

ALICE IN VIRTUALLAND:
HEALING THE INNER CHILD THROUGH VIRTUAL REALITY

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Alice got off at the subway station and decided to stop at the corner coffee shop instead of heading straight home. She has been traveling this route for over 20 years and she admits now to anyone who will listen, that the daily routine of her real life has become mundane. She grabs a cup of coffee - late in the day for her - but she knows what the evening holds if she returns home now. Anything, she thinks, is better than sitting at home all alone. So she opts to sip her coffee outside and people watch or, more likely, she will stare past people as they walk by. She is aware of the void inside but she is at a loss for what to do.

Her 17 year old daughter, Lori, graduated from high school in the spring and is now off at college on full scholarship. Alice is so proud of her. Lori is studying architecture at a prominent school that is a short plane ride and only a ½ day's drive away, but that is not the same as having Lori at home.

Alice's husband, Ben, has worked for the airlines for as long as they have been together and in these most recent years he has opted to fly international routes which means he is sometimes gone for over a week at time. Due to shifts in time zones, Alice and Ben rarely get to talk when he is away. Occasionally they will Skype with one another and that makes Alice feel closer. She recently bought a new laptop with a built in webcam and an Internet air card from her mobile phone carrier so she can easily connect if Ben is available for a call. She can sometimes connect at work on her breaks too and even though she has permission to use her computer at work, she prefers the privacy of her laptop just in case her company has installed a keylogger program on

company computers. After 20 years as a copy editor at the same publishing house, she feels secure at her job, but still, she does not trust corporate culture and covets her privacy. She has edited too many spy novels not to be at least aware of the technology available to corporations and business owners.

Alice likes her job but is not particularly challenged anymore. After she received her degree in journalism she got married to Ben and shortly afterward, she landed her current job. She took a long leave for over a year when Lori was born, and when she returned she was welcomed back into the workforce. She enjoyed her job for many of those years but she never aspired to move up within the company. Instead, she always dreamed of becoming a mystery writer herself. To that end, she received her master's degree in creative writing just a few years ago. She enrolled in an online program and an entirely new and richly diverse world opened up before her. She became fast friends with many of her classmates in her program and while they have never met, she maintains contact with most of them through Facebook. Her closest friends from work have also "friended" her on Facebook and she is very pleased that Lori has embraced her as a "friend" as well. Being friends with Lori allows her to feel close to Lori while she is away. She loves reading Lori's status updates and seeing the pictures Lori posts from school.

Alice remained motivated about writing a novel and she began to use the Internet as a tool for networking and for motivation. She joined writer's groups and she created a LinkedIn Profile. She opened a Twitter account and she even began blogging. Her blog site is a series of short stories that she composes and she has quite a few followers. Her online reputation has grown

immensely and between her Twitter followers, her LinkedIn contacts and her Facebook friends alone, her circle of colleagues, friends and acquaintances has grown into the thousands.

For many years, she was considered “Super Mom” and was revered by friends and neighbors.

Ben and Alice frequently entertained and Alice was always involved in Lori’s projects. But when Ben’s job took him away for a week or more at a time, Alice found herself feeling sad and lonely. Her time online increased. When Lori left, Alice was consumed with a sense of loneliness and despair that she could not describe. She suddenly doubted if anything had any meaning and sometimes she felt her life had none apart from the relationships she has formed online.

On this particular day, Alice has paused at the coffee shop. She knows that when she is home, she will feel that empty feeling again. It is Friday. Lori is likely going out with friends in her college town and Ben is away on another trip. She has the entire weekend alone. Her weekends lately have been consumed with the Internet; the usual networking and Facebooking, but now she finds herself drawn to gaming. She is fascinated by World of Warcraft and one of her game partners in WoW has encouraged her to join Second Life. She has spent many days and hours online and she is concerned that she feels afraid to be without the constant distraction the Internet offers her. These past few evenings she has sworn off the computer, which has left her filled with an indescribably empty feeling. Tonight will begin the long weekend- a battle between loneliness and the lure of the computer. She just does not understand. She never knew she was so fragile – so unable to be in the company of herself.

Alice sips her coffee and finds some solace in knowing that she called a counselor and set up an appointment for next week. The first available appointment was on Tuesday. She called at the beginning of the week knowing what she would face with the long weekend ahead. She had so

hoped she could speak to a counselor before the end of the work week. But it didn't happen so she has to face herself for a few more days before she can talk to the therapist.

