

ALICE IN PLUNDERLAND

STEVE MCCAFFERY

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Steve McCaffery

*Illustrations by
Clelia Scala*

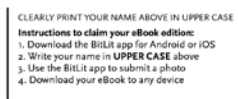
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*All in the golden afternoon
Stoned to the max we slushed
Around for syringes, that with skill
Into our veins we pushed
While little hands held little pills
And drugs were seldom flushed.*

*Ah cruel Junk! In such an hour
Within our junky bones
To beg a tale of death too weak
To cut the finest tones!
Yet what can one poor junky do
When feening with the moans?*

*Thus grew the tale of Plunderland
Thus slowly, pill by pill
It brought on junky dreams and then
Cold turkey 'gainst our will,
Shaking punctured arms and legs
Yet still existing: still.*



CHAPTER I.

Down the Man-Hole

Alice was desperately coke-broke and beginning to find life a bit of a drag standing in line with her dumb-ass sister in the local branch of BMO, faced with the bleak reality of being clean out of lettuce to score even a couple of lines of king's habit: once or twice she had peeped into the open bank book her sister was checking, but it had zilch deposits or withdrawals in it, "and what the fu** use is a sister's bank book," thought Alice, "without any moolah in it to borrow?"

So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the combination of the hot day and opium suppositories made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether a visit to the ATM outside the bank would be worth the trouble of trying to get some emergency cash by keying in her dear mama's PIN, when suddenly a young bank teller with shocking pink hair ran close by her.

There was nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the teller say to herself, "Oh pshit! Oh pshit! I shall be late!" (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but when the teller actually *took a wad of hundred-dollar bills* out of her purse, and kissed it, and then hurried on, Alice turned around, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a bank teller with a fat wad of C-notes and kissing it so ardently, at that. So, burning with curiosity and the authentic thought of effectively mugging her, she ran across the street after her, and fortunately was just in time to see the teller fall into a large open man-hole down and down

under the pavement.

Laughter, as well we know, is a temporary convulsion of the nerves; and it seems as if nature cuts short the rapid thrill of pleasure on the nerves by a sudden convulsion of them, to prevent the sensation becoming painful, and in another moment (after she'd stopped laughing that is) down went Alice after the teller, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again. The man-hole connected to the city sewer system for some way, and then turned to the left so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself crawling through the slime and pshit of the main sewer system.

Sewage, children, is a highly complex liquid; a large proportion of its most offensive matter is, of course, human excrement discharged from water closets, and also urine thrown down gully holes. But mixed with this is the water from kitchens containing vegetable, animal, and other refuse as well as that from wash houses containing soap. There is also the drainage from stables and discotheques and cow houses of child prostitution, as well as the fetal remains from abortion clinics and slaughter-houses containing human, animal, and vegetable offal. Either the sewage was very deep, or Alice moved very slowly, for she had ample time as she crawled along to check out the insalubrious landscape about her and to wonder what the f*ck was going to happen next. First, she swallowed a couple of leapers that magically materialized and then tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything and noxious fumes clouded the entire system; then, with the aid of her cigarette lighter, she looked at the sides of the tunnel and noticed that they were caked in dried fecal matter and well-executed, tag-gang graffiti; here and there she saw rats and enormous cockroaches and one or two down-and-out Vietnam veteran amputees crawling along against the walls. She picked up a plastic bag from one of the elevated

sewer ramps as she passed; it was labeled “HIGH-GRADE COCAINE.” To her great disappointment it was almost empty: however, she snorted the bit of snow remaining but did not like to hang on to the bag for fear of being found in possession of an illicit substance and was well aware that the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency, as well as the FBI and RCMP, frequently investigated North American city sewer systems for stashes of hidden drugs. Accordingly, she concealed it on the edge of a storm overflow, carefully wiping off her fingerprints as she waded on past it.

“Holy pshty!” expleted Alice to herself, “after crawling through raw sewage like this, it’ll be a piece of cake to dumpster dive in the pharmaceutical garbage and hazmat at the local hospitals! How supercool they’ll all think me at home! Why, I wouldn’t say a thing about it, even if I fell off the top of the f***ing house!” (Which was very likely to take place.)

