

THE ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

by

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## The Acceptance Speech

FADE IN:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BLVD. - NIGHT

In the pre-dawn light we see Grauman's Chinese Theater, Frederick's of Hollywood, Madame Toussaud's Wax Museum.

The world's most famous street is quiet. Too quiet.

The stillness is SHATTERED by MEN with JACKHAMMERS - blasting up the pavement, removing somebody's 'star' from the sidewalk.

An ALL-FEMALE R&B TRIO (Destiny's Child-ish) sings:

R&B TRIO (O.S.)

"Hooray for...

EXT. HOLLYWOOD SIGN - DAWN

The sun rises big and brassy over the 'Hollywood' sign.

R&B TRIO (O.S.)

"Hollywood, that screwy, bally-hooey  
Hollywood...

As the song continues underneath -

EXT. THE DOLBY THEATER - HOLLYWOOD/HIGHLAND - MORNING

A crew prepares the area in front of the theater, the effect not unlike that of an orchestra tuning up:

A CARPENTER hammers a piece of bleacher in place; TV TECHIES set up camera platforms; LIGHTING CREWS wheel out floodlights.

The images come faster as DAY turns into NIGHT turns into DAY and an ARMY OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS create the scene: signs are hung, sound checks performed, security tents built, a CLEAR DOME is erected over this part of Hollywood Blvd.

In the middle of it all, his golden skin wrapped in plastic, his chiseled face by turns bemused and perplexed - is a GIGANTIC (10feet) STATUE of 'OSCAR'.

And here come the RED CARPETS - like a convoy of tanks rolling in to liberate a city, unfurling dreamy vermilion plushness in every direction until the screen's on fire with it.

We hear the VOICE of a man, OUR ACTOR, singing:

OUR ACTOR (O.S.)  
 "When there's a...

MONTAGE

A HAND polishes a pair of BLACK FORMAL SHOES.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.)  
 "Shine on your shoes/There's a melody  
 in your heart...

The same HAND polishes a pair of cufflinks - one cufflink  
 wears a 'Tragedy' mask.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "With a singable happy feeling...

The other cufflink wears a 'Comedy' mask.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "What a wonderful way start.

INTER-CUT STOCK FOOTAGE OF FAMOUS OSCAR ACCEPTANCE SPEECHES

SIDNEY POITIER  
 ("Lilies of the Field")  
 "Because it is a long journey to  
 this moment..."

Now the HANDS iron a pair of FANCY SOCKS.

VIVIEN LEIGH  
 ("Gone with the Wind")  
 "Please forgive me if my words are  
 inadequate.

They iron a pair of plush BOXER SHORTS.

ROBIN WILLIAMS  
 ("Good Will Hunting")  
 "This might be the one time I'm  
 speechless.

Unzip an elegant WARDROBE BAG.

AL PACINO  
 ("Scent of a Woman")  
 "I shoulda had a little water before  
 I got on because my mouth's dry.

Remove the DESIGNER TUXEDO.

DUSTIN HOFFMAN  
 ("Kramer vs Kramer")  
 "He has no genitalia and he's holding  
 a sword.

Open a box, take out a fresh new TUXEDO SHIRT.

MARLON BRANDO  
 ("On the Waterfront")  
 "It's much heavier than I'd imagined.

Lay out a BLACK CUMMERBUND.

ROBERT DE NIRO  
 ("Raging Bull")  
 "I hope I can share this with anyone  
 that it means anything to.

A BLACK SILK TIE.

RUSSELL CROWE  
 ("Gladiator")  
 "Anybody's who's on the downside of  
 advantage, relying purely on courage.

Those same HANDS polish a GOLD WEDDING BAND.

JACK NICHOLSON  
 ("One Flew Over the  
 Cuckoo's Nest")  
 "And last but not least, my agent -  
 who about ten years ago advised me  
 that I had no business being an actor.

They stop, look closer at the ring.

SALLY FIELD  
 ("Places in the Heart")  
 "I can't deny the fact you like me!

The INSCRIPTION on the ring reads: "I love you...Carolyn"

CUBA GOODING  
 (for "Jerry Maguire")  
 "I love you! I LOVE YOU! I LOVE  
 YOU!!!

He KISSES THE RING, slips it on his finger.

EXT. DOLBY THEATER - RED CARPET - LATE AFTERNOON (B-ROLL  
 FOOTAGE)

The bleachers are packed, floodlights lick the sky, the media  
 swarms - the red carpet is TEEMING with celebrity. We hear

RED CARPET INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

"Will he win?"

