

What Happened to Alice?

By Jana Jones

Episode 12 – Back to the Future

Wallace, Rhoda, Alice, and Aimee rode in silence along the steadily darkening backroads of Cowen County, South Carolina. Before they left the house, Rhoda ran to the back room and stuffed a wad of rolled dollars in her crochet purse. She figured the young lady from the woods would need money wherever she ended up.

“We’re about ten miles out from Bishopville. There’s a train station there.” Wallace’s eyes shifted back and forth between his side mirror and his windshield. Sophia the Shotgun was tucked away behind the seat.

Ami felt queasy. This was not her time. How would she get back to the present day? Then her thoughts landed on Alice. The sweet little girl quietly examining Ami’s face. What would become of her? Would the Dawsons try to finish their demented mission?

Ami smiled down at Alice’s face. Alice smiled back, showing a row of uneven teeth. Old ones going out, new ones coming in.

“You are going to do great things, Alice.” Ami’s voice shook. “You are brilliant and you are exactly what the world needs. You are supposed to be exactly where you are.”

Ami didn’t know where the words came from, but something touched her heart. There was a reason for the trip down to Faidley. Meeting up with Aunt Darlene and Uncle Clinton. Learning the glorious and seedy history of her family. This was Alice’s history, too. But she would do more.

Both Alice and Rhoda gave appreciative smiles to Ami. Rhoda reached down to get the roll of dollars and stuffed the money in Ami’s palm.

Before Ami could speak up, Wallace sat upright in his seat. “Rhody, swap seats and move to the window. Get Sophia. Alice, get down on the floor.” He nodded at Ami, “You get down on the floor with her.”

Ami looked behind her and saw what looked to be the lights of two vehicles following Wallace Smiths’ truck.

It was deja vu. Ami took Alice and the two of them crouched down by Rhoda’s feet as instructed.

Rhoda’s flexibility defied her years. She leaned behind her to grab Sophia. Wallace continued driving as if everything were fine and normal. Ami could hear the sound of an engine accelerating.

The first truck sped up along the driver’s side of Wallace’s truck. He rolled the windows down and leaned as far back as possible. Two shots rang out from the cab. Ami heard the shrill screeching of tires, then a loud crash.

Ami knew there a second vehicle out on the dark, desolate road with them. She and Alice remained curled in a ball on the floor the truck.

“You good over there, Wal?” Rhoda checked in with her husband. Sophia the shotgun was standing reading.

“Miss Rhoda, by the grace of God, I am.”

Ami couldn’t help but to smile at the couple who no doubt had seen so much in their years together. All of the memories they had between them. Their deep and abiding love for their dear Alice. A strength that would get their granddaughter through whatever life had in store.

Wallace continued speeding down the road. Two blasts from someone’s shotgun stopped the weathered truck in its tracks.

“They got us.” Wallace said matter-of-factly. He looked at Ami. “When I count to three you go on and take Alice into the woods. Stay there until I send the signal.”

At the count of three Rhoda quickly threw open the passenger side door and Ami raced with Alice into the woods.

As she had done before, Ami quickly picked up the little girl figuring she could cover more ground that way.

“Nana and Pop!” Alice cried on Ami’s shoulder. Ami felt herself getting ready to cry as well.

The sound of shotgun fire tore through the sky and sliced through the trees. Ami found a thicket to sit in hiding until the coast was clear.

Would it be clear?

Ami refused to allow her mind to drift to the other alternative. They would prevail. It was the only option. The story would not end this way.

Ami and Alice remained huddled in the safety of the forest when something that felt like strong hands grabbed Ami by her waist and jerked her backwards.