Crawl, crawl, crawl. Would the snail-paced perambulation through the egg-shaped sewer *never* come to an end? “I wonder how many kilometres I’ve crawled by this time?” she said aloud. “Holy crap, it sure as hell stinks down here, I must be getting somewhere near the centre of Tronna. Let me see: that would be 3.7 kilometres south from where I fell, I think—” (for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons at the exclusive Bishop Strachan School for Girls situated on Lonsdale Avenue, and though this was not a *very* auspicious opportunity for showing off her knowledge of topology, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) “—yes, that’s about the right distance—but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I’ve got to?” (Alice had no idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but thought they, like methylenedioxymethamphetamine and supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, were nice grand words to say and even grander drugs to consume.)

Presently she recommenced her monologue. “I wonder if

I shall crawl all the way from Bloor Street West, Tronna, to Long Island! How funny it'll seem to come out in that wealthy American county over there among the affluent dinosaurs and dabblers who walk each afternoon with their designer-clipped poodles in Eisenhower Park! Nissan County, I think it's called—" (she was rather glad there was no one listening this time, as it didn't sound at all the right name of the county) "—but I shall have to ask them what the name of the frigging county is, you know. Please, Ma'am, is this Nissan or Suffolk?" (And she tried to curtsy knee-deep in the sewage as she spoke—fancy *curtsying* to the Governor General of Canada as you're crawling through raw sewage! Do you think you could manage it?) "And what an ignorant little girl she'll think me for asking! No, it'll never do to ask: perhaps I shall see it written up somewhere."

Crawl, crawl, crawl. She had downed her final leaper and her chequebook was at zilch and there was nothing else to do, so after a cogibundance of disjunctive reflections, Alice soon began talking to herself again. "Siegfried will miss me very much to-night, I should think!" (Siegfried was her cheating accountant who worked for the Bonadio Group and who was destined to invent a line of defensive forts in 1916 and have the line named after him.) "I hope my parents remember to pay his exorbitant house-call fee and charge me a penalty for no-show at tea time. Siegfried, my dear! I wish you were down here with me! There are no tax returns to fill out for your exorbitant fee I'm afraid, but you might catch an enormous rat (exactly like yourself), and that's very like one of those small alligators that people flush down the toilet when they've grown too big to be kept as pets, you know. But do small alligators eat rats, I wonder?" And here Alice began to get rather torpid (no doubt owing to the effects of the white powder blending with the toxic sewage fumes), and went on saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of way, "Do small alligators eat large rats? Do

small alligators eat large rats?” and sometimes, “Do large rats eat small alligators?” for, you see, as she couldn’t answer either question, it didn’t much matter which way she put it. She felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Ulysses Simpson Grant, and saying to the dead president very earnestly, “Now, Mr. Dead President, tell me the truth: have you ever literally eaten a rat? I know they sometimes turn up on Chinese take-out menus advertised as Ginger Chicken stir-fry,” when suddenly, thump! thump! down she tripped on a Merryweather-patented fixed hydraulic sewage flusher, and fell upon a hard heap of sewage and waste cans, and the crawling was over.

Her Grail Quest through the enteric realm was finally at an end. Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up on to her feet in a moment: she looked up, but it was all dark overhead; before her was another long passage, but this time sewage-free and the young bank teller was still in sight, hurrying down it with her shocking-pink hair and thick wad of hundred-dollar bills forming an aesthetically pleasing chromatic contrast. After her unpropitious odyssey through the cloacal catacombs of Tronna, there was not a moment to be lost: disregarding the insalubrious topography, away went Alice as fast as a fart in a wind tunnel, and was just in time to hear the teller lament, as she turned a corner, “Holy pshitt, I’ve got to get this scratch to Jimmy quick!” She was close behind her when she turned the corner, but the shocking-pink-haired teller was no longer to be seen: Alice found herself in a long, low, dingy alley, which was illuminated by a row of homemade oil lamps hanging from the walls and the whole scene reeking of stale piss. “Oh, too cool, this must be the genuine underworld of thieves, gangsters, hookers, and drug addicts,” ululated a jubilant Alice to herself. There were doors all along the alley, all heavily padlocked and tagged with urban graffiti (mainly Wildstyle, with some Bubble Letters and a few highly impressive Fat Cap motifs

