

The Night We Meet – Ghost of Timor

By JL Collins

Alison sat in her hotel room, staring at the two objects before her. One was ten years old but never used. The other was new, yet carried more history. Still undecided, she put them both down and walked over to the mirror to check herself once more.

She couldn't remember exactly what she had looked like ten years ago, but she had definitely changed. The strain of children and her own broken marriage was bound to change anyone physically. The children had been a delight; the marriage, less so. She didn't know when it had all gone wrong, but after a long period of growing apart, he had finally put his cards on the table and, in Alison's typical style, she had moved on as quickly as she could.

"Too intense' indeed," she reflected.

But the separation had not been all bad. The children weren't young, and splitting custody every week gave her plenty of time to get back into shape. She'd hit the gym and the road, and the results were there to see. Definitely not a twenty-one-year-old anymore, but she knew that after two years of constant training, her body would still put most half her age to shame.

Satisfied that she looked good, Alison surveyed the room. Everything was ready, with nothing out of place. She'd barely touched anything since she'd checked in two hours earlier, except for the bathroom and shower.

She regarded the two objects that she'd left on the bed a few moments earlier. Grinding her teeth slightly, she read the letter one last time. There was still time to back out, and she wanted to make sure she had read it properly. The one hundred and first time couldn't hurt.

The letter was brief and to the point.

Alison,

I was at the Sydney Cricket Ground on the weekend and sat in almost exactly the same seats I was with you ten years ago. I still have fond memories of our time together. I hope life has treated you kindly.

Yours,

Christian

The letter had arrived at her office eight weeks earlier. Curious about how he had found her, Alison did a quick internet search of her name. The search returned dozens of results. She had been a shameless self-promoter over the years, so it couldn't have been too hard for him to track her down.

She then tried the same on him; no results. That he'd handwritten her a letter and posted it should have been a clue to his searchability. But to have no online records at all was quite the achievement.

Alison persevered online but eventually had to go deep into her glory box just to find a photo of him. The picture was of Christian standing next to a tree and the bicycle he rode

the day they'd ridden the ninety-five km to raise money for medical research. He had a huge smile on his face. He was young, slim, and strong, and had thick black hair.

"I wonder what has changed?" she thought.

He had not left a return address, so he did not want a reply, or he had wanted her to have to work for it. If he had not wanted her to find him, then why write at all? It was definitely option two. She'd initially tried to ignore it, but it wasn't in her nature to leave any loose ends in life.

"Dammit!" she'd cursed when she'd worked that part out. "He's in my head!"

She almost called a halt to her digging then when she'd realised that he was one-step ahead of her. But after a week of him living rent-free in her mind, she'd determined to find him so she could at least take back some of the power he'd somehow gotten over her with his letter.

"Double-dammit!" she cursed when she realised that he'd done it again.

Along with the photo were all of Christian's letters to her. At one time, when she had gotten engaged, she'd thought of throwing them away but had ended up just putting them in a box and then not touching them for over fifteen years. She opened them, hoping to find an address. Bingo. The address was there, clear as day, but she realised it was probably out of date by at least two decades. Maybe there was a clue in the letters.

"Oh-la-la!" she thought after reading them. She felt herself getting giddy. Man, that man could write a steamy love letter. Alison reread them and then reread them all again, just to be sure.

After her trip down memory lane, Alison finally found what she had been looking for — a name: Tom. Tom had been Christian's best friend from the army, at whose house they had spent a weekend together with him and his wife. She remembered Tom had a funny surname that had something to do with the weather.

"Rain, snow, wind, spring, summer... Summer!" That was it. But not spelt that way. She did a search and got rewarded. "Sommer! Tom Sommer."

The search brought back some results, but not a contact. However, there were photos of Tom and his wife Gloria.

"Dammit, dammit, dammit!"

Gloria was also a bit of a self-promoter—respect—and was easily contactable. A brief email to Gloria produced instant results. Gloria replied within the hour and, after a phone call to verify if Alison's was bona fide, she finally had a number.

"Alison!" Gloria said when the penny had finally dropped. "How long has it been?"

"Ten years." Alison said with some embarrassment.

"We'd almost forgotten about you two!"

"What do you mean 'almost'? We met only once!"

"Oh, we never forgot that weekend, Alison. Oh, my God!"

"What do you mean?"

