NONE OF THIS
WOULD HAVE EVER HAPPENED
IF YOU HAD JUST
GIVEN AN OSCAR TO
JENNIFER LOPEZ

By Tony Meneses

Characters:
Hugo
Omar
Nigel
Elijah
Yosef
(all gay men of color in their 30’s/40’s)

Setting:
The last recorded Oscar party in gay history

Time:
February 9th, 2020
Wine.
Charcuterie.
Fresh fruit that no one’s eating.

1970?
YOSEF.

... Maggie Smith.
ELIJAH.

Good one.
NIGEL.

YOSEF.

Kathy Bates.
ELIJAH.

Also great.
HUGO.

1965!
YOSEF.

Julie Andrews.
ELIJAH.

(To Hugo.)
NIGEL.
Too easy.

19... 46?
YOSEF

Joan fucking Crawford.
ELIJAH.

NIGEL.  HUGO.
Oh my god!  Yes ma-ma!

That might actually be my favorite one. *Mildred Pierce*, can’t beat that.

HUGO.
What! Over Vivien Leigh, Ingrid Bergman, MERYL?!
NIGEL.
I stand by my decree.

ELIJAH.
Give me Elizabeth Taylor any day!

YOSEF.
2002?

In an instant it all goes quiet.

NIGEL.
... What did you just say?

YOSEF.
2002. Who won Best Actress in 2002?

HUGO.
Girl. Are you kidding?

NIGEL.
Oh god. She’s not.

YOSEF.
I’m not the biggest awards show gay, I’m sorry.

HUGO.
Who invited him again?

ELIJAH.
(Very serious.)
2002. That’s what you’re asking, Yosef? Two thousand, and two?

YOSEF.
Yes?

ELIJAH.
... Halle Berry. Halle Berry won the Oscar that year.

YOSEF.
Oh. Isn’t that a good thing? We love Halle Berry. Don’t we?

NIGEL.
What kind of a question is that!
HUGO.
You’re going to have to leave.

ELIJAH.
Halle Berry was—and remains to this day—the only woman of color to ever win the Academy Award for Best Actress.

HUGO.
How do you not know that??

YOSEF.
I mean now that you say it, it sounds familiar.

NIGEL.
(Repeats it back.)
It sounds familiar.

ELIJAH.
Other categories have acknowledged POC talent, rewarded it, but Best Actress, no she remains ever elusive. Sure there have been nominees—

HUGO.
Diahann Carroll, Angela Bassett, Salma Hayek.

ELIJAH
And some very close calls—

NIGEL.
Viola Davis!

ELIJAH.
But there has only ever been one winner.

HUGO.
(Does a ‘shout out’ gesture.)
Halle Berry.

YOSEF.
So why do you all care so much? I mean you know every single winner by heart, you watch every year, throw parties, what’s the point then?

NIGEL.
The point is Audrey Hepburn, Nicole Kidman, Grace Kelly, Katherine Hepburn, Bette Davis.
HUGO.
And of course—Cher. Babs. Liza.

ELIJAH.
Icons. All of them. We will not fault them for what is ultimately an institutional problem.

NIGEL.
An unfair standard of what is “worthy”.

YOSEF.
Is that why Omar isn’t coming tonight?

HUGO.
Omar’s not coming?

ELIJAH.
He was considering a peaceful protest this year.

NIGEL.
Oh... Because of J.Lo?

ELIJAH.
Her omission from the Best Supporting Actress category was too much for him to take.

HUGO.
It really is awful, what they did to her. They willfully went out of their way not to nominate her. Everyone predicted that she would be!

YOSEF.
Her Super Bowl halftime show was pretty amazing though.

ELIJAH.
Please. A moment of silence. For yet another injustice committed against a woman of color.

They all observe the silence.
Then, a knock at the door.

NIGEL.
Did you invite other gays?

HUGO.
I didn’t invite Brian don’t worry.
(With a tone.)

Brian.

Hugo goes to open the door and finds Omar, looking troubled.

