

CHICKEN

Short, LGBT, Drama

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1. EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

The man, Tom Chase, sits alone at the table, his gaze lost in the distance. Behind him, the mansion is illuminated by the warm glow of the party. Laughter and music fill the air. Tom sips his drink, his demeanor distant, as if he's not truly present. He's a man in his late twenties, undeniably handsome, yet there's a haunted look in his eyes. He's dressed in a smart open-collar long-sleeve shirt, embodying the smart-casual theme of the occasion.

Suddenly, a confident and equally handsome man of the same age, Jason Morgan, approaches.

JASON
(cheerful)
Mind if I join you?

Tom jumps slightly in his seat, surprised by the sudden voice.

TOM
(caught off guard)
What?

JASON
(smiling)
Mind if I sit?

TOM
(softly)
Sure.

Tom remains distant, sipping from his drink as Jason takes a seat. Jason's movements and posture carry a softness and femininity, contrasting with his masculine appearance.

JASON
(curious)
Not in the mood for the party?

TOM
(resigned)
Not really.

JASON
(teasing)
Ten-year reunion, it's supposed to be a celebration.

TOM
(cryptic)
It's not my kind of thing.

JASON
 (observant)
 You've changed then! Used to be the
 life of the party, all joking and
 confident.

Tom fidgets, visibly uncomfortable. He glances back at the party, where silhouettes dance in the window, and a couple spills onto the balcony, laughing.

TOM
 (unsettled)
 It's just brought back some
 memories.

JASON
 (nudging)
 Good ones?

The air between them grows tense as they make eye contact. Unspoken history hangs in the silence. Tom finishes his drink, placing the empty glass on the table.

TOM
 (resigned)
 Fancy another?

JASON
 (resigned)
 Probably shouldn't. Could do with
 getting off, if I'm honest.

Jason stands and reaches for the empty glass, and as their hands touch, Tom realizes that Jason is now standing over him. The charged moment lingers as neither of them seems willing to let go.

TOM
 (resigned)
 Fine. I'll have a vodka and lemon.
 Thanks.

JASON
 (teasing)
 Don't go anywhere, I'll be right
 back.

Jason takes the glass, leaving Tom in his seat, gazing up at the starry night sky.

TOM
 (bitter)
 And this is why you shouldn't have
 bothered coming. Could do without
 all this being dragged up again.

Tom rubs his lower forearm absently as he stares at the stars, then closes his eyes.

FLASHBACK BEGINS

2. INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

A younger Tom and Jason sit facing each other on tables in an empty classroom. Both are sixteen years old, their youth and innocence evident. Outside, the hustle and bustle of school life continues during this break between lessons.

JASON
(concerned)
What's been going on?

TOM
(quietly)
I just needed to think.

JASON
(understanding)
Want to be on your own?

TOM
(softly)
Yes.

Jason rises from his seat, preparing to leave the room. However, as he does, Tom's hand darts out, grabbing Jason's arm and stopping him in his tracks.

TOM (CONT'D)
(earnest)
It's not to do with you.

JASON
(supportive)
Listen, if you don't want to tell me, that's fine.

TOM
(opening up)
No, I mean I've just got stuff I need to get my head around.

JASON
(empathetic)
I know.

Jason inches closer, their faces nearly touching. There's an undeniable intimacy between them, and it seems as though they might kiss.

TOM
(vulnerable)
It's just...

JASON
 (reassuring)
 I'm not rushing you. Tell me if and
 when you want.

Jason moves even closer, and Tom closes his eyes, emotions
 swirling between them.

FLASHBACK ENDS

3. EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Jason carefully places the refilled glass on the table, and
 the clinking of the glass brings Tom back to the present
 moment.

JASON
 (teasing)
 Was my company that boring that I
 put you to sleep?

TOM
 (smiling)
 No, not at all. I was just lost in
 thought.

JASON
 (sincere)
 What happened to you?

TOM
 (defensive)
 What do you mean?

Tom quickly realizes his defensiveness and offers an
 apologetic tone.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Sorry, I didn't mean it like that.

JASON
 (observant)
 You really haven't changed, have
 you? Still the secretly nervous guy
 hiding behind a veil of confidence.

