



AN ILLUSTRATION FROM LEWIS CARROLL'S "ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND."

Silverlight Café: A Crossroads for Authors & Readers

FANTASY ISSUE

March 18, 2016

"I'm half living my life between reality and fantasy at all times." – Lady Gaga

Gary Dorion

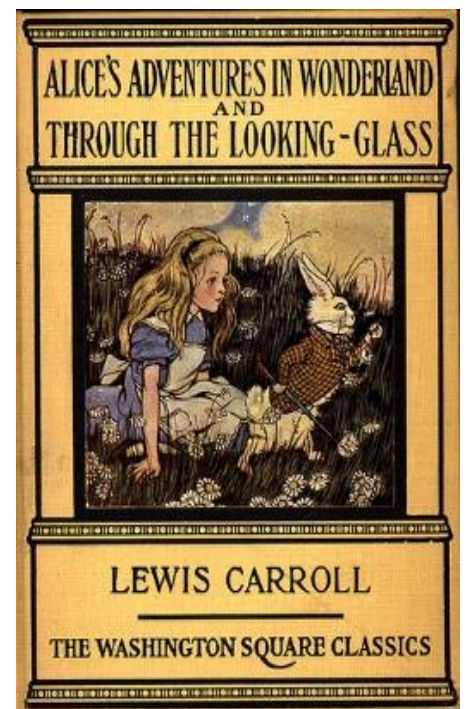
I must start this issue out by saying that the fantasy genre is very interesting to me, but not one that I have chosen to ever write in or read much. Actually, on second thought, I did write a children's fantasy book but nothing in adult fantasy literature. My own consuming genre is historical fiction. I do love the old illustrations in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* – one of the handful of fantasy genre books I have read. The content and symbolism are great! I remember that my dad had bought a set of classics in the mid-1950s when I was very young and – even though the book was advanced for a five-year-old – I had been so attracted to the illustrations that I tried to read it many times. Of course the symbolism passed completely over my head. But the illustrations told the story on several levels. I was hooked, at least on that book. There were other fantasy books that I liked.

The West Coast band, Jefferson Airplane, rekindled my interest in the book in the late 1960's with their song, "White Rabbit." It was only at that time that I realized what a great novel it was. I felt fortunate, and grateful to my dad, that I had been given such a gift as a young child. I am no expert in the fantasy genre and sub-genres so please read what our expert fantasy authors have to say in these pages.

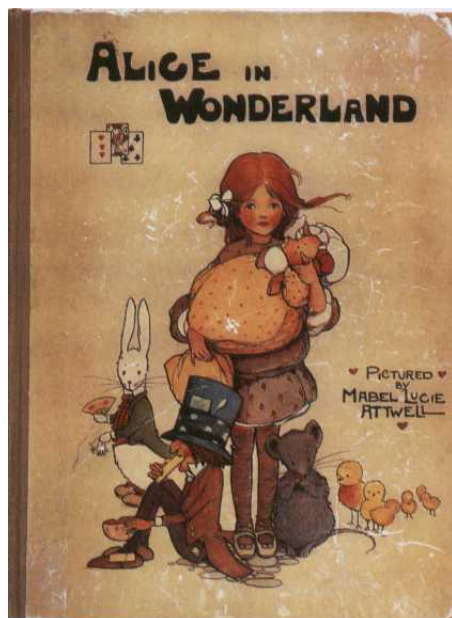


But first, if you want to hear Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit*. Please press "control" + "Click" on the title.

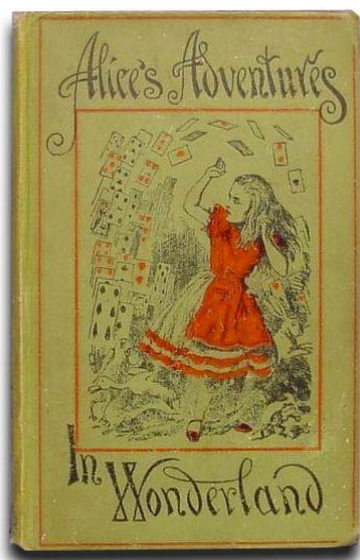
White Rabbit



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland debuted in 1865, the year that the American Civil War ended. The covers went through many evolutions. The one on the previous page was illustrated in the 1930's. Here is a 1910 cover that is just great!



And this gem in 1898, near the turn of the century:



~



M.L. Spencer

Our first author in the fantasy issue is also an AP Biology teacher in California, whose persistence at a young age might have been the impetus that launched her career as a writer in the fantasy genre. Meet M.L. Spencer.

"I have been an avid fantasy reader from a very young age. I still remember my disappointment when, in the second grade, my grandmother returned from the bookstore with a *Nancy Drew* novel for me and the complete boxed set of Donaldson's *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant, the Unbeliever* for my older cousin. I pestered my cousin until he finally traded me, and my passion for fantasy was born. Then came my elementary education: *Lord the Rings*, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Later, in high school, I was hard-pressed to find a fantasy novel I hadn't read on the bookstore shelves. In college I found the love of my life: Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time* series.

"What draws me to fantasy is the depth and complexity of the genre. A good epic fantasy is a prodigious accomplishment, a true work of art. The diverse types of knowledge that must interact to construct such a world and make it realistic is really quite mindboggling when you think

about it. A good fantasy author must have a strong knowledge base in so many different fields: geography, history, sociology, theology, linguistics, military history, classical studies, just to name a few. All the while weaving an intricate web of subplots riddled with a vast and varied range of personalities. And what makes fantasy really extraordinary is that, given the liberty to construct any type of world, an author can explore themes that are countless and infinitely potent.

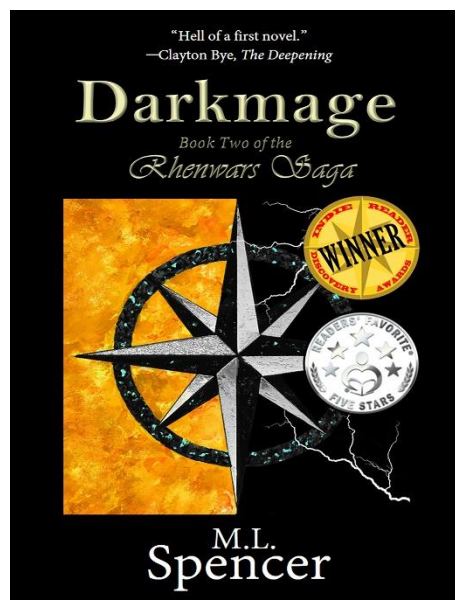
"In my opinion, what elevates good fantasy writing is the time the author has spent in research and world building. Many authors can write a good story. Not everyone can build a credible, realized world that a reader can feel immersed in. My favorite authors are incredible world builders and true scholars: Tolkien, Eddings, Martin, Jordan, Herbert, to name a few. Their writing is richly grounded in the kind of gritty realism that can only come from long hours of research and application.

