

STEVE AND OLIVIA

by

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HEAR an old Jazz Standard, like Sinatra's "Autumn in New York".

CREDITS begin to roll.

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY GRAVEYARD, LATE SUMMER DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

As a casket is lowered into the ground, it reveals STEVE DIAMOND, 45, trim and well-groomed, wearing a black armband and a black suit. He is watching the casket, but looks up when approached by another man, who shakes STEVE'S hand.

The man gives STEVE an old, faded manila folder and motions STEVE to open it. STEVE looks through the folder with rising incredulity and then asks a question, to which the other man nods and smiles grimly. STEVE looks back at the casket angrily, turns on his heel and walks away from the funeral.

CUT TO:

INT. SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM ENGLAND - EVENING

We are in the last throes of a raucous concert. The orchestra is in furious motion - bows racing back and forth, cheeks are red, the timpani drums are vibrating.

In the front, conducting with full vigor and almost bursting out of his tuxedo, is SIR SIMON LOCKWOOD, the conductor of the BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY. He is 50 and has the shiniest shoes in the orchestra.

SIMON is a madman, whirling and thrusting, totally lost in the music.

As the piece ends in triumphant crescendo, SIMON turns and bows deeply to the wildly applauding crowd who are getting to their feet in ovation.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAMMAR SCHOOL MUSIC ROOM - DAY

Sitting at the piano, playing rapidly and obviously flawlessly, is JUDITH LOCKWOOD, 17, very English-rose, with dark hair and eyes. She is concentrating fiercely. We see that the piece is a complex Chopin piano concerto.

Into the room bursts KELLY JAMES, 17, a black British girl. She runs over to JUDITH waving an envelope from JUILLIARD COLLEGE in New York and hands it to JUDITH.

JUDITH opens the letter and scans it laconically, then hands it to KELLY, who reads it and screams happily and hugs JUDITH, who is embarrassed. KELLY grabs the letter and runs back into the hallway, shouting, while JUDITH shakes her head.

JUDITH closes the Chopin and looks around. Seeing no one else, she takes out the music for SUPERSTITIION and begins playing it.

CUT TO:

INT. SYMPHONY HALL, BIRMINGHAM ENGLAND - EVENING

SIMON stands at the rostrum, taking bows. He is handed a bouquet of flowers. He turns to the oboe section and indicates for the first oboe player, his wife, OLIVIA LOCKWOOD, 45, to join him. One of the trumpet players, DARREN, 40, stares at OLIVIA with undisguised longing as she walks up. DARREN catches himself and shakes his head.

OLIVIA joins SIMON. They hug briefly and formally. SIMON presents her to the crowd, and then turns back to the oboe section and beckons for the second oboe player to join them as well. OLIVIA is stunned. DARREN sets his jaw and frowns in anger.

The second oboe player is NANETTE, 25, slim and stylish. She arrives and SIMON turns to her, kisses her on the lips and hands her the flowers.

OLIVIA is horrified with embarrassment and smiles glassily out into the crowd.

CUT TO:

EXT. STEVE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

A black limousine pulls up and a tired looking STEVE emerges and walks past the doorman into an extremely upscale apartment building. He is still carrying the manila folder.

Pan up the building to the penthouse.

It is a huge apartment with floor-to-ceiling glass. There are lights flashing as if a party is going on.

End Credits.

End Music jarringly mid-song.

CUT TO:

INT. A VERY SMALL, WHITEWASHED BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the only clear space in the bedroom, there is a single, very expensive leather wing chair. Draped haphazardly over this is a very well cut black suit jacket. There is a program from a funeral on the chair, for "Leonard Diamond 1943-2017".

There is a double bed with a very expensive iron frame. The sheets are lavender and luxurious. There is a single pillow on one side of the bed.

STEVE lies on the bed, staring at the ceiling. The manila folder lies open next to him, full of yellowed, handwritten pages. The other half of the bed is undisturbed apart from an iPad, open to a page of THE DAILY NEWS with a headline - "DIAMOND IN THE ROUGH" and a picture of STEVE, unshaven and bleary eyed, eating a supermarket coffee cake directly from the box.

Gradually, sound enters the scene. It is a low, insistent beat. Dance music.

Happy dance music.

As it penetrates STEVE's brain, he grimaces and looks at the clock on the iPad. It reads 02:36.

The music increases in volume.

Then laughter begins. From about 10 people, men and women. Then from 20 people.

