

TYING UP THE LOOSE ENDS

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An apartment; early evening. RICHARD and ADAM are packing up boxes. Richard is older, 30's to late 40's, and a little rumpled. Adam is younger, 20's, good-looking and very well dressed.

RICHARD

That pretty much takes care of all the loose ends. Except for the music.

ADAM

This should be good.

RICHARD

It'll be pretty easy to tell mine from yours. Mine is the good stuff, yours is the trash.

ADAM

Oh, that is so bogus. You don't even have one good CD.

RICHARD

I have classics!

ADAM

Please! Look at this. (*Looking at Richard's CDs*) Erasure. Madonna.

RICHARD

--Early Madonna.

ADAM

Madonna. Frankie Goes To Hollywood, for God sakes.

RICHARD

Those guys are going to be big, I tell you.

ADAM

Prince. Bette Midler. Donna Summer. Liza Minelli! This is like the gay man's starter CD collection. I bet you have Judy Garland in there.

RICHARD

On vinyl. You wouldn't know about vinyl. They were these big black round things...

ADAM

Oh, I've seen your vinyl. I think you actually own the Ethel Merman Disco album.

RICHARD

The Ethel Merman Disco Album is a work of pure genius. It transcends its awfulness to achieve a kind of clarity few have matched.

ADAM

Well, see that it doesn't end up in my box.

RICHARD

Oh no, darling. You get Mariah and Christina and Britney--

ADAM

--Early Britney.

RICHARD

Early Britney was, like, two years ago.

ADAM

Some of us enjoy music from this century.

RICHARD

(plopping a CD into his box) You can have "Panic At The Disco"

ADAM

And you can have actual disco.

RICHARD

Disco was revolutionary. Your generation doesn't know about revolutions. Not unless you can download it to your ipod.

ADAM

At least I know how to work an ipod.

RICHARD

I know how to put together a stereo, bucko.

ADAM

..."Bucko"?

RICHARD

Vinyl was hard. You had to be careful with it. You had to take care of it. You never took care of anything. Not even yourself. Certainly not me.

ADAM

I took care of you.

RICHARD

When did you ever take care of me? I had to teach you so much. I had to teach you about music! Look at this. James Blunt?

ADAM

He's going to be big, I tell you. And you know what? I didn't want to be taught about music. I just wanted to listen to it. Without having to hear about why it was good, what it meant, how it was part of history. I just wanted to enjoy a song with you. Wouldn't that have been nice?

Pause.

RICHARD

I will concede that maybe that would have been nice.

ADAM

Well, too late for that now. Bucko. Now all that's left is a custody battle over a stack of CDs.

RICHARD

You can have visitation on mine.

ADAM

No thanks. I'd rather listen to the music of today.

RICHARD

The music of today sucks! There are only two songs: the ones that start "oooOOOOoooOOO...ohhhhOHHHHohhh", and are sung by American idol rejects. And then there are the rap songs, which all start out "Yeah. Unh! Uh huh."

Adam laughs.

ADAM

How did we ever stay together so long?

RICHARD

I don't know. Clearly we're completely incompatible.

ADAM

And yet you had a certain dry wit.

RICHARD

You had a kind of youthful charm.

ADAM

You were occasionally fun.

RICHARD

Occasionally?!

ADAM

Occasionally.

RICHARD

We fought a lot.

ADAM

We're still fighting.

RICHARD

I'm actually going to miss the fights.

ADAM

Why? You lose them all.

Richard gives Adam a "look", and finishes putting the CD's in a box.

RICHARD

Well, I think that's it. I have successfully disentangled our CD collection.

ADAM

You didn't, like, slip an ABBA one in there or anything?

RICHARD

Those are too good for you.

Pause.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I'm going to miss you, you know. And your bad music.

ADAM

I know.

There's a knock at the door.

ADAM (CONT'D)

That'll be my mom.

RICHARD

Oh, God.

ADAM

Be nice to her.

RICHARD

I'm always nice to her. She's the one who--

ADAM

Be nicer to her than she is to you.

RICHARD

Ooo, challenge me.

He opens the door. Adam exits into the bedroom.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Emily! Hi. Nice to see you...again.

Emily enters. She is about Richard's age, but well-dressed, and icy.

EMILY

(very stiff and uncomfortable) Richard.

Richard tries to hug her and she holds her hand out for a handshake, and they both awkwardly step back.