"To me, the appreciation of a good epic fantasy has little to do with escapism and entertainment and everything to do with exploration of the human condition. Quality fantasy is just as character-driven as it is plot-driven. In a high-stakes world, the amount of character growth that can take place is extraordinary. There can be so much substance beneath the plot, which adds depth and allows novels to be appreciated on a variety of different levels.

"My series *The Rhenmars Saga* seems like a straightforward good-versus-evil storyline. In actuality, that is very far from the truth. The underlying theme is the differences between two types of moral

philosophy known as deontology and consequentialism. Deontology considers the morality of a person's *actions* most important. In contrast, consequentialism is an approach to ethics that focuses on the *consequences* of a person's actions: "The end justifies the means."

Because of this, the line between good and evil becomes very blurred in my series, which provides a fertile moral testing ground for my characters.



"Darkmage is a novel that chronicles the turbulent battles between two conflicting ideologies of magic and the moral imperatives that drive them. A thousand years ago, darkmage Xavier Renquist created the Well of Tears to unleash the hosts of chaos in an attempt to save his world's legacy of magic. The result was the cataclysmic destruction of the kingdom of Caladorn, which was reduced to a charred wasteland - now known only as the Black Lands. To safeguard against such a tragedy from ever occurring again, all mages of Aerysius were charged with an Oath of Harmony, binding them with a strict code of pacifism.

"Darien Lauchlin is a mage of Aerysius who has already lost everything. Now, the only thing he has left to lose is his soul. As the Enemy masses in numbers never before seen, Darien is faced with an impossible decision: either remain steadfast to his Oath of Harmony and watch everything he loves fall around him—or abandon his vow and become the most destructive force his world has ever known. Accompanied by his acolyte Kyle and Naia, a priestess of Death, Darien embarks upon a harrowing journey that will lead him toward a path of utter self-destruction. Will Darien hold fast to the moral constraints that shackle him? Or will he abandon his principles and become a darkmage?"

Brief Biography:

"I was born and raised near Redlands, California and teach Biology and AP Biology at the high school I graduated from. I am just as interested in science as I am in fantasy. My knowledge of both biology and general science helps me with world building and also helps keep my writing grounded, adding a dash of scientific skepticism to the fantasy worlds I create. I have won the Indie Reader Discovery Award for Fantasy and the San Bernardino County Writing Celebration.

Series: *The Rhenwars Saga*
 Out Right Now: *Darkmage*
 Coming Soon: *Darkstorm*
 Link to *Darkmage* on Amazon:
<http://ow.ly/XXqCb>



Our next featured author is Teresa McLaughlin. Originally from Tupelo, MS., Teresa has had several

careers and lived in various cities across the US and in Europe.

"Escaping her background consumed her early life," according to Teresa. "Being from a poor, uneducated family in rural Mississippi, she fought to learn as much as she could about human history and civilization. Once she made it to St. Louis, MO, she read the classics, studied classical music and European languages, becoming fluent in French and German. She began seriously studying vocal techniques, a study that would eventually lead to a 10-year long career as a professional singer.

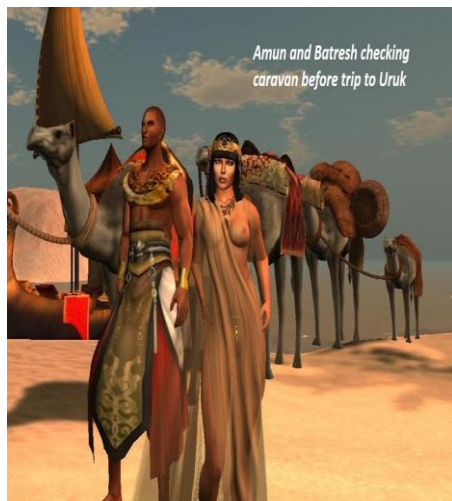


Teresa McLaughlin

What is it that brought her to the fantasy genre?

*Teresa said that she has been interested in sci-fi/fantasy since seeing her first episode of Star Trek. Also, as a child, she was obsessed by the fantasy worlds she saw on TV programs like *The Twilight Zone*, and *The Outer Limits*, she stated. She saw, as a child, the very real human conditions that work in the fantasy genre referred to. She created sci-fi/fantasy scenarios with her Barbie dolls and GI Joes, and saw every Sci-fi/fantasy movie she could get her hands on. She said she "believes that with sci-fi/fantasy the writer*

can be completely creative, allowing one's mind to run free, while being entertaining by taking readers on wildly imaginative flights, the writer can symbolically deal with the human situation."



Teresa "believes that good sci-fi/fantasy must deal with the human condition, presenting alternative realities, visions of the past and future, different timelines, that can illustrate what humanity can achieve, in addition to the depths to which humanity can sink, if we allow our more selfish, aggressive, and fearful emotions to dominate."

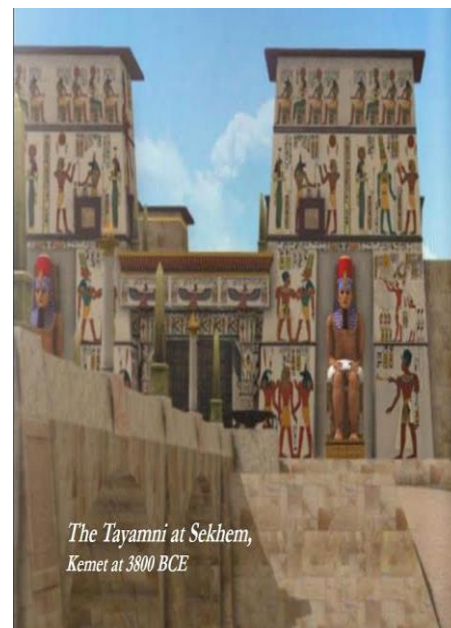
Teresa's favorite sci-fi/fantasy writers are those that combine a sophisticated use of language, knowledge of scientific concepts, human history, and an optimistic view of humanity's future. There are two camps of science fiction writers today, Teresa says, one that prefers a fearful, dystopian view, and others, like Gene Roddenberry, Arthur C. Clarke, Arthur Asimov, and Michael Bishop who envision a more positive future for humanity. Teresa clearly classifies herself among the latter group.

