

Alice, Pursued by a Bear

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CAST:

ALICE (f): 21 to 30; riddled with anxiety

CARRIE (f) 221-30; adventuresome friend

*BEAR (m) ageless; a bear – who grows; feels compelled to save Alice

TIME:

Present

PLACE:

A small apartment. There should be at least two sturdy pieces of furniture that ALICE can climb on – an ottoman, a chair, a table.

*BEAR: ears, claws and a tail would be nice to suggest BEAR. A bear-suit would distract!

SYNOPSIS: Alice has worked at keeping her anxiety at bay. But the more she hides it, the bigger BEAR gets. ALICE finally has to face BEAR.

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AT RISE ALICE and CARRIE are going over travel brochures. BEAR (unseen and unheard by CARRIE) is in the background.

ALICE

It's all good. We take the train to Cinque Terre – that's supposed to be so romantically evocative of old Italy -

CARRIE

- But first a stop at Prato – looks like we might need to rent a car.

ALICE

We're paying for the rail pass – why also pay for a car?

CARRIE

It's the only way to get to the villa.

ALICE

We can walk.

CARRIE

It's six miles. A lot of it uphill.

BEAR

"Uphill." Did you hear that? Better find out what she means by "uphill" before things go too far.

ALICE

How long uphill? Like a "mountain uphill?" Or a "hill-uphill?"

CARRIE

I don't know. It just shows this curvy road going up in the hills.

BEAR

It could be a mountain, Alice. Better beware! Tread carefully.

ALICE

Can't do mountains. Sorry. I thought you knew that.

CARRIE

They say it's a hill!

ALICE

In England, a mountain is 1,000 feet. Is it 1,000 feet in Italy? Every country has its own definition.

CARRIE

When we go – we can measure! Don't get weird.

ALICE

I need to know ahead of time. To plan. My mind needs to plan. That's not weird!

CARRIE

We'll be in the car. What's the diff?

BEAR

Uh oh. Did you hear that? Did you hear the word "car" again? You know what that means. I'd investigate. I certainly would. Before things spiral out of control.

(BEAR moves away. His ears and tail and/or claws may visibly grow during the course of the discussion between ALICE and CARRIE. Change masks, ears, or even actors!)

ALICE

Are we - driving on a highway?

CARRIE

I hope so. I hate driving roads that were made for goats.

ALICE

I thought the purpose of the rail pass was to avoid renting a car. Which avoids driving on highways with maniacs. I hear they don't have speed limits over there. Maybe there's a little road that goes to the villa - you know roads with fewer people, slower roads.....

CARRIE

Highways are faster. You don't get lost.

ALICE

Trains are fast. And you don't get lost!

CARRIE

You can't get everywhere by train. The villa is off the beaten track and Alice – it looks incredible! Fourteenth century, olive orchards, formal gardens, reflecting pools –

ALICE

There has to be a fourteenth century villa that you can get to by train! I mean – Italy is lousy with relics. *There has to be a villa in a valley! I want to go to a villa in a valley!*

CARRIE

There's no villa in the valley! That's where the peasants with the pestles lived!

ALICE

What?

CARRIE

I'm being silly. Like you. Why're you freaking about a car rental? ? It's just two days with the car – up the hill to the villa and back down again.

ALICE

I'm still processing the hill. The height thing – it's been getting to me.

CARRIE

I'm sure it's not nearly as high as the slopes you ski on.

ALICE

Haven't skied in over a year. Last time – I just froze. Couldn't move. This bear cub emerged from the woods and guided me down. I still get palpitations when I think of it.

CARRIE

A bear-cub-guide – you're kidding, right?

ALICE

No – that bear totally saved my life. Such a cutie. All tiny and cuddly like my Terry Bear growing up.

CARRIE

Probably a snow mirage. I hear that happens when you look at all that white for too long.

ALICE

A total bear. A terrible-beauty - all large and giving and saving.

CARRIE

I thought he was a cub.

ALICE

When he stepped out of the woods. He was full grown by the time he led me off the mountain. Bears grow faster than humans.

CARRIE

If you say so.

ALICE

I do.

CARRIE

Can't believe you stopped skiing – you loved the freedom – the cold – that was such a part of you.

ALICE

So - I used to love to color my hair with Kool Aid. I used to love to have frogs crawl on me. Things change.

CARRIE

This villa is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!

ALICE

The world is riddled with once-in-a-lifetimes! You can't do it all. There are things we need to accept – we're never going to win gold in a bobsled race, never going to be Sumo wrestler –

CARRIE

What are you talking about?

