

TRIBUTE

Written by
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TEASER

EXT. WISCONSIN STATE FAIR PARK - DAY

Wisconsin State Fair signage is everywhere.

PEOPLE in bright, colorful outfits stroll, mingle and gawk along Central Avenue.

The Ski Glider attraction sails overhead moving FAIRGOERS from one end of the park to the other.

FOOD VENDORS happily sell their fried goodies.

MELANIE (28), tiny blonde, fights her way through the crowds with CARL (28), linebacker build, in tow.

CARL

What is the big deal? It's not like they're going to run out of tickets for a *free* show.

MELANIE

I want to get a good seat. Front row, baby!

CARL

Geez, Mel. It's just a tribute band. Every seat is going to be a good one. 'Cause they're gonna suck.

MELANIE

Not according to the blogs. Phoenix Rising takes their Ash2Ash tribute seriously. Some speculate that they're better than the original.

Carl snorts.

CARL

Dude. It's Ash2Ash and the tail end of the hair metal era. How hard is it to be better than the original?

Melanie stops in her tracks. Whirls to glare at him.

His chest bumps her nose almost knocking her over. He catches her. She's unfazed. Tugs at the diamond on her ring finger.

MELANIE

Wedding's off.

CARL

What?

MELANIE

I simply will not marry someone who doesn't appreciate the awesomeness that was Ash2Ash.

CARL

You're calling off the wedding over some dead rockers?

She gives up tugging on the ring that will not budge.

MELANIE

Soon as I can soak this thing off, it's yours.

She stalks off. He follows. He's motivated to keep up now.

CARL

Melanie! Wait!

EXT. STATE FAIR AMPHITHEATER - DAY

PEOPLE flow in and find seats. Non FANS get pushed further and further back.

Melanie triumphantly grabs a spot front row center and ignores Carl who is hot on her heels.

EXT. STATE FAIR AMPHITHEATER - BACKSTAGE - DAY

JON SIMPSON (43), longish brown hair liberally laced with grey contrasting with his solid physique, watches the crowd file in. He's on edge, jumpy. SAMANTHA SIMPSON (41), pleasantly plump brunette, hugs him from behind.

SAMANTHA

Look at all those fans. Here to see you.

He grimaces then turns to wrap his arms around her.

JON

What do I need with them when my number one fan is right here?

He kisses her.

KENNETH MARKHAM (39), aging jock with a bit of a belly, interrupts. Raises his guitar in triumph.

KENNETH

You ready to rock?

Jon looks like he's going to puke.

SUPER: WEST ALLIS, WI

EXT. STATE FAIR AMPHITHEATER - STAGE - DAY

Wild applause as the band, PHOENIX RISING, takes the stage. Kenneth eagerly counts in a song similar to Bon Jovi's "You Give Love a Bad Name."

TRAVIS DELONG (37), bald ladies' man with big ears, backs him up on keyboards. BELKY STRAMUS (29), skinny mama's boy with glasses, keeps up on drums.

Jon, on vocals, misses his cue.

The guys share a look behind Jon's back. Go back to the top.

Jon hits the cue. Kinda.

JON

*Stabbed through the eye, because
you're lame / You make hate look
sane.*

The crowd buzzes with displeasure. Melanie frowns. Carl smirks.

Samantha tries to cheer Jon on from backstage. The guys are all disappointed with him. The song gets fuller and we:

EXT. STADIUM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The song continues. Wild, high energy. Fireworks shoot into the sky from either side of the stage.

A CHYRON slams in bottom right corner: "**Seattle Center Coliseum, Seattle, Washington.**"

RYDER HEART (23), scrawny, ash blond fellow with orange and red spiky tips, works the mic like the pro he is. He shares the spotlight with DESMOND MAX (23), slightly bigger with yellow and red tips on his ash blond hair. They both look demonic with their red contact lenses and heavy eyeliner.

"Ash2Ash" flashes above the stage one letter at a time before the whole word dances to the beat.

RYDER

*The devil's kiss is all you own /
Burned so sweet, I should've known /
Flames of torment is all I see /
Tangled in pain, I'm on my knees.*

FANS go nuts. Screaming and fainting and singing along.