Brief Biography

Teresa received a BS in Math/Computer Science from a small college in St. Louis. After working as computer programmer, she moved to New York City and began a career singing, specializing in medieval Music. She lived for a time in the Netherlands, studying the authentic performance practice of ancient music. After a time, she moved to San Francisco, picking up her career as programmer again. Later, moving into Cyber Security, she received a master's degree in Information Assurance. She has always had a strong interest in languages and ancient history. Now, living in the Pacific Northwest with her husband, Rick, she is pursuing her plans to write.

Teresa's first novel, *The Love of the Tayamni* is the first in a series of six. The series combines science fiction, time travel, the Ancient Aliens theory, historical events, ancient Egyptian spirituality, her own autobiographical story, and *First Contact* themes.

In the series, the main character Batresh and her sister Namazu, are brought from their home world, Mussara, a moon orbiting a gas giant, in the Tayamni-Pa system. They are brought as infants to Earth to be daughters of the Matriarch of the Tayamni mission. They arrive at 3800 BCE, at a village on the Nile. The village, Sekhem, is meant to attract human hunter-gatherers by offering food, shelter, and protection. The Tayamni teach human groups agriculture, writing, self-defense, animal husbandry, and spirituality.



The primary goal of the Tayamni is to promote and spread the strongest force in the multiverse, the force of Love. When they first arrived at Earth, they selected Homo Erectus as a candidate. Over millennia, they spliced their own DNA with that of Homo Erectus, creating the first Homo Sapiens. This had been done with their own species, millions of years earlier by a race they call, *The First Ones*. Since that time, thousands of races have been brought to *Genetic Compatibility*. In this way, respect for life and the force of Love is taught and spread.

Being time-travellers, the Tayamni have become aware of a future event, when an advanced race from another dimension, the Si'lat, come to Earth at 2032. Humanity must be more evolved to survive *First Contact*. Warfare must end. The hatred of other groups, the practice of discrimination, selfishness, greed and aggression must diminish, or *First Contact*, will result in the end of the human race.

Some Tayamni allow themselves to age and die, so that their core, their true nature as beings of energy, can be reborn into the physical bodies

of those who will help humanity to evolve. They do this by being born in the bodies of people who are hated by the larger society, racial minorities, refugees, gays, lesbians, and transsexuals. The Matriarch, Batresh's mother, allows herself to die and be born in the body of a boy, who will be effeminate and hated by his macho father. The boy, having no memory of his life as the Matriarch, believes at first that he is gay, then later in life, he transitions to female.

"The wild card in these efforts, is the presence of two ancient, hostile races, the Potacas and the Tlalocs, who wish to take Earth and the Terran system for themselves. They work against the efforts of the Tayamni sowing aggression, hatred, and war. Batresh and Namazu, like all Tayamni, are sent through time to manipulate historical events to result in moving humanity forward. Batresh's first mission is to 1962 Tupelo, Mississippi, to protect her mother, in the body of the little boy, from being killed by their ancient enemies. At the same time her sister, Namazu, is sent to prevent the racial unrest in the southern U.S. from boiling over into white-supremacist led events that will throw humanity back hundreds of years. They find that the Potacas and Tlalocs are both working to foment more extreme expressions of hatred and violence.

"In *The Love of the Tayamni*, Teresa wishes to communicate her own feelings about the importance of a moral direction towards the future depicted in Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* vision. She bases the character of the Matriarch, in the body of the boy, on her own life history, as an effeminate little boy abused and hated by her father, to being introduced to the gay

community in St. Louis in the late 70s, living in New York City and touring Europe and Asia as a singer, and finally, transitioning to female in San Francisco in 2009.

"The six books of the series will follow the boy, Denny, through six different phases of his life. Batresh will change her genetic appearance, and will appear at each of these phases, enlisting the help of humans, and other Tayamni to ensure that the Matriarch can achieve her goal.



Our next author is C.L. Schneider who says she was influenced to write in the fantasy genre by many events and interests in her childhood such as hometown Renaissance fairs and playing games with her friends.



C.L. Schneider

What is it that brought you to the fantasy genre?

"I've always had a big imagination, which went well with my childhood fascination for all things medieval,

mystical, sci-fi, and supernatural. If I wasn't playing "pretend" I was reading or writing it. In games, I was never the princess. I was the spy, the superhero, the detective, the scientist, or the cowboy. I loved being able to slip away into an imaginary world that was much larger (and much more exciting) than my little home town.

As a young girl, attending the Renaissance Fair with my family was heaven to me. I never missed an opportunity to dress in costume.

"I loved being able to slip away into an imaginary world that was much larger (and much more exciting) than my little home town. As a young girl, attending the Renaissance Fair with my family was heaven to me."
- C.L. Schneider

By high school, my fascination had grown. I was captivated by the story of King Arthur and read every incarnation I could get my hands on. I was also reading a fair amount of horror, paranormal, and historical fiction at that point.

"I'd read a great deal on the middle-ages, and gobbled up every fantasy movie I could find. But it wasn't until the end of high school that I had my first taste of true epic fantasy when my brother gave me a copy of *The Mists of Avalon*, by Marion Zimmer Bradley. I fell in love with that book. I read it back to back, and I've read it multiple times since. It spoke to me in a way no other book had before.

Schneider's books can be viewed at: <http://goo.gl/HGn7xk>.

“I’d wanted to be an author since I was old enough to hold a pen, but it wasn’t until *The Mists of Avalon* that I knew I wanted to be a fantasy author,” Schneider said.

“And what’s not to like about it?

There is absolutely no limit but my imagination. The idea of molding the unbelievable into the plausible, of taking my fantasy and making it someone else’s reality—even if that reality only lasts for a couple hundred pages—I love that.”

“It seems to be a very popular

genre with a number of sub-genres across many different media. What is the attraction?

“I love the fact that fantasy has

become so popular in recent years. There is so much more out there now for the fans. Whether it be through books, TV, movies, comics and collectibles, it is so much easier to be fan now that it’s cool to be a nerd!

“I think the attraction of fantasy as entertainment is different for different people. Some simply want a risk-free escape from the everyday grind, a chance to flee the mundane. Fantasy can provide an uplifting diversion. The genre speaks of potential and opportunity. It endorses daydreams and the freedom to let your mind wander in directions it might not otherwise take—without real life judgment or opinions. It doesn’t matter how dark a story gets, there’s a certain amount of romanticism and hope surrounding events that take place in impossible worlds filled with castles and creatures.

