

ST. ALDEN'S

Written by

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Based on his novella, *St. Alden's*,
from the book, *The Cats of Savone*

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EST. EXT. - ST.ALDEN'S UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

Thinning mist and fog over a wide gray flagstone walkway. A fountainhead sprays water into a shallow reflection pool that captures the dark reflection of an old stone house. White scratches are evident on the flagstone.

SOUND (O.S.)
(irregular faint)
Click click tap. Click tap click.

The mist collects and is scattered across the stone sidewalk to the door of the old stone house. The mantle above the door is carved stone and reads, ST. ALDEN HOUSE. A thin silver bar GLOWS in the threshold. The door OPENS and black

leather boots cross the threshold. The tip of a gleaming silver broadsword follows alongside the boots across the glowing silver bar. The boots step off a thick stone and out from beneath the alcove of the house. The sword is being

held by MR. CHRISTIAN (73). His hair is shoulder length and gray. He wears a white oversized button shirt and black pants tucked in his black boots. He holds the sword in both hands out in front of him and peers into the dancing mist.

CHRISTIAN
Come.

The mist swirls.

SOUND (O.S.)
(low growl of a wolf)

SOUND (CONT'D)
Rap tap click. Rap tap click.

Christian brings the sword up, buttressing all sides against the growing SOUNDS.

SOUND (CONT'D)
(howling wolves & snapping jaws)

Christian braces himself and stares into the mist. Instant silence. The swirling mist slows and settles.

SOUND (CONT'D)
(horse's hooves)
Clip-clop. Clip-clop.

Christian moves the sword back and forth. The SOUND of the horse stops.

SOUND (CONT'D)
(low growl of a wolf)

FADE TO:

EST. EXT. - GENTLE WINDING ROAD - DAY

A car moves along the road with no urgency.

INTERIOR OF THE CAR

CREALAND (18), pleasantly handsome, is driving. In the front passenger seat is GEL (18). She has shoulder length brown hair - professional - but unable to hide the attractive cut of her face or her curves. In the middle of the back seat is CHAPIN (19), with dark hair and handsome sharp features. He appears asleep. GEL is reading. CHAPIN wakes.

CHAPIN
Hey, where are we?

CREALAND
About fifteen minutes out.

CHAPIN
Hey, Crealand. It is Crealand, right? What's your major gonna be?

CREALAND
Oh, I'm a provisional. I have to get through the first semester in a liberal arts category before I can declare a major.

CHAPIN
I've got a provisional from my old man, but I'm not staying anyway. I'm just here so I can put it on my resume. My father did the same thing and his before him. I'm the last though. After three consecutive provisionals without a diploma, the school pulls your ticket. I'm the last in a long line of dropouts. But let me add, very well rewarded dropouts. St. Alden's name works wonders.

Chapin leans up in between the front seats and roughly raps Gel's arm.

CHAPIN (CONT'D)

How about you? What's your major, or are you a provisional like your boyfriend?

GEL

My major is actually a dual. One will be engineering with a minor in anthropology and the second will be philosophy with a non-relative minor in metallurgy.

CHAPIN

Strange combinations.

GEL

Strange is relative. The anthropology relates to the engineering insomuch as the methodologies people have used and will use as they adapt to infrastructures, ambient and literal, and also to images far less tacit. And the metallurgy forms a bond with philosophy by-

CHAPIN

OK. OK. I get it.

Chapin leans back in his seat. Gel looks to the side at Crealand and smiles.

GEL

I doubt that very much.

CREALAND

My major will be philosophy after I get this first semester out of the way.

GEL

I thought as much.

CREALAND

How's that?

GEL

Your paper on suicide. It was very good. That's a virgin approach - developing theories of self-death within religion. I thought it was exceptional.

CREALAND

Wow. Thanks. My research points-

Chapin leans forward between both the seats and the conversation.

CHAPIN

You know, it drives me wild when you intellectuals talk dirty.

