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Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was a shy Oxford mathematician, reverend, and pioneering photographer. Under the pen name Lewis Carroll he wrote two stunning classics that liberated children's literature from the constraints of Victorian moralism. But the exact nature of his relationship with Alice Liddell, daughter of the dean of his college, and the young girl who was his muse and subject, remains mysterious.

Dodgson met Alice in 1856, when she was almost four years old. Eventually he would capture her in his photographs, and transform the stories he told her into the luminous **Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass**. Then, suddenly, when Alice was eleven, the Liddell family shut him out, and his relationship with Alice ended abruptly. The pages from Dodgson's diary that may have explained the rift have disappeared.

In imagining what might have happened, Katie Roiphe has created a deep, textured portrait of Alice and Dodgson: she changing from an unruly child to a bewitching adolescent, and he, a diffident, neurasthenic adult whose increasing obsession with her almost destroys him. Here, too, is a brilliantly realized cast of characters that surround them: Lorina Liddell, Alice's mother, who loves her daughter even as she envies her youth; Edith Liddell, Alice's resentful little sister; and James Hunt, Dodgson's speech therapist, an island of sanity in Dodgson's increasingly chaotic world.

Still She Haunts Me Details

Date : Published October 1st 2002 by Delta (first published 2001)

ISBN : 9780385335300

Author : Katie Roiphe

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction

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Cathy Day says

This book reminded me very much of Christopher Bram's FATHER OF FRANKENSTEIN (which was adapted into the film GODS AND MONSTERS with Ian McKellan and Brendan Fraser). Both books revolve around "real" people and "real" events that cannot be fully known or explained. Why did James Whale, director of Frankenstein, end up dead in his LA pool? Why did Alice Liddell's family end their friendship with Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll)? Fiction fills in those historical gaps. Roiphe's meticulous research pays off here; she gracefully and lyrically transports the reader into a real-life Wonderland, an enchanted physical and psychological space inhabited by these characters. I'm impressed by the skillful use of 3rd person point of view, which shifts (often within the same chapter) between five different characters.

Eva D. says

Interesting speculative fiction about Lewis Carroll. It goes into his relationship with Alice Liddell, the supposed muse for the Alice in Wonderland.

From the writing style, it's obvious that Katie Roiphe is an English PhD. I'm having some difficulty deciding whether her references to contemporary authors are clever or gratuitous. As an English major myself, a lot of this book felt like intellectual wanking.

I would have given this four stars, but it gets creepy in the last few chapters. Roiphe has Lewis Carroll taking nude photos of Alice. I don't actually know much of his biography; only that the book was pleasant, and then began to sound like Roiphe thought she could write like Nabokov. Ridiculous.

Jacki says

I thought that this book did all the things that historical fiction is supposed to do: make you curious about the actual story, personalize history, entertain, and bring up questions...

I knew the basics of the Alice in Wonderland story- that it was written for a family friend and yadda yadda.

Had no idea that Lewis Carroll was a creeper.

I loved how this book was written. It flowed well and I couldn't put it down. I liked knowing from the get-go that there was going to be a falling out, because the whole time I was trying to figure out what it was going to be.

A short little book, but it packs quite a punch. There were parts (several actually), that were kind of disturbing to read because they were slightly graphic and it's hard to read about a grown man's fantasies of an 11 year old girl.

Worth a read, for sure.

Rachael says

Where shall I begin? I have witnessed Katie Roiphe's talent for weaving magic into her prose. The entire book is filled with lyricism and I loved every minute of it. I can only imagine the beauty she would present us with in a volume of poetry.

Riophe successfully walks the line of raising our curiosity and skirting the implications of such a relationship between Carroll and Alice. Intriguing to say the least.

I have decided to do my due diligence and read more biographical material on Carroll and view the photographs before making my own judgement. As a mother of daughters myself I am horrified to think this could have inspired the Alice in Wonderland we all love and adore.

As a lover of all sorts of twisted information, I also need to read about Victorian mores and acceptable behaviors for relationships between men and children. Perhaps more reading about John Ruskin is in order. The two share quite a few similarities.

My advice is to appreciate Riophe's writing talent and do your own research to determine what their relationship might have been.