“Personally, I see fantasy as less of an escape from life, than as a way to enhance it, our world, and our minds. Being swept away into a

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- C.L. Schneider

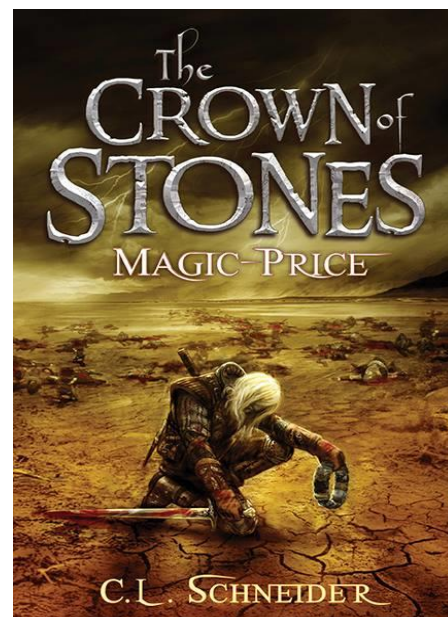
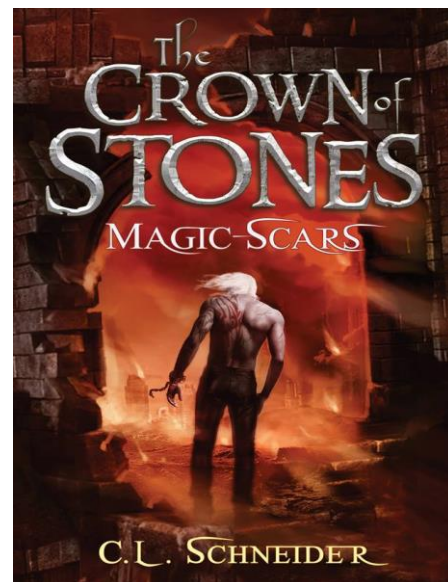
setting so foreign to our own, can expose us to new possibilities and stimulate our creativity. Following along with the trials and triumphs of varied fictional races, living through their experiences with friendship and hate, prejudice and conflict, societal and religious differences, can potentially teach us to see the same issues that plague our world in a new light. Good fantasy should broaden our perception of reality, it should expand and challenge our imaginations, and it’s up to the author to not only meet that challenge, but exceed it.”

Is it make-believe and/or is there a certain realism contained in fantasy writing?

“Fantasy is make-believe — to an extent. Being able to suspend disbelief, to let go of reality in favor of make-believe, is a key element to enjoying fantasy. Yet, if you break it down, you can find a kernel of realism in all fantasy.

“A bear attacks a young man in the forest. The man is fleeing a fight with his cruel, overbearing uncle who was trying to turn the young man against his family. Now, replace that bear with a three-headed, fire-breathing dragon, the man with an axe-wielding long-lost prince who has escaped the clutches evil wizard who may or may not have succeeded in turning the poor, unsuspecting prince into a killing machine bent on destroying his own realm.

“These bits of reality infused within the story, can help us relate, no matter how fantastical the scene.





Synopsis: A Trilogy:

From a land long-divided by prejudice and fear, comes the story of Ian Troy, a magic-user bred for war. Reviled for their deadly addiction to magic, Ian's people suffer in slavery. Their magic. Their once great empire lies buried, lost beneath the sand and a thousand years of secrets—until Ian unearths the Crown of Stones. Ignorant of its true purpose, Ian wields the circlet's power and brings peace to the realms, but at a terrible price.

A decade later, scarred and guilt-ridden, Ian has rejected his heritage and his magic. Old enemies have resurfaced and new ones have risen to seize *The Crown of Stones*. Unwittingly drawn into the conflict, Ian's addiction reawakened.

Caught in a web of obsession and lies, Ian returns to the past to save the future in a time-spanning journey fraught with loss, betrayal, torture, friendship and love. His beliefs and convictions, his knowledge of magic and history are challenged as Ian unlocks the mysteries of *The Crown of Stones*. Despite devastating personal consequences, he clings to a hope for peace. But how much is he

willing to sacrifice? How much burden can he carry? And how far can a man fall before he can't rise again?



Next, please meet Kyra Jacobs, an author who describes herself as an “extroverted introvert who writes about love, humor and mystery.”

Kyra: “When this Hoosier native isn't pounding out scenes for her next book, she's likely outside, elbow-deep in snapdragons or spending quality time with her sports-loving family. She also works for a local municipality full time, putting her M.P.A. from Indiana University to good use.”

What brought you to the fantasy genre? What do you like about it?

“To be honest, I never planned to start writing fantasy novels. Don't get me wrong—I love reading them. Heck, some of my favorite titles and authors are in the fantasy and paranormal genres. As an author, though, I didn't think I could write in a world where rules and locations weren't set in stone. But then I had a scene flash to mind, one with a magnificent golden dragon rescuing a bewildered young woman from Indiana—hey, I gotta write my roots in there somehow—and the idea wouldn't leave me alone. I finally sat down and began toying with the storyline (think *Game of Thrones* meets *Alice in Wonderland*). In no time at all, this alternate reality had sucked me in.

As for why I like writing in this genre, I can sum the attraction up



Kyra Jacobs

in one word: freedom. It's been quite freeing, really, being able to bend the rules of reality by incorporating the fantasy elements of shape-shifters, wizards and witches. While my contemporary romance novels are expected to follow genre troupes and flows, with fantasy I am able to write the story that's on my heart and take creative liberties that might not be as welcomed in other genres.

It seems to be a very popular genre with a number of sub-genres across many different media. What is the attraction? Is it make-believe? What is good fantasy writing like? Does it contain underlying realism and, if so, is that necessary in good fantasy-writing? Can it be just 'escapism' and 'entertainment' or does it need more, in your opinion, to be 'good'?

I'm so glad that you added the last sentence into that question, as so much of what makes a novel 'good' or 'bad' is truly subjective. What one reader devours, another may thumb their nose at. For me, personally, I love fantasy novels built upon a believable foundation. Sure, the setting could be in the past/present/future, it could be here or on another planet or in

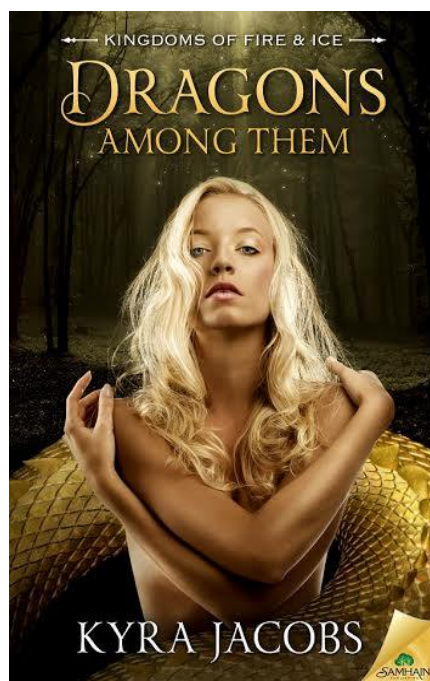
another dimension, but if I don't have solid ground on which to base my understanding of the characters and what's driving them forward in the story, I can't connect with them. And if I can't connect with a character, it's rare for me to keep reading.