Lucy had received an email inquiry from a potential client earlier in the week. The email said, "I am really at a loss. I feel lonely and empty now that my daughter is away at school. My husband is gone for a week or two at a time too. I am finding that I am spending more and more time on the Internet. Anyway, I think I need to talk to somebody." Lucy often receives emails from people who are seeking services now because she is listed on several online therapist directories. She also has a website. She prefers a phone conversation to determine the next steps so she emailed Alice asking for a phone number to reach her. "If you can give me your phone number, we can have a brief consult on the phone. This usually takes about 15 minutes." Lucy is hesitant to continue a dialogue with potential clients or existing clients via email because she is aware that regular email is not secure. She has heard about encrypted services but she has been so busy with her face-to-face practice that she has not had a chance to look into it. A few of her clients have recently requested online sessions due to scheduling difficulties. Since Lucy does not feel comfortable providing services online, she has offered phone sessions to these clients when they have been unable to come in person. She thinks of phone sessions as a viable alternative; after all, she worked a crisis hotline years ago so she is very comfortable with the phone as a way to delivery therapy.

After Lucy spoke with Alice, she deduced that Alice is probably going through the empty nest syndrome and her husband's travels are complicating the transition. She was not too concerned about Alice's description of her Internet use. Alice had said during the initial telephone consultation that she spends hours online finding herself "lost in a world that is frightening yet

somehow chillingly familiar.” Lucy makes note of the description and decides she will only pursue that angle if Alice brings it up again. For now, she thinks she will talk with Alice about her feelings regarding her daughter’s recent departure and how her role as mother has shifted.

Lucy has been practicing counseling and psychotherapy for nearly 20 years. She worked in several settings that required hands-on counseling and case management experience and she has supervised several interns along the way. About six years ago, Lucy decided to go into private practice, having worked in agency settings since she obtained her graduate degree. Her interests in the field focus primarily on survivors of abuse and trauma but in her private practice she identifies herself as a generalist. Still, with her psychodynamic background as a constant influence, she always presumes that unresolved issues are lurking. She has learned over the years not to look for trauma in every client though, and she is now quite comfortable meeting clients where they are at; those murky waters of childhood are sometimes left undisturbed.

For the first session Alice arrived early. Lucy had said there would be paperwork to fill out. Alice had never been to a therapist before so she was not really prepared for the questions that stared back at her from the clipboard. Most of the information was straightforward but when the questions about whether or not she had been sexually abused stared back at her from the page...that really sent a jolt through her. She had. And why does she need to reveal it?? She was instantly put off. She came here to talk about the Internet, NOT the bleak moments of her childhood. And besides, if Alice did not want to discuss it, then why ask? Her mind began to race as she finished the rest of the form, giving short and less than revealing answers. The last question on the form gave her pause. It read, “Is there anything else you would like for me to

know?” She thought about writing, “Well, not just yet, thank you...” But instead she wrote two words. “I’m scared.”

Lucy noticed Alice’s posturing; arms crossed in front of her, sitting on the edge of the sofa. She sensed that Alice was unnerved. Lucy welcomed Alice and introduced herself. Lucy explained that she was a Licensed Professional Counselor with a graduate degree in community counseling. She went on to tell Alice how she works, what her general style is and that she uses the first session to establish comfort and safety. Immediately Alice shifted her gaze from the clipboard in Lucy’s hand to Lucy’s eyes. Lucy took the opportunity to elaborate. “Alice, I realize I asked you to reveal a lot of personal information this morning. You filled out pages and pages of questions and that was before we really had a chance to meet. So I just want to acknowledge how difficult that can be for some people. It might even leave you feeling a bit vulnerable. So I want to be sure that you know your information and your personal history is safe here in this space and with me.” Lucy noted an immediate response. Alice sat back and uncrossed her arms. Lucy spent a few minutes reviewing the informed consent and discussed how to contact her between sessions in case of an emergency. She gave Alice her cell phone number indicating this as the best way to reach her.

Lucy and Alice met for 50 minutes each week. They discussed Alice’s feeling of emptiness now that her daughter is away at college. They talked about her job and her dream of writing a mystery novel. Alice would occasionally bring in bits and pieces of her short stories to share in therapy because she would often use her own life to portray a certain scene or create a character in the story. For instance, her most recent mystery was set in Appalachia in the sixties and in describing the house and the land, she had pulled from her memories of her own childhood. She

thought that by sharing those few paragraphs with her therapist, it might help her therapist understand her better.