GEL

Excuse me?

CHAPIN

Virgin approach. What can be more suggestive? Freud had your type pegged from the get go.

GEL

Type? What type?

CHAPIN

Sexually repressive. Compensating for physical gratification by hyperstimulation elsewhere. It's the librarian syndrome.

GEL

Librarian syndrome?

CHAPIN

Girls who work at not being sexual and dive into books for their satisfaction. That's why guys love the librarian look - white long sleeve blouse, hair pulled back, horny, I mean, horn-rimmed glasses. It's all a ruse for sexual suppression. You get a librarian type - a bookworm like yourself - to set aside her book and it's like tapping a geyser. You're a virtual volcano of cooped up sexual frustration. It's a beautiful thing to expose a woman like you to the joys of life.

GEL

The joys of life?

CHAPIN

Yes indeedy. The joys of life. 'Virgin process.' It's all right there.

GEL

I apologize for the misconception.
I was making a descriptive analysis
of Crealand's forays into new
arenas concerning-

Chapin looks at Crealand.

CHAPIN

She's hot, man. I don't know if
it's you or me, but she wants it.

Gel slams her book.

GEL

That's one of the crudest
suggestions I've had the
displeasure of hearing in some
time. I will ask you one time to
assume some semblance of decorum.
You would also consider modifying
your demeanor on the grounds of the
university or your stay may be even
shorter than you apparently hope
for.

Chapin raps Crealand's shoulder and drops back into his seat.

CHAPIN

Must be you she wants, my friend.
It sure isn't me.

Gel reopens her book.

GEL

You are amazing.

CHAPIN

That has been said of me. Several
times. So, Crea. How'd you get
your provisional? Your old man a
dropout too?

CREALAND

I'm going because of my
grandfather. He works there and
gets a single provisional slot as
part of his benefit package. My
father chose not to use it, so
that's good luck for me.

GEL

What does your grandfather do at
St. Alden's?

CREALAND
He's the Guardian.

CHAPIN
What the hell's the Guardian? Like
the night watchman or something?

CREALAND
He's in charge of the treasury.
They call it the Guardian. I don't
really know why.

CHAPIN
The treasury!

Chapin leans up into the front seat again.

CHAPIN (CONT'D)
Hey, think he'd cut me a check?
Kind of an advance on my expenses
while laboring away as a student?
Yea, just call it an advance.

CREALAND
No, I don't believe-

Gel turns in her seat to Chapin.

GEL
Don't you know anything about St.
Alden's?

CHAPIN
Of course.
(beat)
Like what for instance?

GEL
Like for starters, the St. Alden's
treasury does not issue checks.
You couldn't get a check for a
dollar from them if they owed you a
million.

CHAPIN
Why not?

GEL
You really don't know, do you?

CHAPIN
I think I know all I need to know
about a place I'm not staying at
for long.

GEL

Perhaps if you knew a bit more about St. Alden's, you'd be more inclined to take full advantage of the tremendous opportunity that's been afforded you.

CHAPIN

Thanks for the lecture, Mom. Now tell me why I can't get Crealand's father to write me a check.

GEL

Because St. Alden's, and it's his grandfather by the way, deals wholly in precious metal. All expenditures are satisfied with silver.

CHAPIN

Wait a minute. You're telling me that they don't use checks, they don't use cash, no transfers, credit cards - they don't use money of any kind - they just use silver?

GEL

Correct.

Gel spins back to face front.

CHAPIN

No shit, huh? Is that true, Crea?

CREALAND

I spoke with my grandfather about it once. He said St. Alden's operates at the behest of some humongous benefactor whose principle directive is that the university pays only in silver, just like Gel said.

CHAPIN

That's impossible. Makes no sense.

CREALAND

But it's true and it's been that way for generations.

CHAPIN

That's too weird.

Chapin flops back in his seat.

