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THE WORLD WON'T LISTEN

Eddie..... Adam O'Connell

Steve..... Devin Wright

THE SETTING: New Year's Eve, 1986, a basement. Couch (or whatever basement-type furniture is available, preferably a couch), TV (facing the couch upstage). To the side of the couch, a record player on a cube and a box of records next to it.

THE CHARACTERS:

STEVE, 17-18. Popular track star with a lot of friends. Handsome, charismatic. Has a steady girlfriend. On the honor roll. Has a sports scholarship lined up for him. Deeply closeted, gay or bisexual. He's not sure yet. Has a lot to lose.

EDDIE, 16-17. Not popular, but not a loser. Quirkier, indie/artsy type, but not full-on Duckie. Relaxed. Loves music. Doesn't have a lot of social currency. Definitely gay, but only out to Steve (and only ever plans on being out to Steve).

(EDDIE and STEVE are sitting in the basement of STEVE's house. It's probably a little dingy, on sort of a ratty couch. They are watching Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve, wearing Happy New Year hats, very bored, but STEVE is a little more enthusiastic than EDDIE. There's a party going on upstairs.)

SOUND CUE 1.

EDDIE. I can't take this anymore. Can you put on MTV?

STEVE. Okay, but I wanna see the ball drop. You wouldn't go into the city with me to see it in person.

[STEVE changes the channel. The Smiths' "This Charming Man" music video is playing on MTV. They immediately become more invested.]

EDDIE. Thank god. Look at that man gyrate. Twenty years ago, you couldn't show that on tv.

STEVE. It's hard to believe he's celibate when he dances like that.

EDDIE. It's cause he's a queer.

STEVE. Morrissey?

EDDIE. Yeah.

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STEVE. That's just tabloids shit. "Non-practicing bisexual."

EDDIE. Alright, so he's not a queer. He's a... bisexual queer.

(beat)

Boy George is a queer.

STEVE. No, he's not.

EDDIE. He so is, are you for real?

STEVE. What, a dude can't just like to wear a lot of makeup?

EDDIE. *[dismissively]* I blame Reagan.

STEVE. For what?

[Eddie gestures vaguely towards everywhere, eyes still on the TV. Steve turns back to the TV, and Eddie turns to look at Steve, watching his expression. A beat]

EDDIE. God, you're so gay.

STEVE. *[immediately putting his guard up]* What? No I'm not.

EDDIE. Dude, you come to my house after school every day and we watch MTV and talk about hot guys.

STEVE. So?

EDDIE. So, that makes you gay.

STEVE. Does not.

EDDIE. Steve, I'M gay.

STEVE. So?

EDDIE. So, what are you so afraid of? Just say you're gay.

STEVE. I like girls!

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EDDIE. Fine, you're a non-practicing bisexual. You and Morrissey should hook up.

STEVE. Even if I was gay, there's not anything I can do about it. I'm not gonna "come out." It's not like you talk about being gay to anyone but me.

EDDIE. Well, duh, dumbass. I don't do anything about it. But I know *I'm* gay.

[EDDIE turns off the TV] SOUND CUE 1 OFF.

EDDIE. What about that time we kissed?

STEVE. First of all, that was the third grade. You had long hair and I was confused. That doesn't count.

EDDIE. I was your first kiss and nothing can take that away, Anderson.

STEVE. You do this all the time.

EDDIE. What?

STEVE. You think everyone is a queer.

EDDIE. Everyone is.

STEVE. What.

EDDIE. I got this theory. We all started out dating and fucking men and women and everybody, and then somewhere along the line, we all decided that men were for women and vice versa. It was probably because of the Bible or some shit, but all of a sudden we decided that it wasn't okay for boys to kiss boys or girls to kiss girls. It's obscene. But we're all still humans, so we're all still queers on the inside. We just repress it, because of Ronald Reagan and the news and the political revolution or whatever. It wasn't like this during Woodstock, you can ask our parents. You can tell, you can tell from the way that people act and think and what they do... and in music! People bear their souls in music. Like, check it out.

[EDDIE goes to his record collection on a shelf. He begins to pull out records.]

David Bowie. Publicly announced his bisexuality in 1972. That one's easy.

STEVE. Yeah, and three years ago he said it's the biggest mistake he's ever made.

EDDIE *[not listening]*. Freddie Mercury of Queen. Wrote We Will Rock You, the most badass song ever. Definitely fucks dudes, he said so in an interview.

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STEVE. That's just a rumor! You can't believe everything you read in those magazines.

EDDIE. Oh, duh, Liberace...

STEVE. Who's Liberace?

EDDIE. *[exasperated]* God, it's like you're not even gay.

STEVE. I'm not!

EDDIE. And the je ne sais quoi of gay music...

[EDDIE puts on a record. SOUND CUE 2 GO. "Wake Me Up Before You Go Go" begins to play. Eddie starts to dance, a la George Michael in the music video. Steve smiles.]

STEVE [possibly also starts dancing]. Alright, this song is pretty /gay-

EDDIE. *[still dancing]* /This song's about anal sex.

STEVE. I'm not even going to honor that with a question. That is earnestly the stupidest thing I've ever heard. You've never even HAD sex.

EDDIE. How do you know?

STEVE. You would have told me about it.

EDDIE. *[beat]* Fair. *[he throws his party hat at STEVE and stops the record. SOUND CUE 2 OFF.]*

STEVE. What are you so hung up on anyway, dude?