All that preparation has boiled into the biggest evening of the year.

RED CARPET INTERVIEWER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

"A complete unknown who's toiled in the theater for years and years, this his very first movie!"

BLOCK-LONG LIMOS arrive, the crowd swells with excitement.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - ON THE TV - CONTINUOUS

The same scene on television, the sound very low. We PULL BACK from the TV, TILT UP to a WEDDING PHOTO atop the set:

RED CARPET INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

"I know we're not supposed to be partial, but..."

CLOSE ON the GROOM in the pic, OUR ACTOR, in his 30s then - he's got a great face, a full head of hair, and he's beaming.

RED CARPET INTERVIEWER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

"I know who I'm rooting for in the Best Supporting Actor category."

He's flanked by his FATHER, 50s, on one side, his bride, CAROLYN, 20s, on the other. Happy times.

The sound of RUNNING WATER from the bathroom, then

A BOY (O.S.)

You don't understand.

INT. CHURCH BATHROOM - YEARS AGO

A BOY, 8, in Altar Boy robes with a full head of hair - poses in a mirror - the best 8 year-old Brando you've ever seen.

BOY

I coulda had class.

INT. BATHROOM - THE PRESENT

OUR ACTOR, 50s, boxer shorts and a T-shirt, stares in the mirror. He's still got that great face, but he's out-of-shape, almost entirely BALD. Still does a killer Brando.

OUR ACTOR

I coulda been a contenda.

INT. CHURCH MIRROR - YEARS AGO

The Boy stares intensely at himself.

BOY

I coulda been *somebody*. Instead of a  
bum. Which is what I am, let's -

A ROBED HAND SMACKS the boy upside the head.

INT. BATHROOM - PRESENT

CLOSE on Our Actor's eyes - feeling the memory.

INT. CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STAGE - YEARS AGO

Our Actor, at 16 now with his hair starting to thin, stands  
center-stage, wearing a SUIT OF ARMOR and a porn-stache.

STAGE LIGHTS are melting the make-up off his face.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER

"Life's but a walking shadow.

The intensity in his eyes belies his age - THIS KID CAN ACT.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER (CONT'D)

"A poor player that struts and frets  
his hour upon the stage.

INT. CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STAGE - WINGS - CONTINUOUS

FATHER TARANTO - who smacked him before - is shvitzing in  
the wings, lip-synching Macbeth along with his star.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER (O.S.)

"Then is heard no more.

EXT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - PRESENT

Where Our Actor teaches an acting class.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER (O.S.)

"It is a tale.

INT. PRISON CLASSROOM - DAY

BOY PRISONER 1, 20s, in prison garb - RAPPING:

BOY PRISONER 1

"It is a tale.

HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER  
 "Told by an idiot.

PRISON CLASSROOM

BOY PRISONER 2, 20s, also in prison garb:

BOY PRISONER 2  
 "Told by an ID-I-TO.

HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER  
 "Full of sound and fury.

PRISON CLASSROOM

Our Actor directs the two prisoners:

OUR ACTOR  
 Break it down!

BOY PRISONER 1  
 "Fulla sound!

BOY PRISONER 2  
 "Fulla fury!

BOY PRISONERS 1 & 2  
 "Fulla sound and fury!

BOY PRISONER 1  
 "Signifying -

HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER  
 "Signifying -

PRISON CLASSROOM

BOY PRISONER 1  
 "SIG-

BOY PRISONER 2  
 "NI-

BOY PRISONER 1  
 "FYING...

INT. LIVING ROOM - THE PRESENT

GARGLING comes from the bathroom - as we look at a living room that is cozy, theatrical, messy.

AGAINST ONE WALL

Bookshelves overflow with the collected works of Shakespeare, O'Neill, Williams - acting for the stage, for the camera.

The GARGLING morphs into VOCAL EXERCISES as a CAT dozes on the sofa. We hear APPLAUSE and begin -

A MONTAGE - CURTAIN CALLS - STAGES

Our Actor in his 20s, hair mostly gone. He bows, receiving applause for his performance as STANLEY KOWALSKI. We hear:

OUR ACTOR (O.S.)  
 "Ladies and gentlemen, I would like  
 to thank...

The APPLAUSE grows louder as we move to

A BIGGER STAGE

Our Actor, early 30s, as CYRANO DE BERGERAC, takes a bow.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "Ladies and gentlemen, members of  
 the academy...

