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Running with the Scissor Sisters

By Pam Grimes

I heard the laughter as soon as I stepped from the cab. It was muffled behind the man's well manicured hand, but I heard it all the same. And that little insecure voice in the back of my head whispered, "He's laughing at you!"

I really should kill that voice one of these days. The problem is that sometimes the voice is right, and this happened to be one of those times.

I'll admit that I'm not the coolest mother on the planet, but I'm not exactly queen of the nerds either. Despite what my kids might think, I was actually born in a recent century and was once young, just like them.

So, in a vain attempt to recapture one of the pastimes of my youth, I did something I haven't done in years...no, not *that*. I can still do *that* even with arthritic knees and wrinkles.

My old high school pal Amanda, who now works for a local radio station, invited me to attend a Scissor Sisters concert, knowing how we were both fans of the band's throwback seventies sound. A night on the town seemed like harmless fun, and after scrubbing toilets,

sorting sweaty socks and scraping various fungi out of my kid's lunch bags, I was aching for some fun. Little did I know that *fun* wasn't the only thing in store for me.

Concert day had arrived, and having offered to pick Amanda up at her office, I was now standing in front of the radio station shaking hands with her undeniably hip coworker, *aka, the laughing man*.

"Oh, you must be Amanda's *suburban* friend," he purred clasping my hand in his. His eyes danced with glee as he eyeballed me from stem to stern.

Suburban--gasp! I was horrified.

The way the laughing man said *suburban* made it sound distasteful, like something caught in the back of his throat. As if the suburbs were a place no hip person would ever be caught dead in.

Was I that obvious? Did the personalized "Soccer Mom" license plate tip him off? Or was it the "PTA All the Way" bumper sticker on my minivan? Maybe it was my Spiderman antenna topper?

Then I spotted my friend Amanda dressed like a well preserved rock queen. She was stunning in her dark cargo pants and a stretchy body hugging hoody.

Amanda never had children, while I went on to become the human equivalent of a Pez dispenser, giving birth to

three boys in the past thirteen years. You do the math and figure out which one of us looked like Janet Jackson and which one of us looked like Janet Reno.

I glanced sheepishly at my straight-from-the-burbs uniform; t-shirt, jeans and requisite denim jacket. You know--*mom-wear*. While my pal looked like she was ready to rock 'n' roll I looked like I was ready to sell rolls at the church bake sale.

Once at the concert, the real embarrassment began. I was surrounded on all sides by hipster twenty-something's dressed in black, black...and more black. I was completely out of my element.

The Scissor Sisters have a large following in the gay community and many of the concert goers were flamboyantly dressed. There were yards of gold lamé, glittering platform shoes and feather boas as far as the eye could see. The room was stuffed with fake wigs, fake boobs and other fake appendages that I didn't want to think about. A few were even dressed in bunny costumes. Plushies. I know. I didn't get that one either.

After being shuttled through the metal detectors and frisked a little too thoroughly we were herded upstairs where we found seats next to some young men dressed in wigs and feathers. I took note of their outfits since

Halloween was just a few weeks away and I'm always on the lookout for new ideas for kiddy costumes. I'm sure my kids would be the only drag queens in the neighborhood this year. A first!

The opening act began to play and although I tried, I couldn't muster up much enthusiasm. I looked around and realized that everyone was having a great time.

Everyone but me.

They were all drinking, singing and chatting enthusiastically. I didn't see one person in the crowd over thirty and began to feel conspicuous.

I quickly slipped out of my mommy jacket and tried to look young and chic. I don't think anyone was buying it. Maybe a drink was in order; perhaps then I'd feel the "groove" everyone else was feeling.

Two watered down vodka tonics later my groove was still lost somewhere in the ozone, perhaps with my Flashdance leg warmers and my Olivia Newton John LP's.

I checked my watch, it was eight-thirty. *By now I'd have been in my flannel PJ's*, I thought. I checked again at nine only to feel a pang of regret when I realized that I was missing *The Office*. Drat!

A startling thought began to take root in my mind. I had changed.

What had happened to the girl who could pull an all-nighter and still ace her tests the next day? Where was the girl who camped out overnight on the sidewalk to see the Stones in concert? The girl who could drink coffee and smoke exotic looking European cigarettes all night while debating freewill vs. determinism with equally exotic looking upperclassman?

And then I remembered.

That girl got married, popped out three kids and joined the PTA. I felt a pang of loss. *Darn it*, I thought, *I used to like that girl*. The real question was, did I like the woman she'd become?

I wasn't sure.

More drinks were obviously needed. I signaled the waitress and ordered a drink with a lethal sounding name. I needed reinforcements.

The Sisters finally took the stage at ten (coincidentally my bedtime). The audience had been thoroughly whipped into a techno-pop frenzy.

Perhaps it was the sea of feathers and sequins or maybe the drinks were working their mojo, but I began to recall the excitement of a live rock concert.

The closest I'd come to a concert in the past ten years was *Barney Live!* I didn't think a giant purple

dinosaur wandering aimlessly on stage while singing *John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt* counted as rock and roll.

In an attempt to completely submerge ourselves in the experience we decided we needed a closer look. We knew the best view would be from that danger zone known to many as the mosh pit.

The mosh pit is best described as a trough of writhing humanity. A place reserved for frenzied fans to dance, scream and sweat themselves into a lather. It is the Sodom and Gomorrah of the concert experience, in other words, not exactly the place for a suburban wife and mother of three.

More determined than ever to make it to the pit, Amanda and I wriggled, squirmed and inched our way through the throng of sweaty twenty-somethings.

Once in the pit we were shoved and pulled into the swirling mass of sweat riddled youth. Their eyes rolled in their heads as they swayed, the stage lights catching on their elaborate piercings and colorful tattoos. It was a spectacle!

Yes! This was exactly what I'd needed. I had reached my holy grail.

In an attempt to work the crowd into an even frothier stew of ecstasy, the amplifiers were cranked up to the

Spinal Tap decibel until all we could hear was feedback.

The Sisters finished their show, and the crowd staggered like blind sequin coated lemmings into the chilly fall night.

"That was quite a scene," I yelled to my friend Amanda, "But I'm afraid it's not *my* scene anymore."

"Yes," she agreed. "But it's a fun scene to drop in on every once in awhile."

I liked the sound of that. Rather than mourn my lost youth, or worse yet, pretend that I was still part of the youth culture, I could just be a "visitor" on occasion.

I may have moved on to a more secure address, but I could still cruise the old neighborhood to check things out. The girl I used to be still lives there, and on occasion I just might drop by to visit her.

I'm pretty happy with the woman I've become. So, while the next generation parties into the night, I'll happily curl up in my flannel PJ's and watch the latest Will Ferrell movie with my boys. Sometimes just knowing you've got an invitation to the party is all that counts.