

THE REUNION

Written by

Caden H. Hollander

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DRAFT #5/SHOOTING DRAFT

CHHOLLAN@USC.EDU

BLACK SCREEN

We hear various noises that start to build ... camera flashes ... crowds screaming ... a director yelling "Action!" ... a sitcom laugh track ...

Titles slowly fade in as these sounds get louder:

The sounds continue to crescendo, becoming overwhelming and almost unbearable ...

Until suddenly - the sounds cut out.

1 INT. ENTRYWAY - NINA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

1

We open CLOSE ON an old sitcom poster. Four actors pose together in front of the title "ARLINGTON HIGH."

We pull back from the poster, moving towards the front door as we see a GIRL in her early 20's running through the space with a platter of s'mores. We don't get a look at her face though.

We move out to -

2 EXT. STREET - SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

2

We PAN to reveal a car parked on the street. Out of it steps RON, 21. He wears a black collared shirt and khaki pants, and is staring at an upscale two-story home we just came out of.

Suddenly, Ron hears -

COREY (O.S.)

RON!

Ron turns around, and we reveal -

COREY walking up to him, waving. He's also 21, and wears a goofy anime t-shirt with baggy pants. His hair is out of control.

RON

Corey, my man!

The two hug, Corey gesturing down to Ron's attire.

COREY

Is there a ... dress code for this?

RON
 (laughing) No, I just got off a shift
 at work ... at least, I don't think
 there is?

The two laugh together, before looking at the house. Their
 smiles turn into a look more complicated and conflicted,
 with both of them taking a collective sigh.

COREY
 You ... ready?

Ron sighs.

RON
 Ready as I'll ever be.

Corey nods, and the two of them walk across the street
 together.

As they do, Corey points to a 21 YEAR-OLD GIRL walking up to
 the house. She watches TikToks on her phone and wears a
 university sweatshirt, jeans and glasses.

COREY
 Is that -

RON
 Hey MADDY!

The girl/MADDY looks up, shutting off her phone and running
 over to them, a huge smile suddenly plastered on her face.

MADDY
 Boys!

She immediately goes up to Ron, giving him a long and overly
 intimate hug, before giving Corey a short, more casual one.

MADDY (cont'd)
 Oh my god, you're both all grown up!

Ron and Corey laugh, an awkward beat between the three of
 them, before Corey interjects -

COREY
 Shall we, uh, go inside?

Ron and Maddy nod, and the three of them walk up to the
 front of the house.

The FRONT DOOR is massive, towering over them. Corey rings the doorbell, and they hear it echoing throughout the house. Suddenly, the door opens to reveal -

NINA. 22. She gives them an incredible smile, one that the entire world has fallen in love with. She wears clothes that probably haven't even been released yet, and seems insanely excited to see them.

NINA
Oh my god! You're all here!

She goes down the line, giving each of them polite hugs, starting with Maddy (who barely hugs her back), then Corey, then to Ron, before she addresses the group.

NINA (cont'd)
Come in, come in!

All of them walk inside, and Nina shuts the front door behind them.

Title: **"THE REUNION"**

3 INT. ENTRYWAY - NINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

3

Nina leads them into the entryway of the house, which has an insanely high ceiling. Ron looks up at it, overwhelmed.

NINA
Welcome to my humble abode!

Ron smirks under his breath: *humble*.

NINA (cont'd)
I just bought it from this family with super young kids, so it's got a pool and a playground in the back ... ooh! And the fireplace is just getting warmed up! I thought we could make s'mores! I also have a bar cart, please help yourself! I've got beers in the fridge too if you'd prefer that!

Everyone nods politely, looking around as if it's a museum.

Ron notices a ton of POSTERS hanging up in frames on the wall. The one that draws Ron's eye is a poster for a sitcom, a Disney Channel-looking show called ARLINGTON HIGH. The poster features Nina, Ron, Corey and Maddy, all standing in front of a high school, all about 18 years old.

As Ron looks at it, his eyes become glassy.

The poster catches Corey's gaze too, and he walks up to it.