"Are you kidding? The noises you were making from the bedroom! What was he doing to you in there?"

“Um....?” Alison felt herself beginning to go red.

“Okay-okay,” Gloria tried a different tack, “I have just one question. Was that all you, or was that all him?”

Gloria’s recollection had shaken something loose from Alison’s memory. She remembered that weekend. Alison recalled the afternoon when Christian had pleased her for so long that she screamed a complete stranger’s house down. She remembered emerging from that room hours later and the look on Tom and Gloria’s faces, barely able to stop themselves from bursting out laughing. Gloria had kept staring at Christian for the rest of that weekend.

“Who does that for hours?” Alison asked herself. Who indeed? “DAMMIT!”

Alison spent the next few days mulling over whether to message Christian. What was she setting herself up for? Hadn’t the last few years taught her not to rely on anyone but herself? Wasn’t her mother right when she told her that a man always turns into his father? Hadn’t she been right when she told Alison to forget about Christian and finish her degree?

Her mother. Alison had turned into her mother. She texted straightaway.

Got your letter. Will be in town soon. Are you free? Alison.

Two agonizing hours later, a reply.

Love to. Just say when.

The when was now. Alison put the letter neatly away in its envelope and picked up the second object. She looked in the mirror one last time, smiled, and walked out of the door.

Christian was older now. His hair was still short, but had now gone grey. Ever the soldier, she supposed. Alison had spotted him before he had seen her. Sitting in a corner booth of the coffee shop below her hotel, Christian read a newspaper with interest. She was almost upon him before he saw her.

Business suit and tie worn comfortably like a second skin. Glasses put away—just for reading—he greeted her with a smile and a hug. A kind smile. A warm embrace.

Alison relaxed immediately and lowered her guard. They chatted away for hours about their lives and what they—mostly she—had done in the last ten years, Christian never once mentioning the day she left him.

When she’d heard enough to set her mind at ease, she paused and steeled herself for what was to come next.

“Why did you write to me?” she asked.

“On the way home from the SCG that day, I had to walk past your school, that patch of long grass, your flat. It affected me in a way I didn’t expect.”

Alison could feel herself tearing up. That isn’t what she had meant, and now she had to say it out loud.

“No. I meant, why did you write to me after what I did to you?”

Christian paused for a moment, took Alison by the hand, and then spoke.

“I was working in Vienna many years ago and made some acquaintances with some people from a few international organisations that were headquartered there. One day, a

fellow I knew from OPEC took me aside and asked me what I was doing for the coming long weekend. As I was free, he said that I should come with him and told me to go home, pack a bag, and that he'd send a car to collect me.

"The car picked me up and sped me to the airport, but instead of heading to the major terminal, it turned down a side road marked with a prominent red capital A in a circle. As we approached the security gate, the car slowed down just enough for the guard to identify the driver and, without stopping, sped through. We drove straight onto the tarmac and stopped beside a waiting luxury private jet. The driver took my bag and led me toward the plane.

"I climbed the stairs to find my colleague waiting inside. 'My friend,' he said warmly, 'are you ready?' I nodded, and he turned to a waiting steward, spoke a few words in Arabic, and moments later the door closed. The plane taxied to the runway, and we took off. I won't bore you with the details, but as you may well imagine, it was a flight like no other."

Alison looked at Christian, confused. "I don't understand."

"Alison, I have been on many flights since that day, and my experience has been the same as anyone else who has flown commercially. Modern air travel is a marvel that shouldn't be taken for granted, but when you've flown in a luxury private jet, flying commercial is just not the same."

She pondered this for a moment, then smiled.

"I never got to give you your Christmas present." She said, her nerves almost getting the better of her. "I kept it all these years next to your letters and that one photo I had of you."

Christian shook before Alison placed a key on the table in front of him. It took him only a moment to recognise its significance.

"Handcuffs?" he said, sounding confused. "What am I supposed to do with a key to a set of handcuffs?"

Detecting his cheeky feigned ignorance, Alison rose, then placed her hotel room card on the table next to the key.

"Whatever you want to lover!" She walked a few steps away, but stopped and turned to face him. "Only don't take too long deciding. That's the only key, and I don't want to catch a cold waiting!"

