

Fiction Feature

Alice Agog

by Lisa A. Trofymow

"I grow in the dark, I eat dung, so I became a mushroom," Alice confides to her glass with gin-dewed lips. She takes another sip.

("Infuriating self-pity. From a logical standpoint, through your perceptions you deceive yourself. The world does not deceive only you.")

She's slouched and sunk into the shadows and the red velvet cushions of her booth. The glass is balanced on her breastbone with one hand; in her other hand is the notebook. She stares at the cloud-painted ceiling above, while her stocking feet watch their surroundings from their strange tabletop viewpoint. The leaning straw in her glass seems to yearn for her lips. She toasts with irony.

Take a drink I hope to shrink so cheers to Alice and here's to malice.

The notebook is her map leading her backward, not forward. Pages pass, months pass. She stops to read.

[So I asked him (without a stammer), "Adagio's at eight o'clock?" He looked wide-eyed (eager? hoping?) and he answered, "Sure, sounds nice."]

("Nice". A conventional reply. To you he directed no innuendo.)

"One consolation", she pens in fresh ink along the margins of her map. "That night's disaster is great fodder — for more creative shit."

Constantine comes down the dale hopping in white rabbit's trail Alice runs in hot pursuit but tumbles down the bunny's chute.

Nobody here at Adagio's tells her to keep her feet on the floor. She scribbles and broods and so maintains a peculiar status; she is left alone. She sniffs the clouds of smoke which drift throughout the dim place. Intense murmuring washes everywhere — there's laughter — someone pretends to

play a guitar. Some, like Alice, are alone. Most protect themselves inside groups of three or four. All of them drink much too much, as if they must. Alice does not shirk, for she's easing through her fourth helpmate.

("You were intoxicated that night — and not just with Constantine. Had you viewed his behavior at the time objectively and soberly, you might have recognized your oblivious stupidity in generously insisting that Charlotte join your little party of two — too anxious to confront him alone.")

Charlotte, my fetal friend meet
Constantine, obsession's end dear
Charlotte, dear confidante meet
Constantine, my haunt.

("And recall how he, whom you idealized through secret longing, seemed indifferent to your suffering — you restrained yourself excellently.")

"A Cocktale; Alice Agog"

Constantine, inside my glass reflected so I cannot see that through my tongueless mouth you'll pass so I will never savor thee, hee-hee.

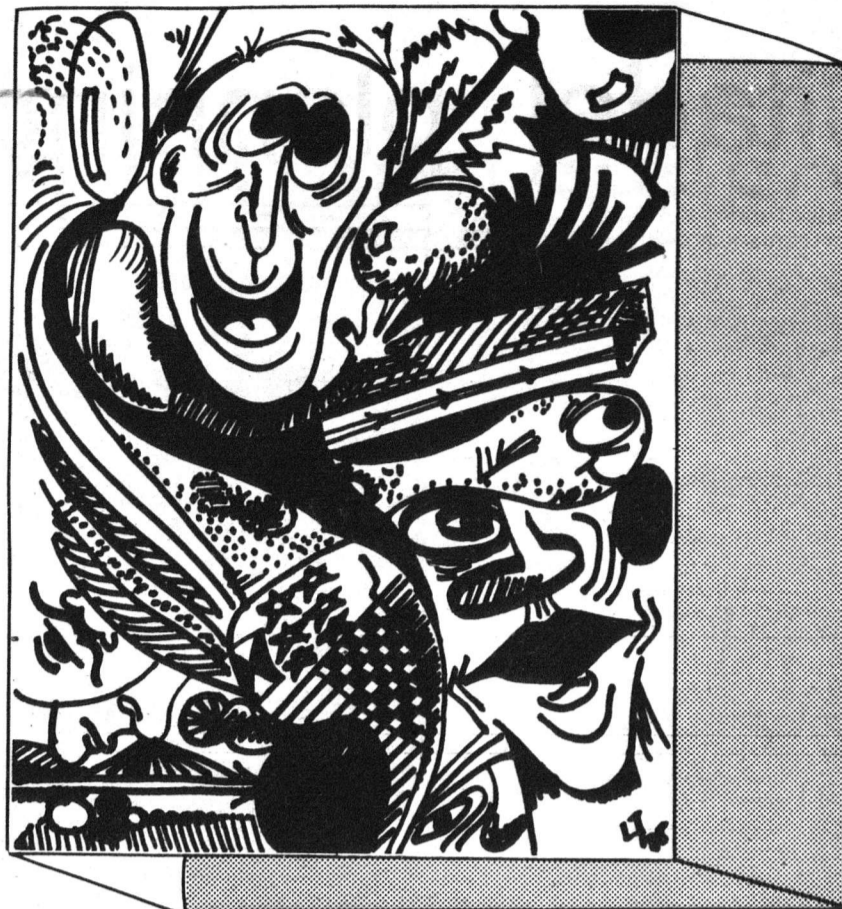
Her ice cubes lay stranded, gin-deserted, and they clink, melancholic, as Alice laughs. She sets the glass down on the table to wait for more

("Gin. An inebriating beverage having variable effects on one's perception. Ironic that you are now drinking just what you three consumed so abundantly here that memorable night.")