COREY
Wow, third season ...

Nina notices them looking at it, and walks up to them.

NINA
Ugh, we were so cute.

As the three of them look at the poster, Maddy's eyes wander around to all the other things lining Nina's walls ... a framed platinum album cover, various memorabilia, etc.

Nina notices Maddy looking at all of this, turning to her.

NINA (cont'd)
These little knick-knacks are from
some projects I've been on lately ...

An awkward moment of silence, before she gestures over to a nearby coffee table, where a stack of scripts sits.

NINA (cont'd)
I'm sorry for all the clutter, my
agents just dropped these off for me
to read! So much happening!

Ron, Corey and Maddy all nod politely.

COREY
Nice.

Another beat of silence.

NINA
So, s'mores?!

4 **EXT. FIREPIT - NINA'S BACKYARD - LATER - NIGHT**

4

In Nina's large backyard, the FIREPIT sits right next to the side of the house. The home's pool is placed at the center of the yard, and a play structure and basketball hoop are at the far end.

The group sits around the firepit, roasting marshmallows and eating s'mores. Ron and Nina sit across from each other, and Maddy and Corey also do.

Maddy, Corey and Ron all drink beers, Maddy's already on her second one. Nina drinks a cocktail.

Maddy looks over at Ron, his eyes are on Nina.

MADDY
So Nina ... tell me about DALTON.

Nina laughs.

RON
Who's Dalton?

NINA
My ... um ... fiance.

A beat. Ron didn't expect that. His marshmallow slips off its stick, falling into the fire below.

RON
Ugh, shit -

NINA
(to Maddy) Here, let me show you the ring!

Nina puts out her hand, revealing a massive ring on her finger.

COREY
Wow, you really said ring by spring.

MADDY
What does he do?

NINA
Well, he's a real estate developer, he's super sweet, we're really excited.

COREY
How long have you been dating?

NINA
About a year.

COREY
Wow ...

RON
I didn't realize you wanted to get married so young.

Nina looks up to Ron, a flash of hurt in her eyes.

NINA

Yeah, we thought about that, but with everything in my career we were able to afford this house and ... I don't know, he convinced me. He's a romantic like that.

(a beat)

Enough about me, though! Ron, what have you been up to?

RON

Um, not much. Been working at GameStop -

COREY

Cool man.

NINA

That's nice.

Ron smirks, they replied way too quickly.

RON

But yeah, just doing my thing ... I'm not making albums or anything.

MADDY

Nothing wrong with that.

Maddy looks over to the pool.

MADDY (cont'd)

(to Nina) Your pool is so nice. The hot tub too!

NINA

Awww, thank you Maddy. It was one of the selling points of us getting the house honestly.

MADDY

Maybe we should all go for a swim.

RON

(looking to Corey) Looks like we should've brought bathing suits.

MADDY

No, you just take off your clothes, silly!

Ron looks to Corey, not quite knowing what to do with that.

COREY

I mean, not gonna lie Ron, I wouldn't mind seeing you shirtless either.

Corey gives Ron a comical wink, and Ron laughs. Maddy looks down, embarrassed.

NINA
(smoothing things over) Corey! I
listened to your show the other day!

Corey, his mouth now full of s'more, looks at her, surprised.

COREY
... Really?

NINA
Don't act so surprised, it's really
good!

RON
Dude, it's so funny.

COREY
(under his breath)
Not the reason I was
surprised.

NINA
Literally the best radio show in
SiriusXM's new lineup.

COREY
Then why didn't you come on?

An awkward beat.

NINA
(to Corey, laughing)
Well you'd need to invite me, silly!
Of course I'd love to -

MADDY
(interrupting Nina)
You know what we should do, we should
all dance. That would be fun!

RON
(interrupting Maddy)
So, Nina ... was there a particular
reason you invited us over? Not gonna
lie, I was kinda surprised when you
asked.

Everyone turning to Nina. She nods.

NINA

Yeah, there is. I know it's been a while but I wanted to do this in person ... Dalton and I's wedding is in September, we're having it at this beautiful spot in Malibu ... anyway, I wanted to invite you all.