Jenn says

This is a fictional story about Lewis Carroll (he wrote Alice in Wonderland) and the young Alice Liddell who is said to be his muse. The book is not so much a plotted story as a chronological listing of various thoughts, musings, journal entries, letters, and on occasion, anecdotes about events that happened during the 7 or so years that Dodgson (Carroll) spent with The Liddell girls. I had a hard time staying focused on the story and it was very difficult to believe considering the amount of information available from this time in the subjects life. Overall, not my favorite.

Brianna says

He realized that time moved slower for him than for his seven-year-old sister Elizabeth, because each minute that passed was a greater proportion of his life than hers. This thought nagged at him, made him anxious, since time was supposed to be the same for everyone, the absolute unit of measurement upon which everyone could agree, five minutes, a half hour, but it wasn't. Time bent and swayed depending on who you were.

I honestly think a well-written story is worth more than an interesting plotline (which is probably why me and Dean Koontz don't get along). This story, about Lewis Carroll and his Alice, has both. The plot is a little uncomfortable, but you're already wrapped up in the tale before you can protest.

Elizabeth Wallace says

The FACTS are this: Lewis Carroll befriended a young girl, Alice Liddell, and she became the inspiration for "Alice in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking Glass." And when she turned eleven her family sent him a letter, telling him they didn't want him to see her any more. Any pages from that time that might have explained what happened were ripped out of his diary.

Those are the facts. Katie Roiphe took those facts and other little tidbits from Alice and Lewis' lives, and wrote a story that COULD explain what happened. There's nothing really to back up Roiphe's story. But it's plausible. And it suuuuuure makes you wonder..

Samantha says

reread

Janet says

The title is a line from one of the 'Alice in Wonderland' poems & the book claims to be "A Novel of Lewis Carroll and Alice Liddell". I have always loved the Alice books - I've read Wonderland countless times & I'd read that this was a good book about Charles Dodgson & the girl many think was his Alice. I knew this was a fictionalized story of their relationship based on Dodgson's letters & diaries but in truth it seems based on rumor & lurid speculation. Yes, there were some who believed Dodgson was a pedophile & apparently he had a very close relationship with Alice, her sisters & countless other children during his life but this book fabricates details to emphasize the worse connotations possible. Personally I think this was a man much more comfortable in the company of children than adults. I did learn that he was an amazing photographer and I strongly recommend you go to any number of great websites that display his work. In fact, the one good thing I got out of the book was an interest in this man, and in Alice Liddell. I am starting to research the facts of his life and his photography. If you read this, please don't accept the story as the truth because it is a complete disservice to him if you do.

Katie says

Roiphe's writing was alright; otherwise, the novel was pretty terrible and not worth the time it takes to read it. It's basically another version of the Alice Liddell/Lewis Carroll story, but Roiphe sensationalizes it quite a bit, causing Carroll to come across as more of a pedophile than anything else. If you're a reader that has done research and/or any previous reading about Lewis Carroll's relationship with the Liddell family, then you know that Roiphe's portrayal of him is simply not accurate and is, in fact, distasteful.

Tamsyn J says

I've been thinking recently I need to read this book again as I really enjoyed it the first time. It's strange reading about such an iconic writer and knowing the story of Alice in Wonderland so well and then this book changed my view of Lewis Carroll entirely and made me look at the story of Alice from a whole new perspective.

Brittany says

I know it was actually about Carol Lewis being a little 'informal', I guess to put it politely, with a little girl, but for some reason the story was just endearing and rather sad. It was almost as if he wanted to understand her mind, and wanted to be a part of what he thought a child's mind would be like, but she wouldn't give it to him. I think it started to make him obsess about her, although this book is rather tame and didn't really allude to dastardly deeds between the two. For some reason I really enjoyed this book, and I sometimes wonder what it would be like to live in a child's mind as well. Would it be the bliss that Carol Lewis thought it would be? Going down the rabbit hole?

Danielle says

This book was absorbing from beginning to end. I found it so engrossing that I read it in one sitting. I did wonder a lot about the historical accuracy of what happens in this book since a Children's Lit course I took as an undergrad told a different story about Dodgson and the Liddell's but, as Roiphe points out in her afterward, the only people who really know what happened between these people are dead. So we can speculate all we want and we'll still never know.