The APPLAUSE is THUNDEROUS as we move to an

EVEN BIGGER STAGE

Our Actor, 40s - in drag - takes a bow as CHARLEY'S AUNT. We hear cries of 'BRAVO'.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "There are countless individuals...

INT. LIVING ROOM - PRESENT

As we follow the Cat toward the bedroom -

ON THE WALLS

A DIPLOMA from Juilliard; CITATIONS for acting excellence, RAVE REVIEWS that have been blown up and framed.

IN A FRAME'S REFLECTION

The excitement from the red carpet on the TV in the bg.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.)  
 "Without whose help I would not be  
 before you tonight..."

Also on the wall is a TEAM PHOTO of the 1978 New York Yankees,  
 and a framed 8x10 of team captain, the late THURMAN MUNSON.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "Accepting this most coveted..."

The ALARM BLARES on an EGG TIMER.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

ECU of a NOSTRIL. A pair of TWEEZERS, a flagrant NOSE HAIR -  
 the ALARM continues to BLARE.

His left hand SLAMS down hard on the EGG TIMER. Silence.

OUR ACTOR  
 What are you, a goddamn English  
 teacher?

His right hand YANKS the nose hair. A WHIMPER.

His face covered with shaving cream, he RESETS the EGG TIMER  
 to 45 seconds, slaps his belly, then - ready, set, go:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)  
 "Folks...Evah since I's pud-high to  
 a fire plug and doin' impressions in  
 the pulpit at St. Anthony's..."

INT. CHURCH - YEARS AGO

Our Actor as that 8 year-old, in Altar-Boy robes, standing  
 on the pulpit - to an empty church:

BOY  
 (as Cagney)  
 "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb,  
 Jesus..."

MATCH CUT TO:

CHURCH

Same pulpit, Our Actor is now that 16 year-old:

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER  
 (as John Wayne)  
 "Pray for us sinners now and at the  
 hour of our death - you heard me,  
 pilgrim!"

INT. BATHROOM - PRESENT

He pops off the egg timer.

OUR ACTOR

Cut the 'America's Got Talent' crap.  
Just say 'thank you' and get the  
hell off.

He resumes shaving. Then stops again.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Can't just say thank you. This is  
it. An audition, a commercial - for  
me. 45 seconds. A billion customers.

INT. CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL STAGE - YEARS AGO

The teenage Actor is dressed like Gene Kelly - straw hat n'  
cane - in their high school production of *Brigadoon*.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER

(singing)

"Maybe the sun gave me the power...

The kid CAN SING.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER (CONT'D)

(singing)

"For I could swim Loch Loman and be  
home in half an hour..."

INT. BATHROOM - PRESENT

Our Actor finishes shaving, rinses his face, dries off.

OUR ACTOR

(singing)

"Maybe the air gave me a sign/For  
I'm all aglow and alive..."

HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

The teenage Actor does a soft-shoe. The kid CAN DANCE:

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER

(singing)

"What a day this has been..."

BATHROOM

Our Actor does a duet with his teenage self.

OUR ACTOR  
(singing)  
"What a grand mood I'm in..."

HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER  
(singing)  
"Why it's..."

BATHROOM

Our Actor splashes on Old Spice.

SPLIT-SCREEN - BATHROOM/HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

The two inter-cutting voices blend into one, harmonizing.

TEENAGE ACTOR/OUR ACTOR  
(singing)  
"Almost like being in love..."

HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

The Teenage Actor serenades a young lady.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER  
(singing)  
"There's a smile on my face/For the  
whole human race/Why it's..."

BATHROOM

SPRITZ. SPRITZ. Our Actor sprays on deodorant.

OUR ACTOR  
(singing)  
"Almost like being in love..."

He takes a towel in his arms like a lover - the MAN CAN DANCE.  
He glides across the tiled floor of the bathroom.

HIGH SCHOOL STAGE

The teenage Actor takes the young lady in his arms.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER  
(singing)  
"All the music of life seems to be..."

They dance, they twirl, they dip.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER (CONT'D)  
(singing)  
"Like a bell that is ringing for me!"

He's about to melt her with a kiss -

INT. BATHROOM - PRESENT

Our Actor stops - it's just a towel.

OUR ACTOR

Shmuck.

He hangs it on a towel rack.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

You don't have to sell your talent.  
You're *nominated*.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He crosses into the bedroom.

OUR ACTOR

If you win you can suck your thumb  
up there - they still give you the  
damn trophy.

