



# Alice's Adventures in Steamland: The Clockwork Goddess

*Wol-vriey*

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The American Queendoms of New York and Texas square off in this Steampunk Bizarro extravaganza!

When war erupts between Victoria Queen of Hearts and Her Majesty Mech-Anna, it sets them down a path of intrigue and violence that threatens to annihilate both dominions. With the help of Lord Busybody and his mechanical assistant Crank, Alice Sin - prostitute/assassin for hire - may be their only hope to restore peace and fulfill the United States prophecy. Many heads will roll along the way...

## Alice's Adventures in Steamland: The Clockwork Goddess Details

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# From Reader Review Alice's Adventures in Steamland: The Clockwork Goddess for online ebook

**Athena Shardbearer says**

Group Read/Steampunk, New Weird, Bizarro, Scifi, Fantasy Book Group

*No spoilers*

Alice is a prostitute turned assassin. She is on a secret mission to kill the Mad Hatter. Texas is at war with New York. The Queen of Hearts is fighter her sister, Anna who is now called Mech-Anna. There are white rabbits always running late and a Ripper on the loose.

**TEXAN FORCES DRIVEN BACK BY NEW YORK TROOPS (VICTORY IMMINENT)**

**HER MAJESTY COMMISSIONS NEW BOILER IN LOWER EAST MANHATTAN**

**RIPPER STRIKES AGAIN!**

This is nothing like the Alice in Wonderland of our childhood. Blood, guts, cake bombs and pumas! The writing is fantastic and draws you in. The world building is amazing! I find with bizarro reads there is never excess in description, giving the reader just enough to know where and what and for us to decide what the rest looks like. The creatures and machines are awesome! And this is my first steampunk book, also my first book by Wol-vriey and will not be my last.

**The Mech-Sioux chief was an immense man, with a metal right arm almost as large as his body, whirring and clanking whenever it moved. His left leg was also made out of metal, but more proportional to the rest of him. He wore a traditional feather headdress and a beaded rawhide loincloth. His massive robot hand gripped an equally massive tomahawk.**

I recommend this one to anyone that like alternate retellings. This one is by no means fluffy, but dark and gritty, but funny and enjoyable.

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**Douglas Hackle says**

In *Alice's Adventures in Steamland: The Clockwork Goddess*, Alice and a good number of the other characters from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* get reimagined and repurposed into an entertaining story of intrigue, espionage, war, alt history, and sex that takes place in the steampunk/bizarro world of "Victorian America," where the U.S. finds itself split into two warring countries fighting for control over the neutral state of Kansas and its vast coal reserves. I enjoyed the farfetched, imaginative steampunk gadgetry and weaponry in this book--e.g. giant war-spiders, airships, and "rustling mechs" (i.e. rabbit-manned, giant steam-powered robots that steal cattle). And the Mech-Sioux Indians, who engage in the practice of

mechanical body augmentation possibly only as a result of “tribal idiosyncrasy” as opposed to more utilitarian reasons--are way cool too.

The book contains a fair amount of over-the-top violence and sex, lending it a sort of pulpy, trashy feel that is in perfect keeping with the bizarro tag. The lighthearted yet deadpan, omniscient, third-person narrative voice employed throughout the novella functions to make these graphic elements more palatable by imbuing everything with an ironic tone and a sort of polite humor. Nevertheless, it's probably not the kind of book you'd want to give grandma as a gift (unless, of course, your grandma likes blood, guts, and big steel dicks.)

There's some grammatical issues here and there in the text, but I thought that the abundance of good descriptive writing that is also found in the book, along with the occurrence of more than a few well-turned phrases, offset such issues. I did find the ending of the book to be somewhat abrupt; while I thought the final appearance of Mech-Anna was awesome, I wasn't all that keen on how the story wrapped up at the conclusion--came off a little anticlimactic to me.

All things considered, *Alice's Adventures in Steamland* was a fun read, and I'll certainly read Wol-vriey again. I recommend this book to anyone who likes their speculative fiction highly weird, ultra-violent, and raunchy.