There is a loud crash of breaking glass. The music stops. The laughter stops, momentarily, and then redoubles in intensity.

STEVE sits up abruptly, with a murderous look on his face. He crosses to the door and flings it open.

CUT TO:

INT. STEVE'S PENTHOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

The scene is chaotic. The penthouse is enormous, and sumptuously furnished. The main window looks out over the Manhattan skyline. There is expensive furniture, original art on the walls, and on a shelf near the fireplace stand

13 Tony Awards. There is a space for a 14th, which has obviously been removed.

The group of party-goers are standing around a smashed glass and wrought-iron table, through which has been dropped the missing Tony.

As STEVE bursts into the room, (from what was obviously once a walk-in closet) and surveys the scene, he is almost wildly enraged. All of the party-goers look at the floor in embarrassment, except for one man, a slim 40 year-old with an impeccably tailored green vest and matching glasses. This is JONATHAN. He looks at STEVE with total disdain.

JONATHAN

Relax, Steven. It's only the one  
for Raindancer...

STEVE closes his eyes, takes a breath, and then opens them again. His face is now totally composed.

STEVE

(loudly)

Thank you, everyone, for  
celebrating the death of my father  
WITHOUT ME, in MY OWN LIVING ROOM,  
but now I'd like EVERYONE to  
leave.

No-one moves.

STEVE (CONT'D)

I said leave. All of you.

(beat)

Now.

(almost losing his  
temper again)

FUCK OFF! GO!

Everyone begins shuffling for the door. JONATHAN mutters apologies to the guests as they file out.

When they are gone, JONATHAN turns to STEVE and snarls at him.

JONATHAN

HOW DARE YOU!

STEVE is staggered.

STEVE

(sputtering)

How dare I?!

JONATHAN

YES! This is MY home! I can invite over whomever I please, whenever I please, regardless of YOUR circumstances.

STEVE

(calmly)

Your home? You are the one desperate to sell it--

JONATHAN

I'm only thinking of you. You need the money. To give me half.

STEVE

Over my dead body!

JONATHAN

Honestly, Steve...Haven't you been around enough of those for one day?

STEVE

(disbelieving)

I always knew you could be cruel, Jonathan, but I never pegged you as a total asshole.

JONATHAN

Then pay up. Settle the divorce - give me my money and never bother me again. I've paid my dues here.

STEVE

(slipping to angry)

Are you fucking kidding me?! Paid your DUES? Twenty years you've been attached to me like a leech!

JONATHAN

(wearily)

Don't romanticize it, Steve. We both know without me you're nothing - you'd still be writing jingles in Yonkers for NPR!

STEVE

(combative)

That so? What about you? Every lyric a cliché, every feeling fake and obvious. Just like our relationship. If anything you have CLIPPED THE WINGS OF MY GENIUS!

JONATHAN

Oh honey, that's one dead bird!  
You haven't crafted a tune worth  
anything in a decade. All this --

JONATHAN sweeps his hand, taking in the awards --

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

--is nothing more than you riding  
a reputation based on MY work!  
Look how your great comeback show  
fared? What did The Times say?  
*Lost, forlorn, hopeless and  
pathetic.*

STEVE

(devastated; shrinking  
back)

They did NOT say pathetic! They  
said "misguided!"

JONATHAN

(vindictively  
triumphant)

Isn't it funny though...MY big  
idea - Bleached Roots - and when  
you cut me out right before  
opening, it bursts into flames and  
crashes. The only time it's ever  
happened to the Great Steve  
Diamond, isn't it?

STEVE is halfway between apoplectic and terrified.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

In fact, it was so pathetic you  
might even think someone had  
planned it that way...maybe to  
prove who the real talent was for  
all...those...years...

STEVE, shaken, takes a step back.

STEVE

(realisation dawning)

You...

JONATHAN gets right in STEVE's face.

JONATHAN

(hard whisper)

Maybe pathetic is all that I see.

JONATHAN takes a step back.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
 Soon, you'll be all alone and  
 miserable. And I'll be rich and  
 happy. Works out well. For me at  
 least.

STEVE stares hard and with cold fury recomposes himself  
 again.

STEVE  
 So marrying and divorcing me in 48  
 hours was...what? All just to get  
 on the deed here to sell and run?

JONATHAN smiles cruelly.

STEVE (CONT'D)  
 You bastard. You aren't getting  
 another damn penny.