A FENCING FOIL leans against the wall with a Robin Hood-like  
HAT hanging from it. He dons the hat, picks up the foil -  
is suddenly Errol Flynn - the man CAN FENCE:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Basically...

He turns, addresses:

A HAIR ALTAR

of busts, each wearing a different style wig or toupee.  
With great intensity and panache he duels each bust.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

You just...wanna be...a Great Guy  
about it.

He pivots, faces the large CAT TREE in the corner of the  
room. A 'Have-A-Nice-Day' bulls-eye rests in the middle.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Plus -

He raises his sword - the Cat runs for its life.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Whoever you mention is gonna owe  
you, so mention -

He PLUNGES the foil into the bulls-eye.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Everybody.

He yanks out the sword, crosses to the HAIR ALTAR, addresses the group:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Okay, boys - who's coming to the show tonight?

To the bust with the VERY THIN Shakespearean toupee:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

"Uneasy lies the head that wears that crown...

To the bust with the DONALD TRUMP rug - a nest on steroids:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

"Ya fired!

There's the shaggy ROCK STAR, the 80s MULLET, the slicked-back, 90s PAT RILEY. The busts of hair vie for his attention:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Much as I would delight/to recite/  
you all/to the Ball/tonight...

In the back, quietly on a bust - a very simple-looking toupee. The Actor snags it with the tip of his foil, addresses it:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

"Ladies and gentlemen, look: awards, competition. The biggest thrill is just being nominated, just being thought of in the company of such great artists as...

He stares hard at the toupee, which stares hard back.

INT. PRISON CLASSROOM - A YEAR AGO

A GANGSTA, 20s, standing in front a prison acting class, MUMBLES from a dog-eared copy of *Macbeth*.

GANGSTA

"Out, out brief candle/Life's but a walking shadow...

Wearing his 'simple' hair-piece, Our Actor - as teacher/director - listens intently.

GANGSTA (CONT'D)

"A poor player/That struts and frets...

The Gangsta stops.

OUR ACTOR  
What's the problem?

GANGSTA  
This is bullshit.

He tosses the book at Our Actor, takes a seat in the back. SNICKERS from the prisoners. Even the GUARD by the door grins.

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT

Our Actor snaps out of it, glancing at the TV, where the pre-Oscar excitement on the red carpet builds to a crescendo:

RED CARPET INTERVIEWEE 1 (O.S.)  
The whole damn world's rooting for  
him! This virtual unknown up against  
the best actors of his generation -  
it's the American Dream!

Our Actor crosses to the closet, takes out the TUXEDO we saw earlier, lays it on the bed. It is a thing of beauty.

OUR ACTOR  
Just be yourself.

He glances at what looks like a CONTRACT sitting on the night table. He smiles, the hair-piece becomes his Oscar:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
"Ladies and gentlemen, members of  
the academy: I am the best actor of  
my generation and it's ABOUT TIME  
SOMEBODY NOTICED!!!

IN THE BATHROOM MIRROR

An IMAGE of his FATHER, 70s, a working man. He sits in his BARCA-LOUNGER in front of the TV, reading the *NY POST*.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
"Look at me, Pop...

His father doesn't.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)  
(Cagney)  
"TOP OF THE WORLD!"

To his father in the mirror:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

"Ladies and gentlemen, members of the academy: I'd like to thank the two people in my life - my father and my wife - who've been behind me all these years.

IN THE BATHROOM MIRROR

His FATHER puts down the paper.

FATHER

35 years I been on the road in a truck I don't own, hauling magazines I don't read.

Our Actor's heard this from his father a thousand times.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Fine. Drop out of law school, move to Hollywood, become an actor. When you're nominated for an Academy Award - you let me know, okay?

ON A STAGE

A classic ODETS-IAN kitchen-sink melodrama: his father in a wife-beater and Yankee cap.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Been on strike tree times - nose broken, skull busted - never once crossed the line...A working man's gotta fight like a dog for respect in dis country. And I did - so you could get a shot at sometin big - doctor, lawyer. Sometin with balls. Sometin to make a difference.

Our Actor-as-Teenager, James Dean-ish, hair thinning, pleads:

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER

Pop, it's what I want!

The two of them are emoting like crazy.

FATHER

Your mudda - rest her Soul - would turn over in her grave!

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER

It's what I've always wanted!

FATHER

I always wanted to be Thurman Munson,  
catch for the Yankees. First captain  
since Gehrig...Dats what I WANTED.

(extra deep)

Dreams are nice, son. Sooner or later  
you gotta wake up.