— gin. Those painted clouds overhead are finally floating, and she too seems freed.

("That evening, you painted Charlotte absurdly virtuous, like a saint — as if she should have spurned the young man's woozy stares and yearning hands so as to prove her eternal friendship to you; to make a sacrifice.")

"Feet washed, or a fill?" A blond-and-gel-sleeked boy (a new one, labelled with a white apron) stands staring at her, grinning,



mocking her with his folded arms and tilted hips.

She parries with, "More of the same — a g-and-t — and less of you, thank you." She retreats behind her book-shield, feet waving like flags. He seems unwounded and only takes away her empty glass.

Backpacing, she sees someone reflected in ink, but does not recognize herself now.

[Finally, after attending all of Con's recitals since first year, after our nods and smiles in the hallways, here we were drinking g & ts together, talking for hours. Until I saw Charlotte come in. Of course I had to invite her to sit with us — almost begged her to sit down — she didn't suspect that she would — I'd wished for him for too long.]

What now? Of course. The blond boy returns with her g-and-t. She asks him if he's got the time.

"Only if you do" and he sets down her glass with a flourish.

Blood from his cut colors her face. "What I haven't is a watch".

He has a pocketwatch hidden in his apron. " 'Tis almost midnight. Give it up and slow down. I'm off — for now." He gives her a wave and a smirk, then disappears.

She takes a hearty gulp.

He's rather like the Cheshire cat — his grin to boot — imagine that.

("Objectivity! He's merely cheeky-you seem incurable.")

She asks, "Or is he the —?" But she swallows no answer. One, two, three sips and she's the mushroom once again.

But it is her pen which finally finds a dim trail through her jumble. "Foiled by white-washed bunnies," she etches in her book. "Traucherous varmints — can't be caught or touched." Still she stays mushroom-like. Her gin wobbles mirthfully; drops of it wet the

pages with tears. When Alice is quiet again she sees herself reflected in the glass. And ink.

[Charlotte has disappeared. Con has dissolved. Hope they're happy. They giggled out together between night and morning. Now Peter's sweeping under my feet, he's taken away our glasses. I'm just sitting here.]

"I'm just sitting here" she echos, not loud. "Sipping."

("Thus, from a wholly scientific viewpoint

a) opposites attract
b) Charlotte — northern polarity;
Constantine — southern polarity, there fore:

c) animal magnetism.")

Alice still pouts. "But the question is —"

"Another fill?" The blond boy has reappeared, this time offering another helpmate from his own pocket.

She ignores his plea. "So why do I feel disgraced?"

But the blond boy offers her "Because it's not good taste to drink with your feet." He speaks with real white teeth. Without his white apron, as he stands enveloped in the clouds of smoke, he is perfect as her confessor.

"True," Alice answers him. "I drink shamefully. When I have something to drink." He knows, nods, and disappears again.

She stares at the ceiling until he returns with both his hands brimming. Her feet retreat beneath the table and she slides over to make room for him.

("We begin again, purely platonic.")
"Let me tell you a story," she says, as they sink down slowly together. "It begins like this."

One draught will drain these sour drops so listen close with buttoned chops to a cocktale of Alice agog...

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The Album Playlist is based on Airplay — a combination of programmer preference and listeners' requests. Tune in every Sunday at 12:00 for the Alternative Countdown — the favorite albums, EP's singles and tapes.

TOP 10 ALBUMS

1. Jerry Jerry and the Sons of Rhythm Orchestra — Road Gore: The Band That Drank Too Much (Og, Canada)
2. Various Artists — Abstract Magazine (Abstract (UK))
3. Flora Purim & Airto — Humble People (George Wein/A&M)
4. Oliver Lake Quintet — Expandable Language (Black Saint (Italy))
5. Colourbox — Colourbox (4 Ad (UK))
6. Various Artists — Till Now You Were Alone (Atelier de Motage/Pollution Control)
7. Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers — Rockin' and Romance (Twin Tone (US))
8. JFA — Live 1984 Tour (Placebo (US))
9. Various Artists — Bullets & Guitars (Mouton C-3/Central

- American Records)
10. Neil Young — Old Ways (Geffen/WEA)

Singles, EP's & Tapes

1. The Randyeters — Independent Day (XXX (Canada))
2. Independents — Far Away (Tape)
3. Red Herring — Taste Tests (Neon (Canada))
4. Topper Headon — Drumming Man (Mercury/EMI (UK))
5. Thomas Dolby — Dolby's Cube (Capitol/EMI)
6. West India Company — Ave Marie (London/Polygram)
7. The Max'd — Surreal (Black Bear (Canada))
8. The Red Hot Chili Peppers — Hollywood (Enigma/EMI)
9. Husker Du — Makes No Sense (SST Records)
10. Condition — Night & Day (Tape)