

ACE IN WONDERLAND

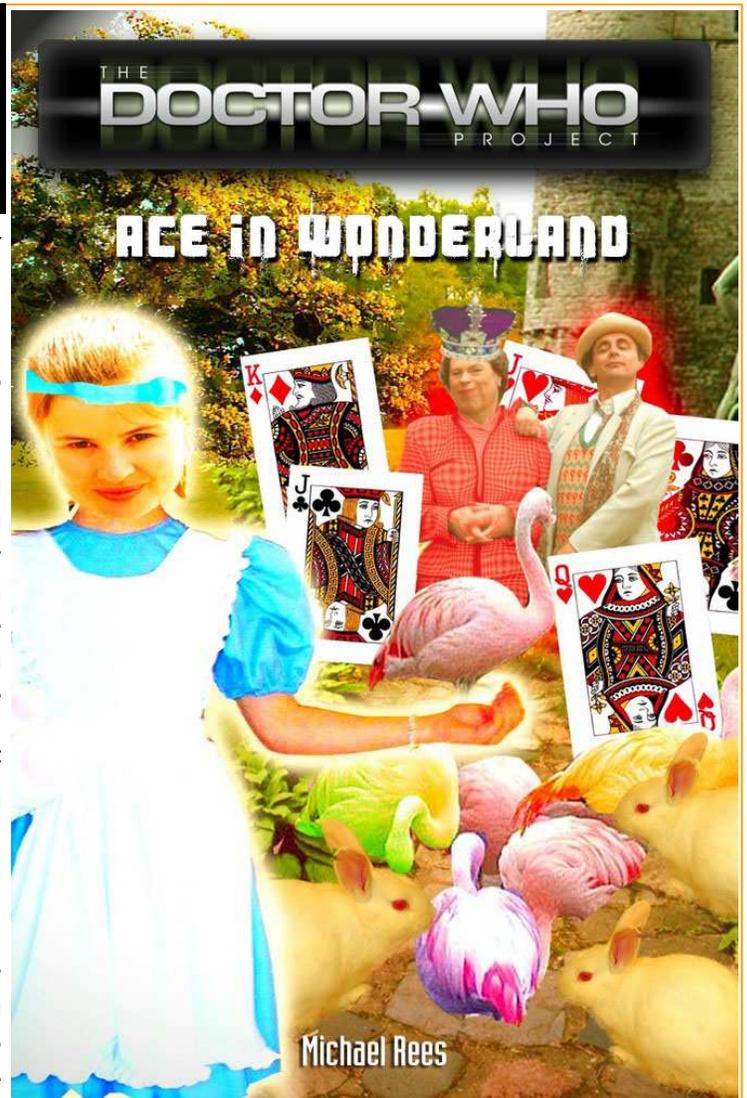
Written by: Michael Rees
TDWP Special
Reviewed by Jez Strickley

The Seventh Doctor, Ace and Bernice Summerfield discover that their view of reality is open to debate in Michael Rees' *Ace In Wonderland*, a science fantasy outing which presents TDWP readers with a rare excursion into the unbelievable. The result is a relatively solid adventure which is certainly no run-of-the-mill affair.

Rees does not waste his words and his plot line moves along at a fair pace. In double-quick time Ace finds herself in a Wonderland-like world playing witness to the White Rabbit being decapitated by a scar-faced death squad. She is then teleported to a tea party by the Cheshire Cat, whereupon she discovers the Seventh Doctor and Bernice, who are tackling the not so solid structure of their surrounding reality. The time travelling trio then head for the castle of the Queen of Hearts, only to find its battlements arrayed with an assortment of Wonderland characters preparing for battle. In the ensuing onslaught playing card soldiers take to the air like gliders and Ace pilots a laser-absorbing Jabberwocky, otherwise known as an armoured aerial assault suit.

The mixing of the fantastical with the hi-tech is then briefly clarified when the Doctor deduces that a collision between a terra-forming spaceship and a prisoner transport vessel led to the former craft creating the Lewis Carroll inspired landscape in which they now find themselves. And, as if untangling yet another seemingly unfathomable mystery was not enough, the Doctor then manages to pull a solution out of the bag which appears to satisfy all concerned. This last move is typical of the Seventh Doctor's penchant for achieving the impossible, and in this sense Rees keeps his Doctor true to form.

It is Rees' overall portrayal of the regular characters, however, which lets his story down. Ace's need to scrap with almost anything and the Doctor's occasional party tricks each feel a little too staged. The result is that both characters, to some degree, resemble caricatures of themselves. More damning is the fact that Bernice is well and truly wasted throughout. Her role as a mere bystander diminishes her character and begs the question of why she was ever included. In fact, given its title, the story would have been much better served by focusing entirely upon Ace, and resorting to the Doctor here and there to explain things and to help set everything aright in the end. Still further, supporting characters are few and far between, and aside from the prison warden Tralon, whose desperation to recapture his escaped prisoners is fairly routine, the rest are little more than a series



“Ace In Wonderland presents the odd passage which really catches the reader’s attention.”

of snapshot figures, insubstantially populating a narrative which is deserving of a much better ensemble.

Character flaws aside, *Ace In Wonderland* presents the odd passage which really catches the reader's attention. Of particular note is the scene in which the TARDIS is repaired after a nearly catastrophic incident. Rees' references to the various incarnations of the Doctor, which seem to form part of a chronological inventory by which the TARDIS fixes itself, is both smartly written and intriguing in its content.

In short, this serving of fan fiction mixes the staple ingredients of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* with typical Seventh Doctor fare, delivering an adventure which, in spite of some criticisms, provides an interesting read that will certainly appeal to the more science fantasy-oriented members of *TDWP* readership. **7.5/10**