

Stalemate by Morgan Przewoznik

Characters:

RICHIE ADAMS

MRS. ADAMS

LANDON HUDSON

Scene

*[March, 1980. A little over a year since San Francisco's county supervisor Harvey Milk's assassination. Back in Papillion, Nebraska, **LANDON** follows **RICHIE** into **RICHIE**'s bedroom, closing the door behind him. The moment the door is shut, **RICHIE** pushes **LANDON** against the wall and kisses him. They're frantic, having only been able to do this in private. Five months. It has been five months of hiding. **RICHIE** maneuvers them toward the bed. Just before they could sit, **MRS. ADAMS** enters roughly through the door.]*

MRS. ADAMS: Oh my...

*[**RICHIE** and **LANDON** look at her quickly, jolting away from each other. They trade glances before looking back at her.]*

RICHIE: *[Nervously]* Mom? *[Tugging at the hem of his shirt]* I thought you were supposed to be going for a walk?

*[**MRS. ADAMS** stays silent, just staring at the boys.]*

RICHIE: Is everything alright?

MRS. ADAMS: *[Loudly]* Is everything alright? Is everything alright?! *[**RICHIE** and **LANDON** flinch]* How are you going to ask me if everything is alright?!

[RICHIE begins to panic, looking to LONDON for reassurance, but LONDON is in complete shock, standing stock-still.]

MRS. ADAMS: *[Angrily]* All those years we spent bringing you to church because we knew! We knew, Richie! Didn't you learn anything from conversion therapy? Or from Father John? How could you not find God throughout all those years? *[Tearing up and pointing an accusatory finger at RICHIE]* How could you sin like this?!

[RICHIE is fuming throughout her rant, bouncing on his heels with his jaw and fists clenched. As MRS. ADAMS finishes, he grunts and snatches The Nightingale and the Rose from his desk and chucks it at the wall beside her, breaking the spine of it on impact.]

RICHIE: How about Dad? Why are you never on his case about his drinking? That's a sin, isn't it? Or his temper? You know, I do hear you at night. I hear the way he yells and the way you cry. I can hear when he slaps you. All those times I wanted to go in there and just scream. But I couldn't, because he'd knock me out cold. God wouldn't want a good man to hurt his wife, would he?

[RICHIE starts to walk towards MRS. ADAMS with nothing but glowing anger in his eyes. MRS. ADAMS backs away.]

RICHIE: *[shouting]* Remember all those nice happy family trips we always took when I was younger? I bet you just loved everyone's eyes on us, wishing they could have a perfect family like ours, right? Those were all just to show us off, right? Just to show the world that you had it better than the rest of them? Well I was gay then! Too bad the world didn't know that I was gay then, right?

[MRS. ADAMS cringes at the word 'gay.]

RICHIE: [*Quieter*] You want to know a secret? A big, fat, ugly secret? [**MRS. ADAMS** *gapes at him, not replying.*] Do you know what happened when we went to San Francisco?

LANDON: [*Reaching a shaky hand out*] [*brokenly*] Richie-

[*Tears begin to tread down RICHIE's cheeks as he continues on.*]

RICHIE: You were both sleeping. It was a nice day, even warmer than usual. You had gotten sunburnt at the pool and wanted to have an early night in. So as you and Dad slept, I left. Walked right out. You know where I went? [**MRS. ADAMS** *stays silent.*] Castro District. [**MRS ADAMS** *breath hitches. RICHIE smirks.*] It was pretty there. It was all lit up and colorful. Everybody was smiling. I walked through all the shops and nobody even spared me a second glance. They weren't as sad and miserable as everybody back here. The clothes they wore, oh, you'd hate it. Imagine me now, just ten times more flamboyant. There were so many boys there, Mom. [*Whispering*] I kissed so many boys that night. [*It was a lie, he had only kissed one, but he wanted MRS. ADAMS to be angrier.*] I also met a friend. A real friend, because, you know, you never let me bring any friends home from school. I still talk to him sometimes, too. You may have seen him around, he comes to town every now and then. He sends me clothes. All the clothes you hate so much are from him. They're from San Francisco, Mom! [**RICHIE** *is talking animatedly, now, flailing his arms in the air.*] I've known I liked boys since first grade. I remember one kid telling me a story about his first kiss. He said she smelled like honey and candy canes and her lips were sticky with lip gloss. I thought it was gross. I didn't want to kiss lips that were sticky with lip gloss. The boys in class all talked about girls and I had already known. You, on the other hand, sent me to conversion when I was fifteen. You had no idea. Don't act like you knew when you had no idea!

[**MRS. ADAMS** *stands in shock, face still pale. There is a long pause, just RICHIE and MRS. ADAMS* *staring each other down.*]

RICHIE: *[Voice thick]* What about all those records that I bought you? What about those? The records I bought with money that I earned and brought them home to you even when I absolutely hated them, just to put a smile on your face because the man you married couldn't! I was gay when I did that, too! What about those?

*[Upon waiting a moment and receiving silence for an answer, **RICHIE** grabs **LANDON's** hand and storms toward the bedroom door, but stops in front of **MRS. ADAMS.**]*

RICHIE: Oh, and by the way, conversion therapy doesn't work because being gay isn't a choice. It isn't a disease that can be cured. Hate to break it to you, but you gave birth to a son that can only find pleasure in kissing boys. I'm sure a ton of people in this closed-minded country did, too, but they're too afraid to say it. But you know what I think?

LANDON: *[Tugging on his hand]* Come on, Richie, it's not worth it.

RICHIE: *[Softly]* I think God would be pretty upset if he found out that his precious people were disowning their own children because of who they love.

*[**MRS. ADAMS** lifts her hand and smacks **RICHIE** hard across the face. **LANDON** gasps and pulls **RICHIE** away, who is unfazed and his expression is bordering on smiling. **LANDON** pushes **RICHIE** to the door, bends down to pick up The Nightingale and the Rose, and turns to look at **MRS. ADAMS**, who looks back at him in disgust.]*

MRS. ADAMS: You're a sick boy.

LANDON: Whatever you say, Mrs. Adams. *[Smiling and walking out of the room with **RICHIE.**]* Good luck with your husband! *[**RICHIE** muffles his laughter with his hand.]*

MRS. ADAMS: *[Faintly]* Sick! You sick animals!