A beat, as the rest of the group takes that in.

NINA (cont'd)

It'll be a ton of fun, we've got an open bar, a ton of big people are gonna be there, the whole Kardashian family, anyway we have a yacht for the cocktail party and it's gonna be on the water at sunset -

RON

Hey, you don't have to sell us on it. We'll be there.

Nina looks up towards Ron, giving him a small smile. Maddy and Corey nod as well, backing Ron up, though more reluctantly.

MADDY

(to Nina) Has Dalton seen the show? Like, will he know who we are?

NINA

(laughing) Of course he knows who you are, but no, he hasn't. I'm so embarrassed, I was such an amateur back then! But I'll have to make him watch a few episodes before the wedding -

MADDY

How's he gonna feel about all the stuff with ... y'know, you and Ron?

Ron looks up sharply, his marshmallow catching fire.

NINA

I'm sure he's okay with it, I mean, it was just acting.

Ron looks down again, blowing out his flaming marshmallow.

MADDY

I don't know, I remember it being a lot more than that -

COREY

I mean, we were all just kids back then -

MADDY

Oh my god, looks like I need another drink! I'll be back!

Maddy abruptly gets up, walking back into the house.

RON

(turning to Corey) Is that her -

COREY

Third. Yep.

A beat.

NINA

Oh, also, random thought, butttttt I was thinking, for the wedding, since now we're all going to be there, y'know, it could be fun to take some pictures, play up the three of you being there, it could maybe even get the network interested in potentially doing a reunion episode -

RON

(thrown off guard)
Is that the goal? To do a reunion episode?

NINA

I don't know, but why not see where it leads! Like with the *Friends* Reunion when Jennifer Aniston posted-

Corey abruptly gets up, walking inside. As he walks away, she turns to Ron, confused. Ron just smirks.

RON

So *that's* why you wanted us to come to your wedding ... I see now.

He gets up, following Corey.

5 INT. ENTRYWAY - NINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

5

Ron walks in to find Corey standing at Nina's bar cart, pouring himself a shot.

Ron walks up to him.

RON
Could you make me one too?

COREY
For sure ... after that, the least I
can do is raid her fucking Aboslut.

Ron laughs.

COREY (cont'd)
Did she really just invite us to her
wedding for a People Magazine photo
op?

RON
I think so ... I hate this town.

The two take a shot together.

COREY
You should move away. They have
GameStops all over.

RON
I really should.

Suddenly, Nina walks in, a confused look on her face.

COREY
(downing another shot)
Well fuck.

NINA
Hey guys, what happened back there?
Are you okay?

COREY
Yeah, we're fine.

NINA
You seemed upset?

COREY
I wonder why.

NINA
What are you talking about?

A beat, as Corey gains his composure.

COREY

I was being serious earlier, Nina. About coming on my show. I reached out about you being a guest three months ago, right when the show was starting. I sent you an email and a text, and then you fucking ghosted me.

NINA

I get a lot of messages, it probably just slipped through the cracks -

Corey laughs to himself.

COREY

(hurt) Slipped through the cracks, ok, ok, I see.

NINA

Yeah. That's just the way it is. I get 150 text messages a day, brand deals, label, studio, scripts, agent, stuff slips through the cracks. I don't understand why you're so upset.

RON

Well that's the fucking thing.

Corey and Nina both turn to Ron.

RON (cont'd)

The brand deals, the scripts, the whatever. That's all it's about for you. This whole night. Us getting together. It wasn't about us being friends or catching up or wanting us at your wedding or whatever. No, instead, you just want us to convince us all to film some reunion episode that'll "increase your visibility," honestly probably to cross promote with your next album, oh and the tour. You can't forget the fucking tour, you'll just be *rolling* in cash -

NINA

Ron, that's not what -

Nina's posters on the wall sit behind them as Ron delivers his final blow -

RON

No, I think that's exactly what you meant. It's been three years, Nina. Three fucking years. And this is why we're meeting up, after everything?! This is all we are to you. Pawns in the chess game that is your stupid fucking career.