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER

You don't understand.

FATHER

Don't tell me I don't understand!

OUR ACTOR AS TEENAGER

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

INT. HOSPITAL - I.C.U. UNIT - 7 YEARS AGO

His father hooked up to machines in ICU, Our Actor by his  
side. His father stares up at him, Our Actor fights to keep  
it together - he has so much he wants to say to his father.

Too late.

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT

He unwraps his new tuxedo shirt and accidentally pricks his  
finger with a pin. Watches it bleed.

OUR ACTOR

Look at me, Pop.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The medicine cabinet is open. Our Actor wraps his cut finger  
with a band-aid. When he closes the cabinet door

IN THE MIRROR

An IMAGE OF CAROLYN, late 20s. More beautiful than pretty,  
she has the eyes of an angel.

INT. TINY DRESSING ROOM - SMALL THEATER - 10 YEARS AGO

Our Actor, having just done a performance of Richard III, is  
at his dressing table removing make-up, taking off his wig.

Knock at the door. He puts the wig back on, opens the door.

CAROLYN

Hi.

OUR ACTOR

Hi.

CAROLYN  
I've never done this before...Well,  
I've said hi before.

OUR ACTOR  
You do it well.

CAROLYN  
I meant, been a groupie. Can you be  
a groupie without a group?

He just looks at her. Suddenly she's full of emotion.

CAROLYN  
I mean, the character's such a freak  
but you gave him so much -

She's crying. She quickly turns away.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)  
I'm fairly certain groupie's are not  
supposed to cry.

He undoes his shirt, pulls a roll of toilet paper - Richard's  
hump - out of his back and offers it to her.

She takes it. Smiles. We hear WEDDING MUSIC.

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT

Our Actor stares at the WEDDING PHOTO of he and Carolyn as  
he resumes buttoning his tuxedo shirt. He notices a BABY  
RATTLE hanging from the mirror.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - 7 YEARS AGO

He sits up in bed, reading. (Note: He ALWAYS wears a hair-  
piece with her.) Carolyn coozies up next to him, shakes the  
baby-rattle to get his attention. He keeps reading.

She takes his book, tosses it across the room, then climbs  
on top of him, shaking the baby-rattle seductively.

CAROLYN  
Took this off one of my kids today.  
A dangerous weapon in the hands of a  
first-grader.

She slides the rattle down along his chest, down further.

ACTOR  
Or a first-grade teacher.

They kiss - deeply, passionately. We hear an ORCHESTRA.

INT. HOLLYWOOD SOUNDSTAGE - BLACK N'WHITE - CONTINUOUS

Our Actor is FRED ASTAIRE, in tux n'tails; Carolyn is GINGER ROGERS, in an evening gown. Our Actor takes Carolyn in his arms and they dance - so in love.

BACK IN THE BEDROOM - 2 YEARS AGO

They're in bed. Very loving, very close.

CAROLYN  
Tick...Tick...Tick.

He looks scared. Very scared.

CAROLYN (CONT'D)  
I've never been so ready in my life.

He manages a smile. But as we CLOSE IN on that smile -

INT. TELEVISION STAGE - APARTMENT SET - CONTINUOUS

We hear SCREAMING TRIPLETS. In the TV version of their apartment Carolyn is June Cleaver, Our Actor is Mr. Hollywood - chest hair, medallions. She's doing 4 things at the stove, he's trying to feed babies their bottles so they'll SHUT UP.

It's the Sit-Com from Hell.

BACK IN BEDROOM - 2 YEARS AGO

Our Actor's smile fades. He wants so badly to give Carolyn what she wants, but he can't, HE WON'T - and she knows it.

ON THE SIT-COM FROM HELL SET

A SULTRY LIGHT comes up downstage right on the LEAD SINGER of the "R&B Trio". She's on a stool, very bluesy:

LEAD SINGER  
(singing)  
"Do you measure up...

A SULTRY LIGHT downstage left on her

BACKUP SINGERS  
(harmonizing)  
"Do-ya, do-ya, do-ya..."

The Sit-Com from Hell set has become very quiet, very real. Our Actor sits at the small kitchen table. Carolyn puts on her coat, takes her suitcase, and leaves.

INT. OUR ACTOR'S BEDROOM - THE PRESENT

He stares at the wedding ring, that same shattered look on his face as he remembers the day his wife left him.

LEAD SINGER (O.S.)  
 (on TV, singing)  
 "True, you're a treasure but..."

