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Putting Alice Back Together

Written by Carol Marinelli

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putting Alice back together

Carol Marinelli



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For Sam, Alex and Lucinda
with love always xxxx

putting Alice back together

Prologue

Little Alice

'That's the Munchkins sorted.' Mrs Evans smiled. 'Now we can move on to casting the main parts.' Everyone was nudging, all sitting cross-legged on the gym floor—a mix of eager and dejected faces, because anyone left after this would be in the chorus. 'The Wicked Witch of the West…' Mrs Evans announced, and I held my breath. If I wasn't going to be Dorothy I didn't actually mind being her, but I could feel the sweat beading on my forehead as Debbie Carter got the part.

'The Lion…' I knew this next lot of roles would go to the boys.

It was between Louise and me—she was so pretty and blonde she'd be lovely as the good fairy.

I knew I was good at drama. I knew I had a role and that there were only two girl ones left—and with my curly hair I wouldn't make a nice neat calm fairy. And given that my hair was red too…

I was going to be Dorothy!

Jonathon Phillips actually walked like the Tin Man as he stood up.

'Choose me, choose me…' I had my fingers crossed under my little fat shaking knees. I was trying to pretend I didn't care, that the lovely gingham dress and ruby shoes didn't matter so, except they did. I made my wish at the wrong second, though. Everyone was cheering. Louise was patting me on the back and Mrs Evans was grinning widely as, red in the face, I stood up and crashed my way through all the crossed knees.

I was Alice Lydia Jameson—the Scarecrow.

One

'How could she not know?' Roz snorted.

Hugh was at the table, filling in tax forms.

Roz and I were watching the news when a story came on about some woman who hadn't known she was pregnant and had flushed it down the loo…

'For God's sake.' Roz, lovely Roz, who was usually non-judgmental, was so opinionated and scathing as she said it again. 'How could she not know? How can she say that she didn't even know?'

And I gave a half-laugh, topped up my wine and carried on watching the news. But my face was burning, just as it did during a love scene at the movies when I felt as if the whole cinema was watching me and gauging my reaction; just as it did when Dr Kelsey asked all those questions.

I couldn't hear the scratch of Hugh's pen any more and I was sure he was watching me.

I just felt as if he knew.

'Of course she knew!' Roz insisted, even though I wasn't arguing, and I wanted to turn around and correct

her. I wanted to tell her to shut the fuck up, but instead I took a swig of wine and almost missed my mouth, my hand was shaking so much. She turned her attention to him. 'What do you think, Hugh?'

Only I didn't want to hear what Hugh thought.

I didn't want his educated opinion.

Do you know, every time some poor cow flushes a baby down the loo, or it turns up in a rubbish dump, or she arrives in Emergency with abdo pain and produces a babe, or pops a foetus into her hand luggage and tries to head for home, the comments are the same—*she must have known*.

No.

No.

No.

She didn't know.

She *couldn't* know.

Because once she did, *then* it was real.

I didn't need Hugh's opinion and I didn't need Roz's either.

I could see how it happened.

I knew how it happened.

Because, Once Upon a Time, it had happened to me.