

What Happened to Alice?

By Jana Jones

Episode 10 - Reverend Dawson is Concerned

Ami stared down at her plate of butter beans and cornbread. She explained to Wallace and Rhoda how she had come about removing Alice from her playmates.

“She is in danger around them,” Ami pleaded. She didn’t want to mention her dream and the incident with the radio show from the present-day dimension.

Wallace studied her curiously, paying extra close attention to her locs. Rhoda stared deeply into Ami’s eyes. Almost to the point where Ami thought the older woman was trying to communicate telepathically.

“Where are you from again?” Wallace furrowed his brow.

“Philadelphia, sir.” While Ami had never been raised to “ma’am, sir” her elders, she felt this was a special exception.

“We warned her, our daughter, about that Dawson boy.” Rhoda Smith spoke softly. “She kept him a secret from us for as long as she could, I guess. We went to their church, Second Baptist. It had been our family church at one point.”

Rhoda and Wallace exchanged glances. Rhoda continued: “It’s a known fact that those Dawson menfolk like to have their way with the women and girls. The poorer girls were who they preferred. I guess they felt no one would put up a fuss.”

“Our daughter, Alice’s mother, has a good heart. She’s always been a sweet girl, but she just didn’t have the mind to look after a young one. Followed behind some friends who went to Kansas City.” Rhoda massaged her round knee and looked off to the side.

“Alice swears those children are her friends, but I keep telling her to stay clear. She’s so young. She doesn’t understand any of it.” Wallace finally spoke up. “I thank you, ma’am. Miss...”

“Johnson. Ami Johnson, sir. I...I’m just glad I could help. I know all of this...” Ami gestured with her hands. “I know this was not expected, but I’m so glad Alice is home safe. I—”

Ami began to get choked up, and the last thing she wanted was to scare the Smiths. The flood of emotions threatened to consume her. What would happen to Alice next? What would happen to *her* next? How would she get back to her time?

Rhoda got up and walked over to where Ami sat. She gently kneaded Ami’s shoulders. The tender, grandmotherly touch was the first bit of softness Ami had experienced in some time. She missed her parents, her friends, her dog, and her warm bed back home. There was a strong possibility that she would be separated forever from all she loved.

Hard knocking on the Smiths’ front door pulled Ami out of her rambling thoughts. Wallace lumbered over to take a quick peek out of the window before answering. He turned to face his wife and Ami.

“It’s Reverend Dawson.”

Rhoda and Ami exchanged concerned glances. Considering their earlier conversation, having the Dawsons show up felt like an ominous sign.

Another hard knock on the door, and then a powerful baritone sounded through the wooden walls of the house: “Brother Smith, we just got word that a woman ran off with Alice. They said she came from the woods. Scared the children real bad, she did. Let me in, brother.”

Still facing the door, Wallace did a hand motion signaling for Rhoda to take Ami in the back. Just then, Alice came skipping out. Without missing a beat, Rhoda quickly grabbed Alice to take her back to where she had been.

Wallace opened the door slightly and saw that Reverend Dawson wasn't alone. Three men were standing a few feet behind the reverend. One was holding a shotgun.

