

ALICE ALONE #1

Alice doesn't remember much about her early years as a vampire. I ask her questions from time to time and usually she just shrugs. Every now and then, though, an odd fact or disconnected experience will pop into her head as if she always knew it. When I repeat it out loud to her, she often seems surprised. It's odd.

I don't know exactly what happens to a human's brain when it is repeatedly subjected to doses of electrical current (though Carlisle and I strongly suspect organic damage), and I don't know how it is then affected by oxidizing into what we are. I do know one thing, though—the result is Alice and she is a one-of-a-kind miracle.

I've kept track of the bits and pieces that Alice has revealed to me over the years, though I doubt if she could repeat much of what I've collected. As far as I can tell, all her long-term human memories were lost and never recovered. She has no recollection of anything from before her time in the asylum. Memories that were shorter-term, such as experiences in the asylum and just afterwards, come out in flickers from time to time. I can only guess that once the electroshock stopped, her brain began to heal and she gradually became able to store memories again.

So though most vampires have only vague recollections from their human years, Alice has almost none and the few I've caught are just wispy images from the last six months or so of her life. She might have had more toward the end except that she was kept in darkness most of the time. I've seen nebulous images of a door at the end of a long hallway, for example, and the memory of pain in her eyes when she went through it into the light.

The ill effects of Alice's shock treatments lingered into her new life as a vampire, making her the only one of our kind I know of who does not have clear memories from the moment of her birth. Her earliest ones are

piecemeal. For instance, she remembers where she woke up, but not how she got there. She remembers a sickly sweet burning smell, but not what it was from.

Alice awoke from her burning time in a cave, alone. She later identified the strong odor there when she witnessed the annihilation of a vampire for the first time. We know now that what she smelled was smoke from the burning of her creator. The evil James destroyed him, but saw no sport in killing a bewildered newborn. He left Alice to struggle on her own with no guidance and without even knowing what she was. Though ignorant and abandoned, when Alice emerged from the cave into the sunshine, she was thrilled to discover that she was a stunning creature adorned all over in sparkling diamonds.

Alice didn't find out until much later that she had been created and left to fend for herself in Jasper County, Mississippi. It was portentous—the county where she was born as a vampire bore the same name as her future true love.

Alice set out into the world with nothing except the rags on her back and the visions in her mind. Fortunately for us all, Alice had survived with a gift undoubtedly enhanced from what it had been when she was human. That helps to explain why her lack of memory caused her little grief. What had already happened was not as important to her as what would happen, something that remains true today.

Rosalie once described Alice aptly: "...secure as always, living ahead, her mind in a time her body hadn't reached yet. Always so calm."¹ I believe that was never more true than when she was first created for, after all, what else had she?

As far as I've been able to determine, Alice made her first public appearance in Heidelberg, Mississippi, a tiny town southwest of the asylum where she had lived for so long. She was drawn there by her newborn thirst, for it was the closest place with a population of human prey. In the

¹ From http://www.stepheniemeyer.com/pdf/nm_extras_miscalculation.pdf, © Stephenie Meyer, 2006

1920s, Heidelberg was barely a bug spot on a map of the state, with dirt wagon trails and no telephones or automobiles (or indoor plumbing). Its remoteness and lack of any modern means of communication turned out to be a good thing for Alice.

The town had a general store on its one street with a gray-haired proprietor who served as Alice's first meal. His wife, bringing her husband his lunch, was her second. In such a small community, the death of one citizen was instant news and the mysterious deaths of two at once constituted a public emergency. There was no such thing as anonymity in Heidelberg and when the bodies were discovered, the ensuing ruckus—galloping of horses, ringing of the church bell, screaming and shouting—compelled Alice to run north in search of a bigger town with a larger population. Fortunately, it was easy for her to escape, since all she had to do was dodge one or two rifle bullets and outrun a few horses.

Alice didn't know better than to travel by day and so that's what she did, which worked to her advantage in rural Mississippi. Her glittering skin caught the eye of solitary farmers and hunters who would come to investigate and provide her with convenient meals. Like a newborn human, a newborn vampire has everything he or she requires to survive, which in Alice's case, was simply the instinct to drink what smelled like sustenance.

Not too far along in her journey northward, Alice came upon some railroad tracks and, assuming they led somewhere, followed them until she reached the state capital of Jackson, Mississippi. In the city, she quickly discovered that her beautiful diamond skin was not an advantage. While it drew humans to her, it always drew too many and they frightened her with their screams and cries, and their tendency to gang up on her or try to capture her. Good sense told her that during the daytime she would be hounded, so she became a creature of the night.

Alice being Alice, she soon discovered that her ragtag appearance—chopped-off, half-grown-out hair, ragged clothes, and no shoes—set her apart from all other females she encountered. Finding none of our kind,

Alice chose what she wanted to look like from among the women who could be seen on the city streets in the evening and at night. They came primarily in two varieties—visions of beauty and elegance attending the theater, opera, and glamorous evening parties; and a wide range of ladies, most of less-than-elegant comportment, who wore revealing clothing and ambled up to men on the streets. She preferred the former group.

Alice set about styling herself in the manner of an elegant lady. She soon discovered that with the new 1920s hairstyles, her chopped-off locks could be made to look chic. Jackson, Mississippi, was not known for being at the cutting edge of fashion, but Alice acquired a few beautiful evening dresses, including a violet one with a flounce made from ostrich feathers. I've seen a very clear image of that particular dress in her head, but when asked to recall it, she cannot.



Alice quickly learned where the best ladies' shops were located and she made a habit of breaking into them at night to build her wardrobe. Soon, she had acquired a collection of striking clothes to wear during her evening forays.

After careful observation, which was her only way to learn how to dress and act, Alice was soon able to participate in the social scene of Jackson. Her favorite mingling spot was the luxurious Edwards Hotel (another portent?) across from the Union Train Station. It was the favored location among the wealthy elite for society balls and parties. Fortunately for Alice, shop proprietresses could not afford to attend the exclusive functions that she attended or she might have been caught out in a stolen dress.



Again, Alice being Alice, she quickly became the Belle of the Balls, known for the coquettish fashion she established of wearing hats with colored veils over her eyes. Men seemed to find this mysterious and it attracted them to her in droves. If pressed, she would admit to a hereditary melanin defect that gave her pale skin and un-pigmented eyes which were very sensitive to the light. If anyone grew too curious, she simply drank them for dinner (*La Belle Dame sans Merci*). She had learned to hide her corpses meticulously in order to avoid suspicion.

By charming wealthy male patrons, Alice was able to establish herself in Jackson, buy a house, and fill it with the finest of furnishings. At first she simply stole what she liked on midnight raids of shops and import warehouses, especially those with luxury goods from France. Soon, though, she learned from a gentleman friend about investing in the stock market and she gave up her more risky means of acquisition.

Having foreseen the stock market crash of 1929 in a vision, Alice speculated in stocks to the highest possible degree and then converted everything to gold before the market began to fall. That was how she instantly made herself one of the richest citizens in the South, especially as the booming economy gave way to the Great Depression.

As is always the case with our kind, Alice could remain in Jackson for only nine or ten years before her noticeable lack of aging grew troublesome and she decided to move on. She retained the mansion she had bought and turned it over to a leasing agency, thus establishing a long-held tradition. She still acquires properties in every city she likes, and to this day, owns historic homes all over the country. Rents alone would keep her in high-fashion clothing and fancy yellow Porsches, but she generously supplements that income with continued speculation in world markets. It's something of a hobby nowadays.

Edward

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