While *DRAGONS AMONG THEM* is set in a fictional, alternate reality, there is a significant amount of realism behind the settings and characters. It's not a complete fairy tale by any stretch, though. Life is hard in their world, characters are pained and broken. But there's beauty there as well. (And dragons—you can't go wrong with handsome guys who shift into dragons.) All joking aside, though, I built what I believed to be a reasonable amount of 'realism' into the story so that my readers could understand why my characters behaved the way they did. As the story (and the overall series) progresses, the characters grow and stretch, just as we do in our everyday lives."

Who are some of your favorite authors who write in the genre/sub-genres? Why do you like them?

"I always struggle with this question, because there's never enough space to give credit where proper credit is due. Growing up, I adored Ray Bradbury and The Martian Chronicles. In high school someone handed me my first Stephen King—*The Tommyknockers*—and that took fantasy/sci-fi to a whole new level. Both were extremely talented authors who made 'different' believable. More recently I've enjoyed the likes of Jim Butcher, Cassandra Clare, Juliette Cross and Rhenna Morgan. Each brings believable characters and their

journeys into a fantasy world that mixes with our own."



Two worlds. One unstoppable passion. A fiery secret that could destroy them all.

Synopsis:

DRAGONS AMONG THEM

Prince Zayne Godfrey, heir to Edana's throne, is betrothed to the lone princess of rival kingdom Forath. While his heart is not in the arranged marriage, he will do his royal duty.

When he finds a beautiful stranger cornered by a pack of wolves, he doesn't hesitate to shift into his golden dragon form to save her. She thanks him by taking one look at him and fainting dead away.

Photographer Adelaide Miller is in England for a career-making shoot when a bizarre jogging mishap lands her in a dangerous, medieval-like world of royals, wizards and dragon-shifting men. Her first instinct is to find her way back, but the fire-breathing prince intent on protecting her threatens to melt her heart.

Zayne's burning passion for Adelaide not only jeopardizes the fragile peace between two kingdoms, it uncovers a ruthless plot to destroy his family. Remaining together may change Adelaide's very definition of home—and expose one searing secret that could forever shift the balance of power in Zayne's world.

You can find Kyra Jacobs web sites at:

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/KyraJacobsBooks>

Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/KyraJacobsBooks>

Website:

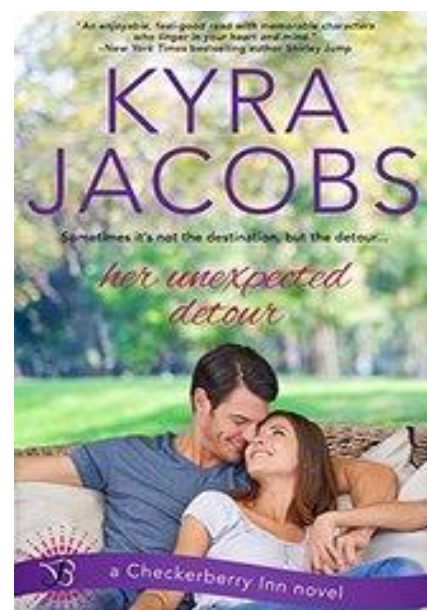
<http://www.KyraJacobs.wordpress.com>

Blog:

<http://www.IndianaWonderer.wordpress.com>

Goodreads:

<http://www.goodreads.com/KyraJacobs>



Our next author refers to himself as “the proverbial bookworm.” Meet Nicholas Rossis - proud dad, lover of ancient Greek history and “proverbial bookworm,” who lives outside of Athens.

This is what he told us about his home life and work:



Nicholas C. Rossis

“Even as a child, I loved reading. As an awkward teenager, I spent hours upon hours in our school library, and checked out a dozen books each weekend. I was the proverbial bookworm.

“At some point, I came across Tolkien and was taken by his mythology and the archetypal images his writing conjured. I read everything I could find of his, from *Silmarillion*—an unrecognized gem if I’ve ever saw one—to the lighter-in-tone *Hobbit*.

“*Middle Earth* had fired up my imagination, with its epic good versus evil storyline, complex heroes and distinctive lack of magic: instead of Gandalf simply vanquishing his enemies with fireballs, he bashed their heads with his staff. It was this emphasis on everyday struggle, this down-to-earth approach, that most captivated me.

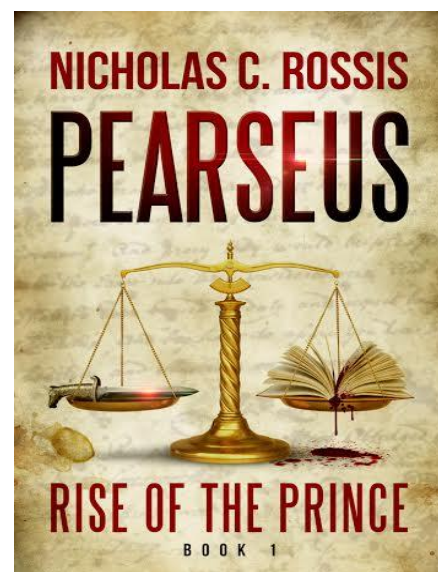
“Plus, *hobbits*. This least expected of heroes, echoing Britain’s unexpected resistance to Nazi Germany. The ones destined to save a corrupted world, failed by both nobles and immortals. Tolkien’s heroes are unassuming, next-door kind of characters, and that appealed to me.

“Many, many books later, I had just finished Martin’s *Song of Fire and Ice* series, and picked up Jim Lacey’s *The First Clash* and Herodotus’ *Cyrus the Great and Rise of Persia*, which describe the fatal battle on Marathon between Greece and Persia in the 5th century BC.

“Marathon Bay is a 20’ drive from my home, and I’d often visited the tomb where the ancient Athenians buried their dead, so I thought at the time, “wouldn’t it be great if someone did what Martin did for medieval England, only with the story of Greece vs. Persia? And in space? How cool would that be?” Then it occurred to me: so, what’s stopping *me* from writing it?