Roiphe definitely did her research here. Reading this book made me want to re-read the works of Lewis Carroll and also Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*, which I have on my bookshelf and read sometimes when I need a creepy bedtime story to give me inspiring nightmares!

Sometimes the book is worded beautifully, while other times I found it underwhelming. The book shifts points of view a lot and it pulls the reader out of the narrative a few times.

Pam says

Disappointing. Not because Ms. Roiphe can't tell a good story, because she can. I just grew tired of the story she told. I'm a fan of history, but I think the made up tale of the uncomfortable situations between Dodgson and Alice...and then the even more uncomfortable climax - along with the addition of many unnecessary characters got to be a bit too much for me. And in the end...I still really don't feel like I knew any more about Charles Dodgson other than the fact that he had a speech impediment and that he used to tell many of his *Through the Looking Glass* stories to the Liddell children. Not only that, but proof has come out to say that Dodgson's infatuation most likely wasn't with Alice at all - which makes this made up account of the situation even more uninteresting. Maybe my imagination isn't big enough to appreciate this book.

Jenn says

I know it's a fiction, but so many facts are wrong. Easily established facts like how many children were in Carroll's family and other silly twists of fact that weren't relevant to the story so why even go there? And the ending...oh the ending what do I say...I just don't like the perpetuation of the thought that Carroll is a perv. It can't be proven that he was. And while his behavior may have been odd by our standards (or others), no one

really knows what was going on in his head and it's never been shown that he did anything the least bit inappropriate with his child-friends.

Please read *The Mystery of Lewis Carroll: Discovering the Whimsical, Thoughtful and, Sometimes, Lonely Man Who Created "Alice in Wonderland"* to learn actual truths about a talented and lonely man whose life has turned into fabrications and skewed realities because that is more tantalizing for the readers of today.

Martina says

Nicely written, and I recommend it - if you can understand and accept the fact that this is published fanfiction. There are fragments of known truth, the rest is based upon speculation (it is, after all, a NOVEL and not a biography). That said, it's a very good piece of fanfiction. Most of the characters are well written (considering the book is quite thin), and it's easy to sympathize with the main character, Charles.

Saving the fact that I'm slightly opposed to fanfiction featuring real people (dead or not), this was an enjoyable read, and it made me think and feel, as a good book should.

Seth Baker says

The book touched on interesting topics regarding Charles' relationship with Alice. Who knows, many aspects may be true! However, the ending could have been stronger. It ended abruptly.

Elizabeth Mahler says

the title describes this book well.....this book haunts me.

this is a telling of Lewis Carroll, née Charles Dogdson, & his relationship with the real Alice that we all know & love from her venture through Wonderland. at first innocent by all outward appearances, Carroll's obsession deepens & nearly destroys him.

the characters are so well written in this book, that upon my first reading (i read my favorites many times over) i felt Alice's confusion & her mother's rage & disgust as the whole story twists together.

simply beautifully written & full of recognizable moments from the Alice in Wonderland you know.

Beth_Adele says

I found this book in a 50cent throw out bin (I kid you not!)

Whilst I am not a fan of Roiphe's NYT contributions, I adored this book.

She quite remarkably wrote beautifully and lyrically of a topic that has a tremendous amount of cringe factor to it. Though really, by the time you realise where she is going with her fictionalised version of events, you are far too wrapped up in the story to worry about it.

Despite the creep factor, long time fans of the fictional Alice and her creator will love this tale of where it might have all began.

Tara Lynn says

I adored Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* when I was younger, and this fictional story, which tries to draw insight into the nature of his relationship with Alice is extremely interesting. Although I found some passages to be awkwardly written, it's a great theory to mull over. The book basically stipulates an semi-erotic relationship on the part of Carroll towards young Alice. However, I'd be interested to learn more about the man himself, and perhaps see the photographs in question, as described in the book. When presenting a work of fiction based on real people, it can often be hard to pull away from where reality ends and fiction begins. Definitely an interesting piece.
