The Deliveryman moved. His hand caught the pistol, shoving it aside. Then his foot kicked, slamming into Al's stomach. As the man fell forward, the deliveryman flipped him over his shoulder. With a scream, Al dropped down the manhole.

For a long moment the Deliveryman just stared at the manhole. "Shit, now Queenie will really be pissed at me."

Drink me or: Our hero has to escape, but how?

Al screamed as he fell, the cry dying as he hit something...soft. He stared upward but he had fallen so far he couldn't even see the streetlights down the manhole. He was lucky to be alive and laying in this... Bed.

He sat up, looking around, confused. It looked like a room belonging to a teenaged girl; one that seemed to have a terminal affection for pink. He looked upward but there was a canopy overhead and what looked like a normal ceiling above it. But he was alive, and all he had to do was get out of here.

He looked at the pistol, his hand tightening on it. Six bullets, it should be enough. He threw open the door expecting someone, resistance, anything.

What he got was a hall right out of an upscale hotel. Slowly, he walked down the hall. The carpet was cream and turquoise that ate his footfalls so he moved in silence. He reached the end but it was a blank wall, even though it had been painted to look like a cross corridor. He turned around and this time he attempted to try every door. But there were none except for the door he had exited; every other one was merely a frame over a section of wall painted to look like a door. The elevator was a wider frame with a panel mounted, but the buttons and elevator

door were merely painted on the wall. The only entrance was the way he had come in.

He growled, looking around the room. There was a set of curtains but pulling them back only showed him a blank wall. Who built this place? There was a dollhouse but what good would that do? He looked in the dollhouse, hoping for something, then noticed something odd.

There was light through the windows against the wall. He tried to lean forward but he couldn't get his head close enough to them. There was also a door with a keyhole. But it was tiny; the key itself would have been maybe less than a quarter-inch long. He pulled the small structure away from the wall; behind it was just another blank wall. Yet from the inside he could see what looked like a field through the windows. He could see the wind blowing the flowers. Somehow he knew it was real.

He stood, looking around again. There had to be-

There on the nightstand was a tiny antique key. He brushed it into his hand and knelt. He couldn't hold the key. His fingers were too big to hold and use it. Disgusted, he dropped the key by the tiny door and leaned back. This was getting him nowhere. He was angry and thirsty.

Wasn't that a nightstand before? Now it looked like one of those tiny refrigerators they have in hotels. The kind where everything is charged the instant you picked it up. Inside were only a few cans marked DRINK ME SODA. But so what? He was thirsty.

He popped the top, chugging it. Strange, not too fizzy-

The room was growing away from him, as if he was shrinking a foot a minute. Al stared, then noticed his clothes were getting larger too. A few moments later, he crawled out of the massive pile his clothes had become.

He stared around him, then at the dollhouse. It was the right size for him now. He ran across, the key now the size of an antique house key. He slipped it in the lock; turned it. It opened!

He flung open the door, running through the dollhouse to the back door which swung open at his touch, looking across a beautiful lawn. He almost ran through then remembered how he was dressed, as in not a goddamned thing. Wait, doll house, maybe there were some clothes!

Al ran up the stairs, looking frantically. The house was a well-built structure, with a real closet and real chests of drawers. Fat lot of good it did him. They were filled with women's clothes. He dug through frantically, but there was nothing a man might wear. Bad enough, it was all short skirts, tight tops, Daisy Dukes and high heels.

What was this, Slut Barbie's house? Finally he settled for a pair of shorts and a top that might have started life as a turtleneck sweater before they had sliced off both sleeves and all of the back except for that high collar. He finally found an Ike jacket of leather to go over that. He ran downstairs, then onto the lawn. Less than a minute later, he was back inside, rooting through the shoes. He was used to pavement, not rocks and grass that dug at his feet, damn it!

He finally settled on a pair with heels that were only three inches tall, better than the others at least! They were sling-backs. He tottered on them, almost falling down the stairs, but that lawn led somewhere and he wasn't staying in here.

The Caterpillar, Or; you should be careful what you say...

He felt so much better outside. Sure he was staggering around trying to stand in the fucking heels, and dressed to troll the streets looking for tricks, but hell, he was out of that madhouse! It felt like summer, warm, with the jacket too warm. But he wasn't going to walk around looking like a hooker in daylight.



He found a path and followed it down toward a river below him. The trees confused him until he realized they were really flowers twenty feet tall. He didn't know what was happening but this was too fucking weird!

An hour later he found himself staggering along, feet sore from those fucking shoes, wishing he had some men's clothes, or he was on the street running back to the boss even if he had to report a failure. There was something ahead of him, sweet smoke, and... a mushroom? Lying across it like a Playboy centerfold on the bed displaying itself was... a caterpillar. It sipped smoke from a hookah pipe, blowing a fragrant ring into the air, lips rolling as if tasting a fine wine.