RICHARD

Well, I've got...I've got...Adam's stuff all packed. I was just going through the CDs.

EMILY

Oh. Okay.

RICHARD

This last box doesn't have a lid. I'm sorry.

EMILY

Fine.

RICHARD

The other boxes are in the bedroom.

EMILY

(this makes her very uncomfortable) The...bedroom.

RICHARD

(sighs) I can bring them out.

EMILY

Thanks. Sam is bringing up a dolly for the big stuff. As soon as he finds a place to park.

RICHARD

Okay...good, then.

EMILY

Listen...I'm sorry you...couldn't have been there...at the end.

RICHARD

Oh. Well, uh...

EMILY

They just said...I mean, it was family only...the hospital's policy.

RICHARD

I know, and I'm not family. You made that clear.

EMILY

It's not that, I mean, I didn't bring it up again to make you think... This is very hard for me.

RICHARD

Yeah.

EMILY

He will always be my little baby, you know? He was just starting kindergarten yesterday...

RICHARD

He was twenty-six.

EMILY

I know, Richard. I know how old he was. I'm just saying. To me, he was always my little boy.

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

EMILY

Okay?

RICHARD

He seemed young to me, too. My God, look at his CDs.

She paws idly through his CDs.

EMILY

I haven't heard of half these people. *(pause)* I couldn't talk to you at the funeral, I was still too angry.

RICHARD

At me?

EMILY

At you. At him. At God. At everything.

RICHARD

I know...

EMILY

I was always...so worried about HIV, y'know? I never thought about leukemia.

RICHARD

Yeah...I was always worried that he was just...going to leave me. But not like this.

EMILY

Well. Anyway. He talked about you. In the hospital.

RICHARD

Yes?

EMILY

A lot, actually. He told me... pretty close to the end... he told me... that I had to be nice to you... because you made him happy.

RICHARD

He said that?

EMILY

Yes. So I just...I just wanted to thank you. Thank you for making my son happy.

She begins to cry, quietly. Richard hugs her and she lets him, although doesn't return the hug.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Lord knows I never made him happy.

RICHARD

You did, you did. He looked up to you. He wanted to be like you. He wanted your strength.

EMILY

I have no strength. I have no strength left.

RICHARD

You'll get it back. Give it time.

She half-heartedly hugs him back.

EMILY

(done with the hug) Okay.

Richard self-consciously breaks the hug.

RICHARD

So, this is you, being nice?

She laughs a little.

EMILY

This is it.

RICHARD

You know what helps me? I talk to him.

EMILY

Yeah, I do too.

RICHARD

Actually I argue with him.

EMILY

(brightening) You do?

RICHARD

Yes. Why should it be any different now? We still squabble all the time.

EMILY

Oh my God. I'm so glad to hear that.

RICHARD

You too?

EMILY

We had a huge fight on the way over.

RICHARD

You and Adam?

EMILY

Yes.

RICHARD

What was it about?

EMILY

Oh it was...stupid...I'd rather not...what was yours about?

RICHARD

Music. He still doesn't like my music.

Emily goes over to look at Richard's CDs.

EMILY

Oh...no...this is good. I have this one. And this one. I like a lot of this. We have the same tastes. We have the exact same tastes.

She looks at Richard.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I don't even want to know what that means.

RICHARD

We have a lot in common. We both loved Adam.

EMILY

Yes. I know you did. I know you did.

RICHARD

And he loved you, you know.

EMILY

Did he? Really? I find that hard to believe.

RICHARD

Well, he said it.

EMILY

He actually said he loved me?

RICHARD

Those exact words.

EMILY

Huh. Really. Thank you for that. Um. I'm going to see what's taking Sam so long with the dolly.

She runs out. Adam reenters.

ADAM

I never said I loved my mother!

RICHARD

I know.

ADAM

She drove me crazy.

RICHARD

I know. But you probably did.

ADAM

Yeah I probably did.

Pause.

ADAM (CONT'D)

See? I'm taking care of people.

Emily reenters.

EMILY

Okay, Sam's on his way up. I'll go ahead and grab the small stuff.

She picks up the box of Adam's CDs, and looks at them again.

EMILY (CONT'D)

God, he really did have abysmal taste in music, didn't he?

Adam rolls his eyes and Richard smiles.

LIGHTS FADE