Omar! You’re here!

Hey.

Oh, are you finally out of mourning?

I thought you were protesting?

Come in, come in!

Thanks.

What’s going on? Are you okay? You seem troubled.

I just didn’t want to be alone right now.

Jennifer will be fine, you’ll see, in the end it really is just an awards show, right?

They all turn to look at him.

Go make yourself useful and open another bottle of wine.

Come sit, read the red carpet looks with us, you’ll feel better soon.

No I don’t think so.
HUGO.
Let him be. It was pretty shitty what they did this year—Lupita Nyong’o, Awkwafina, Alfre Woodard, Zhao Shuzhen, the entire cast of Parasite. All ignored!

ELIJAH.
No, it’s something else bothering him right now. Tell us.

OMAR.
... You all don’t feel it?

YOSEF.
Feel what?

OMAR.
The Australia wildfires, the conflict with Iran, what’s happening in China!

NIGEL.
What’s happening in China?

ELIJAH.
Girl.

OMAR.
It all started with Jennifer!

YOSEF.
What are you talking about?

OMAR.
Everything has felt—wrong—since the Academy didn’t nominate her. You all haven’t noticed it? It’s one bad thing after another, and I fear it’s only going to get worse.

ELIJAH.
Baby. Have some Beaujolais. You need it.

OMAR.
I know you feel it too! Women’s intuition. It’s like, the world, has been off track, since the morning of January 13th.

HUGO.
(To Yosef.)
When the Oscar nominations were announced.

YOSEF.
Oh.
OMAR.
I think it broke everything. Her Oscar snub.

NIGEL.
He’s serious.

HUGO.
Or is giving an Oscar worthy performance himself.

ELIJAH.
Wait a minute, wait a minute! Are you honestly saying that the reason why things have been going like shit lately is all because Jennifer Lopez wasn’t nominated for an Academy Award?

OMAR.
Think about it. The Hong Kong protests, the Ukraine scandal, the Iowa democratic caucus, Harry and Meghan leaving the royal family!!

They look at one another.
    It makes sense.

ELIJAH.
Shit.

HUGO.
The world depends on women and women of color especially. It does make sense.

OMAR.
I’m afraid. What do we do? Where do we go from here?

Yosef refills everyone’s wine at this point.

NIGEL.
The show’s starting. Should we all not watch?

ELIJAH.
No. No, maybe it’s not too late, we have to do what we’ve always done—channel all our energy and make some people of color win tonight! Who knows, maybe we can get Parasite to win all the awards!

HUGO.
Screenplay, Director, and Best Picture? Isn’t that asking too much?

ELIJAH.
We can do it. I believe we can.
NIGEL.
And Renée Zellweger? Can we also?—

ELIJAH.
And Renée Zellweger sure.
(To all the gays.)
It’s up to us to turn all this around, to celebrate art and love and light and joy, like we always do, ladies. To save the world... It needs us, now more than ever.

I’m in.

HUGO.

NIGEL.

Me too.

YOSEF.

Okay.

OMAR.

... Let’s do this.

They settle in and start to watch the 92nd Academy Awards.

YOSEF
But like, what about all the bad stuff that happened before this year?

ELIJAH.
That all started when Whoopi Goldberg lost for Color Purple.

The scene fades on them, and then
Jennifer Lopez appears
Oscar in hand.

JENNIFER LOPEZ
Thank you, thank you all. I have so many amazing women to thank. Our director Lorene Scafaria; Jessica Pressler who wrote the article the film is based on; our producers Alex, Jessica, Megan Elaine, Pamela; our cast Constance, Julia, Keke, Lili, Mercedes, Madeline, Trace, Lizzo, Cardi B! Women made this film, in front of and behind the camera, and the fact that you all acknowledged a movie like that and said, it is worthy—said I am worthy, as worthy as all the women who came before this moment—that means a lot, that says a lot. More than you’ll ever know. Gracias mi gente!

Everything is right in the world.
End of play.