GEL

And not just any silver. St. Alden's silver - the finest silver in the world. Check that - the finest metal period. While clearly a metal, it has properties much like a mineral with an organic line in the base structure. Very, very difficult to classify. That uniqueness gives it a value well above platinum on the current exchange, minus the market volatility incumbent with most metals.

CHAPIN

So, it's like, better than sterling silver?

GEL

Not even a question. St. Alden silver is so pure that it has generated a completely new standard. It's really amazing.

CHAPIN

This benefactor guy must be one rich sonofabitch!

GEL

You are so simplistic. Paying encumbrances with silver is scarcely the tip of the iceberg at St. Alden's.

CREALAND

Chapin. The benefactor is so wealthy and St. Alden's silver so valuable, none of the students pay tuition.

GEL

While that's true, Crealand, that isn't what I was referring to.

Gel undoes her seat belt and crawls up around on her knees to face Chapin.

GEL (CONT'D)

Chapin, listen to me. Do you know what over one thousand of the world's most influential business and political leaders have in common?

Chapin shrugs.

GEL (CONT'D)

St. Alden's. They are all graduates of St. Alden's.

CHAPIN

You two you're starting to sound like an ad campaign. But tell me something. Why would all those people want to come here? This place is in the middle of nowhere.

GEL

Different reasons. But remember, those people weren't always politicians or business leaders. Most came here as regular as us. It's what they did after St. Alden's that set them apart.

CHAPIN

Those people became all those powerful people, and there's still no tuition? Whoever's running this outfit is dumber than I thought. With alumni like that, they could be charging beaucoup bucks and still be packed.

GEL

That's the point, Chapin. It's not about money.

CHAPIN

Everything is about the money. When they say it's not about the money - it's about the money.

Gel spins back into her seat and buckles her seat belt.

GEL

Not at St. Alden's. This place is about bringing the finest instructors to one place, adding the most promising students from around the world, mixing them up with the vision and mission of St. Alden's and watching the results.

CHAPIN

The finest teachers, you say? From all over the world? How do they get them here?

GEL

The recognition that comes from being a professor at St. Alden's is akin to you wanting to list it on your resume. Plus, and here is where your money comes in, they are paid rather unique salaries from what I gather. Isn't that true, Crealand?

CREALAND

Like everything else, the profs are paid in silver. And, like the students, everything is provided.

CHAPIN

By this mysterious benefactor?

CREALAND

By the benefactor.

CHAPIN

If it's such a great place, why don't more people enroll there? I heard the whole student body is less than a thousand.

CREALAND

You don't apply to St. Alden's.

GEL

You are invited to attend. That is why your provisional appointment is such a wonderful opportunity for you.

Chapin leans back deeper into the seat, folds his arms, and feigns sleeping.

CHAPIN

Yea, okay. Have fun kids. I've got bigger fish to fry than spending four years holed up in some musty dusty college for nerds stuck in the middle of the mountains. Good night all.

Gel shakes her head and drops it back against her headrest.

EXT. CAR

The car slows and turns into a unadorned blacktop road. A simple black sign with silver letters reads ST. ALDEN'S UNIVERSITY. The University comes into view.

CREALAND

I wouldn't be nodding off just yet.
We're here.

CHAPIN

Not much of a first impression, is it?

The car weaves along a long driveway.

INT. CAR

GEL

Rather quaint I would think.

CHAPIN

I guess we know why it isn't overrun with students. Look at this place! No wonder no one comes here.

Crealand parks in front of St. Alden House.

GEL

I don't think it's the buildings that keep people away. I think it's the wolves.

Crealand and Gel exchange smiles and open their doors.

CHAPIN

Wolves? Where? What wolves?

Chapin looks out each window as the others close their doors and walk away. He scrambles out of the car.

EXT. - WIDE STONE PROMENADE IN FRONT OF ST. ALDEN HOUSE

The door of St. Alden House OPENS and Christian bolts out pulling on a deep red blazer.

CHRISTIAN

Crealand! I knew you would come.
I could feel it.