

ACTING COACH
(First 10 Pages)

by

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FADE IN:

THE ACADEMY AWARDS

Hollywood royalty in attendance, primed and primed.

On stage, A BIG TIME ACTRESS poses.

BIG TIME ACTRESS

And the award for best actress
goes to... Mona Curtains-Gosling
for "Fall From Grace!"

Everyone applauds as MONA (16, looking 23) beams at her
luck. Truly incredible. She takes the stage.

MONA

There are so many people to thank
for this... actually, that's not
true. There's really one person
to thank. For being my hero.
He's been a big part of my life,
not just an English teacher but as
an inspiration. He always pushed
us, even though we lived in a tiny
town and had an even tinier drama
club. It was for the good of us
kids, and he gave us a chance at
our dreams. And he's my dad:
Arthur Curtains.

(Wells up)

I can't accept this because it's
yours, Daddy. Take it.

Camera 2 scans the audience and finds ARTHUR CURTAINS, a
proud man in his 40's looking dapper in a tux.

False modesty, he waves off the over-powering applause.

He stands, bows, but that just won't satisfy this crowd.

A woman resembling Meryl Streep hands Arthur one of her
Oscars. Her lips say, "I owe it all to you."

MONA

They want a speech, Mr. Curtains.

Arthur shakes his head "No" for one second heading before
the stage, all smiles.

A female model wearing a COLONIAL WIG escorts Arthur.

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ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This is Arthur's fourth Oscar tonight, despite not being officially nominated in any categories. In fact, I would not have become the voice over person if it weren't for his help.

The crowd chants "ARTHUR! ARTHUR! ARTHUR!"

Arthur raises a hand, pleading for sanity. He steps to the microphone.

The audience's hearts stick in their throats.

ARTHUR

You're welcome.

Pandemonium. Like the Beatles just reunited.

ARTHUR

I'm still hungry, Mr. Jefferson.

The model -- now Thomas Jefferson in a dress -- returns. Her mouth opens, emits POUNDING NOISES. BAM-BAM-BAM!!

The audience now claps the sound of pounding. BAM!
BAM!! BAM!!!

Arthur holds his ears, clenching his teeth. BAM!! BAM!!

INT. GALTONA HIGH SCHOOL - ENGLISH ROOM - REALITY - NIGHT

BAM! The glitz and glamour of Arthur's dream have been replaced by tattered grammar posters and old text books.

Arthur rises from his desk, an essay stuck to his cheek.

He looks out the window: the entirety of tiny GALTONA, ILLINOIS before him -- one stop light, an FFA field of dead corn, one gas station. Population: tiny.

BAM! BAM! BAM! - someone's banging on hall lockers.

Arthur peeks out his door. A student wearing FACE PAINT runs around like a maniac.

Arthur steels himself. They are only basketball fans.

ARTHUR

Now is the winter sports season of my discontent.

INT. GALTONA HIGH - HALLWAY

A single-hallway school. At the other end lies the gym and it's already rocking. The place Arthur doesn't want to go.

Incredibly, that's where he's headed.

With every step, his surroundings get more hostile. The closer he gets to Hell, the more misspelled, hand-made posters Arthur endures.

The Home Ec door bursts open and PRINCIPAL LEDGER steps out, catching up with Arthur.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

First game. Whole town's pouring in. Amazing, right?

ARTHUR

It is, indeed, incredible.

They reach the gym, and the herd of fans. Arthur continues, pulling to the side of the gym. To a door labeled "JANITOR'S CLOSET."

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

I bet there's not a single occupied house in Galtona. 'Course we're a tiny town, but still, they're all here, and they all brought their wallets.

Arthur struggles with his key. The door won't budge.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

Coach Orwig thinks we'll do well. If Rory stays hot. Which he will. We might end this year in the black. Maybe. What would we do without basketball?

Ledger strides into the gym, excited.

ARTHUR

One can only dream.

INT. GALTONA HIGH - BASEMENT - JANITOR'S CLOSET

Just beneath the gym. From above, a huge CHEER rattles a steel shelf holding vomit remover and industrial soap.

Four DRAMA LEAGUE (TIM, INIS, EMMA and Mona, looking much less Hollywood) sit on buckets as Arthur enters.

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ARTHUR

Free lesson today, fellow Drama Leaguers: making an entrance.

MONA

Fell asleep, Dad?

ARTHUR

Let's get to work.

MOMENTS LATER, REHEARSAL BEGINS

Arthur swaps the scripts of Tim, Emma and Inis.

INIS

But it's a guy's part.

ARTHUR

The role suits you. It needs to be more masculine than Tim is capable of giving.

TIM

Amen.

ARTHUR

It's a four-person version of "War & Peace," Inis. Be flexible. Go.

INIS

(Forceful)

"Do not blame Sonya."

TIM

"From the very beginning, she has been after you."

INIS

"If you say one ill word about her, I'll marry her and never see you again!"

They smile. It worked.

EMMA

Some Steppenwolf stuff, huh, Mr. Curtains?

ARTHUR

I don't like to brag about my time with Gary Sinise and John Malkovich. John Mahoney, Joan Allen.

Mona peeps through a trap door in the ceiling.

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CONTINUED: (2)

ARTHUR

Et tu, Madame Stage Manager?
Watching that during my rehearsal?

MONA

Not exactly.