"And what might you be?" it asked, looking toward him. Golden lambent eyes regarded him, clothes, face and all. "How confusing. A man, it would seem, but dressed like a girl. This is worthy of a story I would think." It sipped more smoke. "One you will provide."

"Shit." Al wiped his face. "Where do I begin?"

"That is simplicity itself," the Caterpillar replied, blowing yet another smoke ring. "Start at the beginning, go through to the end, and when you get to the end, stop. I thought everyone knew that."

Yeah, yeah." Al sighed. "Got another mouthpiece to that Ganja pipe?"

"You want to share some of my smoking mixture? Now that is odd." The Caterpillar handed him a mouthpiece, and Al sucked some of the smoke. He was surprised that it wasn't marijuana, but whatever it was, it made him feel mellow. He told the Caterpillar about the boss, about how the organization wanted to know who dared to work on their turf. How he'd been sent to track the White Rabbit truck, then...

"So by definition, you are a spy." The Caterpillar commented. "How plebeian. And why are you dressed that way?"

"Like I had a choice." Al snarled. "Everything else would have made me look like a street walker! Nothing to wear but this shit and this is the best of a bad lot. I feel like an idiot or a drag queen." Al's head was spinning. Boy this was good shit!

"Well, I can make the clothes fit better if you like," the Caterpillar commented with a slight smile. "But I can't guarantee your peace of mind."

"Fuck that. Anything is better than this shit," Al said. He leaned his head back. Boy, he felt sleepy. "This is really good. I want to sleep for a week."

"Then by all means lay down," the Caterpillar said. "Anything I could do to help would work better if you were asleep."

"Really?" Al felt himself leaning back into the sod. "Man, it's like so weird..." He fell asleep.

Al, or is it Alice?

Al suddenly woke up; the first thing he saw was light filtered through what might have been a curtain. But it was pressed against his face. He struggled, feeling the stuff give, then rip, as he rammed his hands through it. The stuff was like a hard plastic shell, and he pulled himself frantically out of it. He fell to the ground, gasping. For some reason the clothes felt... comfortable now. He sat up, looking down. The first thing he noticed was tits. Not on some girl, but on his own chest. He pulled the top off, looking at his chest. They were there all right, nice firm, C cup at least. They'd be great.

On some girl's chest.

He started running his hands frantically over his body, or at least the body he had now. Tits, ass, legs, arms... He screamed when his hands dug into the shorts and found something he didn't expect even if he feared it.

He looked around, seeing the mushroom and that fucking Caterpillar still toking its pipe. "What happened!" He screamed. He suddenly noticed he even sounded like a girl!

"Well I see that you finally woke up," the Caterpillar commented.

"What did you do to me?" Al shrieked.

"You said you felt like an idiot or drag queen. I said I could make the clothes fit better, but I couldn't guarantee your peace of mind. You said anything was better than the current situation." He puffed, blowing another fragrant ring. "I just... corrected the problem."

"You couldn't correct the clothes maybe?"

"You weren't specific about what to correct, so I corrected the obvious problem. Now you fit the clothes perfectly."

"You couldn't have left me my dick at least?"

The Caterpillar paused. "Since by definition a drag queen has such an appendage, no."

"Can you change me back then?"

"Oh my no. The process I used only works once."

"Process, what process?"

"You do know I am a caterpillar, I assume," the Caterpillar said. "I am a quite attractive specimen of what is called *Danaus plexippus* or the Monarch butterfly. We spin a cocoon around ourselves, and when we come out, we are butterflies or moths. All I did was use some of my

cocoon webbing on you with some extra instructions. After all, you didn't want wings too, did you?"

There was that at least. Al rubbed his temples. The longer black hair didn't help. "So how do I change back?"

"If you can find Queenie, she might be able to return you to normal."

"Might?" Al glared at him. "No fucking way I'm going to keep going with only 'might' as an option!"

"Well, that will be a problem," the Caterpillar commented. "The way you came in leads to a dead end. The only way back is to go forward."

"That makes no sense at all," Al rasped.

"A lot of things in life make no sense. They just are."

Of course Al refused to accept it. There were seven paths out of the clearing and he tried them all, but every one he took led him right back again. After a couple of hours he finally gave up.

"All right, how do I get out of here?" he demanded.

The Caterpillar tapped the mushroom he was using as a couch. "You must eat some of this mushroom."

"What?"

"This end," The Caterpillar touched the end where his head was, "will make you smaller. The other," His tail slapped down, "Will make you larger."

Since he'd already been shrunk to doll size, Al chose the side that would make him larger. He hesitated, then took off his jacket.

"Whatever are you doing?" the Caterpillar asked. Then he slapped his forehead. "Of course, the clothes. These clothes you wear belong here. That is why they will not stay this size. They will grow with you."