Awhile back, Wol-vriey sent me an email in which he claimed to be the recently ousted Prince of Nigeria, that he'd been forced into exile and was in need of a trustworthy individual with a U.S. bank account, someone he would compensate handsomely if said individual agreed to hold onto his US\$1.7 million just until he got his affairs in order. Like an idiot, I gave him my account info and he wiped me out clean. I might have given this book 4.5 stars, but as I'm still pissed off, I must deduct half a star.

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## Shamus McCarty says

I've read a lot of Wol's stuff. He writes very creative Bizarro Fiction, a genre that is almost indescribable due to its weirdness. So I was worried when I picked this book up, because I didn't know if that creativity was going to be stifled by rules in this Victorian America setting. What was Wol going to do, now that he can't distort time and physics anyway he feels?

I was stupid to doubt Wol. He took all that creative energy that he normally uses to create a fascinating world, and focused it on steam powered gadgets. The results are amazing. The machines Wol comes up with are so out-there, but he describes them in a way that you're like, "OK, that could actually work." And the Mech-Sioux, man those guys are straight out of Wol's bizarro roots. The creativity that went into that race of people would kill the average person.

I personally feel the book is worth a read for the gadgets alone. I know I didn't really focus on the story in this review, but I'm being honest when I say it kept me up at night because I didn't want to put the book down.

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## **Elaine Carass says**

I loved the storyline of this book and thought it was well thought and well written.

The characters were well written and likable and totally engaging. I found myself really liking Alice and her humour and found her a very strong character. The other characters always seemed to be in the background trying to break out but never just managing.

I hated the name Busybody and thought that was a let down for that character.

Been a fan of Alice in Wonderland I was always on the look out for similarities and found a few. I was expecting a Wonderland style world which I didn't get.

The character of Mech-Anna was not as well thought or written they was just something about that character that I thought was not working for the book.

I was disappointed with the ending, all the way through the book it seemed to be building up to one hell of an ending and it never happened, everything was wrote of and ended in one paragraph and that was a let down. All in all I enjoyed this book and thank Arthur for the copy he mailed me

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## **Rick says**

This was a really interesting read since it sort of follows Lewis Carroll's Alice books; unfortunately I am sad to say I have not yet read the originals so I don't know how close it really is. I did recognize some things from having seen the Disney animated version many years ago.

Wol-vriey (how does one pronounce that anyway?) did a great job as usual, there is plenty of weird stuff going on and the character development was quite good. I really enjoyed Crank with his interesting speech patterns that always start with a descriptive like or followed by all caps.

If you are a Wol fan then this is a must-read. If you are a steampunk fan and can stomach some gore and sex scenes then this would be a great first Bizarro book for you since it's not *too* wild compared to some other bizarro books I've read. I think that if some eccentric rich person wanted to make an off the wall animated movie this would be perfect for an adaptation.

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## **Edward Keller says**

Upon finishing the short introductory chapter of *The Clockwork Goddess* one realizes that there is no turning back.

This short novel (or rather just 'novel', if we pretend the post-1970's bloating epidemic had not swept the publishing world) is not in the bizarro genre as outlined by the pioneers of the field, but is rather an eccentric cousin from the genre defined in the 1990's by English titan Robert Rankin as 'Far-fetched fiction'. Only without Mr. Rankin's self-conscious humor knotting up the prose.

In other words, *The Clockwork Goddess* is as bonkers as say Rankin's *Hollow Chocolate Bunnies of the Apocalypse*, but as deadpan as Jonathan Howard's *Johannes Cabal* books. With a liberal helping of Gary Wolf's 'Who Censored Roger Rabbit'.

This is a steampunk adventure whose structure is hopelessly entangled with the world of Carroll's Alice. The

Cheshire Cats are a race of eerily smiling teleporting butlers, the March Hares have taken over all professions to do with punctuality and uniforms, and the toads are perfect toadies.

A war is waged between the two queens (heads of Texas and New York territories respectively) for possession of the enormous Kansas coal fields, while Alice is trying to break out from prostitution into the lucrative assassination business. And at night, a mystery figure dubbed by the newspapers 'Ripper' is disemboweling her former colleagues.