Lucy would often take Alice's lead and guide her toward her past - particular moments or feelings - especially those lonely feelings Alice would repeatedly describe. Lucy also noticed a thread of lonely characters in Alice's stories. Alice would often summarize her latest blog story and between the short summaries and the snippets that Alice would bring in and read, Lucy would often find herself overwhelmed by the loneliness Alice carried with her. For months Alice and Lucy talked about the lonely feeling. Alice had no recollection of abuse or particular neglect at the hands of her family. She was molested by a neighbor across the street when she was 11, and while she and Lucy talked about the significant impact this had on her life in many ways, Alice just could not identify the lonely feeling she had as being connected in any way to that event.

And so, they kept talking. Alice was very comfortable with Lucy and trusted her. She was so excited to see that Lucy was on Facebook. She did a search and saw her profile picture. She also saw that Lucy had joined a Facebook support page for parents of children with autism and saw that she was also a member of several environmentalist groups. A few weeks later after Lucy had not returned Alice's request for friendship, Alice asked Lucy about it during their therapy session.

Lucy logged on to Facebook. She loved Facebook because it enabled her to stay in contact with her close family and friends. Lucy hardly used the Internet at all but her sister had talked her into joining Facebook and even showed her how to sign up and get started. When Lucy saw Alice's request for friendship she did not know what to do. She was stunned that her client would want

to be connected in that way. For the time being, she decided to ignore the request and take it up with Alice only if she asked.

Then, just before a session with Alice, Lucy was reading an article in a counseling magazine and read that it might be unethical to friend a client and further, therapists might consider explaining social networking boundaries with their clients during the informed consent process. Lucy was not really sure what social networking was, but she knew that Alice had recently asked for friendship. Lucy went on to read that clients might frequently friend their therapists because clients don't understand the ethical responsibilities of their therapists. With that, Lucy thought it might be wise to explain that she did receive the request but she opted not to return friendship because it might be considered a dual relationship. Lucy had not thought that friending a client might also compromise confidentiality. She was a bit concerned about her Facebook profile after reading the article. The article advised that therapists should be aware of their profile security settings. She did not know quite what to do so she decided she would call her sister.

Before Lucy could address the Facebook issue in their next session, Alice asked Lucy, "I friended you on Facebook but you never accepted. Do you go online much?" Lucy explained why she did not accept the friend invitation based on the article she had just read and told Alice she mainly used her computer for word processing. "Oh. So you must think I am really strange going on and on all these months about my avatar and Second Life stuff." Suddenly Alice felt unheard and out of place. For the first time since she started seeing Lucy she felt exposed. Lucy said "Alice we have talked about many things since you began therapy, including your game issues." Alice was quiet. Lucy did not quite know what to make of the silence. She could not understand Alice's reaction. Lucy sat with Alice in the silence. Alice's eyes teared up. Lucy

finally asked, “What are you feeling, Alice?” Alice looked away and stared out the window, tears now streaming down her face. She replied with a tone completely void of affect, “You don’t get me...all these weeks I have been talking about all my stuff, but a lot about my other reality. I even told you about my avatar. I thought it was odd that you didn’t latch onto that piece. I mean, I thought it was perfect – that I was willing to share with you this avatar - my persona, a part of me that I created online- I told you her name even.” Alice began to speak with a wavering and loud tone, “Do you remember?? Her name is Wendy and she is 11 years old. Well, anyway, you probably didn’t say anything because you don’t even know what an avatar is do you? I figured you were the therapist. You are supposed to know things better than me. So I just assumed we would circle back to Wendy. But we never did. Now I know why. You think she is just part of a silly game I play, don’t you?? To you, she has no purpose in here. But guess what, Lucy? She is real. She is real to me!!”

Lucy felt for the first time in many years, that she really missed the mark. She realized in short order that she was unfamiliar with this context that Alice brought to therapy. Her mind was racing. She actually thought she might be working outside her scope of practice. Should she make a referral? Has she reached an impasse? But in those moments when Alice shared her true feelings, she also knew that she and Alice had made a connection so she hoped her authentic response would be a step in bridging this huge gap in Lucy’s knowledge base and that she and Alice could continue to work together.