signed “Deadboy”); and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she ambulated with profound despondence down the middle, kicking at the empty Molson Canadian and Labatt 50 cans that confected the terrain, and glancing around at the admittedly awesome graffiti, wondering where the fu** she would find a toilet she could use (by this time she needed badly to micturate), and how she was ever to get out again.

Suddenly she came upon an unmarked wooden crate, constructed out of solid pine; there was nothing on it except a crack kit with some back door that Alice quickly polished off, a few dozen cigarette butts, razor blades, crack suppositories, a couple of broken chillums, and what looked like a house key. Alice’s primary thought was that it might belong to one of the padlocked portals in the alley; but, no way! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate the incompatible dimensions of the projectile and the intended metallic recipient precluded the possibility of opening any of them. However, on the second time round, she came upon a trash can she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about eighteen inches high: she tried the key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!

Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than an escape tunnel from a government safe-house: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the coolest garden you ever saw. Through a lambent haze she could ascertain that it was amply equipped with the most majestic and thriving marijuana plants, an in-ground Ameri-Brand custom-made kidney-shaped swimming pool constructed out of the finest fibreglass that came with a lifetime guarantee, complete with a dozen or so Swimline blue fabric-covered U-Seat inflatable happy chairs and innumerable duck toys, artificial palm trees, and an awesome poolside bar! How she longed to get far away from that nasty, dark sewer





system, and circumgyrate among those bright bottles of vodka, tequila, and white rum, among those kind of beautiful girls in bikinis and sunglasses that you see only in James Bond films, each reclining on a deluxe Body Love dual lounge with a cocktail in one hand and a coke spoon in the other, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; “and even if my head would go through,” thought poor, stoned Alice, “it would be of f**k all use without my shoulders. Some frigging security system here! Oh man, I wish I could diminish my stature to about the size of two ounces of monkey dribble! I think I could, if I only knew how to begin.” For, you see, so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately that Alice had begun to think, like Leonardo da Vinci and Albert Einstein had before her, that very few things indeed were really impossible.

There seemed to be little use in waiting by the little door, so she went back to the wooden crate, half hoping she might find a freshly rolled mooster on it, or at any rate a morning wake-up or a modicum of lamb’s bread: this time, however, she found a small bottle standing on it (“which certainly was not here before,” affirmed Alice), and round the neck of the bottle was a paper label, with the words “DRINK ME” beautifully printed on it in large, blue, Trebuchet letters.

It was all very well to say “Drink me” in beautifully printed large, blue, Trebuchet letters, but the wise little crackhead Alice was not going to do *that* in a hurry. “No way José, I’ll look first,” she mumbled inarticulately, “and see whether it’s marked ‘*poison*’ or not;” for despite her aquatic propensities she still had sufficient remaining brain cells to remember having read several nice little histories about rich, spoiled, child bingers who had got burnt by bad business ventures, such as Ponzi schemes and other unpleasant things, all because they needed some quick lettuce for their habit and they *would* not remember the simple fact that all financiers are crooks and

are out for nothing but their own profit: such as that Chief Executive Officer at a bank in Cincinnati who gave himself a five million dollar Christmas bonus after having his bank bailed out by the federal government to the tune of 13 billion dollars. (Such things never happened in Canada.) She had also never forgotten from her kindergarten chemistry classes that if you drink much from a bottle marked “poison,” it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later.

However, this bottle was *not* marked “poison,” so Alice, being something of a cabbage head, ventured to pour some down her most aqueous and irriguous esophagus, and noting the label said “98% PROOF” and finding it very bomb diggity (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry liqueur, pineapple daiquiri, toffee-flavoured vodka, gin, vermouth, and just a subtle hint of coconut and pomegranate), she very soon finished it off.

