The Reunion

by
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INT. CONVENTION CENTER - NIGHT

A brightly decorated room. Silver mirror balls dangle from the ceiling. A BAND performs on stage. Above the band, a banner reads “CLASS OF ‘99 - CLOVEDALE HIGH”

A crowd of people, dressed to impress, pay more attention to each other than the music.

One member of the crowd is CHRIS, 27, sharp suit, killer smile. Next to him is BLAKE, 27, chunky, receding hairline. They each hold a plate of food.

CHRIS
At least some things never change. The band is still terrible.

BLAKE
I’ve never envied a disabled group as much as I envy the deaf right now.

Blake picks up a piece of sushi off his plate and motions shoving it into his ear.

BLAKE (CONT’D)
If only they made the sushi smaller.

CHRIS
If only they made all your food smaller.

Chris taps Blake on his stomach.

BLAKE
Hey it’s only because I’m sympathizing with Marcy’s pregnancy. The doctor said it’s normal for me to gain weight.

CHRIS
Did he also say it’s normal for you to gain the weight three years before your wife got pregnant?

Before Blake can respond, Chris’s attention is caught by a WOMAN at the buffet table. She scoops some food onto a plate.

Chris stares at her, mesmerized.

BLAKE
Dude do you think they got any dessert here? Chris? Hello, Earth to Chris!

Blake waves his hand in front of Chris’s face. Still no reaction. He looks over to see what has him transfixed.
BLAKE (CONT’D)
Oh shit, isn’t that --

--Yep.

CHRIS

BLAKE
And didn’t you --

--Yep.

CHRIS

BLAKE
So why don’t you go over and --

--Nope.

CHRIS

BLAKE
Why the hell not?

CHRIS

Why not? Because she’s Ashleigh Sims. I’d never have a shot with her.

Blake slaps Chris in the face. Hard.

CHRIS (CONT’D)
Did you just... bitchslap me?

BLAKE

Yeah, because you’re acting like a little bitch. We aren’t in high school anymore. Who cares if Ashleigh Sims was one of the popular girls and we were lower on the totem pole than Paris Hilton’s underwear.

Chris looks back over at ASHLEIGH SIMS, perfectly neat black hair, perfectly sculpted body, perfectly fitting red dress. She talks and laughs with TWO OTHER WOMEN, oblivious to the attention from afar.

CHRIS

Well, it has been ten years. And we’re not the same losers we were in high school.

BLAKE

Exactly!

Chris turns back to Blake who now has sauce on the front of his shirt and food stuck to the side of his mouth. Chris sighs, slumps his shoulders.

He is startled by a tap on his shoulder. Spins around, comes face to face with --
ASHLEIGH
Excuse me, do you mind taking a quick picture of us?

CHRIS
Uh...

ASHLEIGH
Thanks.

She hands him a digital camera, poses in between her two friends. A rose between roses.

Chris fumbles with the camera, wanting to savor this moment forever. The flash goes off, illuminating Ashleigh in her rightful position in the spotlight. Chris, as usual, outside of it.

Ashleigh comes up to Chris and retrieves her camera. She looks at the picture.

ASHLEIGH (CONT’D)
How did I look?

CHRIS
Beautiful. I mean... it turned out well.

ASHLEIGH
Thanks. So did your girlfriend or wife graduate from Clovedale?

CHRIS
No, actually. I did.

ASHLEIGH
Oh I’m sorry. I don’t recognise you. Um...

CHRIS
Chris Sampson.

Ashleigh shows no hint of recognition.

CHRIS (CONT’D)
You probably don’t recognise me without a mouth full of metal and a lisp.

ASHLEIGH
Oh right, of course. I always thought your name was Chris Thamthon for some reason.

CHRIS
Yeah that’s okay, everyone did.
ASHLEIGH
Well you’ve certainly changed a lot, you look great. The braces obviously did the trick.

An awkward silence, Chris doesn’t know what to say.

ASHLEIGH (CONT’D)
Okay well it was good seeing you again Chris. I’m going to go and catch up with a few other people.

Ashleigh turns to walk away, Chris instinctively yells out to her.

CHRIS
Ashleigh!

She turns back around.

ASHLEIGH
Yes?

CHRIS
(nervously)
Uh, I was just thinking that, it would be a shame to wait another ten years to see you again. Do you think there’s any way that we could, maybe, stay in touch?

ASHLEIGH
Yeah absolutely.

Chris looks shocked and excited.

CHRIS
Really?

ASHLEIGH
You have Facebook, right? Add me.

And as quickly as that, she is gone once more.

Chris, dejected, looks for somewhere to hide.

INT. MEN’S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Chris enters the men’s room and stares into the mirror. Shakes his head and turns on the faucet. Splashes his face with water.

A stall door swings open and Blake steps out, wiping his shirt with toilet paper.