Sudden bursts of contemporary profanity and sexuality keep the reader from relaxing too deeply, reminding them that this was indeed published by Bizarro Press, not by Disney.  
Recommended!

P.S. There are also mechanical Texan warspider submarines.

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## **Kris Lugosi says**

"Fucking oddest palace I've ever seen.."

In Alice's Adventures in Steamland: The Clockwork Goddess, Wol-vriey mixes the classic tale of Alice in Wonderland with the disturbing world of Return to Oz while adding his own seemingly acid fueled insanity.

Talking caterpillars, top hats with bottomless compartments, a war between Texas and New York, a killer on the loose, and little Alice amongst all this chaos has traded her life on the streets for the imposter position of Lord Busybody's wife. Life wasn't all assassinate this or assassinate that for Alice Sin, that is until she met Marie Busybody. The hateful bitter wife to Lord Busybody, resents the fact that her husband will not kill his sister the Queen of Hearts and reign over New York. Lord Busybody acts as the role of Mad Hatter rightfully named given his top hat of bottomless wonders. Marie decides to hire Alice, who is a much younger prettier version of Marie herself, to seduce and kill Lord Busybody. Things go according to plan, until Lord Busybody discovers her plan to kill him and turns the tables on Alice by administering an aging serum, aging her to Marie's years and refusing Alice the anecdote until she has performed the tasks he has set about....the assassination of the Texas ruler, his other sister, Mech-Anna aka The Clockwork Goddess! Yearning to end the battle between New York and Texas, Lord Busybody feels his sister Anna has become unfit to rule and must be taken down in the name of peace.

The new assassination mission is accepted by Alice on the grounds of receiving the anecdote once The Clockwork Goddess is killed. Impossible to pull off on her own, Crank, the brass man robot constructed by Lord Busybody, is instructed to assist her on her journey. After deciding that she would rather hire The Ripper to help rather than leave him on the streets to murder more of her fellow prostitutes, Alice and Crank take a detour mission to recruit the killer who turns out to be much more familiar than anyone could have thought.

With the Texas army's advanced weaponry and surplus of coal as fuel, will our band of ragtag "assassins" be able to pull off this dangerous and risky mission in enemy territory?

Again, I am in love with every character in this book. Lord Busybody and Big Chief Little John, are probably my favorite. They both have such kind good natured hearts, especially Lord Busybody despite his

bitch wife and Alice's lies and deception. The Queen's son Prince Jackson, is a creepy, desperate little creep of a human being but he even becomes someone you love to hate as the story goes on (and then right back to hate). Wol-vriey's Alice is definitely a wrong side of the tracks girl with street smarts and a resourcefulness about her that is endearing and Crank, the brass man, is my favorite original character. Some parts of the book "jumped the ship" as I like to call it. Going from one incomplete thought and then abandoning it for another. This only happened a little bit in the very beginning of the book and doesn't really affect the plot or story much just a small observation. The ending was very lackluster and didn't have that Wol-vriey feel that I'm use to. Although, the ending sentence got a good laugh out of me.

The feel of this world is like Firefly mixed with Alice in Wonderland set in Victorian times. The floating Cheshire Cat heads and Marching Hares are wonderful little expanded characters with an original feel to them while maintaining the classic appeal. Other twists on classic elements are the cupcakes that the caterpillar, Baker, has invented. Each one will do something different and unknown to it's consumer making for an interesting torture experiment. Wol-vriey's own creations fit perfectly in this world and the detail of the mechanical hybrids is very impressive. If Alice had looked down the rabbit hole that is Wol-vriey's brain, this is what you would get. So much conspiracy, deceit and assassination schemes are abound in this steam fueled, filled to the top hat brim with family drama, strange sexual hang ups, giant mechanical spider machines of destruction, human/cow hybrids, part mechanical (where it counts) part flesh Indian allies, and chocolate covered cocks! I don't think Wol-vriey could write a book I didn't love.

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### **Donald Armfield says**

The war between New York and Texas is going down. For the coal fields in Kansas. Alice hired to assassinate The Mad Hater by his wife. The Mad Hater a tinker using steam and coal to power his inventions. As well as a 6 foot robot, and to top it all off Alice is a prostitute.