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“What a phucking phabulous peeling!” alliterated Alice euphemistically and exceedingly intoxicated; “that liquor sure packs one inferno of a punch! I must be as drunk as a skunk in a trunk.” And so she was indeed: she was now finding it difficult to stand, and her face brightened at the thought that she was now in a state of intoxication sufficient to drive impaired straight through the little door into that lovely garden with its fantastic poolside bar. First, however, she waited for a few minutes and delayed her trajectory until she’d completed a rainbow yawn into the sewer system: she felt a thankful relief after she’d fully thrown up. “I should try to stay sober I suppose,” she surmised, “like my therapist advises, otherwise I might end, you know,” murmured Alice to herself, “crashing out wired and getting

mugged and all my money and ID heisted, and maybe even stripped naked and left in an alley for dead. I wonder what that should be like then?" And she tried to fancy what it would be like to be mugged, stripped naked and dumped in an alley, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing except on cable television.

After a while, finding that nothing more happened, she decided to effect her entry without delay into the garden with the fabulous kidney-shaped swimming pool and the even more fabulous poolside bar; but, alas for poor Alice! when she got to the door, she discovered she had forgotten the house key, and when she stumbled back to the crate for it, she found herself so tanked-up there was no way she could reach it: she could see it quite plainly through her bleary eyes, and she tried her best to stagger along the ground and pull herself up one of the sides of the crate, but was too plastered by now to do so; and when she had tired herself out with trying, the poor little thing collapsed in a heap and hiccupped.

"Come, there's no use in hiccupping like that!" muttered the extremely tipsy Alice in a semblance of communication to herself, having been prostrated due to the excess of the potent liquor she had consumed and its concomitant dissipation. Rather slurring her words, "I advise you to leave off this minute!" She generally gave herself very sound advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she drank herself so unconscious as to wake up not knowing who or where the f**k she was. Once, after a full deck of crystals, she remembered trying to punch her own face for having cheated in a game of imaginary high-stakes poker she was playing against herself, for this curious child was paranoid-schizophrenic as well as being majorly up against the stem, and very fond of pretending to be two people. "But it's no use now," concluded poor Alice, pissed as an alligator, "to pretend to be two people! Why, there's sufficient enough of me left sober to make one

respectable person!”

Even in this state Alice could recall that drugs are at the heart of the new imperialism and soon her blurry eyes fell on a triple-fold that was lying beside the crate: she opened it, and found in it several grams of white powder with an accompanying note, on which the words “SNORT ME” were beautifully marked in lurid red nail polish (or it might have been human blood!) “What the pshitte, I’ll do what it says and snort it through this tooter,” decided Alice hiccupping, “that is, if I can find my frigging nose. I do hope it’s cocaine, which is generally considered to be the caviar of street drugs. If it gets me coasting again, I might be able to reach the key; and if it proves to be a bumner and brings on the cocaine blues and I start to see coke bugs nibbling through my skin, or if it brings on a nightmare hallucination in which I creep under the door away from a pack of blue devils headed by Sandie Rinaldo or Don Cherry, either way I’ll get into the poolside bar, and I don’t care a pshytt what happens!”

She inhaled at first about two abes-worth of the schoolcraft, and then quickly a good deal more with all the subdued relish of an epicure, and said to herself in a highly hyperactive manner, “Which way? Which f*ckin* way?” holding her hand on the top of her head to feel which way it was growing, and she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size: to be sure, this generally happens when one toots a lot of devil’s dandruff, but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed (as it did to Hermann Goering, John Belushi, William S. Burroughs, Drew Barrymore, Tila Tequila, David Hasselhoff, Robert Downey Jr., Farrah Fawcett, Charlie Sheen, Pope Pius III, Johnny Depp, Jamie Lee Curtis, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and other legendary tweakers) pshit-dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way.

So she set to work, and eftsoons finished off the contents

of the entire triple-fold and felt quite at home as she thought of all the famous celebrities, fashion models, high-ranking politicians, Tronna mayors, and Wall Street traders who use blow just like her.

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Steve McCaffery

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Colophon

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