BLAKE
Dude, why didn’t you tell me I had sauce all over my shirt?
Chris doesn’t respond, still looks into the mirror.

BLAKE (CONT’D)
So, how did it go with Ashleigh? Did you ask her out?

CHRIS
Well yeah, kinda.

BLAKE
Kinda? What does that mean?

CHRIS
I said it’d be great if we could stay in touch, and she told me to add her on Facebook.

Blake slaps Chris in the face again. Harder.

CHRIS (CONT’D)
Ow! Will you stop doing that?!

BLAKE
Will you stop being a bitch? What the hell are you going to do with her Facebook address? Sit at your computer and jack off to her picture while you read about what kind of mood she is in? Fantasize how at our twenty year reunion you might be able to get her mobile number and have text sex with her? At this rate by the time you actually go out with her you’ll both be ready for the retirement home.

CHRIS
Maybe I just have to accept that I’m not supposed to be with a girl like that.

BLAKE
What are you talking about? I have seen you with girls hotter than Ashleigh over the last few years.

CHRIS
It’s more than her looks I liked. It was... everything really. Plus with girls now I don’t feel like they are seeing me as the nerd I used to be in high school.

BLAKE
Listen, you run your own company, have some money saved up, are in good shape and dress well. Ashleigh would be lucky to go out with you.

CHRIS
Thanks Blake.
Chris turns on the faucet, washes his hands. Feigns splashing water on his face and instead throws it at Blake’s crotch.

    BLAKE
    Hey!

    CHRIS
    That’s for slapping me in the face.

Chris runs out of the room.

    BLAKE
    (yelling)
    Asshole!

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - BAR - LATER

Chris pours himself a glass of punch from the punchbowl. An attractive ASIAN WOMAN beside him does the same.

    CHRIS
    Here’s what we’ll do. You stand lookout while I spike the punch.

The Asian woman gives him a dirty look and storms off.

    CHRIS (CONT’D)
    What? It was a joke.

Blake sidles up to the bar, trying to cover his wet crotch with his jacket.

    BLAKE
    Man this will never dry... hey how was Cindy Lee?

    CHRIS
    Who?

    BLAKE
    Cindy. The woman you were just talking to.

    CHRIS
    That was Cindy? I didn’t even recognise her... wasn’t she the girl who --

    BLAKE
    -- got molested by half the football team after her punch was spiked at prom? Yep.

    CHRIS
    Oh, right. I forgot about that.

    BLAKE
    I’m guessing she hasn’t.
CHRIS
I think you might be right.

MAN’S VOICE (O.S.)
Excuse me everyone, can I have your attention?

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN holds a microphone on stage.

MAN
Just want to let you all know that this evening’s festivities will be wrapping up in half an hour. But the band will be back on stage in about five minutes to give us another set.

There is a collective groan from the entire crowd.

Chris scans the room and rests his eyes on Ashleigh, chatting effortlessly with various people.

CHRIS
Maybe I should go over and say goodbye to her.

BLAKE
Or maybe you should stop torturing yourself and just get over her already. It was bad enough when I had to listen to you obsess over her back in high school.

CHRIS
I never obsessed.

BLAKE
Really? You came over after school everyday for a month to make me learn that stupid song you wrote for her. What was that supposed to achieve again?

CHRIS
I don’t know, I thought if you played the piano while I sang her a heartfelt song, I might have a chance to... woo her.

BLAKE
Woo her? Who says the word ‘woo’ anymore? You sound like a gay cow.

CHRIS
And you look like the before shot in an incontinence commercial.

BLAKE
Touche.

Chris pours another glass of punch for himself and Blake.
CHRIS
I still remember it y’know.

BLAKE
What’s that?

CHRIS
The song. I still remember the song I wanted to sing for Ashleigh ten years ago. I was just too much of a pussy to do it.

BLAKE
Well, why don’t you do it now then?

CHRIS
(laughing)
Yeah sure, good one.

BLAKE
I’m serious dude, why not sing it for her now? If you don’t do it now then you’ll be kicking yourself that you never had the balls to step up and let her know how you feel.

CHRIS
But there’s all these people here, I’d be too nervous... and besides, there’s no music to go with it.

BLAKE
Well I might just be able to help you out on that one.

Blake turns to the stage and eyes off the piano. He turns back to Chris and the two friends share a conspiratorial grin.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Ashleigh talks to A COUPLE who hold hands. She hugs them and kisses them on the cheek.

ASHLEIGH
It was so great seeing you guys again. Congratulations on the wedding, I’m really excited for you.

CHRIS (O.S.)
Testing... testing... is this on?

Ashleigh spins around to see Chris on center stage, as he taps the microphone.
CHRIS (CONT’D)
Um, hi everyone. For those of you who
don’t know me, I’m Chris Sampson.

Silence amongst the crowd.

LONE VOICE (O.S.)
Who?

CHRIS
Uh, you might know be better as Chris
Thamthon.

