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A is for Alice

George A. Walker
The Porcupine's Quill (December 2009)
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Alice in Wonderland has inspired the imaginations of generations of readers, writers, and artists the world over. In *A Is for Alice*, the visceral merriment and eccentricity at play in Lewis Carroll's original masterwork shine brightly. Via twenty-six of his intricate wood engravings on the subject (which number close to an amazing two hundred), expert book-maker and printer George A. Walker offers a glimpse of some of the most memorable moments and characters of Wonderland fame.

The book's release is a mere three months before the highly anticipated blockbuster *Alice in Wonderland*; while this may be fortuitous timing, *A Is for Alice* is strikingly different from Tim Burton's prismatic feature. Walker's Wonderland is captured in bold slashes—stark, physical renderings of movement and emotion in solid wood. Each image offered here provides evidence of its creation; there is a reminder, with each turn of the page, of the hand and thought that guided each groove. Walker's ability to impress such great detail (as in the grain of both the fur of the Cheshire Cat, and the branch upon which he is perched) in a print made with woodblocks is remarkable, and is a testament to the quarter-century Walker has dedicated to creating books.

The author's careful selection of passages and images encourages readers to take as little or as much time with the text as they wish. The woodcut images themselves provide plenty to ponder (feeling at times to be actual snapshots of the fantastic and bizarre heroine's journey) and the alphabetical layout offers similarly brief, yet telling, almost anecdotal-feeling narrative. Carroll's charm is ever-present in Walker's playful choices for the letters' representatives, ranging from the understated "C is for Caterpillar" to the active "U is for the Jack (Knave) Under Arrest." Wonderland is nothing if not a realm of wordplay, and Walker successfully continues the game.

At the heart of this book is the *art* of the book, pages kissed by poetic samples of Carroll's writing and bound using artisan techniques onsite at The Porcupine's Quill headquarters. It is a high-quality, collectable edition in which fans of the *Alice* stories, bibliophiles, and young readers will delight.

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