TOM
 (resigned)
 Guess so.

JASON
 (curious)
 So, what have you been doing with
 yourself? You pretty much
 disappeared after school finished.

TOM
 (reflective)
 I needed to make a fresh start, new surroundings and stuff.

JASON
 (intrigued)
 Did I really scare you away that much?

TOM
 (rapid denial)
 No, not at all.

JASON
 (light-hearted)
 Behave yourself! I know you didn't run away because of me.

There's an uncomfortable tension in the air, and both men take a moment to sip their drinks in silence. Tom eventually breaks the awkward quiet.

TOM
 (self-reflective)
 You always had a way of just being there, didn't you?

JASON
 (friendly)
 Is that a bad thing?

TOM
 (conflicted)
 I don't know! It's like you always appeared when you knew I was off-balance or just in need of company.

JASON
 (softly)
 Like now?

TOM
 (nostalgic)
 Yeah, something like that.

Tom rubs his forearm again, a subtle wince flashing across his face before the conversation continues.

JASON
 (curious)
 So, care to tell me why you chose to leave school and put as much distance as you could between you and it?

TOM
 (emotional)
 You'd think after ten years it
 would just roll off my tongue.

FLASHBACK BEGINS

4. INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Sixteen-year-old Tom sits in a dimly lit living room, staring at the TV screen. The room is filled with tension, and a palpable sense of unease hangs in the air. The front door swings open, revealing Ian Smith, a stocky man in his early forties. There is no family resemblance between them.

Ian wordlessly drops a bottle of beer into Tom's lap, and the cold glass startles the teenager. He looks up at Ian, his discomfort evident. Ian holds a bottle opener in his hand and places his other hand on Tom's knee, his touch heavy and unsettling.

Tom gulps nervously, trapped in an uncomfortable and vulnerable position as he looks up at Ian.

CUT TO

5. INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR - DAY

A much younger Tom, at sixteen, is seen walking through a bustling school corridor. He looks anxious, and his gaze is downcast. The noise and chaos of the corridor are overwhelming. As he continues, he stumbles upon a group of students laughing and chatting. He freezes for a moment, seemingly reluctant to approach them.

Just as he is about to turn and walk away, the door to a nearby classroom swings open, and Jason, also sixteen, steps out. He's confident, charismatic, and exudes a sense of belonging. Their eyes meet for a brief moment, and Tom looks away, clearly flustered.

The group of students carries on, seemingly oblivious to Tom's presence. He hesitates, looking unsure of where to go. Jason, noticing Tom's discomfort, walks over to him.

TOM
 (quietly)
 Sorry, I didn't mean to—

JASON
 (interrupting, friendly)
 No need to apologize. Are you new here? I don't think I've seen you around.

Tom looks up at Jason, his anxiety giving way to a glimmer of hope.

TOM

Yeah, I just transferred.

Jason smiles warmly, offering a sense of acceptance and understanding.

JASON

Well, welcome to the school. I'm Jason. If you ever need help finding your way around or just someone to talk to, feel free to look me up.

Tom's gratitude and relief are evident as he smiles back at Jason, feeling like he might have found a friend in an unexpected place.

FLASHBACK ENDS

6. EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Tom's eyes well up with tears as he recalls the memory. Jason watches him with empathy, understanding the significance of that moment.

TOM

And that's why I've never forgotten that day.

JASON

(softly)

I'm glad you remember.

They sit in a moment of shared understanding, and the weight of the unspoken words hangs in the air.

TOM

You have no idea how much your offer meant to me back then. It was a tough time, and I felt so alone. But you being there, offering a listening ear, it made a world of difference.

JASON

(earnestly)

I'm really glad I could be there for you, Tom. You're a great guy, and you deserved someone to stand by you.

TOM

(smiles)

You're a great guy too, Jason. And you always had a way of making me feel like I wasn't alone, even when I was at my lowest.

They share a warm, heartfelt smile, the connection between them palpable.

JASON

(sincerely)

It's funny how life works, isn't it? Ten years later, here we are, sitting together and catching up.

TOM

(nods)

Life has its twists and turns, but it's nice to reconnect with old friends.

JASON

(grinning)

Yeah, it is. So, what else have you been up to since school?