JONATHAN  
 Then I will continue to contest  
 the settlement. And I will  
 Do...Whomever... I... Want...  
 (beat)  
 Alejandro?! Darling?!

STEVE  
 (appalled)  
 He's HERE?

A young, tan, beautiful Hispanic man puts his head around  
 the door before gliding into the room. He is ripped.

He walks over and drapes himself on JONATHAN.

ALEJANDRO  
 Hey...

JONATHAN  
 (smugly)  
 Get your bag.

ALEJANDRO grabs an UNBELIEVABLY ugly knock-off Gucci  
 manbag.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
 We're going. SOME people are just  
 so miserable they have to spread  
 it around. They can't stand to see  
 ANYONE happy.

STEVE's shoulders sag.

JONATHAN picks his keys up and he and ALEJANDRO walk out the front door. We hear giggling, and then a peal of raucous laughter.

STEVE stares at the door. He turns and walks back to his room and shuts the door behind him.

No one has cleaned up the table. The Tony still sits amidst the broken glass on the floor.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYBILL BUILDING, FASHION AVENUE, NEW YORK - ESTABLISHING, DARK AND DRIZZLY MORNING

A large brownstone building with a Starbucks and a Wells-Fargo on its ground floor. It is just after 9 am. The town is bustling.

CUT TO:

INT. PLAYBILL OFFICE RECEPTION - MORNING

We see a POV shot of a RECEPTIONIST leading us down the corridor of the PLAYBILL office. There are framed covers and signed programs adorning the walls, and we turn a corner to the office of ANDY REZNICK. The RECEPTIONIST smiles and turns to go. REZNICK glances up and smiles.

REZNICK

Steve! Great to see you - thanks for coming in. You sounded a bit tired on the--

REZNICK's face changes to a look of concern.

REZNICK (CONT'D)

(beat)

Whoa...Steve, are you all right?

REVERSE SHOT:

STEVE looks like shit. He is wearing the same suit, which is wrinkled. His tie is still loose. His eyes are red and his nose is raw from blowing. He is carrying the manila folder.

STEVE

Hi Andy...

STEVE gratefully drops into a large leather sofa away from the desk.

LATER:

STEVE has a cup of coffee and a box of tissues next to him.

REZNICK sits on his desk. He is reading through the manila folder.

REZNICK

Really? A twin sister? In England?

STEVE

Apparently so. I mean, she might be dead or have moved. I was born in England, in Birmingham, but my folks moved here when I was two.

REZNICK

Your mom?

STEVE

Died when I was two. So at my father's funeral yesterday, his attorney gives me a bunch of letters the adoption agency sent like 15 years ago saying my sister wanted to get in touch. And my dad just...never told me. We weren't a talkative bunch...

REZNICK

(empathetic)

Shit, Steve...

REZNICK checks his watch. He hands the folder back to STEVE, who places it on the floor next to his chair.

REZNICK (CONT'D)

Dammit! Look, you know you are welcome here, we always want to talk to you...And I'm happy to publish the news about your sister if you're sure you want all the hassle...But I have to ask...

The unspoken question hangs in the air.

STEVE

...but you have to ask about "Bleached Roots." For the record.

REZNICK

It's been almost 8 weeks, and you've still not said anything publicly...

STEVE sighs and nods his head. REZNICK puts his phone down on the desk to record the conversation. He clicks it on and motions for STEVE to begin.

STEVE

Look, I could give you a sob story. My dad was sick. My relationship was falling apart. I was isolated and couldn't see the danger signs.

REZNICK

So in the midst of all that, you decided that a racially reversed production of Roots would be your comeback vehicle? Is that about it?

STEVE

It was meant to be like Hamilton, you know? This great social commentary on injustice...Trump's America...

STEVE looks out the window for a moment. He turns back.

STEVE (CONT'D)

Oh the hell with it. It was awful. From start to finish. Not the performers - NOT the performers. But everything was wrong. The songs, the script. The lyrics. The whole fucking concept.

REZNICK

You've won 14 Tony Awards, over 4 different shows. Unmatched success over 15 years. From Raindancer to Life in Yonkers all the way to Mr Starshine. Then five years away. And now Bleached Roots, your big comeback, which Lin Manuel Miranda called a "theatrical travesty." Where do you go from here? A \$31 million production gone in a day. Will you be able to carry on?

STEVE

I don't know. It will be... difficult. I think I need some time away.