A beat of silence between them. Nina looks at Ron for a long moment, before walking outside, dejected and almost broken.

Ron and Corey look to each other, not quite knowing what to do next.

Suddenly, Maddy walks up to them.

MADDY

... The fuck happened here?

Ron and Corey turn, startled.

COREY

Jesus!

RON

Where did you go?!

MADDY

I got my drink (holds up another beer) and took a peek around, did some ... *exploring*. You know, she has a whole room just filled with Grammys, like how can you win so many with just one album?!

Ron and Corey laugh.

MADDY (cont'd)

You boys wanna dance?

Ron and Corey look to each other.

RON

... not really in a dancing mood.

MADDY

Well, I'm going to the pool. Corey, you coming?

COREY

(sighs) Fuck it, sure.

Corey turns to Ron.

RON
I'll catch up with you in a bit.

Corey and Maddy nod, walking outside.

Ron turns, looking up at the massive album cover with Nina's face on it.

6 **EXT. NINA'S BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER**

6

Nina sits on the play structure ladder, her head in her hands.

Meanwhile, Maddy and Corey sit on the edge of the pool, dipping their toes into the water.

Corey gestures to her beer.

COREY
Mind if I have a sip?

MADDY
Bitch, get your own.

He laughs.

COREY
I don't know if you heard what was going on in there.

MADDY
Honestly, I tried not to.

COREY
Basically Nina wants everyone to do a reunion episode ... kinda why she asked us to come to her wedding.

MADDY
I see.

A beat.

COREY
Is that something you'd want to do?

MADDY
A reunion?! On TV?!

COREY

Yeah.

MADDY

Hell no! I'd never wanna relive that again.

That intrigues Corey.

COREY

Why not?

MADDY

Doing a reunion ... I don't need another whole news cycle of being compared to Nina Garcia every day. That's not a competition I'm likely to win.

COREY

Yeah ... it's hard for all of us, living in her shadow. But don't be so hard on yourself, it's not a competition.

MADDY

It's different for me, Corey.

COREY

How do you mean?

MADDY

We were cast as co-leads. They knew one of us would become the star, and they wanted us to push each other. They made me hate her. Every week, Nina's doing this, Nina's getting this agent, what's going on ... And the shit part is I could've beaten her. I should've won, Corey. If I wasn't in a courtroom half the time testifying over which of my parents got to keep all the money I was earning, if I'd had the emotional energy, I would've been the one.

Maddy takes a sip of her beer.

MADDY (cont'd)

I don't know about you, I'm happy partying in my fucking sorority house and going to classes and allowing myself to never think about any of that shit ever again.

A beat.

COREY

... You never told me that before. About your parents. How did I not know?

MADDY

The network wanted to keep it under wraps. Bad press or whatever. Ron's the only person I told.

Corey nods.

COREY

Those years weren't all bad for you though, were they?

Maddy sighs, standing up.

MADDY

I mean, yeah, of course there was good stuff. But hard to go to Red Robin with everyone after a Friday taping and have a nice ol' time when all that other shit is happening too.

A beat.

COREY

I always thought you never went to those dinners because you didn't care about us.

On Maddy. That hurts.

MADDY

You thought I didn't care about you?

COREY

Yeah ...

Corey takes a moment, processing his thoughts before he says what's on his mind.

COREY (cont'd)

You know, you say you don't give a shit about Nina or whatever, but the minute she invited you here, you came running. When I reached out, you just left me on read.

MADDY

Hey, I needed space -

COREY

You could've told me that.

Corey stands as well, facing her.

COREY (cont'd)

I know I'm just the funny guy, but you can't just walk over me. I just wanted us all to stay in touch, and the only person who ever responded was Ron.

Maddy looks up at him, seeing the hurt in his eyes.

COREY (cont'd)

So it's not like Nina cares either.

MADDY

Hey, you're not in her head. Maybe she does care about you.

Corey turns to her.

MADDY (cont'd)

And maybe she doesn't, and you know what, who gives a fuck? Do you like your show?