Wol-vriey packs alotta STEAM in one book. Steampunk, Bizarro, Fantasy

If Lewis Carroll ate a "Magic Cake" and had sex with a prostitute. This would be the outcome....GREAT READ!!!

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### **Ashley E says**

I entered for this book because a grown-up Alice in a steampunk American sounded pretty darn interesting. Unfortunately, it wasn't really my cup of tea. Actually, it was more like a glass of very high-proof alcohol. And I'm not much one for drinking.

The only way I can really describe this book as is strange. Very strange. And a bit crude. Alice was only a very slightly sympathetic character to me. And Dudley was, well, strange. His hat kinda freaked me out. I couldn't get into the story, the plot seemed oddly pointless, and I kept cringing at different events the characters encountered.

I hate being the one to give a bad review, so I will say this. The book was well-written, and I believe my 1 star is mainly opinion. So if you're up for gore, sex and strangeness, you may want to give it a try. Just not me.

[I received this book for free through First Reads and was not required to write a positive or any other type of review. All opinions stated herein are solely my own.]

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## **Melanie Catchpole says**

This is the second of Wolvrieys books i have read. Really enjoyed both. I look forward to the next read.

I didnt think this story was really anything like Alice in wonderland, but most of the characters were there and i was quite impressed how he worked in some of the other bits of the story like the magical cakes etc.

It read very well and i followed the story easily.

I would certainly recommend this book to my friends.

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## **Arthur Graham says**

Seems to be no shortage of Alice in Wonderland adaptations these days...

THESE days? What am I saying? There's been a nonstop barrage since the story was originally published back in 1865. From the sanitized Disney treatment to the tripped-out Svankmajer version, up through Moore & Gebbie's pornographic *Lost Girls*, poor Alice has suffered through enough film and lit adaptations to warrant a diagnosis of multiple personality disorder. And yet the adaptations persist, because her story continues to resonate with interpretive possibilities 150 years later.

Most of the rehashes have been quite redundant, to be sure, but every so often one manages to put a fresh spin on things, delving into previously unexplored areas and thereby distinguishing itself from the rest. This book clearly falls into the latter category, and I'll tell you why.

Yes, I know -- surely you're thinking "but we've seen PLENTY of Alice in This-or-That-Land already!" Even in steampunk, a genre currently enjoying its renaissance, we've begun to detect hints of young Ms. Liddle. Seeing as how her character was based on a real person from the Victorian era, it's really quite astonishing that we haven't seen more of her adventures transposed with a steampunk setting. However, in filtering this seemingly obvious combo through one of the most demented minds in Bizarro fiction, *Alice's Adventures in Steamland: The Clockwork Goddess* becomes something else altogether.

In Wol-vriey's darkly humorous tale, the United States of America has yet to be born. Instead we have the Queendoms of Texas and New York, respective dominions of Her Majesty Mech-Anna and Victoria Queen of Hearts. The sister monarchs and their subjects enjoy a truce of mutual peace and prosperity -- that is until war breaks out over the coalfields on their borders.

I won't say much else plot-wise about this unique entry into Alice's ongoing saga, but let's just say that it doesn't skimp on the sex and violence -- elements largely glossed over in Carroll's original. This isn't to say that it's a nonstop flesh and gore fest either, but Wol-vriey's irreverent take on Wonderland and steampunk convention is bound to titillate and infuriate readers just the same.

Get ready for a plunge off the deep end of the rabbit hole...



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## Jeffrey Keeten says

I read Alice in Wonderland eons ago. I had no idea what precarious circumstances Alice has gotten herself into since the last time I had spent time with her. Imagine my surprise to find that she has turned to the world's oldest profession. Madame Lola is always on the look out for new talent to keep her bordello fresh and interesting. She plucks Alice out of her menial work and teaches her how to turn tricks. As a bonus she often shares her wisdom with her young protege.

*"Physical beauty is the sole preserve of women," Madame Lola was fond of saying. "A man's beauty is in his money; the more of it he has, the better looking he is."*

My image of Alice has changed.