LONE VOICE (O.S.)
Oh yeah. Hey everyone, it’s Metal Mouth
Chris.

The crowd finally registers their former classmate in
front of them, a collective “Oh yeah” echoes the room.

CHRIS
The braces came off a long time ago.
Anyway, you’re probably wondering why I
am up here. In fact I’m starting to
wonder what I am doing up here.

He looks behind him at Blake who sits at the piano and
gives Chris two thumbs up, followed by a fist pump.

CHRIS (CONT’D)
The truth is there was something I wanted
to do ten years ago but I never had the
guts to do it. And I’ve regretted it ever
since. But I figure it’s better late than
never.

Ashleigh looks up at Chris, a bemused smile on her face.
She has no idea what is about to happen.

CHRIS (CONT’D)
I have to warn you that I’m not much of a
singer, and I wouldn’t want to pollute
your eardrums... but considering the
competition so far this evening I don’t
think that’ll be a problem.

The crowd laughs. Inspired by this reaction, Chris
relaxes and looks more confident than ever this evening.
His shoulders are back, his head is high.

CHRIS (CONT’D)
There was this girl back in high school
that I had a major crush on. I always
wanted to tell her how I felt but could
never seem to find the right words. So I
hope this song can say what I was never
able to.
Chris turns his back to the crowd to compose himself and gives the signal to Blake to start playing.

Blake runs his fingers up and down the piano with the flamboyance of a fatter, balder, more heterosexual Elton John. Damn, he’s actually good!

As the music begins to play, Chris turns back around to face his awaiting audience. Picks up the microphone.

    CHRIS (CONT’D)
    (singing)
    Ooh my darling
    My little darling
    I watch you from afar
    You're my shining star
    And I would run a mile
    Just to see you smile
    My darling Ashleigh
    You make me happy

At hearing her name Ashleigh turns a bright shade of red. She looks genuinely shocked. She locks eyes with Chris and smiles nervously.

Other people in the crowd stare at Ashleigh now and murmur amongst themselves.

    CHRIS (CONT’D)
    (singing)
    Ooh my darling
    My little darling
    You're the one for me
    The only one I need
    I long to touch you
    I long to kiss you
    Let me make you happy
    Yes this song is sappy

Chris puts the microphone back in the stand.

Blake hops up from the piano and jogs up to the microphone, places a hand around Chris’s shoulder.

    BLAKE
    (into mic)
    Chris Thamthon everybody.

An awkward silence for what feels like an eternity. Then a few people clap, then a few more. Suddenly the whole place goes crazy. People cheer and scream for Chris.

Chris leaps down off the stage and makes his way over to Ashleigh, eyes locked on her.

    CHRIS
    I have a confession to make.
ASHLEIGH
What’s that?

CHRIS
I don’t want to be your Facebook friend.

Ashleigh laughs, looking charmed by his innocence.

ASHLEIGH
Yeah I guessed that. Why didn’t you ever say anything back in high school?

CHRIS
Do you remember what I used to be like back then? That’s why.

ASHLEIGH
Okay good point.

CHRIS
I hope I didn’t embarrass you in front of everyone. I just had to get it off my chest after all these years.

ASHLEIGH
So how do you feel now?

CHRIS
Pretty good actually. I’ve realized two things tonight. One, letting you know how I felt wasn’t as scary as I imagined. And two, I should never ever be allowed to sing in public again.

ASHLEIGH
(laughing)
And do you know what I’ve realized?

CHRIS
What?

ASHLEIGH
I find rock stars very attractive.

As she says this she leans in close and gives Chris a quick kiss on the lips.

Chris is stunned, unable to find the right words. Blake however, can.

BLAKE (O.S.)
Awesome!

Chris and Ashleigh turn around to see Blake standing there with a big goofy grin on his face.
BLAKE (CONT’D)
It looks like my work here is done. I’ll
leave you two lovebirds to it.

ASHLEIGH
That was a really amazing performance you
gave on the piano by the way.

BLAKE
Thanks. Don’t tell anybody, but I was
actually really nervous.

Ashleigh looks down at Blake’s wet trousers.

ASHLEIGH
Apparently so.

BLAKE
No it’s not like that, I... ah forget it.
I need a drink.

Chris and Ashleigh laugh as Blake heads off to the bar.

CHRIS
Actually a drink sounds good. I know a
great little lounge bar just near here if
you’d like to join me.

ASHLEIGH
On one condition.

CHRIS
What’s that?

ASHLEIGH
You have to promise not to serenade me in
front of the entire bar.

CHRIS
(laughing)
That I can manage.

The pair turn around and head for the exit.

As they walk out, Ashleigh notices Cindy Lee standing to
the side of the room, arms folded. Her eyes shoot daggers
at Chris.

ASHLEIGH
Why does Cindy look like she wants to
kill you?

CHRIS
Uh... guess she wasn’t a fan of the song.

FADE OUT.