COREY

I mean, yeah -

MADDY

Ok great. Well then if you like it, and you think what you're doing is cool, then that's what matters dude. Maybe Nina looks down on it, maybe she loves it, who cares?!

Corey laughs, nodding his head.

MADDY (cont'd)

Besides, even if she won't come on, I would.

Corey looks up at her.

COREY

Really?

MADDY

Of course. We can have our own
Arlington High reunion.

COREY

That wouldn't be too hard for you ...
reliving the past and all that?

A beat.

MADDY

I mean, you're right, it wasn't all
bad ... and, I care about you, Corey.

Corey smiles back at her.

COREY

Back when we were shooting the show
... I wish I could've been there for
you more, I didn't realize ...

MADDY

At the time, it felt like Ron was the
only person that sort of got it.

COREY

Is that why you liked him?

MADDY

(caught off guard) Huh, what?

COREY

Dude, it's pretty obvious.

MADDY

Was not!

COREY

Dude, it *still* is. Take off your
clothes?!

MADDY

Shut up!

COREY

Second season, why do you think the
writers threw in the love triangle
with you, Ron and Nina?!

Maddy laughs.

COREY (cont'd)
You ever gonna tell him?

Maddy turns around to see ...

Ron. Standing in the backyard now, looking at the play structure, his eyes glued to Nina, who still sits with her head in her hands.

He starts to walk over to her.

MADDY
I think there's a reason the writers had him end up with Nina.

She turns back around to Corey.

MADDY (cont'd)
So I think it's better to keep that one to myself.

Corey nods.

7 **EXT. PLAY STRUCTURE - NINA'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS**

7

Ron walks over to the structure, sitting down on a swing next to Nina, who still sits on the structure's ladder.

There's a moment of silence, as Ron contemplates the right thing to say.

RON
Hey, um, I think I was too harsh back there. I'm sorry.

She doesn't turn to face him, still clearly upset.

NINA
I don't want you to come to my wedding because of a potential TV episode, Ron.

RON
Why then? Because you care about me? You care about me so much that you didn't reach out for three years?

NINA
It's not like you did either.
(MORE)

NINA (cont'd)
(a beat, she turns her head slightly
towards him)
Why didn't you?

RON
I mean, it's not like I didn't see
you, you were all over my Instagram
feed, posting 2-3 times a day, new
movie, new merch, new album, you met
the President, feels like I saw it
all.

Nina fully turns to face him now, starting to understand
where his animosity is coming from.

NINA
Does that ... bother you?

RON
It's just ... a reminder of what
could've been.

A beat. Nina turns back around.

NINA
... Nothing ever happened between us
because you said you didn't want that
kind of life.

RON
(looking away from her)
I don't. I hate, it, the press, the
awards shows, the paparazzi, it's all
so intoxicating ... and yet ... (he
turns towards her) there's still that
part of me that fell in love with it
at the beginning.

NINA
Dude, my Instagram feed isn't who I
am. You know better than anyone that
there's a whole downside to all of it
that you don't see on a red carpet.

RON
Of course ... it's just hard being
out of it, I'm not living the
downside anymore. When I'm sitting at
home watching TV, all I see is the
red carpet now.

Nina nods knowingly.

NINA

Look Ron, I love it. The long hours, the 14 hour days on set, being on tour away from my family, despite all that, it's still worth it to me. That's never what it was for you, and that's ok.

A beat.

RON

Then why do you want me to go back to it? To do a reunion?

Nina ponders that question.

RON (cont'd)

Seems more like you just wanted to do a reunion, and damned are my feelings and what I want.

NINA

Ron -

RON

I just ... I thought you would outgrow all this petty showbiz shit.

A beat.

NINA

... and what? Run back to you just like the old days? Live out my days in a *Gamestop*?

RON

Oh, so now *Gamestop* is a dirty word?

NINA

That's not what I -

RON

Yeah, but it is though. You know how much judgment I got, Nina, when I decided to leave? You say that you're happy for me, and you say it's totally ok that I work a minimum wage job, but secretly, you think I'm a nutcase that "threw it all away!"