“Oh Alice. I am truly sorry. I was working off the emotions you were bringing into our sessions and I admit I did overlook your mentions of Wendy. You are right. I don’t understand because I don’t know about this other reality you have spoken of, and that is short-sided on my part. I

should have asked more questions and allowed you to lead us to what is obviously important. Would you be willing to show me and guide me to this place you talk about?"

Alice wondered for a moment if she should even come back. She felt, in a word, invalidated. Ironically, she learned about feelings of invalidation from Lucy. But when Lucy admitted her mistake, Alice sensed that Lucy was speaking from a place of humility and recognized her own naivety. She asked Lucy, "Do you want to meet Wendy?" Lucy replied that she would be honored to meet Wendy. Alice said she would bring her laptop to the next session. Lucy explained that she did not have an Internet connection at the office and Alice assured her that would be fine because she would bring her air card. "Okay Alice. Thank you for being willing to bring me up to speed so we can continue our work together. I think it might be helpful if I take a look at Second Life before our next session. I clearly have some catching up to do."

Alice had scheduled her next appointment 10 days later because she and her husband had planned a 3 day trip to visit their daughter. Alice felt surprisingly empowered after the session, knowing that she had stated her true feelings and that now she would be able to explain to Lucy in a way that she had never explained any of this to anybody. She actually looked forward to their next session.

Lucy felt incredibly overwhelmed after her session with Alice. Facebook, Internet, avatar, air card...her head was spinning. And she was a bit scared that she would not be able to come up to speed and truly understand. She had logged on to Second Life that evening after her session with Alice and she felt confused, like she did when she was in algebra class in seventh grade. She signed up for an account but then she was asked to download a program and her sister had

warned her not to download too many more programs because her computer was several years old and did not have much space or memory or something like that.

She had heard recently of Avatar, the movie. She saw the previews but that did not make much sense to her either so she didn't see the movie because it looked like science fiction and that was not a genre that usually held her interest. She thought perhaps she needed to seek guidance on her case with Alice, but from whom? She decided to call her long time mentor, Dr. Alan Finster. "Hi Al, I know it has been a while. I have a case I would like to discuss with you. Can I tell you briefly? I don't know if this is a situation you can help me with or if you know someone I can talk to? I am just at a loss. This is all so new."

Dr. Finster couldn't think of anything that would be "so new" as to be out of his range of knowledge and expertise. Nearing retirement, he figured he had seen and heard it all, especially with supervisees and consultees who came to him to discuss transference and counter-transference issues. He had consulted with Lucy over the years having met her when she was in graduate school. He was her first clinical supervisor at Lucy's internship placement. Since that time she would call on him as necessary when she felt she was struggling with a case. She had never presented a case to which he was unable to offer clear direction. But when he heard about Alice and her expression of what sounded like an alter she had created in this game setting, he knew he was not amply prepared to guide Lucy appropriately. "Lucy, this is probably a different answer than you were expecting, but it sounds like you are dealing with an unknown set of cultural morays. It is as if you have said to me that your client is from another country that you don't know anything about. And unfortunately, this country is one I don't know about either." Lucy immediately resonated with that description. "Yes! That is exactly what it feels like! It is

like I don't know the terrain- I can't even visualize it! But if it were another country, well I could look up pictures of the terrain, I could read about the culture but this, I don't know where to even start." Dr. Finster paused and said, "You have started. You have accepted an education from your client and that will likely be rich and informative. Now you need to seek out additional resources. I will see what I can find out. Do you mind if I ask around? And perhaps you can do the same."

Lucy called her sister next. "Anne, do you know anything about Second Life? You know how you got me on Facebook? I need to go to Second Life. And what's an air card?" Anne invited Lucy over Saturday afternoon. She said she could show Lucy Second Life, "I have been in Second Life. It is pretty cool, actually. I just haven't had time to really explore. This will be a good excuse! And fun too! I don't think your laptop has sufficient memory to run Second Life, but we have my laptop and the desktop here at the house so you and I can both be on." Lucy was greatly relieved. At least she would be able to see this other world that Alice kept referring to. "Anne, thank you. Can you explain other things to me like social networking?" When Lucy visited Anne, she indeed saw and walked in Second Life for the first time. It was such an expansive experience and she was struck with this entirely new and different view she would have never have had, were it not for her client. She reflected on how her clients had taken her to new and different places within herself many times over the years, but this was so very different. And she couldn't wait to tell Dr. Finster that it is not another country, this Second Life thing - it is another world!!