He opens the dresser drawer, takes out those cufflinks he polished before, then his face goes slack. He pulls from the back of the drawer a PAIR OF PANTIES Carolyn left behind.

BACKUP SINGERS (O.S.)  
 (on TV, harmonizing)  
 "Do-ya, do-ya, do-ya..."

At the end of the dresser is a box filled with other things she left. He drops in the panties, checks out the assortment of fruit magnets, takes out a photo of her with the cat. He puts it on the dresser, then crosses back to the mirror.

We HOLD on the photo of Carolyn, then PAN to the night table where that contract is. Actually, it's DIVORCE PAPERS, filed by Carolyn, still yet to be signed.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (O.S.)  
 "'Are you watching, Sweetheart?"

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - NYC PENTHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Night-time Manhattan skyline. Carolyn's in bed, watching TV.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.)  
 Of course she's watching. The martians  
 are watching.

In walks a GORGEOUS MAN, 40s, carrying supper on a tray.

OUR ACTOR(O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "Is Philip there?"

The gorgeous man leans over, kisses her.

OUR ACTOR(O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "Is he the Sensitive-New Age Man of  
 Your Dreams?"

Carolyn sits up. She's PREGNANT.

BACK TO OUR ACTOR'S BEDROOM

The CAT, back on his tree, stares hard at him.

OUR ACTOR

What are you looking at?

(puts on cufflink)

The 21st Century Woman: takes the  
cuisinart, leaves the cat.

There's a bouquet of flowers, a bottle of Budweiser, a half-  
eaten Big Mac on the dresser. He swigs the beer.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Can't be bitter. They loathe bitter.

Negative you can be, sarcastic -

it's TV. But bitter's theater. It's  
got that Smell.

He puts on his tuxedo pants, glances back at the picture of  
his father in front of his truck. Suddenly his father -

ON THE TV

Barks at him from his barca-lounger:

FATHER

There's more truth on a stool at a  
truck stop than in all the hot brains  
of Hollywood!

BACK TO OUR ACTOR

He zips up his pants.

OUR ACTOR

"Ladies and gentlemen, let's have  
some perspective here. This award  
doesn't feed anyone, shelter anyone.  
This award doesn't do anything -  
except maybe get me laid tonight.  
Which I'll take, thank you very -

INT. PRISON ACTING CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Our Actor works with the other YOUNG PRISONERS.

BOY PRISONER 1

That Macbeth is one pissed-off salt-  
shaker!

The GANGSTA who was doing the monologue is off by himself.

OUR ACTOR

What makes you think he's white.

BOY PRISONER 2

Lady Macbitch pull that shit on a  
brother - she's history!

BOY PRISONER 1

Ancient!

GIRL PRISONER 1

Don't you be hatin' Lady Macbeth.

GIRL PRISONER 2

She's the only one in the whole damn kingdom ever gets anything done!

Our Actor glances at the Gangsta in the corner, then reads in a normal voice from the play.

OUR ACTOR

"Out, out, brief candle/Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player,/That struts and frets his hour upon a stage/Then is heard no more...

(to the group)

Okay, what's the Salt-Shaker saying?

(no response)

Come on!

GIRL PRISONER 1

Life is short.

GIRL PRISONER 2

Life is an illusion.

GANGSTA

Life SUCKS.

INT. BEDROOM - THE PRESENT

He's putting on his cummerbund.

OUR ACTOR

"Ladies and gentlemen, look - I'm just some stupid actor who can barely get out of bed in the morning, but...

(inspired)

"We have got to find a way to love one another!"

He's trying awkwardly to fasten it from behind.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

"But as we are - without illusions, without expectations. And the only way to do that is to figure out a way to love ourselves!"

The cummerbund is still not fastened. He looks in the mirror, sees he need only turn it to the front to fasten it easily.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 (checks his watch)  
 DAMMIT!

Urgently he starts looking for his shoes.

INT. CORRECTIONAL FACILITY - ACTING CLASS - CONTINUOUS

The Macbeth discussion continues.

GIRL PRISONER 1  
 He's saying life's like an actor.

GIRL PRISONER 2  
 Everybody plays their part.

BOY PRISONER 1  
 Better squeeze-the-weeze outta ur  
 part -

BOY PRISONER 2  
 Show's over real soon.

Our Actor approaches the Gangsta. His voice is quiet:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)  
 When your brother was killed and you  
 had all those people up in your face  
 trying to give you reasons why it  
 happened, trying to make sense of it -  
 remember what that felt like?

