

What Happened to Alice?

By Jana Jones

Episode 9 - Welcome to Faidley. Again.

Sunlight poured through the treetops. Ami eventually slowed down to more of a fast walk, still clutching Alice close as if the little girl with the long limbs were a newborn.

“Where’s home?” Ami looked down at the girl with the sweet, brown face and large, doe eyes.

“We came from that way.” Alice pointed her finger eastward.

“I’m not a witch, by the way.” Ami felt the need to get that off her chest as she put Alice down.

“You from Faidley?” Alice looked Ami up and down as if the woman were from another planet.

“No, I’m from Philadelphia,” Ami responded. She had one question she already knew the answer to, but she needed to hear it directly from the girl. “What’s your name?”

“My name is Alice Smith.” She said her name proudly. There was no trace of shame or any second-guessing. She had a confident aura for someone so young.

Ami could see why the Dawsons would feel insecure. Alice could easily outshine any of their “claimed” children.

“Were those your friends back there?” As Ami asked that question, she did a quick look around. The voice that screamed at her while she was running sounded demonic. She wondered if anything else was lurking around in the woods, watching them.

“Yup, those are my best, good friends.” Alice gave an assured nod. “Riley and Ruby and M.E. and John.” She recited their names in a sing-song fashion.

It reminded Ami of her dream.

Ami could see they were reaching the forest's edge as the two continued their walk. A cluster of clapboard homes was up ahead. The light from the sun was desperately fighting against the grey clouds. She thought about what her father said about the town being possessed.

Alice pointed up ahead. “We live that way. I live with my Papa and my Nanny. We have a dog, too. Jimbo.”

The two walked, hand in hand, out of the forest and into a cluster of modest, shanty-like homes. Ami was thankful that no one else was out and about as she could only imagine how she looked. She took her free hand and ran it through her locs—a hasty attempt to get the last bits of greenery out of her hair.

For a brief moment, Ami’s thoughts went to the condition of her rental car and her flight home. Would she ever make it back to her time?

Alice led Ami to the second house along the dirt road. She bounded up the wooden steps and yelled out for her grandparents.

At that moment, Ami realized she hadn’t given Alice her name. And what, exactly, would she say to Alice’s grandparents?

The front door opened, and a large man with skin the same shade of brown as the house peered out the door. His face softened at the sight of his smiling granddaughter.

“Pop, this lady came and got me from the woods. I was playing with my friends and the Dog Witch was trying to get us.” Alice tried her best to summarize the strangeness of the day.

The old man gave Ami a thorough once over just as his granddaughter had done earlier. He took a long look at Ami's clothes and then stared into her face. He nodded his head and thanked Ami for bringing his little girl back.

Alice had already taken off full speed ahead into the house while Ami remained on the front porch fidgeting with her fingers.

Just then, a woman who Ami assumed was his wife and Alice's grandmother walked up to stand alongside her husband. Her face showed an expression that caught Ami by surprise—relief.

“I'm Ami. Ami Johnson. May I come in? I would like to talk with you both if I can. About your grandbaby's friends...the Dawsons.”