“Thus, *Pearseus* was born. It is as far from Tolkien’s Middle Earth as you can imagine, with a storyline set on a terraformed planet, in the near future. It combines ancient Greek city-states with *Dune*-like politics; so much so, that a reviewer described it as “*Game of Thrones* meets *Dune*.” And it lacks any RPG-like magic, even as paranormal happenings do occur.

“Still, I’d like to think that we also share many similarities: my heroes stumble from failure to failure just as often as they emerge triumphant. They have to use their wits and whatever ancient weapons lie around, instead of magical spell. And they come from all walks of life.



“To me, all that is important. I’m particularly fond of multi-dimensional characters, whether they’re the hero or the antagonist. I want my heroes flawed, not perfect. And I’m particular about understanding the antiheroes even better than I do my heroes. Ideally, I want people to think, “hell, yeah, if I were in their shoes, I’d probably be a paranoid, blood-thirsty dictator, too.”

“You see, in my view, life isn’t perfect. Why should fiction be?”

The Epic Series:

Pearseus, Rise of the Prince: Book 1 of the Pearseus epic fantasy series

“*Pearseus* does for ancient Greece what *Game of Thrones* did for Medieval England.” - Reviewer

Synopsis:

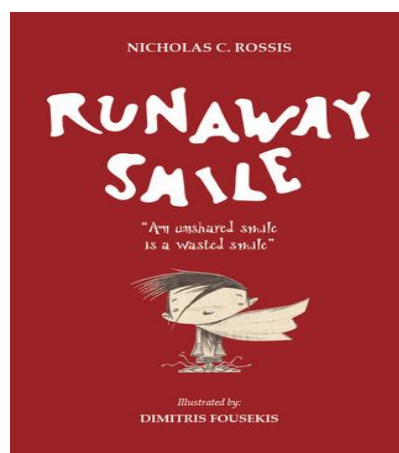
“Three hundred years after humans crash land on Pearseus, Styx, the Capital’s cruel ruler, learns of a dark prophecy: Cyrus, a young boy, will one day slay her. She imprisons him, but days before his execution he escapes with the help of the First, the planet’s native inhabitants. On their way to safety, nightmarish

monsters attack. Cyrus flees, scared and alone, until a pair of First warriors rescue him and spirit him away to the mysterious Old Woman.

“All Cyrus wants is to reunite with his family. But the Old Woman insists Cyrus is the foretold instrument in the First's ancient war against a shadowy enemy who will stop at nothing to prevent him from fulfilling his destiny. Heart and mind war within Cyrus as he must choose between rejoining his family and preventing humanity's extinction.”

Brief Biography

“Nicholas Rossis lives to write and does so from his cottage on the edge of a magical forest in Athens, Greece. When not composing epic fantasies or short sci-fi stories, he chats with fans and colleagues, writes blog posts, walks his dog, and enjoys the antics of two silly cats and his baby daughter, all of whom claim his lap as home. His children's book, *Runaway Smile* has won the Gellett Burgess Book Award.”



What readers are saying about Nick's fantasies:

“Most avid readers still have books from their childhood which they

read over and over again. 'Runaway Smile' has joined the list.”

“From the very first sentence I realized I was not reading a book - I was going on an adventure.”

“The strength of Rise of the Prince is two-fold: Mr. Rossis' flowing, concise writing and his brilliant use of ancient Greek history.”

On Nick's Amazon site, one of the many five-star reviews of *Runaway Smile* stated:

“I woke up this morning and I had lost my smile and it wasn't my fault and I looked everywhere and it was gone. Then I met a workman and a king and the best salesman in the world and a clown and no-one wanted to give me theirs. At school, I asked Miss to give me hers, but she gave us a pop quiz instead, and then no-one was smiling and...”

“A little boy wakes up in the morning and realizes he has lost his smile. After spending the entire day trying to find it, he learns the truth behind smiles: the only real smiles are the shared ones.”

“Another reviewer: “A brilliant book to read with your family, especially if you'd like to witness the reaction of the little ones. Every page is a joy to read and the illustrations are excellent.”

For more on Nick or to chat:

<http://bit.ly/1G79bQS> -

BlogNovel Authors:

<http://bit.ly/1JZEQct>

Facebook:

<http://on.fb.me/18lyLr5>

Twitter:

<http://bit.ly/1dKgsPT>

Google+:

<http://bit.ly/1IkzR22>



Please meet Paul Coey, of Northern Ireland, an author who wrote The Messenger, the prequel to The Banished. In The Messenger, Coey writes about war, and about “brigands, hunger and unspeakable hardship.”



Paul Coey

“Growing up in Northern Ireland from the onset of the euphemistically named Troubles, I found fantasy in my early teenage years through Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings. The wonderful escapism of that book affected me deeply, touching upon self-sacrifice, duty, comradeship, and the eternal struggle of good over evil. And from it a love of sweeping literature took root in a boy growing up in dark times. The scars from my youth live with me to this day, and my first book, The Messenger, draws upon my experience to deliver a harrowing story of duty, desertion, guilt and atonement underpinned by the pain of a man suffering PTSD. So it's a dark story, albeit with flashes of humor throughout, something which I think readers of Joe Abercrombie's or Glen Cook's works might appreciate.

“So, Tolkien was the beginning, but way back in the 1970s his work seemed a lonely tree in a fantasy wilderness. There was Alan Garner, he of The Weirdstone of Brisingamen

and *Moon of Gomrath* fame, books which I read and re-read at the time. I also discovered Ursula le Guin with her Earthsea Quartet, and later Marion Zimmer Bradley and the Avalon series, but nothing which matched the breadth and scope of Middle Earth. It was only after I left university that I rediscovered fantasy, borrowing and later buying Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time mammoth 14 book series that was eventually completed by Brandon Sanderson after Jordan's death in 2007. After that it seemed that fantasy had grown as a genre, albeit as one which was still considered a "*potentially malodorous genre*", (The Guardian Review, 18th May, 2002), from fringe reading into mainstream.

"I still consider Tolkien to be the gold standard, and indeed *The Lord of the Rings* was repeatedly voted the book of the 20th century in poll after poll; yet, despite its popularity, fantasy still lacked gravitas in literary circles. I find that strange, even today, for, in my opinion, fantasy is the most malleable of all genres to explore difficult contemporary issues; for example, religious persecution or intolerance, in a "neutral" setting. Of course, a book's foremost objective is to entertain, to wrap the reader in something else, somewhere else, but escapism doesn't mean the book can't be a vehicle for controversy or debate either. Personally, I prefer my books gritty and realistic, and Joe Abercrombie's First Law series is a fantastic example of that, combining larger than life characters Sand dan Glokta and Logen Ninefingers with cracking dialogue, where each conversation involving Glokta has an internal monologue proceeding in parallel. It's both dark and funny, and as a tool provides Abercrombie

with endless mileage for cynical comment, something at which he excels.

