

Lifetime Achievement...
and all the Shortcomings Thereafter

(A Ten Minute Play)

by

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CHARACTERS

CARSON NORTH: (60s) A jaded actor.

BILLY SANDERS: (20s) An actor. Black

ASHLEY OLIVE: (20s) an actress.

SCENE ONE

The green room of an old theatre. Classic movie posters line the walls. There are two sofa and a chaise by a minibar. Its glory still exists beyond the fading and dated wallpaper. Outside the room you can hear the hustle of people moving frantically.

CARSON lies across the chaise, drinking from a flask. A trophy beside his head. He flips over facing away from the door. BILLY enters, addresses the press.

BILLY

I'm sorry I can't answer any more questions. You all have a good night. Thank you.

He crosses to a sofa. He looks at the trophy, kisses it.

CARSON

First one?

BILLY

Yeah. Just won for Best Supporting Actor.

CARSON

First one always feels important.

Carson turns over, taking another long swig from his flask.

BILLY

Holy shit you're Carson North!

CARSON

The one and only.

BILLY

Yo! I'm a huge fan sir. I've seen all of your movies, like every single one! I even loved *Love Hunters*.

CARSON

No one loves, *Love Hunters*. I don't even love, *Love Hunters*.

BILLY

Well, I do. It's a good film, If you get passed the strange pacing and choppy editing. No offense. It's what inspired me to start acting when I was ten. Your role as Gideon Smith was awe inspiring.

CARSON

How old are you kid?

BILLY

Twenty-four.

CARSON

(sitting up)

Jesus. One day you're thirty on top of the world inspiring kids when they're ten...or whatever. The next it's fourteen years later and you have to do some shitty indie to grasp even the tinniest bit of relevancy.

BILLY

Wow sir...

(noticing the award)

Congrats on the award.

CARSON

Kid that shit means nothing. I mean for you it must be a sign that things are looking up, but for me it's a message of just how far I've fallen.

BILLY

A message?

CARSON

I've been nominated for Tonys, Emmys and even an Oscar, won a few and now here I am at a worthless film festival in Topeka-fucking-Kansas receiving a lifetime achievement award.

BILLY

I would kill for a lifetime achievement award, that's an ultimate honor.

CARSON

That's where your inexperience shows kid.

BILLY

My names, Billy Sanders.

CARSON

Well Billy Sanders, if you're going to strive for a lifetime achievement award, make sure it's at least televised. When it's not televised it just means you are the biggest name in the room. Then you realize talent doesn't equal fame and fame doesn't equal lifetime achievement. I saw some actors whose performances blew mine away, they just never got the chance to have my career. Hence why I have the award and they don't.

BILLY

You're just underselling yourself.

CARSON

Tell me your story kid.

BILLY

Again the name is Billy. I suppose just want to create good art.

CARSON

Elaborate.

BILLY

I'm picky about what I audition for. They should mean something to me if I'm going to do it.

CARSON

Your agent doesn't just put you up for everything?

BILLY

I don't have an agent. But this award could change all that.

CARSON

I wouldn't get your hopes up. Remember we're in Kansas. None of the important players are here. Try Sundance or TIFF if that's what you're after.

BILLY

You think I'm good enough for one of those?

CARSON

I won't lie to you I don't know. I didn't watch your film.

Billy sinks into his seat.

CARSON

Let me guess, you got a BFA in Musical Theatre from one of those top conservatories but then you realized that with your.. *point of view*... It would be easier for you to break into film and television.

BILLY

Not quite. No BFA. I actually didn't go to school I just kinda jumped into it, and took classes. Also, never particularly liked musicals. They never made sense to me.

CARSON

They're good for the soul when they are good.

BILLY

I just decided that I can do it all. Film, TV & theatre, why pigeonhole myself if someone's going to try and do to me anyways so might as well rebuke that thinking now.

CARSON

Interesting.

BILLY

I'm not gonna sell out.

CARSON

Didn't you already?

BILLY

Huh?

CARSON

Taking that award, wouldn't that be considered selling out.

BILLY

No. It's just--

CARSON

Smash it.

BILLY

What?

CARSON

Smash the award. On the ground. DESTROY IT!

BILLY

I'm not going to do that...

Carson takes his trophy and smashes it on the ground. Shattering it into pieces.

BILLY

What the hell?

CARSON

That felt amazing.

BILLY

You're--

CARSON

Free.

BILLY

Deranged!

CARSON

And you're a sell out.

