

First Love

By Lo-Arna Collins

Do you ever really forget your first love?

Alison pondered this question, turning it around and around in her head. Until it felt it had been turned inside out and stretched so much her head hurt. But she still didn't have the answers.

It had been ten years since she had even seen him, but now it was like he had held her just yesterday. Bumping into him in the supermarket was so unexpected it had shocked them both. At first, she hadn't known what to do. Hug him? Smile and walk on? Stop and chat? In the end he had taken control of all those hard decisions and smiled warmly and placed an arm on her shoulder and asked how she was. As soon as his eyes met hers and his skin touched her shoulder through her light blouse, all the years had slipped away and it was once again, just the two of them.

Except it wasn't really just the two of them, his wailing three year old had put an end to any re-connecting. She was a cute red faced little girl with her strawberry blonde hair in pigtails. He was a single dad he'd told her. She didn't ask much about the mother because it didn't feel right to ask those sort of things in front of the little girl so she smiled and nodded and hoped she was wearing a sympathetic expression. He'd asked to catch up for coffee and she agreed, giving him her number and then pushed her trolley forward to continue on with her shopping.

She couldn't concentrate and when she absent-mindedly loaded all of her bags into her boot she hoped she had gotten food worthwhile and things she could actually make a meal out of as she had just grabbed anything her hands found, her mind too busy to take in what she was grabbing. She couldn't quite put her finger on how she was feeling. She had seen him once or twice after their break up and she hadn't even wanted him back, he had wanted her and she had relished in that knowledge feeling as if she had the upper hand finally, especially as he had had been the one to end their relationship. And she had thought of him a few times over the years, finally able to look past the heartache he had caused her and remember the good times. There was no question he had a piece of her heart since the first time their lips had locked. She had always had that soft spot for him because what they had, though it ended badly, had been real and she could still remember the way he had made her feel, those memories would never wash away. But they were different people now, ten years and a lifetime had passed, he was a dad now, her a career woman, they weren't the carefree seventeen year olds they had been. She

was certain if she had never known him before today and they had passed each other in the supermarket she wouldn't have given him a second thought. Except, that she did know him, very well in fact.

As she got ready for her coffee catch up with him she felt jittery and much like a teenager again. He was the only one who had ever prompted this reaction in her and she wasn't sure she liked to feel this way again, it made her feel vulnerable, powerless and out of control. She used to like feeling so powerless to his charms, but she was older and wiser and knew where it led- heartbreak.

Coffee turned into a meal, a meal turned into a movie, a movie turned into ice-cream and a walk along the beach. Alison mused to herself it could probably pass as the world's longest date in the Guinness book of records. But she found her heart was light, her throat sore from laughing and her cheeks sore from smiling. He took her hand as they walked and later as they sat down to watch the sunset, her toes dug into the sand and his hands stroked her hair, her chin, her cheeks and finally pushed his lips gently but firmly against hers, she melted into his arms and against his lips. His lips felt the same, warm, passionate and just so him. It was like they were teenagers again, like they had never been apart.

After what seemed hours of kissing, of been lost in his kiss, Alison pulled away.

"Goodbye John. I hope you find what you are looking for in life." She said simply, smiling kindly.

He stared at her speechless, confused.

"I think you will always have a part of my life, but if we were meant to be we would be."

"But that...kiss..." He breathed out, staring at her lips.

"I know, amazing. It always was, but a relationship is a lot more than passion. I'm not ready to be torn apart again; I want to remember you fondly. I don't want us to tear each other apart again."

He was at a loss for words again.

"I will never forget you." She whispered against his lips, kissing him once more before standing and walking away into the dark night.

He stared regretfully at her retreating back and sighed deeply. She had been the best thing to ever happen in his life, apart from his daughter but he loved her enough to let her walk away and find happiness without him.