Lucy began to wonder about life in this other world and as she walked through Second Life, visiting a coffee shop, a jazz club and a shopping mall, she paused. She thought about Wendy - Wendy, walking around in this huge, endless world...alone? She is 11 years old! She began to feel protective of Wendy and remiss in her duties as a therapist, reflecting on how her own ignorance nearly caused irreparable damage to the therapeutic alliance with Alice. Even so, she was filled with new energy and a better understanding of what Alice would present to her in their next session. She just felt that she needed to talk to a therapist who may have experience in this realm.

Lucy searched the Internet using various terms. She did not really know what to name what she was looking for, although she had heard terms like online counseling and e-therapy before. In her search she came across a couple of prominent names in the field that surfaced over and over and she found an organization's website that offered articles and information on topics related to mental health and technology. She also searched major online bookstores like Amazon and found valuable resources. Over the next week she poured through websites, read articles, and contacted a couple of "experts" for a one-time consultation. She found online courses that offered continuing education. She even ran across references to "Avatar Therapy." What she learned in just one week was the beginning of a major paradigm shift for Lucy. She started to envision her work with clients in an entirely different way. Signing up for encrypted email was as simple as setting up a Yahoo or Gmail email account. She could give homework assignments and additional readings via email between sessions. She could even offer her clients online sessions through video conferencing and chat. She realized the learning curve but after exploring Second Life, cyberspace did not seem as intimidating to her and she was interested in the exploration. In

fact, she was considering buying a new laptop, but she would not have this in time for the next session with Alice.

Alice arrived at her next appointment with Lucy on time. She was very excited but timid about introducing Wendy to Lucy. Lucy welcomed Alice. She told Alice that she had done some research and visited Second Life. She thanked Alice for her patience and told her that she was determined to get up to speed. Alice set up her laptop and used her air card to access the Internet. Within a few minutes, Alice was online and in Second Life. With Alice and Lucy both positioned on the sofa, Alice placed the laptop on the coffee table in front of them. Alice said, "This is Wendy." Lucy saw an 11 year old version of Alice with the same color hair, freckles, a small nose and a dimple in her chin. Lucy was struck with the sense that Wendy was in the room with them. She immediately felt the need to remind Alice (and Wendy) that they were both safe in this therapy room. She wanted to be able to process this introduction without delving too much further. She suggested to Alice that Wendy might need time to become comfortable with Lucy and said that perhaps they could just leave the interaction with Wendy at introductions for today. Alice agreed and after Alice shut her laptop, they discussed feelings Alice was having about introducing Wendy to Lucy and how they might proceed with further sessions. Alice asked if Lucy would be willing to join her inworld and Lucy explained that she was exploring ways that they could accomplish this but she wanted to do a bit more research. Alice thanked Lucy for her willingness move into a new frontier.

Lucy was able to secure a consultation with a person who had knowledge of virtual worlds and avatar therapy. She talked about the case of Alice but also asked technical questions about

working in environments like Second Life. The consultant suggested to Lucy that perhaps she continue in a similar fashion but perhaps work from her own laptop in the same room with Alice. The consultant explained that Second Life is not encrypted but since they will be sharing the same space face-to-face, that they might talk within the session instead of using the chat component of Second Life. Lucy thought they might progress to working from home, with Lucy and Alice on their respective laptops, logging on from remote locations and the consultant recommended using a chat/voice option that is encrypted to layover Second Life.

Over the next few weeks, Lucy and Alice met in the office. Lucy purchased a new laptop and enabled her office with Internet access. Lucy joined Wendy in Second Life and Wendy spent a couple of sessions taking Lucy to her favorite places. She had created her own home, complete with furnishings and her favorite foods in the kitchen cupboard. It became clear that these places that Wendy showed Lucy were all safe, warm and without conflict. The home was the home of Alice's childhood. Wendy said, "When my parents are home, they are here in the living room reading the paper."

When Lucy and Wendy finally met inworld without the physicality shared by Alice and Lucy in the office, the conversation deepened and the information shared became much more intimate within minutes. Wendy and Lucy traveled around, Wendy showing Lucy new discoveries in Second Life. Lucy was keenly aware of how free and uninhibited she felt and how easy it would be to communicate much more casually with Wendy. She literally had to imagine herself as the therapist she is, picturing her office space and the chair she sits in to remain centered and focused while she worked with Wendy. At the end of this session, Wendy said she had created more buildings and streets and teleported Lucy back to her home. Wendy had created a street with

trees lining the road and another house across the street from her own. Lucy immediately recognized the significance of the house across the street and suggested that she and Wendy take a walk “to that very pretty meadow you found. Let’s close the session there. And then I want to ask you if it is okay for Alice and I to have an in-person session again before I meet with you here? We can come right back to this meadow.”