Alice Sin seemed like a much more appropriate working name. She turns to prostitution with relish. She happens upon a chocolate trick that is a big hit with her customers and makes uhhh swallowing easier. It doesn't take long for her to develop a desire to do something more meaningful with her life. When the opportunity arrives, it barely takes a nudge, for her to take up the world's second oldest profession...assassination. She is hired by Lady Busybody to kill her husband Dudley.

The United States is split into two countries ruled by sisters Queen Victoria and Queen Anna. Victoria controls the New York half and Anna controls the Texas half. A problem arises over my home state of Kansas. At first neither sister wanted the cantankerous state.

*"Both by reputation and in practice, Kansan natives are a difficult lot to govern--cattle rustlers, magicians, prophets, founders of strange cults, extreme rabble-rousers--not the sort of influence you want corrupting your society."*

Kansas made a fine buffer between the two kingdoms until it was discovered that it had a mega deposit of coal. Steam is the life blood of both kingdoms and burning coal is the desired fuel to keep both societies functioning. A war breaks out over Kansas.

Meanwhile Alice Sin has proved to be not as dexterous at assassination as she was at prostitution. Lord Dudley Busybody, younger sibling of Anna and Victoria, discovers her foul plot, and offers her more money than what she would earn killing him to assassinate Queen Anna.

All hell breaks loose. There are war spiders that float up the rivers and attack New York Kingdom cities. Cheshire Cats carry messages by teleporting. There are March Hares as soldiers for the Queen. There are White Rabbits running all aspects of every city. There are live bird cups that require constant supervision or they will hop away with your beverage. There is a wind-up robot named Crank that proves to be a life saver for Alice. There are Rustling Mechs, 40 meters high, that are designed to steal cattle. There are BullyBoys sporting Minotaur heads with longhorn attributes. There is a really annoying Cuban Cigar smoking caterpillar that proves to be an ongoing problem for Alice. There are soft drink trees and steamguns. There

are Puma's with lioness heads and golden fur riding mechanical horses. There are the mech-Sioux a culture that has taken fetishistic augmentation to whole new levels. There is an Indian princess with vagina dentata which proves to be not only a humiliating moment for Big Chief Little John, but more than a little uncomfortable moment for our fair reader. There is a prince suffering from mazophilia and a blood thirsty inclination that proves more than a challenge for poor Alice. It doesn't take long for Alice to look back on her life as a prostitute with wistful nostalgia.

There is really an amazing amount of creativity that went into this story. I struggled with some grammar issues, but as I started flowing with the story the occasional awkward sentence didn't bother me as much. There is carnage a plenty. Some of the battle scenes were particularly well written. Plenty of imagination was on display and for those of you with a steampunk need this will definitely steam up your glasses with all the gadgets. There is graphic sex, but the story is not overwhelmed or detained by an overabundance of it. Most of the sex was actually nicely incorporated into the plot. I read this on my computer at work during slow times and found myself more than a little annoyed when my phone rang pulling me away from the action

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### **Teresa says**

HOLY STEAM-SHIT!!! This book is in my top 5 favs of this year, for sure. Steampunk and Bizarro mixed flawlessly makes me a very happy lady. Not to mention Wol totally kept it 'real' if you will- he managed to keep the whole 'Alice' mythos intact despite the difference in story plot. I have some thoughts on each book (except book 3) posted on a thread deep in the bowels of Goodreads. I'll trudge them out and make a 'copy and paste' review that is a bit more comprehensive...but not til I can work on the laptop. Sorry! I've got so much to say on this one, I WILL be timely in getting a good review up! (Of course, I said that about Baby Hater too, and it was another one of my top 5 favs this year, and IT still doesn't have a review- I fucking SUCK!!!)

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### **Krissy says**

What could possibly make a book about a Victorian-era America engaged in civil war, full of psychotic royals, mechanical natives, bizarre war machines, and vagina dentata any better..... Why Alice and the White Rabbit and hallucinogenic cakes of course! Laughed out loud on the subway more than once reading this during my commute. You know its going to be a good day when you read about mechanical penises on the way to work.

