

My Alice

by Cary Briel

My story begins where so many have ended, strapped fast to a cold table, just moments from a lobotomy needle and anything resembling the man that I am.

It's impossible to convey this horror. Bound, as it were. Restrained, watching an officious little prick prepare the syringe, hastily sanitized, with the same disregard one might exercise in changing dirty blades on an old, steel razor. He turns and walks, and without the slightest hesitation, forces six inches of thin, cold steel into the top of my eye socket.

Truthfully, the anticipation was the worst part and most terrifying. Because I'd been informed that this was coming, I'd had plenty of time to prepare the worst thoughts. I'd run through numerous scenarios for how it would be, but as things turned out, it was quick.

A casual stroll from a side table, as if the attendant had performed the procedure a hundred times before, and then, eyelid lifted...stick!

That's what he believed he'd be doing, anyway. But the day was his to be ruined. He barely got the tip of that needle through whatever tough membrane separates my eye socket and brain, when hell fell down from above.

You know, I'd read a thousand books in my childhood. Most, science fiction. In those days, this was the escape of choice for nerdy types like me and my friends. Reading. Many of those books were far-fetched, but I'll tell you this, what happened next in that lobotomy room put the wildest of those stories to shame, because a

character, who I doubt even the greatest of scifi writers could write, saved me.

I want to say, he came from the ceiling.

Melted. That's what happened to the little fucker, wielding his pointy implement of terror. Melted is the best description I have for what I saw, though perhaps, even this as a description doesn't say it.

Needless to say, one second, he was. The next, not, leaving the needle sticking right out of my eye socket.

He disintegrated right before my eyes. But not just him, the two others also in the room. The gorillas, as I called them. It always took gorillas to restrain me and strap me down. These two met with a similar fate. Jellied, pooled, just the same, on the scuffed, white floor below. They too ceased to be living.

And the room, for reasons I'm at a loss to explain, it jellied too. Its walls, as white as its floor, its ceiling, with its crisscross of black rails between white ceiling tiles, all melted. All ran together, like the mixing of paint, and drained away!

Why he saved me, I can't explain that either, but I believe, now thinking on the matter, that he must've been watching me from the start, from those days in youth when I'd held creatures like him in such high regard.

I watched everything melt, that day, everything but me. Or did I?

Now let me tell you about Alice. Oh Alice, when you read these words, unclasp your hands from around me. Let me have one inch of movement, as I used to know, before the world ran, like colors, away.

I talk to her like this. She asks that I do.

We're close. The other day, for example, I licked her. Not literally, because that would be impossible. Let's just say, until a creature drops through a ceiling and takes you straight up, and changes you, all the licks you'll ever lick will be literal. Do you follow? In your world, your literal tongue, full of taste buds, does the licking. But when I licked Alice, it didn't necessitate movement at all. Ever since everything melted and pooled, it's only thought that's remained distinct. That's how Alice can hold me and how I can lick her so non-literally.

So I licked her, and no sooner did I manage this, she called me Jerome.

Don't ask. You wouldn't believe the inside joke behind that one.

Oh Alice, unweave your tightly woven fingers. Let me move just a little away. Unwind the essence of me from you. Unwrap your legs. Distinguish your liquiflesh from mine...

So I licked Alice, and what does she taste like, you ask? I thought you'd never ask. Alice tastes like burnt toast. She always has. I can only assume, a little of that has rubbed off on me, with us being so close, and between you and me, I can't say I'm happy about that.

Does Alice lick back? Hmm. (One hundred thousand millennia pass as I think on this question.....Alright, I'm back!) Do you see how time passes in this liquified state? I can do numberless millennia, thinking, and for you it's simply a few words and punctuation.

At any rate, all my thinking has been for nought. I don't know if Alice licks back. Pretty dumb answer for thinking that many years, huh? Maybe I should just ask her.

Oh Alice, do you lick back?

Alice is angry with me. It may take her a while to answer...If she does before this entry is done, I'll tell you.

But now I need to relate a story. I need to go back to the day that I met her, my Alice, my love, who locks me up so, in her sticky, hot embrace. On that day, I wasn't so sure as I am now that Alice is a good thing.

So at first, I thought I hadn't melted at all. I mean, I'm watching the kid with the needle, straight out of the eye he poked. I'm looking right at him and witnessed him dissolve. And everything else too.

So let's skip past what I thought, right to the truth.

Okay, I melted. I can say it now. It doesn't hurt anymore. To me, perceptually, it felt just like falling asleep. A tiredness, a little dizziness maybe, and then, blur..... Finally, I was dreaming. This is when I first saw her. Naturally, as in all dreams, she was real. Very real. You don't know in dreams that you're dreaming. You never do.

I came across this girl. She was wearing a short skirt. She had legs that climbed like beautiful ash trees, from her shoes to what, at the time, seemed very heaven-like. But that's beside the point. Her eyes were oceans, filled with color, every imaginable color you ever thought could exist. If her soul was contained in her eyes, my what a soul! How complex and yet, defying any description. This was the first time I saw her.

Why then, you ask, wasn't I so sure she was a good thing? Well, at the same time, she was also frightening. Sometimes, or perhaps it was when I looked at certain angles, the colors, that ocean that I saw in her eyes, raged. Storming in ways only seeing could tell. It's like having a bad dream, waking, and for moments, feeling the same horror you felt within it, only to have it slip away, departing in such

a way that you can't explain it to a best friend, or loved one. Conversations like that inevitably end with the words, "You'd need to have been there." Or as I used to say, "I wish you could've been there with me!" I can't put into words what scares me about Alice, sometimes, but if you saw that rage in her eyes, you'd be scared too.

Other times, it's just tears. Not hers, mine. I look into those colors and realize, I've been waiting my whole life for her. I was born to be entangled as such.

Oh Alice, do you feel the same? What do you see in my eyes? I ask her, since there are no mirrors in this place.

At first, we courted. Me, pooled over here. Her, over there, runny like uncooked eggs. Occasionally, she'd extend a finger or toe and touch me. She'd touch my fingers and toes. She'd reach to my side of the craft. The exhilaration I'd feel when she did it was pure bliss. The titillation.

Then, one day, it must've been that the creature who rode in the front must've leaned on a control, or a lever, and the craft pitched left, for lack of a better word or sense of direction, and Alice began rolling, long legs, blood-red lips, hair falling wildly into her eyes...She rolled in one big splash, right into me. Little did I know, we'd mix so well. So perfectly. That our colors would compliment each other's.

That's when she laced up her fingers, my Alice, and wrapped around her arms. That's when I realized, as it's been said in some old book, that two can actually become one.

I think sometimes about my old world, though. Sometimes. The literal one, where licking required a contraction of muscles. Where you were over there, and I was over here, and there was little way that we could combine, even if someone driving the craft were to

lean on a control. If it happened in that world, I'd crash into you, or you into me, and one of us would probably bitch about it. And maybe, need a BAND-AID.

Sometimes when I dream, I still hear it. Crazy fuckers, all around me. Nutty as bats, the people in that asylum. Those dreams are the bad kind, the ones I have trouble describing, later, to Alice. I'll dream that I'm propped up in a chair, in a big open room. I watch, while everything crazy carries on around me, my eyes flitting left and right in their sockets... I don't know if I've ever felt so helpless.

I wake and try my best to forget those images.

Oh Alice, clench your arms tighter. Lace up your fingers and toes. Wrap your legs tight around me. Never let me go back to that place.