He's got his attention.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)  
 So what if it doesn't make any sense -  
 never has, never will?

GANGSTA  
 So?

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)  
 Can you still show up? Do you have  
 the stones to play your part anyway?

He tosses him the play. The Gangsta catches it.

INT. BEDROOM PRESENT

Our Actor's on his hands and knees, searching frantically  
 under the bed for those shoes he was polishing earlier.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

"To all the people who helped me through my monkey years, who believed in me long after I stopped believing in myself...

(finds one)

"Thank you. Bless you. This award is really just a symbol of your Faith."

(considers it)

Good.

(laces the shoe)

Then sit down and shut up.

He scans the room for the other shoe. To the cat:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Where is it?

Cat's not telling. Our Actor starts searching the room. He checks the closet - it's not there.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I'm gonna email you back to her.

The Cat has heard this threat before.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

You don't think so?!

He quickly crosses - runs - into the bathroom. We hear loud rummaging - something SHATTERS. Then he comes out carrying the shoe. To the cat, who's still staring at him:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Don't even think it!

He puts on the shoe and, still angry, starts tying it:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

"To all the people who've been the

op -

(shoelace snaps)

"posite...of supportive.

INT. PRISON ACTING CLASS -- CONTINUOUS

The Gangsta reads slowly, quietly:

GANGSTA

"Out, out brief candle...

BACK IN THE BEDROOM

Our Actor gets another shoelace, sits on the bed, begins taking out the old lace and putting in the new one.

OUR ACTOR  
 "Who promise to call and don't.

ACTING CLASS

GANGSTA  
 "Life is but a walking shadow...

BEDROOM

OUR ACTOR  
 "Who make appointments and don't  
 show.

ACTING CLASS

GANGSTA  
 "A poor player,/That struts and frets  
 his hour upon the stage...

BEDROOM

OUR ACTOR  
 "Who've made it and forgotten what  
 it was like before they did.

ACTING CLASS

GANGSTA  
 "Then is heard no more...

BEDROOM

He ties the shoe.

OUR ACTOR  
 "Who keep you waiting.

AN AUDITION WAITING ROOM

Our Actor waits - with a room full of other actors.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "And waiting.

SAME WAITING ROOM

There are fewer actors.

OUR ACTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 "And waiting.

SAME WAITING ROOM

Our Actor is alone.

BEDROOM

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Who make you feel like a loser cause  
you have a dream.

(excited)

That's it! "I'd like to dedicate  
this award tonight to anyone out  
there with a dream. Hold tight,  
man, hold very tight to it - there's  
a lot of people gonna do their best  
to rip it out of you.

He looks at the 'HAPPY TIMES' WEDDING PHOTO of himself with  
Carolyn and his father. His face darkens.

ACTING CLASS

GANGSTA

"It is a tale...

BEDROOM

OUR ACTOR

"It's the people you love you gotta  
watch out for.

ACTING CLASS

GANGSTA

"Told by an idiot...

BEDROOM

OUR ACTOR

"The people who love you...

ACTING CLASS

GANGSTA

"Full of sound and fury...

BEDROOM

He looks hard in the mirror.

OUR ACTOR

"And their hatchet man.

ACTING CLASS

GANGSTA

"Signifying...

Our Actor watches as the Gangsta breaks down.

GANGSTA (CONT'D)

"Signifying..."

He can't say the last word. Shaking with terror and grief, about to EXPLODE - he looks up at Our Actor.

BEDROOM

Who is staring in the mirror.

OUR ACTOR

Gotta get back, gotta find a balance.  
 "Gotta find a BALANCE, ladies and gentlemen. Not moderation, not compromise - lose those frightened words. You want friction - your Dream and your Life, man, out there and in here, what could be and what is - it's got to rub! Balance is the perpetual state of tug, the diction of friction, and man - if you ain't got dat Rub/You ain't got it, Bub!" COME BACK, LITTLE SHEBA!

ACTING CLASS

The Gangsta begins to cry. The Guard, the other prisoners - are stunned. Our Actor walks up to the Gangsta, wraps his arms around him. The Gangsta lets go in him, begins to sob.

BEDROOM

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

"Hold tight, hold very tight to your dream but be able to drop it, walk away, swear you'll never act or write or whatever again and MEAN IT. If you go back God loves you. If you don't go back God loves you. No one spends years and years practicing alone in the dark unless they have to. If you can walk away and be peaceful - don't be a shmuck. DO IT. If you can't, and only you know if you can't - close the door, turn out the lights, keep practicing."