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### **Cassie-la says**

REVIEW ALSO ON: <http://bibliomantics.com/2012/07/24/b...>

I first encountered Wol-vriey in the anthology Tall Tales With Short Cocks, where he wrote a fantastical tale set in a kooky world that was almost a little too strange. Thankfully for Wonderland, there is no such thing as too strange, but there might be such a thing as too much semen. You have been pre-warned.

The novella is set in Victorian America, AKA a steampunk version of America ultimately divided into two territories. Half of America is run by Queen Victoria Busybody, dubbed the Queen of Hearts because of her

choice of heart embroidered wardrobe. She runs the queendom of New York, while her sister Queen Anna runs the queendom of Texas- where everything is bigger. Anna goes by the moniker Mech-Anna or “the Clockwork Goddess”. Both sisters have torn the country apart, all over the state of Kansas, which is a hotbed of coalfields. Enjoy it Kansas, this will be the only instance where people actually fight over control of you, fictional or otherwise.

Also in the Busybody monarchy is the sisters’ brother, Lord Dudley Busybody, a mad scientist people refer to as the Mad Hatter, so called because of his enormous hat. Inside the hat are various drawers he keeps a never ending supply of objects in, including teacups, but sadly no drunk mice. Think Mary Poppins’ bag. At one point he even locates what appears to be a rubber caterpillar inside its depths. He found the object, which fell from space and placed it inside his hat to study later. Because it’s logical to put things that fall from the sky like a meteor in your wardrobe. Later, when the caterpillar inexplicably comes to life/reanimates and we get some “Who are you?” jokes, we learn his name is Baker and he makes exploding cakes. Rounding off the royal family is Prince Jackson, who may or may not be a homosexual incestuous Mama’s boy with homicidal tendencies.

The heroine of our story, Alice Sin (originally Alice Cinnamon) is hired by the Hatter’s wife to assassinate the Hatter for all the reasons women kill off their husbands. Possibly also to become a Queen. Alice looks like a young Lady Marie Busybody and uses this to her advantage when seducing Lord Busybody, pretending to be a reporter with a weak constitution. A word of caution to anyone planning to read this tale. At times, it reads like a soft core porn. If you read it I hope you like penises (peni?) as major plot points.

As expected, the story is laden with references to the original tale, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, the talking animals in particular. In New York, the streets are patrolled by March hares, whose species as their names indicate are prone to professions containing marching. I.e. the military, marching bands, the Einsatzgruppen, you get the picture. These rabbits also have a propensity for checking the time, which is strange because the same can be said of the few White Rabbits we see. Cheshire Cats are equally present and also seem to be drawn to one profession: particularly butlers. They use their strange powers to pop in and out where needed, sending messages and ignoring social mores such as knocking before entering rooms. This also helps with population control. The Cheshire Cats all look the same and are all named Cheshire, leading Alice to postulate that all Cheshire Cats are just the same cat masquerading as a species. Racism against the Cheshires is pretty rampant.

As if all this plot wasn’t enough, there is also a serial killer on the loose known as the Ripper who targets prostitutes. Unfortunately for them, unlike the British counterpart who doesn’t seem to exist in this alternate history, there is no medical precision and instead the victims are eviscerated with a scythe and their entrails are strewn everywhere. Lovely. As explained by the Hatter, he is named the Ripper because of his resemblance to a reaper... What? Then why isn’t he called the Reaper!?!

To heighten the ties to Wonderland, Wol-vriey has tables set with tortoises that stand in as serving trays and birds with fused wings that are used as cups. Too bad for the diners, they seem to work better as croquet mallets and this use of fowl is merely foul. Yes, I just went there. There are also magical cakes which give the eaters super powers (x-ray vision, astral projection, teleportation), affect the size of the eater’s characteristics, their location, etc, etc, etc. This second half of the novella feels more Wild Wild West than Alice, complete with Mech-Indians who are partly mechanical Native Americans. There are even walking robot spiders. Wiki wiki wild!

The main problem, sans the reliance on sex, is that Alice in Steamland often suffers from too much explanation. Where the original is so wonderful because nothing is explained, Wol-vriey seems to want to

explain almost every little joke and pun. Alice is so fun because it doesn't require or supply answers. It doesn't need to! A little less tell and a little more show next time would be nice.

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