Rain streaked the windowpanes of the guest room that looked out towards the Capitol. A summer thunderstorm lashed the city, and from inside that room, the hotel seemed to endure the brunt of it. The ancient oaks outside were being thrashed by the wind. After a long absence, the storm had broken.

Like the rain pouring down the hotel windows, perspiration streaked Alison's skin. Sweat bubbled up everywhere on her body—beading between her breasts, trickling in rivulets down the curve of her spine to pool at the base where their bodies slammed together, and dripping from her hardened nipples as they swayed heavily with each powerful thrust. The air was thick with the musky scent of their arousal, her slick folds gripping him tightly as he drove into her.

Some respite from the heat, she thought, but there was none. Alison hadn't endured a workout like this in years—at least not in this position, bent over the chair, her wrists cuffed securely to the chair's frame. Her body was reminding her that this form of exertion was entirely different. Marital sex had been polite and predictable; this raw, intense fucking—

Christian's thick cock stretching and filling her completely—was primal, consuming, *everything*.

Alison could hardly believe she was here again, ass up and exposed in front of the mirror, taking every inch Christian could pound into her. After ten years, she had never expected to see him again, let alone surrender so completely. She had left him an unmistakable trail: shoes at the door, then her dress, bra, and panties, leading directly to her—naked, bent over, and aching for him.

"Why, Lieutenant Holland, is that a gun in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me?" she quipped breathlessly.

Seeing her in such a vulnerable yet willing position, Christian's eyes darkened with lust. "No, just my mobile phone. I thought I might take a few photos for my blog. And that's 'Colonel' Holland to you, Private Benaud."

"Get fucked!"

"If you insist," he'd growled, shedding his tie and the rest of his clothes in record time. He was behind her in seconds, one hand gripping her longer blonde hair as he lined up and thrust deep in one smooth stroke.

Christian's own sweat mingled with hers, his hips snapping forward with relentless force. The wet slap of skin on skin filled the room, punctuated by her gasps and his low grunts. He reached around to pinch and roll her nipples, sending sparks straight to her clit.

Her eyes locked on their reflection in the room's mirror—her flushed face, swaying tits, his powerful body claiming her. Twenty minutes in, she felt him swelling inside her, his rhythm turning erratic. "Come for me, baby. I want to feel you again."

He finished with a deep groan, flooding her with hot pulses. But instead of stopping, he stayed buried deep, reaching between her thighs to circle her swollen clit with expert fingers. Already on the edge, she bucked wildly against him. Pinned and cuffed, utterly at his mercy, Alison surrendered completely.

His cum leaked down her thighs as he worked her relentlessly. The filthy impropriety only pushed her higher. *Where have you been all my life?* She thought, the rising wave crashing over her.

Alison came hard, her walls clenching rhythmically around him in powerful spasms. A guttural moan tore from her throat as her legs buckled, ecstasy ripping through her. Christian held her through it, fingers never stopping until she was a trembling mess. Only then did he ease her down, caressing every inch of her sweat-slicked skin, nails raking lightly over her back to leave faint, possessive marks.

He whispered hotly against her ear, "You're like a statue brought to life—best appreciated by touch... and taste." He kissed her deeply as aftershocks rippled through her.

Once she had regained some composure, Christian stood and walked to the bar, retrieving the gin and vermouth she'd laid out for him.

"You came prepared," he said.

"I couldn't find your blindfold, so I substituted it with your drink," Alison replied.

He mixed two martinis, carried them to the nearby lounge, sat, and sipped. "Can I get you anything?" he asked with sarcasm.

"The key might be nice."

“All in time,” Christian said, sipping his drink and admiring her with a smile.

“Well, if you aren’t going to uncuff me,” she said, “then you could at least tell me what you’ve been doing for the last ten years!”

Postscript

Lord Huron’s “The Night We Met” provided the emotional spark and title for the story. The song’s refrain—“I had all and then most of you / Some and now none of you”—captures the disorienting pull of a love that once felt complete and then slipped away. That sense of unfinished business, of wanting to rewind to the charged first meeting and somehow rewrite what followed, became the story’s central current.

Alison and Christian both arrive seeking a form of closure and renewal. Alison needs to release the long-held weight of what she did so she can finally stand in the present without being haunted by the past. Christian seeks to discover if the Alison he remembered was ever real. Their final reckoning is less about reclaiming the night they met and more about deciding whether the love that began there still has a future.