Ryder and Desmond share a look. Loving the adrenaline rush.

EXT. STATE FAIR AMPHITHEATER - STAGE - DAY (PRESENT)

Jon looks to Samantha. She gives him an encouraging nod. He takes a deep breath and lets loose.

JON

*You're a two-edged knife / I made
you my wife / Needed a rescue,
there's only more strife.*

Kenneth, Travis and Belky exchange surprised looks. They work to keep up with him.

As a collective, the audience draws closer to the stage.

Even Carl isn't immune to Jon's charisma. He and Melanie exchange a smile. The wedding is back on.

JON (CONT'D)

*Stabbed through the eye, because
you're lame / You make hate look
sane / Ran from you, just to be
maimed / You make hate look sane.*

Jon thrusts the mic toward the audience.

CROWD

You make hate look sane!

More PEOPLE crowd into the amphitheater putting it over capacity to be part of the spectacle.

EXT. STATE FAIR AMPHITHEATER - BACKSTAGE - DAY

All on adrenaline highs, Jon, Kenneth, Belky and Travis huddle to celebrate.

BELKY

Yeah ba-bee. Standing room only.
Ya'll see that?

Travis playfully nudges Kenneth. Taps the "cancelled" strip on the life sized cutouts of MIDGETS, none of whom are under 6'5", in sequined vests and tight pants.

TRAVIS

Not so mad those acrobatic midgets
got that last minute gig in Vegas
now are you?

KENNETH
(cautious)
Filling in might've worked out.

They all roughhouse him. He play fights back and turns to Jon.

KENNETH (CONT'D)
And you. Where did those vocals come from?

TRAVIS
Talk about sick. It was like you were a different person out there.

JON
(shrugging)
I don't know. Just got caught up in the moment I guess.

BELKY
Yeah, well, try to get caught up in the moment more often. That was off the hook.

More hugs, fist pumps and chests bumps all around.

STONEY PHILLIPS (22), tall and wiry, pops up in the middle of the celebration. Enthusiastically shakes Jon's hand to the exclusion of everyone else.

STONEY
Stoney Phillips, Mosinee Gazette.
Awesome performance, man. Just awesome.

JON
Than--

STONEY
Inquiring minds of Mosinee want to know, well, everything. You guys are local heroes. Is it true you joined the band when their front man ditched them before performing at a wedding reception?

JON
Stoney, it was your brother's wedding.

STONEY
It never hurts to have a secondary source. Do you remember where you were when you found out Ryder Heart and Desmond Max were dead?

Jon pales at the question. Desperately looks for an escape.

STONEY (CONT'D)

How long did it take you to get your Ryder Heart impersonation so spot on? What's it like being the town accountant by day and an awesome rock star by night? Do you feel like Batman with a secret identity? Is Principal Markham as tough on you guys in rehearsals as he was on us kids?

Jon grabs Kenneth and pushes him toward Stoney.

JON

Why don't you ask him yourself?
Primary sources are gold, right?

KENNETH

Mr. Phillips. Stirring up trouble?

STONEY

No, Principal... I mean. Can I--?

KENNETH

You mean, "may I"?

STONEY

May I interview you about the band?

KENNETH

Of course. How're your parents?

Jon can't get out of there fast enough.

INT. BAND VAN - DAY

FORACE MARCEL (42), stronger than his soft frame looks, loads equipment into a van. Jon leans against the vehicle, nearly hyperventilating. After a furtive look around, Forace closes the van door from prying eyes.

FORACE

You done come to the wrong place for sympathy. I told you this wasn't a good idea. The venue's too big.

Jon sits on a crate and puts his head between his knees.

Despite his words, Forace pats his shoulder.

FORACE (CONT'D)

You did good, kid. Just keep pushing
Kenneth forward as the face of the
band and all this just might work.

JON

That reporter thinks my Ryder Heart
impersonation was spot on.

FORACE

Well, since you are Ryder Heart
that's not exactly surprising is it?

Off Jon's miserable face.

END OF TEASER