The Two Alices

by andlat

“Face it, Levi. You lost.”

The Costume Box
2026

Chapter 1

The Two Alices

“Face it, Levi. You lost.”

“Don't need to rub it in.” He muttered, trying one last time to get the cards to stand up. It had been a dumb bet anyway, but Alice always knew just how to get under his skin. Sisters were like that, or at least Alice was. Jenn usually just sat there on her phone, observing the two of them at their never-ending game of one upping each other.

“He's right, Alice.” Jenn said imperiously. Alice stuck her tongue out at Jenn. “One of these days, a bird's gonna come eat your tongue.”

“That's not true.”

“Ugh.” Levi pushed the cards away. “I give up.”

“Well, you already lost.” Alice said. “So that means you gotta” her voice was taking on more and more of the sing-songy teasing tone. “Do what I say!”

“Alice.” Jenn said.

“You're not Mom.” Levi and Alice said in unison.

“See, that's why people still think you're twins.” Jenn remarked, laughing as they both looked disgusted at the thought.

“What's it gonna be?” Levi asked. Alice grinned, milking her

victorious moment.

“You're gonna check the mail.” She said at last.

“You always do this.” Levi said. “We know there's more to it. Just tell me.”

“Well,” she stretched it out just to bother him more. “Well! Remember Halloween?”

“Those family costumes?”

“Uh-huh. Dad was the Mad Hatter, Mom was the Queen of Hearts, Jenn-”

“It's too hot outside for that White Rabbit outfit.” Levi interjected, cutting to the chase to ruin Alice's building tension. He had been sweaty all night long even in October! And the face paint had almost been worse.

“You're right.” Alice fought back a malicious giggle. “Which is why you're gonna do it in my costume.” Levi sighed. He should have known.

“Great, a dress. Again.”

“That's the spirit.” Alice reached over to pat his cheek, but Levi's glare was fiery enough that she thought better of it. “Make sure he doesn't try to hide.” She told Jenn before bouncing to her feet and going to find her costume.

“You're gonna look great.” Jenn said. Levi turned his glare at her. “Hey, consequences of your actions, bud.”

“Don't call me that. Dad calls me that.”

“Aw, you don't wanna be my buddy?” She laughed and returned back to her phone before adding “Forgot to tell her no photos.”

“She knows.” Panic set in. “She knows, right?” Jenn only shrugged from her position lounging on the couch.

“You better make sure.” She said in sing-song. Sure, she liked being the mature one, but sometimes, it was just more fun to antagonize her younger siblings.

“No photos!” Levi blurted out the moment Alice returned, her arms full of her costume.

“Didn't even think of that.”

“So that means no doing it.” Levi knew his sister well enough that he wanted to make it very clear.

“But you gave me the idea.” She pretended to pout. “Alright, you know the drill. Shirt off, put on the dress, then take off your pants.”

“It's bad enough seeing your underwear when we do laundry.” Jenn remarked, immediately agreeing with her sister's logic.

“I could just go into the bathroom.”

“So you can admire yourself in the mirror?” Alice teased. Levi groaned.

“That's not what I meant.” He said self-consciously before pulling his shirt over his head.

“At least he's eager.” Jenn remarked, finally sitting up as the spectacle before her was starting to become more entertaining than gossiping by text with her friends. “You're doing the wig too?” Levi reflexively was about to refuse, but then he noticed Alice's face.

“Oh, uh, yeah. I figured it'd help… hide who he is when he's outside.”

“Huh.” Jenn was impressed. “See, Levi? She's not trying to ruin your social life after all.” Alice considered pointing out that being the sister of the boy in the dress was not something she wanted, but maybe Mom was right and some thoughts should just stay inside.

Somewhere around when Alice tied the pinafore around his waist, Levi stopped looking like Levi and it looked like there were two Alices in the living room: one in shorts and a casual tee, the other in a dress, tights, the whole nine yards. Jenn watched with growing interest, wondering who would turn more red if she pointed out that they really did look like twins now.

“Ok, sit down for your shoes.” the casual Alice said. “No, not like that!” The Alice who was actually Levi – the formal Alice! – had flopped down in a cloud of white petticoats and tights. Casual Alice hauled him back to his feet. “Push down on your skirt and lower yourself down.” He turned pink as he did his best to mimic her. “Give me your foot.” He grunted as he tried to kick her, but she caught it. “Such a slender, petite foot.” She grinned up at him. “Jenn, we should think up a

family costume for this Halloween that lets Levi be Cinderella." She snorted at his outraged look. "I'm just kidding."

"Maybe we can all be princesses." Jenn said. "I'll be Snow White, Levi'll be Cinderella so he gets a blue dress. Not sure who you'll be, Alice."

"Mom and Dad'll be Queen and King." Alice pulled Levi to his feet.

"These shoes suck."

"I wore them all night." Alice said. "Plus every single time we had to dress up for school, church, weddings, Christmas," Levi knew this would go on for a while, so he changed the subject.