ARTHUR

The theater, Mona, is everything.
Whether it's the grand stages as
I've played, or next to expired
soap, this is our world. Don't
tarnish it with something so
tawdry as sports.

MONA

I'm checking out Principal Ledger
getting cozy with Miss Suzy.

TIM/EMMA/INIS

Oooooooooo!

They all scurry to see Ledger in the doorway, a bit too
close to a busty woman.

ARTHUR

Oh. Well, that's tawdry for
different reasons. Back to one,
everybody. Everybody?

Arthur realizes the Drama Kids are all lost in the game.

INIS

Man, Rory Goodside can fly.

TIM

I like his shoes.

EMMA

Do you think he knows who I am?

Arthur spins them around.

ARTHUR

My colleagues, I know how you
feel. You watch this and think,
"Why can't that be me? Why can't
I have the glory, the adoration of
hundreds of screaming fanatics,
begging to treat me as a god if
only for a brief moment?"

Arthur's lost in his dreams.

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CONTINUED: (3)

INIS

When are try-outs?

ARTHUR

So we have to rehearse in the basement. They don't know what they're missing. We don't need their respect. We give it to ourselves.

The lights go out.

EMMA

That happened for everyone, right?

INT. GALTONA HIGH - GYM

The game's in full swing. The entire town encased cheers for RORY GOODSIDE, the star of the team.

Coach Orwig lays into his players.

COACH ORWIG

Pass the ball, Critter. To Rory.
If you're not Rory, I don't want
you near my ball.

Arthur sidles up near the scorer's table. An electrical box. He flips the switches.

Coach Orwig looks Arthur up and down, turns to a player.

COACH ORWIG

Your girlfriend, Brandon? Wait,
you're that English teacher?

ARTHUR

That's right!

COACH ORWIG

Get off my court.

Mona jogs up.

MONA

Hey, you don't own the gym.

COACH ORWIG

Oh, don't I? Ask my players.

The players on the bench cower, like abused wives.

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COACH ORWIG

(To the game)

You move like my grandma's
catheter, Griffin! Grab a board,
you waste!

ARTHUR

Let's go, Mona.

COACH ORWIG

You're probably scared of seeing
this many people. See, they WANT
to see my show.

ARTHUR

Ha, no. Drama League is a
respectable organization. We
don't need to kowtow to this
crowd...

(Announcing)

For our play "War & Peace,"
January 16 and 18!

Rory steals a pass and goes for another trademark dunk.

ARTHUR

For your sake, Mr. Orwig, I hope
you get the chance to see what
real drama looks like.

THUD-CRACK! All eyes hit the court, where Rory Goodside
lays, clutching his leg.

Coach Orwig, Arthur and Mona join the mass around Rory.
Principal Ledger bullies his way to the boy.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

Rory, what's wrong?

RORY

Oh, GOD! My LEG! MY LEG!!

KURTIS

I think it's his leg.

Principal Ledger reaches them.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

Somebody call an ambulance!

The entire crowd dials their phones. A collective BEEP
of a busy signal rings out.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

Some-ONE call an ambulance!

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COACH ORWIG

What do we do? What do we do?

ARTHUR

Medics are on their way.

COACH ORWIG

I mean about the season. Rory's our whole team. Without him, we might as well not even play.

Coach Orwig looks at his players - hates every one of them. He clutches his chest, falls into Arthur's arms.

COACH ORWIG

ACK! My heart! My heart!

KURTIS

I think it's his heart.

ARTHUR

Stand back! I've had training while I was at Steppenwolf with Gary Sinise, John Malkovich.

COACH ORWIG

AAH!!

ARTHUR

Breathe in through the nose and let it out in a deep, loud yawn.

COACH ORWIG

AAHH!

MONA

Dad, those are vocal exercises!

Ledger grabs Arthur by the sweater vest.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

Rory and Coach Orwig, lost in one game. This will cost a fortune!

Ledger clutches his chest.

ARTHUR

In through the nose, out in a yawn.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

I'll walk it off. Cheaper.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - NEXT DAY

Ledger fields questions from TEACHERS tap fingers too nervous to eat donuts.

MATH TEACHER

Cancel school, Ledger. Give us time to grieve.

HISTORY TEACHER

I'm a history teacher, and I can tell you, without hyperbole, that losing Rory Goodside is the greatest human tragedy of the last fifty years.

Enter Arthur, snagging a donut and carrying a form.

ARTHUR

Donuts? Did Coach Orwig pass on?

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

Coach Orwig was admitted in stable condition. He'll pull through.

ARTHUR

That's why these are day-old donuts.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

The pressing problem is finding a replacement coach, since Orwig's, um... personality left a vacancy in the assistant coaching department.

HISTORY TEACHER

So we're getting an interim coach? With what money?

MATH TEACHER

Screw the coach. What about Rory?

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

A broken leg won't fix over night.

MATH TEACHER

Have you even tried?

The teachers throw day-old donuts at Ledger.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

Ow! Those are stale and hard!

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ARTHUR

Be civilized! A man nearly died
and three other people suffered
reactionary heart attacks. All
because you put so much stake in
silly past-times.

MATH TEACHER

Arthur's right. We're teachers.
Education first.

HISTORY TEACHER

I hope we're not taking money from
the text book budget to pay for
this interim coach.

PRINCIPAL LEDGER

No, we're pulling funding for
drama league.

Arthur throws his donut at Ledger.

END OF TEASER.