TOM

(leaning back)

Well, I moved to a different city, started a new job, and, you know, tried to find myself. It wasn't easy, but I needed a fresh start.

JASON

(pensive)

I can understand that. Sometimes, a fresh start is exactly what you need to figure things out.

TOM

What about you? What's been happening in your life?

JASON

(smiles)

I stayed in our hometown, got a job in marketing, and, well, I've been enjoying life as it comes. Nothing too dramatic, really.

TOM

(laughs)

Sometimes, that's the best way to live.

As they continue their conversation, there's a sense of rekindled friendship and understanding between Tom and Jason.

The party continues in the background, but in that moment, it's just the two of them, sharing stories, memories, and the comfort of each other's company.

7. EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Tom's emotions are a whirlwind, his painful past threatening to engulf him, and his eyes darting between vulnerability and determination. He can't hold back the storm of memories any longer.

TOM
(sighs heavily)
Alright, I'll tell you.

Jason's expression shifts from concern to empathy as he listens intently.

TOM (CONT'D)
The day I bumped into you, it was the day after... my life fell apart. My family... they didn't understand. I couldn't bear the weight of their expectations.

A tremor in Tom's voice reveals the depth of his struggle.

TOM (CONT'D)
I was lost, and that night, I... I did something desperate. I thought it was the only way out.

Jason's eyes fill with empathy as he grasps the gravity of the situation.

JASON
(softly)
I'm so sorry you had to go through that.

TOM
(teary-eyed)
You saved me that day, Jason. You were there when I needed someone, even if I couldn't express it.

Their gaze lingers, the unspoken words weighing heavily in the air. Tom takes a deep breath, regaining his composure.

TOM (CONT'D)
I've come a long way since then. But being here, it brought back the memories, the pain... the guilt.

Jason steps closer, offering a comforting presence.

JASON
 You don't have to carry that guilt,
 Tom. You've grown, and you're
 stronger now.

TOM
 (teary smile)
 Thank you, Jason.

As the weight of the past begins to lift, Tom and Jason share a moment of understanding and healing, their rekindled connection providing a sense of hope and renewal.

FLASHBACK BEGINS

8. INT. HOUSE - EVENING

The room is dimly lit, and we hear the faint sound of a TV in the background. Tom, a sixteen-year-old, is sitting on the couch, nervously fidgeting with his hands. The camera pans down to show a closed, unopened beer bottle at his feet. The atmosphere is tense.

TOM
 (whispering)
 I don't think this is right.

From off-screen, we hear the voice of Ian, the older man, who is encouraging Tom to conform.

IAN (O.S.)
 Don't worry, it's all part of
 growing up.

The camera lingers on the unopened beer bottle, creating an unsettling and foreboding mood.

FLASHBACK ENDS

9. EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Tom remains visibly uncomfortable as he opens up about his past.

JASON
 But you never told me anything, you
 never talked to me.

TOM
 I needed a friend.

JASON
 Is that why you suddenly
 acknowledged me?

TOM

I did!

Jason looks hurt.

TOM (CONT'D)

But not for the reasons you think.

JASON

What was it then?

TOM

I grew up with a dad who would rather have battered me than allow his only child to be gay. That and...

JASON

And?

TOM

His best friend. His best friend abused me. That's why I was so upset that day.

JASON

Why have you never said anything?

TOM

Because my dad would either have not believed me or else killed him. And besides, I brought it on myself, didn't I really?

JASON

How do you figure that?

TOM

Oh come on, a curious teenage boy. I should have been wiser. It's my fault I put myself there.

JASON

Stop it.

Tom looks surprised at Jason's tone.

JASON (CONT'D)

Regardless of what happened, you weren't the one to blame. Nobody has the right to do anything like that.

TOM

It wasn't like that.

JASON

Clearly he was!

TOM

I always hoped that turning away from it would keep it all in the past, but seeing you tonight brought it all back.

JASON

I didn't mean to.

TOM

It's not that, it's the fact that I got to know you at an unfortunate time. We went from strangers to friends because I needed someone who would understand.

JASON

But how could I understand if you never told me?

TOM

You were always so confident with yourself, so comfortable in being who you were.