So, is realism necessary for

successful fantasy writing?

Absolutely not, I'd say, but bear in mind that agents and publishers hate it when authors restrain the story for the sake of delicacy. If you're a writer, then be true to the character, the story, your audience, and yourself as a writer, and I think you'll get it just about right, noting, though, that what may be acceptable language or scenes for adults, would definitely be out-of-bounds for YA readers—your audience, if that's your pitch.

Currently I'm reading a diverse selection of books, an eclectic mix of historical fiction, fantasy (shock!), horror—not really my thing, but I love the Passage trilogy by Justin Cronin, and am awaiting the final installment in June), and whatever else appeals at the time.

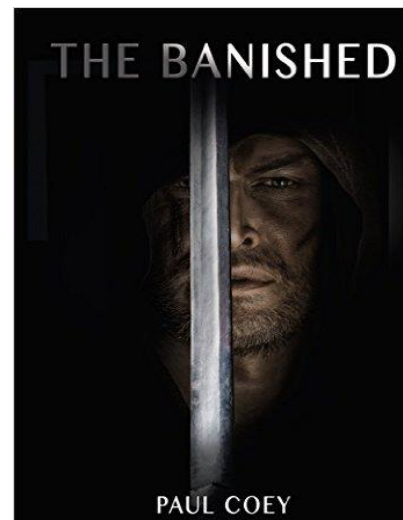


The first of my books, *The Messenger*, is a story of pitiless war rooted in ancient days when the Nameless were first defeated and cast down. Unable to repel the invading fíos, the northerners turn their eyes and hopes for salvation

south, sending messenger Fálnir Aasberg to the kingdom of their ancient allies in a desperate plea for aid.

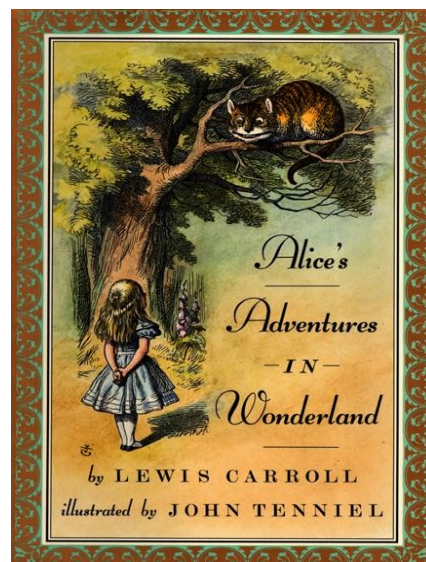
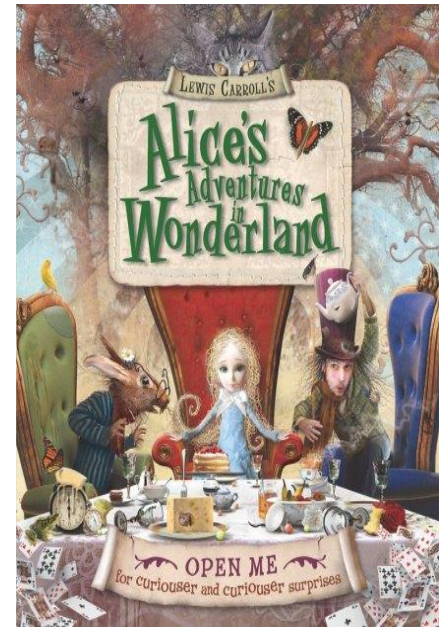
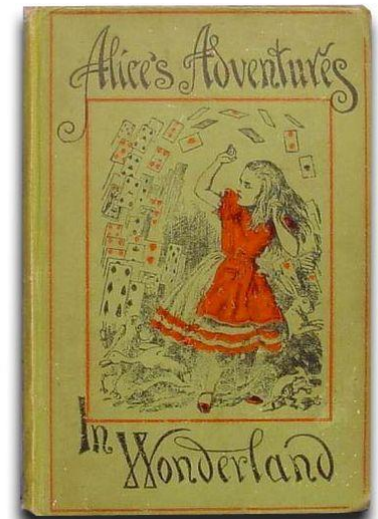
"Enduring brigands, hunger and unspeakable hardship in Annessa's bitter midwinter, Fálnir struggles with his conscience when faced with the loss and murder of his wife, his sanity slowly unravelling among the ghosts of those he met and lost along the way: men he admired, women he loved, the children he could not save. A broken, haunted man, Fálnir must deliver his message to save thousands. Maybe even himself.

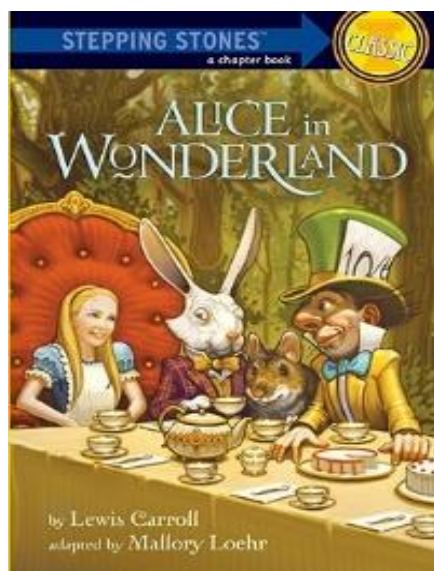
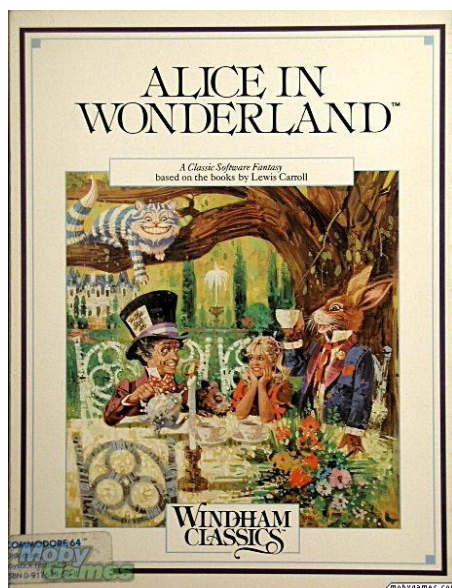
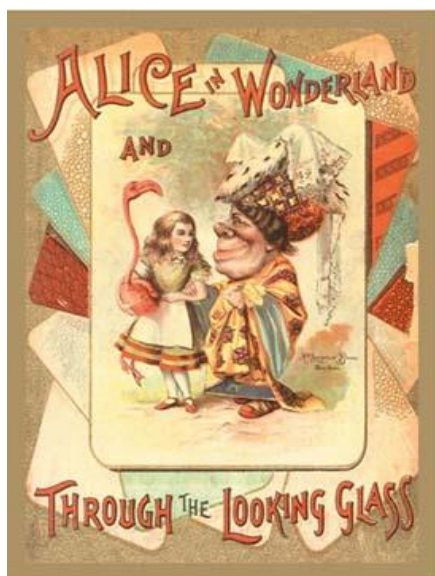
The Messenger is also the prequel to *The Banished*, the first book in a four-part series called *The Age of*