Our Actor swigs the beer, looks back at himself in the mirror, then SLAMS the bottle down in frustration:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

DAMMIT!

He walks into the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM CONTINUOUS

He ties his tie in the sink-mirror. He is still upset, but his voice is quieter, more reflective:

ACTOR

"Ladies and gentlemen, I've spent years rehearsing this goddamn speech. I've always thought awards, my big acceptance speech would somehow mark the moment the world accepted me.

ACTING CLASS

The Gangsta sobs in his arms. Everyone in the room is blown away - Our Actor most of all.

BACK TO THE BATHROOM

He puts on the hair-piece, adjusts it very artfully, then stops. A sweet, sad light comes on brightly in his eyes:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

Look at me, Pop.

INT. BEDROOM MOMENTS LATER

He comes back in, puts on his tuxedo jacket. He seems more relaxed, more focused:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

What's important here? One: to have a place to live and enough to eat. Two: to love things exactly as they are. To be loved is gravy. Three: to be one of those people who make things better. It's pretty impossible to do - still, it's nice to try.

He takes a bite from the Big Mac and, as he chews it, considers what he just said.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

1 outta 3 ain't bad. Hell, if I was still playing ball I'd be a goddam star. The great Thurman Munson never hit 1 outta 3 his whole damn career.

He takes a carnation from the bouquet, sniffs it, holds it up to the mirror:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)

"Ladies and gentlemen, members of  
(MORE)

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)  
 the academy: I'd like to accept this  
 award tonight on behalf of the  
 Captain, and all those people out  
 there not hitting 1 outta 3. I am  
 very lucky to be doing so, and don't  
 you ever think I don't know it."

He looks at the photo of Carolyn, takes off his wedding ring,  
 reads the inscription. A tear rolls down his cheek.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 I love you, too.

He takes a pen from his jacket, signs the divorce papers.

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
 Have a great life.

He leaves the ring on the night table beside the bed.

INT. RED CARPET/HALLWAY - LATER

CLOSE ON POLISHED SHOES walking down a PLUSH RED CARPET.  
 There's a LINE OF PEOPLE on either side, FLASHES from cell-  
 phones are going off in every direction.

Suddenly the shoes SPRING OFF THE GROUND, do a graceful TWIRL,  
 and continue down the red carpet - as we hear

OUR ACTOR (O.S.)  
 "When there's a shine on your  
 shoes/There's a melody in your  
 heart..."

We TILT UP and see that OUR ACTOR, a carnation in his lapel,  
 IS NOT WEARING HIS HAIR-PIECE.

As he continues down the red carpet we CLOSE IN on his face:  
 he has never been more at peace, has never looked happier.

INT. OTHER END OF HALLWAY SAME

CLOSE ON a GORGEOUS YOUNG WOMAN (Lead Singer of R&B Trio),  
 dressed to kill. She is waiting, does not like to be kept  
 waiting, is doing a long slow burn. She checks her watch,  
 then looks up.

OUR ACTOR walks toward her, grinning like an idiot - and the  
 Woman's glower turns to shock: she's never seen him without  
 his hair-piece, has never even known he wore one, and can't  
 take her eyes off his shiny bald head.

OUR ACTOR  
 Sorry I'm late.

As he glides by she hands him something.

We FOLLOW him through an archway where a well-dressed group of people are standing.

INT. DINING ROOM - RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

He addresses the group with great authority:

OUR ACTOR  
Ladies and gentlemen...

He turns and smiles - there's a GLEAM in his eyes:

OUR ACTOR (CONT'D)  
Please follow me.

We PULL BACK to reveal a large, elegant dining room and, as OUR ACTOR - a stack of MENUS under his arm - leads the group to their table, one of the LADIES, 50s, whispers to him.

LADY  
You're an actor, aren't you?

OUR ACTOR  
Yes, Ma'am.

Our Actor lights the candle on the table, and holds the chair for the Lady as she sits.

LADY  
I saw you in something not too long ago. You were wonderful.

Our Actor smiles and bows graciously.

OUR ACTOR  
You're very kind.

We PAN TO the bar in the restaurant where several patrons are watching the Academy Awards on TV. As we CLOSE IN

ON THE TV

The excited PRESENTER tears open the envelope:

PRESENTER  
"And the winner is..."

CUT TO BLACK:

A MIX of "Almost Like Being In Love" and "When There's a Shine on Your Shoes" - by R&B Trio and the Rappers as we

ROLL CREDITS