"This is a lot just for checking the mail." Levi's voice wavered like he was overwhelmed, but he was good at playing it up to get out of things, so Alice only shrugged.

"Don't do things halfway, right? But fine, we won't put you through makeup."

"It does suit you, Levi." Jenn said. He glared at both his sisters. As Alice admired her handiwork, she wished more than anything – well, maybe not anything anything – that she had not agreed to no photos. She would've loved to make him do even half the poses Mom had made her do when she was Alice.

"I think you're set." She said with only a hint of

disappointment. “Remember, just to the mailbox and back. Don't go chasing any rabbits with your face, Alice!” Alice snickered as Levi shuffled toward the door. “Walking like that, everyone will know it's you.” Levi smirked and did a prissy little skip for a few steps.

“That's the spirit!” Jenn laughed.

“After you.” Alice held the door open for Levi, bowing. Both girls snorted as Levi struggled to navigate his dress through the door.

“Feel like the extra petticoat was overkill.” Jenn murmured as Levi finally succeeded, popping out onto the porch and immediately launching down the stairs to do what he had to.

“Oh, please.” retorted Alice. “He doesn't know any better and just look at him.”

Closing the door gently behind them, they stood side by side on the porch as Levi made his way to the mailbox, looking left, right, and everywhere as if terrified his friends would suddenly leap out of Mr. Priestland's bushes. Being the White Rabbit had been horribly warm; this was breezy in ways he didn’t like, every bit of the voluminous skirt blowing up and out if he wasn’t constantly vigilant.

“Halfway there!” Jenn called as he touched the mailbox. And like a million miles to go, he thought.

“You have to actually check it.” Alice said, wondering if it would be too mean to loudly say his name. Levi's glare was scorching even from across the yard.

“He's doing it, Alice.” Jenn said. “You're Alice, not malice.”

“Shut it.” Alice said. She and Levi had gotten into a few situations as kids that had resulted in the ‘Alice, not malice’ saying being overused.

“Anything?” Jenn called.

“No.” Levi yelped as a suddenly stiff breeze startled him and played with the dress.

Jenn and Alice cackled as his anxiety got the better of him and he charged back toward the house, dress flying up and Mary Janes clip-clopping on the pavement.

“Maybe I shoulda grabbed shorts.” Alice remarked with a laugh, teasingly shielding her eyes from the bizarre scene of another Alice barrelling toward her, her dress in a most unladylike state.

“Letmein, letmein, letmein!” Levi bellowed, pushing past them. How had the wig stayed on? Jenn wondered as he opened the door. Or tried to. “Haha.” He glared at his sisters. “Very funny.”

“What is?”

“You locked the door.”

“What?” Alice looked at Jenn. “I didn't. Did you?”

“No.”

“Yeah, right.” Jenn tried not to laugh at the comical image of Levi looking indignant dressed as Alice.

“No, we're serious, Levi.” Alice said, looking at the door rather than him to avoid laughing. “We're all locked out.” She sighed.

“Alice, do you promise that you-”

“Alice!” Levi jumped straight to assuming his sister's guilt. “Unlock it!” Jenn rolled her eyes at his hysterics.

“Alice, not malice?” She said, looking her sister right in the eye.

“I swear.” She tried her best to exude innocence from every inch of her face. It might have helped if she was innocent more often and knew how to look like it. “I didn't lock the door.”

“Move.” Jenn said, pushing Levi aside enough to try the door herself. “Yep. We're locked out.”

“But” Levi squeaked. “We can't be!”

“We are.” Jenn sighed and flopped into the old chair on the porch. “Mom and Dad'll be home eventually.”

“But” Levi squeaked again. “What am I gonna do?”

What he ended up doing was whine. Alice grew bored of teasing him, soon wandering over to the driveway to throw small rocks through the faded basketball hoop that hung over the garage.

“If you break a window, Dad'll murder you.” Jenn called.

“I'm gonna murder her if we don't get inside soon.” Levi

marched over to the door and tried it again.

“Didn't work the fifteenth time? Shocker.” She grinned. “Maybe you like the prissy little clip-clop of your Mary Janes.” Levi glared at her. “What?”

“Isn't there some way to pick the lock?”

“I'm not a burglar.” Jenn said. “Just relax.”

“I'm outside. In a dress.”

“And a wig, not that anyone can even see you.”

“You and Alice can.”

“Just relax.” Jenn said. “Dad's probably on the way home.” Levi groaned and covetously eyed her chair.

“Let me sit.”

“Nope.” Jenn leaned back luxuriously. “He'll be here soon.”

It felt like a small eternity before Dad pulled into the drive to the strange sight of all three kids on the porch. If it hadn't been for Alice standing right next to him, he wondered if he would have ever guessed that that was Levi standing there in that blue and white dress.

“We're locked out!” Levi yelled the second the car came to a stop. He regretted drawing attention to himself as he saw the expression on Dad’s face and reality hit. How was he going to explain this?