What She Found There

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Summary

“Dr. Liddell? I’m afraid I’m going to need you to come with us.”

Notes

written for LJ community "writerverse" prompts “You looked too small, in their big black car, to be a threat to the men in power.” (Kate Bush) & “The looking glass so shiny and new, how quickly the glamour fades, start spinning slipping out of time, was that the wrong pill to take” (Rabbit Heart) (bonus: sci-fi genre)

“Dr. Liddell? I’m afraid I’m going to need you to come with us.”

The man who had spoken looked very much like the car he arrived in— large and square, even the shiny polyester of his suit matching the SUV’s black paint. His smile was bland, official, and Alice returned it in kind.

“And which agency are you from?” she asked. “NSA, FBI…or have you cobbled together a few more letters since the last time I looked?”

“Ma’am, my orders are quite clear. If you don’t come willingly, I am authorized to take certain actions to ensure you cooperation.”

Alice’s smile turned genuine, if a little patronizing. “Young man, you really have no idea who you’re dealing with, do you?”

She took a step backwards, up onto the rim of the circular fountain. It was a beautiful, old thing,
made of marble shined white by decades of rain and sun. But underneath, it was Alice’s baby, a machine she had spent the last forty years working on in secret.

Well, mostly secret. The presence of the government agent meant that someone had found out what she was doing. And that meant that her time was up.

As soon as Alice’s foot touched the edge of the fountain, something deep inside began to hum, heating the water until it came out as steam. It was followed by a clicking, the whir of gears.

“Dr. Liddell!” shouted the agent, over the noise. “It doesn’t have to end this way!”

“Oh, this isn’t the end!” Alice called back. “It’s just the beginning!”

The fountain-machine gave an almighty bang and Alice stepped backwards into the water. She fell… down, down, down…

“Oh, my dear,” said a voice. “You’re very, very late.”

Alice opened her eyes to see a white rabbit in a silk waistcoat peering down at her. “Yes, I am,” she agreed. “And I’m very sorry. But I had to wait until I was old enough to believe in fairy tales again.”

“Hmf,” said the rabbit.

Alice stood, brushing herself off. “Rabbit,” she said. “Do you… have you seen the Hatter, recently?”

“Hmf,” the rabbit said again. “As if he isn’t still pining for you.”

“He is?” Alice asked, feeling like a little girl all over again.

“Well, come along,” said the rabbit. “You still know your way around, I suppose?”

“Oh, yes,” said Alice. “It’s good to be home.”

THE END

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