BILLY

I'm no sell out.

CARSON

Whatever you tell yourself Billy. Is that your SAG name, Billy Sanders?

BILLY

Why wouldn't it be?

CARSON

So you think my name is Carson? My real name is Carmen Vingerhuot. Won't find that on the Wikipedia page. They did everything in their power to bury it. Back in the day, they told me I'd never work with a name like Vingerhuot guess it's too much to say or too jewish or whatever. So they created Carson North. And I went with it because success above all else right?

BILLY

That's terrible.

CARSON

Well you know once the cash rolls in you get over it...

BILLY

Sure...

ASHLEY, burst into the room. She's just as excited as Billy was, holding a similar if not slightly bigger trophy.

ASHLEY

What's going on in here?

(seeing the smashed trophy)

Whats that about?

CARSON

Loosening the chains of society. Your name dear?

ASHLEY

Ashley Olive.

CARSON

(to Billy)

See thats not her real name. It's a nom de guerre.

ASHLEY

It is kinda my name. Ashley is my first name. Olive is my middle. Just thought it was cute. You don't forget it. Wait you're Billy Sanders, congrats on the win tonight.

BILLY

Thanks. This is Carmen Vingerhuot.

That catches Carson by surprise.

ASHLEY

Really cause I could've sworn that was Carson North.

CARSON

You both are correct.

BILLY

He's been lecturing me about the industry all night.

ASHLEY

I'm going to ask about the mess one more time?

BILLY

Carmen smashed it because he thinks a lifetime achievement award isn't important unless its from a televised event.

CARSON

That's what you got from that?

Billy shrugs.

ASHLEY

Oh you're dropping, knowledge? Teach me something good.

CARSON

What did you win your award for?

ASHLEY

Lead actress.

CARSON

I don't care about category, what did your part entail. You weren't playing a mother were you?

ASHLEY

I did not.

CARSON

Good you have a good ten years before they start casting you in those roles.

ASHLEY

I'm twenty-five.

CARSON

I stand by what I said. Here is the thing about good ole Tinseltown. It doesn't see you for who you are inside, but by your exterior. She probably played a character with some kind trauma. If an actress is going to win an award the character has to be all kinds of fucked up. Never see a happy female character be an awards contender. There's some messed up shit at the character's root. Am I wrong?

ASHLEY

No... I...

CARSON

And Billy you will probably only break out after playing a slave, or some dead black public figure with a tragic backstory; most likely a civil rights leader. Those will be your lifetime achievements.

ASHLEY

That's terrible. They defiantly put me in the wrong green room. I need to leave.

Ashely goes for the exit, but stops.

CARSON

It's not a reflection of you or your talents. You are just a cog in the massive very old and barely functioning wheel.

BILLY

You are sad.

CARSON

What?

BILLY

I get that you've obviously gone through some things. But you got to have the type of career everyone wants. You've played pirates, spies, dotting husbands and a plethora of others. And you're jaded? You told us that if we want to feel accomplished all we're gonna be able to do is play into sad and depressing stereotypes. All you've done all night Carmen is make me feel bad for wanting to be an artist and tell me things I already knew.

CARSON

Then why not fight it?

BILLY

How do you know I'm not? You just assumed this award was me selling out when actually the part I played was that of a doctor. Not a thug and definitely was not a slave. One who did really good by his community. You are right about a lot of things said here tonight. But me being a sell out ain't one of them.

ASHLEY

Good for you Billy!

BILLY

Everything, I do, every part I'm going to play is for that kid like me who goes to the movies to dream, to see what is possible. That's why I do what I do because everything is bigger than me. When you're Black. That is life. You are in a position in life where you can take back what was lost. So instead of complaining to two early career twenty-somethings, take it back and do something about it.

CARSON

Way to find your voice kid.

Carson takes another swig.

BILLY

It's Billy Sanders. Remember it.

CARSON

Well Billy Sanders, if you like your name, keep it. Don't let anyone talk you out of it. Cause one day they're going to engrave it into a lifetime achievement award and you'll want the person you see yourself as reflected on it.

BILLY

Thanks Carmen.

CARSON

Thank you. I'll see you both at the afterparty.

ASHLEY

Bye Carmen.

Carson exits.

ASHLEY

He knows the after party is at an Olive Garden, in a mall, right?

BILLY

I don't think he knows what an Olive Garden is.

Ashely and Billy leave the stage taking their awards with them.

END OF PLAY