EDDIE. There's a whole world out there. People are marching and making little clubs and shit all about being gay! Gay guys! Gay girls! Everything in between! Wouldn't it be awesome if we could all march together like that, and we didn't have to worry about whether we're gay or straight or celibate or non-practicing bisexuals. And what are we doing? Sitting in this basement jerking it to Smiths music videos.

[Eddie lies down on the couch]

STEVE. Okay, the minute you take your dick out while we're watching MTV, we're not friends anymore.

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EDDIE. *[into the pillow]* You wish.

STEVE. Listen, Eds, I appreciate your loving fantasies about the free world and how we should all have one big queer orgy and sing Kumbaya with Boy George and Liberici.

EDDIE. *[uninterested]* Liberace.

STEVE. But that's not the way it is! It's scary out there, for people like... people like you. Queers. People are dying. You know it, I know it, they're all talking about it on the news. AIDS. HIV.

[Eddie lounges out on the couch and stares up at the ceiling, not really listening to Steve]

It's all the people in those nice parades and clubs. It's not all holding hands and rediscovering nature together! There are consequences, okay? And it's your singers, too. Freddie Mercury might have it, I saw it on the news.

EDDIE. That's not true.

STEVE. It is! I know you know it. (beat) Look at me, Eddie!

[EDDIE looks up at STEVE]

You're my best friend and you're not stupid. It's true and it's happening and you can't go around pretending like it's not, pretending like everything's okay and nothing's gonna happen to us.

[EDDIE stares back up at the ceiling]

(beat) Eddie, listen to me!

[EDDIE blows on his party horn as Steve talks]

Cut it out, I'm being serious!

[Steve goes to the record box, haphazardly pulling out records. He holds one up to Eddie. This gets his attention.]

Queen, Jagger, Fleetwood Mac, what does it matter? They're people, just like you and me. They're people who write songs to make money, songs for millions of people, it has nothing to do with them being queer. Not everything is about this, not everything is about you.

[He puts the record down, and sees David Bowie's "Heroes" in the box. He pulls it out haphazardly.]

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David Bowie, King of the Queers, so dedicated and caring he said that coming out was the worst decision he ever made. Truly a paragon of queerness, huh? A real fucking “Hero,” alright!

[He ungracefully smacks the front of the record as he speaks, right in Bowie’s face]

EDDIE *[snapping to attention]*. Hey, put that down, that’s not how you handle a record!

[Eddie goes for the record, Steve keeps it from him]

STEVE. Just because YOU don’t fuck guys doesn’t mean somebody’s not going to, and doesn’t mean that nothing’s gonna happen. I’m scared! I’m fucking scared, can’t you get that through your head?

EDDIE. Cut it out! Put down the record!

[EDDIE grabs the record from Steve and goes to put it back in the box]

STEVE. No, I need you to listen to me!

[Steve goes for the record again. A slight tussle. In a flimsy misstep, it flies out of Steve’s hands and onto the floor violently. Eddie goes for it immediately, kneeling on the ground. When he pulls the sleeve off, the record is shattered. Broken pieces slide out, into his hands and onto the floor. Eddie is heartbroken.]

STEVE. Oh my god, Eddie, I’m sorry...

[He goes over to pick up the pieces. Eddie shoos him away.]

EDDIE. No, no, stop.

[He picks up the shattered pieces of the record, slowly.]

STEVE. I know how much those records mean to you.

EDDIE. No you don’t! You have no fucking idea!

[STEVE backs off]

EDDIE. Elton John. Boy George. Bowie, man. You can hear a million songs on the radio or you could buy out the whole record shop, but these guys... they get me like nobody else does, not even you. They write music and I feel like it’s about me. They’re queers, just like me. I know

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they are. I know they don't say so but I just... there's no way any of them could get me like this if they weren't. You'd never understand unless...

I heard it on the news too. About Freddie. You're right. What if he dies? Who is ever gonna make music like that again, who is ever gonna get me like he does? If they all die, what'll I have left? What will WE have left?

[a long pause]

STEVE. I'm sorry, Eddie. About the record. About everything.

[another pause]

EDDIE [visibly upset]. It's okay. You're right. People are dying.

STEVE. I overreacted. Freddie's gonna be fine, man. You said it yourself, he's the most badass dude who ever lived.

EDDIE. It's not just about Freddie.

[EDDIE puts the record back in the box and sits up against the couch.]

STEVE. I'll buy you a new Bowie record.

EDDIE. Let's just watch MTV and not think about it, okay?

[STEVE grabs the remote and turns the TV back on. SOUND CUE 3 GO. The first line of Starship's "We Built This City" begins to play. They both react viscerally, with disgust.]

TV. "We built this city!"

STEVE. Oh, god!

EDDIE. Anything but that!

[STEVE switches the channel to the news, mid-AIDS report.]

TV. "There is a one in five chance a victim will die within the first year of the illness."

[STEVE switches off the TV quickly, and sits down on the floor next to Eddie, in exasperation. EDDIE looks at him, smiling sadly.]

EDDIE. Guess we can't not think about it, huh?

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[STEVE looks at his watch, then puts on his party hat.]

STEVE. Hey, Eddie. Happy New Year.

[EDDIE takes his noisemaker off the couch and blows it. STEVE grabs the remote and turns the TV back on.]

BLACKOUT.