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Benjamin, Melanie. Alice I Have Been.

You may have heard that Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* was based on a real life Alice who, while taking a boat ride on a lazy summer day, asked Carroll to tell her a story which then became the iconic children's tale. The daughter of the Dean of Oxford University, Alice lived both a charmed and restrained life next door to Dodgson, a.k.a Carroll, who was a mathematics professor at the university and a close family friend of the Liddells. Melanie Benjamin removes the idyllic lens that covers this myth and reveals the more complicated nature of the relationship between Alice Liddell and Charles Dodgson, one which was speculated to be darker than it appeared.

The book follows Alice from childhood to old age as she struggles against the confines of Victorian culture and her family, naively navigating her strange relationship with Dodgson and the impact it has on the rest of her life; the strained connection she has with her competitive older sister and mother, as well as the opportunities and misfortunes she experiences in the realms of love and family.

If you are looking for a charming tale, you will not find it here. Rather, Benjamin paints a picture of a girl who became entwined in something far more damaging than she imagined; a memory that would come to haunt her for the rest of her life. For historical fiction fans, this is a gem. Benjamin is a wonderful storyteller who balances fact with human feeling very well. Prepare to have your perspective of this children's classic changed forever. Make sure to pick up Benjamin's latest novel, *Mrs. Tom Thumb*.

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