ALICE

Accepting stuff. Things we can't do.

CARRIE

We can and will do Italy. It's been in the planning stages for five years! We've had endless discussions about this trip. You've been fine with everything! And for six months, we've been planning the actual nitty gritty. I included everything on your list – picking lemon trees on the Amalfi coast, eating in-season artichokes, the four-course farmhouse dinner in Florence – do you notice everything you want has to do with food?

ALICE

Did you notice that everything I want doesn't involve cars and mountains?

CARRIE

I want to play "Princess of the Villa." Give me that. It's a holdover from when I was six.

ALICE

Fine! We can dress up in hot, smelly Renaissance clothing if you want and run through olive orchards outside a villa. In a valley. A villa in a valley!

CARRIE

My heart is set on the one in Prato. I want to make the arrangements next week – everything – plane tickets, rail pass, car rental, rooms reserved. We planned this trip forever, Alice. Time to make it come true.

ALICE

I never thought it would really happen. I sort of put it on the shelf with the “we’re going to be in Annie on Broadway” dream.

CARRIE

We were eleven!

ALICE

But – we let go of the dream.

CARRIE

Because we got too tall to be an orphan! You never get too tall for Italy! It’s happening! To us. To the two of the geekiest kids in high school. And you know why we were never “high-school cool?” Because we’re “Italy-cool,” my friend – “ITALY COOL!” We’re “Armani-Roman Holiday-Tuscan-Sun” cool, Alice!

ALICE

“Armani-Roman Holiday-Tuscan-Sun Alice!” I am “Italy Cool!” Do you hear that, world? You’re looking at “Italy Cool!”

CARRIE

Italy Strong!

ALICE

Italy Strong!

CARRIE

It’s waiting for us. Hungry for us. Michelangelo’s David is in the Galleria whispering “Where are they? How long do I have to wait?” They’re all waiting for us -

ALICE

I’m coming, Italy! Strong-Italy-Cool Alice is coming!

CARRIE

– the art, the pizza, the valleys, the mountains -

ALICE

Hill! You said a hill! Don’t make a mountain out of a hill!

CARRIE

Get a grip! I’m doing this! We’re doing this. The dream is waiting. Don’t lose sight of that!

ALICE

I want to. Please know that I really, really want this to happen.

CARRIE

Good. Stay strong. Stay Italy-Cool! I have to get to work. I thought I would just drop off the stuff for you to look at and next week, we make the final arrangements. Cars! Valleys! Mount – Hills!

ALICE

I'll - go through it.

CARRIE

Talk to you tomorrow.

ALICE

Bye, Carrie.

CARRIE

Ciao, amica mia!

(CARRIE exits.)

ALICE

I am "Italy Cool!"

(BEAR comes forward and goes through the Italy brochures.)

ALICE

You look bigger. Did you just grow?

BEAR

The gondola ride looks like fun. You swim. Not much danger in the canals.

ALICE

At the rate you're growing, you'll never fit in a gondola.

BEAR

I can still fit inside your glove compartment of your car.

ALICE

I know! I don't know how you do it. You must assume an impossible yoga position.

BEAR

I conform. To keep you safe. On little roads. Avoiding highways.

ALICE

Maybe I should take up yoga. To quiet the firecrackers in my head.

BEAR

That's why I'm here.

ALICE

I can probably avoid the villa. Don't you think? I'll just stay a few extra days in Florence and then catch up with Carrie at Cinque Terre. It's not a big deal. Boom! Done! I have a plan! There's the Galleria – people say it takes days to go through that. And the Duomo –

BEAR

It's high – the Duomo. Very high. Don't be caught unawares. Rethink the Duomo.

ALICE

But it's not a mountain! It's inside – with guard rails and stuff. I could climb it. I'd be fine. And you'd be there, right?

BEAR

Behind you. Always.

ALICE

So I'm safe.

BEAR

For now.

ALICE

And we'd feast! Gelato and pizza for me! Fresh fish for you! Pulled right out of the Mediterranean – Italy's a mecca for bears.

BEAR

You're determined. I know you want this so hard. Think it through. Every moment, every bite, every site, every road.

(BEAR retreats as ALICE enjoys her Italian dreams.)

ALICE

"Alice and Michelangelo sitting in a tree...." No! "Alice and Da Vinci – cracking the code!" No! Not Alice anymore! Alesha! "Alesha dancing on the Trevi Fountain!"

END OF EXCERPT