

Alice Falls Again

DJ Stoneham

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Alice Falls Again is a fun and creative continuation of a classic story.

Fantastical wonders and head-over-heels adventures abound in D. J. Stoneham's fantasy novel *Alice Falls Again*.

Alice is packing to move to London and study history at the university when the sound of a train whistle catches her attention. She goes to investigate and discovers a miniature train traveling on the surface of the river not far from her home. Its tiny passengers are in a state of panic. They cry out to Alice for help, and as she reaches for them, she loses her balance and tumbles into the river herself. Alice's fall becomes the starting point for a roller coaster of an adventure that takes Alice back into a world she knows well: Wonderland.

The book is written as a sequel to Lewis Carroll's classic tale about Alice's tumble down the rabbit hole. It takes place a few years after the original story and fuses the world of Wonderland with classic English nursery rhymes.

Written in a joyful tone, the text is laced with just enough sarcasm and joviality to keep it from becoming saccharine. Alice is adventurous and aware of her strengths and her weaknesses. Occasionally she is less than pleasant, and the fantastical and imaginary creatures she encounters are variously friendly, rude, caring, selfish, and sad, just like humans.

With a story that consists of one adventure after another that Alice falls into more or less by accident, the book is fun to read, though its narrative arc is only loosely constructed. This is true to the original story, though the book's lack of a clear direction and its continuous introduction of new characters and events becomes taxing.

The language is light and playful, even in the darker moments of the story. Sentences are rhythmic, at times even poetic and musical. That parts of the story are based on nursery rhymes is refreshing, particularly in this similarly new take on a well-known story. All the nursery rhymes included are listed at the end.

By the end, the book's many narrative strands are wrapped up neatly, and the book clearly articulates the message of its story. Just as the beginning of the book echoes that of the original adventure, this final scene fits.

Though there are moments at which it struggles to stay upright, *Alice Falls Again* is a fun and creative continuation of a classic story.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (April 18, 2019)

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