Ron stands up, walking towards the back of the play structure.

NINA

Ron, stop, that's not what I -

Ron climbs up the back of the play structure as he talks, eventually climbing to the top level, sitting with his back facing Nina.

RON

You know, I was honestly really worried about coming back here, because it just drudges all this up, all this toxicity, all this superficial bullshit, when I'm trying to move on. But then I thought, no, maybe it'll be nice ... I'll get to see Nina in-person instead of just on a fucking billboard. I guess she hasn't completely forgotten about me.

A beat. Nina turns around to face him.

NINA

... You came for *me*? Not for Corey or Maddy?

He turns around to face her.

RON

I mean, it's nice to see them too obviously, but ... yeah. You were my best friend, Nina. At least for me, what we had was so much more than just acting.

NINA

... I shouldn't have said that earlier. You were my best friend too.

A beat.

NINA (cont'd)

I'm sorry, Ron ... we really don't have to do a reunion.

Ron looks into her eyes. She fully turns around to face him.

NINA (cont'd)

I want us to be close again. And we don't need to shoot a TV episode in order for that to happen. I don't want you to think I invited you here tonight to further my career or whatever.

(MORE)

NINA (cont'd)

(a beat)

That's just the only language I know how to speak these days. Everyone who hangs out with me now is basically financially obligated to.

Ron looks to her.

RON

That sounds really lonely.

Nina nods.

NINA

I ... don't want to go another three years without you in my life.

A pause, as she lets her words hang in the air, waiting for a response from him.

He gets up, moving towards her, sitting down on the slide next to her.

RON

... Me neither.

They smile at each other, holding each other's gaze for just a few moments, when suddenly Nina breaks their silence -

NINA

After all this time, and we've gone in such different directions, sitting here, I can't explain it, I just feel so close to you right now.

Ron nods, and looks out to see Corey and Maddy talking by the pool. He turns back to Nina.

RON

I think the people in our lives that mean the most are the ones we can drift away from, and yet still know that we can always come back to.

She looks up at him, smiling.

NINA

Yeah, you're right.

The two embrace, both Nina and Ron wiping tears from their faces.

RON
Damn, looks like I need a tissue.

NINA
Dude, I've got to completely redo all
my eyeliner!

They laugh together, when suddenly Ron chutes down the play structure's slide, beckoning Nina to follow him! She laughs, sliding down after him.

Meanwhile ...

8 **EXT. POOL - NINA'S BACKYARD - SAME TIME**

8

As Maddy and Corey continue to talk, Maddy looks to her beer, noticing that it's empty.

MADDY
Ope, looks like I need a refill -

She starts to walk off, but Corey steps in front of her. She looks to him, confused.

COREY
... Don't do that.

MADDY
I'm sorry?

A beat. Corey doesn't know what to do or say, so he just says the first thing he can think of -

COREY
Dance with me.

MADDY
Huh?

COREY
You wanted to dance! Dance with me!

Maddy smiles.

MADDY
Okay.

She sets her empty beer bottle down, and Corey queues up the ARLINGTON HIGH THEME SONG. As it starts to play, Maddy looks to him, laughing.

MADDY (cont'd)

This?!

Corey nods, and Maddy takes his hand, and the two jam out to the song.

NINA (O.S.)

No way!

RON (O.S.)

Oh hell yes!

Nina and Ron run up to them, and the four of them start jamming out to the song.

As the music plays, they all dance together, laughing and cheering each other on.

As Corey and Ron do a goofy dance move in the corner of the yard, Maddy comes up to Nina.

MADDY

Hey. Thank you ... for having us over.

NINA

(non-chalant) Yeah, of course -

MADDY

No, really. Thank you. I ... needed this.

Nina smiles, putting her arm around Maddy as the boys run back over to them, continuing to all dance together.

As the song starts to come to an end, they all sit down on a stone ledge together. They're staring right at us, smiling.

We see a FLASH and suddenly the moment is immortalized:

A still polaroid image of the four of them standing together, reunited at last.

FADE TO BLACK