At their next in-office session, Lucy and Alice caught up on Alice and Ben’s trip to see their daughter. Alice also talked about her mystery writing. She said that her latest story involves “the house across the street. You know, the one Wendy showed you in Second Life.” Alice asked why she chose that house as the house in her mystery story and she said, “Well, the house that Wendy created in Second Life is the house I was molested in when I was 12. Since that house has bad memories for me, it makes sense that it would be the perfect place for a murder in my next story. A young girl is murdered there.” Lucy asked if there was any significance between Wendy creating the house in Second Life and Alice writing about the house as the scene of a murder and Alice replied, “I don’t think so.”

Within seconds, Alice was clenching her fists, rocking and shaking with her eyes closed. Lucy reminded Alice where she was, that she was safe and asked her, “What do you see?” Alice replied, “it is not what I see, I mean, I have seen this house, well I mean, I don’t know, I was just there, in the house. Wendy took me there inside...you know, in Second Life, but now I am there again, I mean it is me, or Wendy, oh I don’t know. And he is there, and he is hovering, oh I just know I am going to die. I think I will just die if he touches me, oh my God.” Lucy contains Alice’s emotions and brings her back fully into the present. Alice is co-conscious and aware of what just happened. Alice whispered, “Soul murder...that’s what happened to me. I have been

searching for my soul...he took it. Wendy is the me before the murder. She is free and light and..." Lucy said gently "And you can be free and light again Alice."

"I mean, my parents didn't show me a lot of attention. They read the paper a lot. But I never felt like they meant to hurt me. I knew there was something - I don't know, it is hard to explain. I have always remembered what happened. But today, I remembered it differently. I remembered how I felt - that it was wrenching, that it left me emotionally empty and I have been so lonely searching for myself all these years. And Wendy, she is so innocent."

Lucy offered to meet Wendy in Second Life for the next session. "Alice, why don't you think about how you would have liked things to be different? "Well, I would have liked to have not been molested." Lucy sat on the edge of her chair and proclaimed, "And so it is."

"Whatever do you mean, Lucy??"

"Let's let Wendy show us a different ending to this story. She can take us in the house. You will be safe because I will be there and besides, this did not happen to Wendy."

"But Wendy is a part of me." Alice said.

"And Wendy has something to share with you Alice, so let's see what she can reveal to you."

Lucy offered Alice the opportunity to email if she began to feel overwhelmed. "I will check in with you as well. Remember to use your encrypted email account. Reach out if you need to. I might not read it right away and you have my phone number if it is an emergency. But feel free to email me before we meet again. This has been an intense session and I want you to know I am right here."

Seven days later, Wendy and Lucy met in the meadow in Second Life. The meadow was full of poppies and shasta daisies all abloom. Wendy talked with Lucy about how wonderful things have been. “You remember I told you I have a best friend? Her name is Maggie. She is my age and guess what?? She lives right across the street!” Lucy and Wendy teleported back to Wendy’s house. Wendy walked across the street and Lucy followed. “Maggie isn’t home right now but I just wanted you to see! Go in! Maggie and I have the most fun ever here! This is one of my favorite places in the whole wide world!” Lucy enters the house full of pastel colors. Cupcakes and cookies lined the kitchen counter and a huge doll house was set up in the living room. There were balloons everywhere. “What are the balloons for Wendy?” Wendy replied, Oh, we had my birthday party earlier today! I am 12 now!”

Alice, sitting at home, led by Wendy’s unwavering quest for fun and harmony, felt reborn in that moment. Her soul was alive again and the trauma she had experienced washed away as if it never happened. The feelings of loneliness that had engulfed her as she searched for herself were gone. Wendy had been able to reframe the entire experience for Alice turning her 11th year into something to celebrate instead of regret.

Lucy and Alice continued to work together and processed these events over the next couple of sessions. Alice’s driven desire to be inworld and online passed over time and when she did go into Second Life, she would allow Wendy to show her all of those safe and fun places they shared. Whenever Alice felt unsure or unsafe, Wendy was there to show her life and remind her of the incredible soul work that was accomplished in a virtual world.

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