JASON

It wasn't as easy as it looked. I don't even talk to my own dad anymore. Growing up it was horrendous trying to be someone I wasn't, until I thought, "Sod it! I'm going to be me."

TOM

I envied you for that, I still do.

JASON

I just allowed myself to be me.

TOM

The time we kissed, in the classroom during that lunch break. I never got to tell you what it meant to me.

FLASHBACK BEGINS

10. INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Jason and Tom share an intimate moment as they kiss tenderly, wrapped up in each other's arms. Their kiss is filled with emotion and warmth. As their lips part, Jason pulls away, breaking the silence that enveloped them. The sounds of voices and laughter from the hallway grow louder, reminding them of the reality beyond this stolen moment.

JASON

Sorry.

TOM

Don't be. I'm just... getting used to...

Before Tom can finish his sentence, the classroom door bursts open, and the rest of the class pours into the room. Jason and Tom quickly distance themselves, blending in with their classmates, returning to the roles of ordinary students.

FLASHBACK ENDS

11. EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

The memory fades, and we return to Tom and Jason on the grass.

JASON

I always thought you ran because of that.

TOM

I ran because I was scared. On the one hand, I was allowing myself to feel what I did with you, and on the other, it made me feel I was letting things happen, and it was all my fault with him.

JASON

I wish you had told me.

TOM

Would it have changed anything?

JASON

It would have changed everything.

Jason takes hold of Tom's arm and exposes the scars again.

JASON (CONT'D)

It would have changed this.

TOM

Would it?

JASON

Yes. You'd not have been alone dealing with it.

Tom fights to hold back the tears welling in his eyes.

JASON (CONT'D)

Do you regret what happened between us?

TOM
I regret not knowing.

JASON
You should have told me.

TOM
I wasn't ready. I still don't think I am.

JASON
I'm not going to push you, I'm not going to ask you anything else. You just need to know two things.

TOM
What's that?

JASON
First, I'm always here to listen, to be a shoulder if you ever need it.

TOM
Thank you. And the second?

JASON
The second, I'll tell you tomorrow.

TOM
Tomorrow?

JASON
Meet me for a coffee in the morning.

TOM
Where?

JASON
I'll message you the details. But, promise me one thing.

TOM
Yes?

JASON
No more of this.

Jason traces his fingers gingerly over the fading scars on Tom's arm before leaning forward and once again kissing Tom. We move away as the pair shares an intimate kiss.

12. EXT. STREET - DAY

The street is busy with people, and Tom stands outside a coffee shop with a drink in hand.

We see he is uncomfortable, and in the distance, we hear raised voices and muffled music. This is Pride.

JASON

I didn't know if you'd come.
Jason approaches from the side, and Tom turns to face him.

TOM

Neither did I, it was something of a big deal.

JASON

Like you said last night, I seem to appear at the right moment.

TOM

Indeed.

JASON

Ready for your moment?

TOM

What do you mean, my moment?

Without warning, Jason grabs Tom's hand and drags him across the street. Darting through traffic, the pair navigates along a side road, and we see a sea of people crowding the street. Rainbow flags fly in every direction, creating a carnival atmosphere filled with music and chatter.

Led by Jason, Tom is dragged through the crowds, apologizing as they move toward a large stage in the distance. The crowd is diverse, flags fly denoting all signs of the LGBTQ+ community.

STRANGER

Watch where you're going.

TOM

Sorry!

We focus on Tom and Jason's hands as they move through the crowds. The music gets louder and louder, and we finally make out the track "Sound & Vision" by David Bowie blaring out of the speakers. Tom and Jason come to a stop among the crowds as a tribute band plays on the stage. Jason turns Tom to face him and holds Tom's head in his hands.

JASON

Ten years I've spent feeling bad for making you run away.

TOM

I'm sorry.

Jason presses his finger to Tom's lips to silence him.

JASON

No more apologies. We both need to move away from that past, and I'd like it if my future had you in it, however you'd like that to look.

TOM

Jason...

Rather than finish his sentence, Tom breaks free from Jason's hands and presses forward. Surrounded by the crowds, they kiss, and we leave them embraced by a sea of waving flags, finally happy.

We finish with an aerial view of the crowds, with Tom and Jason still visible in the crowd as we

FADE TO BLACK.