Endings. Much lighter in tone than

The Messenger, *The Banished* is the story of Ruyen Artisson, a young man struggling under the weight of expectation and distrust arising from ancient heritage he would disown but cannot avoid. By turns admirable and hard to like, Ruyen is a flawed character, the type of person I prefer to read about. There is something unsettling about cheering for an obnoxious performer; the bad boy

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Project Gutenberg's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll

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Title: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Author: Lewis Carroll

Posting Date: June 25, 2008

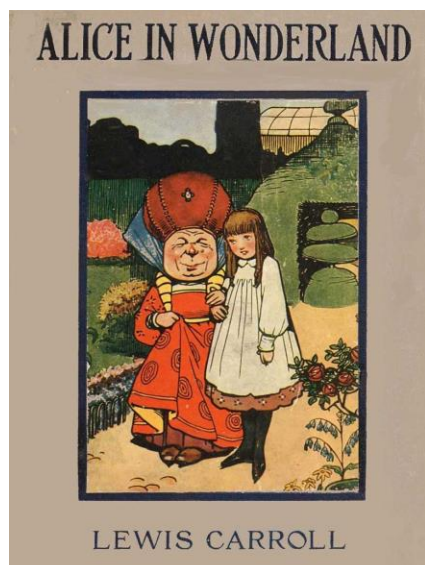
[EBook #11]

Release Date: March, 1994

[Last updated: December 20, 2011]

ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

Lewis Carroll



THE MILLENNIUM FULCRUM EDITION 3.0

CHAPTER I

Down the Rabbit-Hole

"Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, 'and what is the use of a book,' thought Alice 'without pictures or conversations?'

So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.

There was nothing so VERY remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so VERY much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, 'Oh dear!

Oh dear! I shall be late!' (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the Rabbit actually **TOOK A WATCH OUT OF ITS WAISTCOAT-POCKET**, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and fortunately was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down a very deep well.

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and book-shelves; here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labelled 'ORANGE MARMALADE', but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.

'Well!' thought Alice to herself, 'after such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs! How brave they'll all think me at home! Why, I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house!' (Which was very likely true.)

Down, down, down. Would the fall NEVER come to an end! 'I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?' she said aloud. 'I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think--' (for, you see, Alice had

learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a VERY good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) '--yes, that's about the right distance--but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to?' (Alice had no idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but thought they were nice grand words to say.)

Presently she began again. 'I wonder if I shall fall right THROUGH the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downward! The Antipathies, I think--' (she was rather glad there WAS no one listening, this time, as it didn't sound at all the right word) '--but I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know. Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia?' (and she tried to curtsy as she spoke--fancy CURTSEYING as you're falling through the air! Do you think you could manage it?) 'And what an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere.'

Down, down, down. There was nothing else to do, so Alice soon began talking again. 'Dinah'll miss me very much to-night, I should think!' (Dinah was the cat.) 'I hope they'll remember her saucer of milk at tea-time. Dinah my dear! I wish you were down here with me! There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that's very like a mouse, you know. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?' And here Alice began to get rather sleepy, and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy

sort of way, 'Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?' and sometimes, 'Do bats eat cats?' for, you see, as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it. She felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah, and saying to her very earnestly, 'Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?' when suddenly, thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over.

Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up on to her feet in a moment: she looked up, but it was all dark overhead; before her was another long passage, and the White Rabbit was still in sight, hurrying down it. There was not a moment to be lost: away went Alice like the wind, and was just in time to hear it say, as it turned a corner, 'Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!' She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again.

Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass; there was nothing on it except a tiny golden key, and Alice's first thought was that it might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but, alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them. However, on the second time

round, she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; 'and even if my head would go through,' thought poor Alice, 'it would be of very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin.' For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately, that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible.

There seemed to be no use in waiting by the little door, so she went back to the table, half hoping she might find another key on it, or at any rate a book of rules for shutting people up like telescopes: this time she found a little bottle on it, (which certainly was not here before,' said Alice,) and round the neck of the bottle was a paper label, with the words 'DRINK ME' beautifully printed on it in large letters.

It was all very well to say 'Drink me,' but the wise little Alice was not going to do THAT in a hurry. 'No, I'll look first,' she said, 'and see whether it's marked "poison" or not'; for she had read several nice little histories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild

beasts and other unpleasant things, all because they WOULD not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that if you cut your finger VERY deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds; and she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked poison,' it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

However, this bottle was NOT marked 'poison,' so Alice ventured to taste it, and finding it very nice, (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavor of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast,) she very soon finished it off.

What a curious feeling!' said Alice; 'I must be shutting up like a telescope.'

And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this; 'for it might end, you know,' said Alice to herself, 'in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?' And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle is like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing.

After a while, finding that nothing more happened, she decided on going into the garden at once; but, alas for poor Alice! when she got to the door, she found she had forgotten the little golden key, and when she went back to the table for it, she found she could not possibly

reach it: she could see it quite plainly through the glass, and she tried her best to climb up one of the legs of the table, but it was too slippery; and when she had tired herself out with trying, the poor little thing sat down and cried.

things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.

So she set to work, and very soon finished off the cake."

'Come, there's no use in crying like that!' said Alice to herself, rather sharply; 'I advise you to leave off this minute!' She generally gave herself very good advice, (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. 'But it's no use now,' thought poor Alice, 'to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make ONE respectable person!'

Soon her eye fell on a little glass box that was lying under the table: she opened it, and found in it a very small cake, on which the words 'EAT ME' were beautifully marked in currants. 'Well, I'll eat it,' said Alice, 'and if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow smaller, I can creep under the door; so either way I'll get into the garden, and I don't care which happens!'

She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself, 'Which way? Which way?', holding her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing, and she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size: to be sure, this generally happens when one eats cake, but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way

