

What Happened to Alice?

By Jana Jones

Episode 11 - Sophia

Wallace took a few small steps out the door. “Reverend, our Alice is back with us. She wandered on out of the woods, safe and sound. No scars, no marks that me and my wife can see. I thank you for your concern.”

Reverend Dawson’s eyes narrowed despite the cheerful smile on his face. “I’m glad she’s back, Brother Wallace. Would it...could it be possible for me to see the darling little girl?”

“Alice!” As Wallace called out to his granddaughter, his eyes never left Reverend Dawson’s face. “Come on out, baby. Just for a minute.”

Rhoda quietly walked up to the front of the house with Alice. She stood behind the door while Alice saddled up next to her grandfather. The girl stared cautiously at Reverend Dawson.

“Alice, we were very worried about you. Your friends told me some...some creature in the woods had run off with you. John was especially distraught.” Reverend Dawson got down on one knee to come eye-to-eye with the girl.

“Thank you,” the usually loud and boisterous girl whispered. “I’m safe.”

Wallace and Rhoda both gave silent prayers of relief.

Reverend Dawson stood up at full height and nodded to Wallace. The men standing behind him began backing away from the Smiths’ home.

“We still plan to keep an eye out for that thing, whatever it was. The children were shaken up pretty badly, and we can’t have them living in fear. You keep that one close, you hear?”

Reverend Dawson looked Alice over one last time before turning to leave.

For the first time in a long time, Wallace picked up his granddaughter as they stepped back inside the house. Rhoda and Ami were standing in the front room side by side.

“We gotta get her out of here. These folks have something planned, Rhody.” Wallace spoke to Rhoda as he looked over at Ami. “This ain’t good. It ain’t good at all.”

“Like a lynch mob?” Rhoda held her breath.

“That’s what it felt like.” Wallace rubbed Alice’s back. He still hadn’t put her down.

Ami began pacing in a small corner of the front room. “I don’t know how to get home.”

“Where you say you were from again?” Wallace asked Ami.

“She say she from Philadelphia.” Alice smiled.

“How far away is that? Might have to put you on a train out.” Wallace was working out the logistics of Ami’s escape in his head.

As the adults tried to stay calm and figure out a plan, Alice skipped to the front window.

“Pop pop, a man is hiding behind the tree. Is he waiting for us?” Alice asked expectantly, as if there was a game of hide and go seek she was missing out on.

Rhoda stood behind her granddaughter to get a glimpse at what Alice saw. “Go get Sophia, Wal.”

Wallace went over and pulled a double-barrel shotgun from behind a tall chest. “Those gah damn Dawsons,” he grumbled under his breath.

“I’m going back outside.”

“Wait, Wallace, no! Just keep an eye on ‘em. From here.”

Ami felt helpless as she watched the elder couple try to protect her. “I can go out. I don’t want you all to be in any danger.”

“Oh, chile, just hush.” Rhoda shook her head and swatted in Ami’s direction. “You here with us now.”

Wallace stepped out onto the front porch with Sophia the shotgun locked and loaded. An exchange occurred between the two men before one loud blast sounded through the walls of the house.

“Nana!” Alice rushed to bury her face in the softness and security of her grandmother’s thigh.

Rhoda held Alice close as Ami continued feverishly pacing the Smiths’ front room floor. After some time had passed, Wallace came back in the house, mud, and blood covering the front of his overalls, tightly gripping Sophia.

“C’mom.” Wallace shook his head, his voice grave. “We have to leave. Now.”

