



In Love with Alice: A Thirtover Novel

Alon Preiss

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Alon Preiss's *In Love with Alice* weaves a complex, magical web of love, betrayal, and secrets that spans years and continents.

In the 1980s, after a massive financial failure, Alice, a young New York entrepreneur, contemplates rebuilding her life. But she finds herself living in the shadow of the secretive older man who marries her to save her from ruin. Secrets, and what we do to hide them, take center stage in this novel that is at once dreamlike and prosaic, poetic and practical.

Each character in *In Love with Alice* has a secret: an uncanny gift for learning Asian languages, a lost love, or wounds from an old tragedy. Each is also in some way awkward, made so either by nature or by the weight of the past. Characters are filled with the mad desire to “throw themselves together with a hungry intensity” and collide “like shooting stars,” yet they hide from each other the very details that would provide access to their souls. In spite of it all, love blooms, costs are counted, and prices are paid.

Preiss's prose shimmers, with fragmentary sentences adding lilt to its movement. Pacing ranges from brisk to languid, depending on the needs of the scene, and never drags. Some scene changes are abrupt, but the narrative quickly sets each new stage, smoothing out the flow.

Graceful, passionate, and earthy, the narrative skillfully conveys emotions and the means by which they are masked. When Alice cries that she longs “desperately for the intensity of shared tragedy,” Preiss shows how deep the need for the honest, raw sharing of emotions and experiences can be, and how essential such sharing is to authentic relationships and lives fully lived.

Preiss has a gift for creating vivid, pointed descriptions: an actress has a smile so wide that “her uvula seemed to swing and sway in the wind,” a man is “plastic-handsome,” and a pair of jeans is described as being “a shade of faded blue engineered for royalty.” Each of the novel's themes, and each of the several relationships portrayed, is intense and poignant in its own right, and the frailties and foibles of Preiss's characters are revealed in a manner that is at once guarded and intimate.

The text does contain some distracting errors in grammar, syntax, and diction, though. Character descriptions are not always consistent, and details in scenes are sometimes muddled.

With *In Love with Alice*, Alon Preiss draws the threads of multiple lives and relationships into a complex web to offer a compelling look at how chosen facades can cause people to lose sight of their real selves, real needs, and real lives.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November 1, 2016)

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