

STRIPLING ON THE OLYMPUS

by Tom Lassu

FADE IN:

EXT. HUDSON RIVER WALKWAY - AFTERNOON

A dilapidated steam ferry is anchored to the bollards with thick steel ropes. They creak as the waves budge the ship. We hear a happy crowd from the past, when the old steamer was still alive, in the form of a restaurant.

The WRITER (42), dressed in a white summer suit and sporting a straw hat, is teasing his WIFE (34). She holds her parasol as attractively as she possibly can, the knitted lace leaves beautiful.

WIFE

This is the perfect day for us!

WRITER

No, You are perfect! I was gonna get some flo...

WIFE

...you make me blush just like ten years ago, on this same day...

They continue strolling down the path, when the foghorn of a passing ship interrupts their conversation.

The STRIPLING (18), materializes out of the fog, like a fence pole coming to life. He is wearing cheap, worn clothing and carries a loosely bound, thick script under his arm. Slowly, he walks toward the couple.

When the Writer sees the Stripling, he stops and abruptly clutches his chest, paralyzed in place.

WIFE

Are you all right?

WRITER

Its nothing... I just...I feel like running away, but I can't.

WIFE

What, what, running away from what?

WRITER

Excuse me, I need to talk to this young man.

The Stripling stares over the water, clutching the script under his arm. The Writer catches up, turns towards him, doubting his own eyes.

STRIPLING
(tight lipped)
What's up?

The wife is looking on from the distance.

WRITER
(flustered)
I'm surprised to see you...

STRIPLING
Don't be ridiculous...

WIFE (O.S.)
Do you want me to call for help?

WRITER
Honey, just leave us alone for a
few minutes, will you?

The Wife shrugs her shoulder and paces impatiently.

WRITER
(to Stripling)
Aren't you curious about me and
my life?

The Stripling is looking away, no answer.

WRITER
I settled down, and live
comfortably.
(a beat)
Are you angry at me?

No answer. The Stripling bitterly tightens his lips.

WRITER
Oh, the silent treatment! Do you
think you invented that? Look at
you, you're miserable and skinny...
you poor thing, look at your
clothes! They are not even
suitable to donate, why not just
burn them?

The Stripling turns to the Writer, and takes a long, hard
look, right into his eyes. Then, he turns his back again.

STRIPLING
You are dressed to the nines.

WRITER

Yes I am a Writer now, I have
matured... I have to reflect that...

STRIPLING

...Uhhh, sure.

WRITER

Perhaps you blame me for something?

STRIPLING

You talk too much.

WRITER

Let's take a walk.

They continue down the path, the wife follows them tensely.
The Writer becomes emotional, his voice weakens.

WRITER

(whispers)

What do you think I should have
done? I grew up... and the things
you planned were not possible...
believe me I tried. Things worked
out differently, and it's not so
bad, after all.

As the Stripling turns to the Writer, his mouth distorts
into a passionate grimace.

STRIPLING

(hoarsely)

Did you travel to Mars?

WRITER

Oh... not personally, but they're
working on it... they sent a rover
there, and it landed fine... it
sends pictures... back to Earth!

STRIPLING

I see. THEY are working on it.
Did you join the military, train
hard, and become a Navy Seal?

WRITER

(eyes to ground)

For that, you have to get up
REALLY early, you were simply
wrong on that. Besides, you know
that I am a night owl, and war is
dangerous... but I did pick my
battles wisely, I went to college.

STRIPLING

So you studied.

(beat)

Did you win the Nobel Prize?

The Writer sinks his head.

WRITER

Not yet...

The wife is opens up the umbrella, passes them, then closes it again. She assertively passes it to the Writer. He takes it without a word.

STRIPLING

How about ending World Hunger.

Did you reverse Climate change?

The Writer waves his hand dismissively.

WRITER

Well... I donate to the Red Cross,
and the other day I gave a half
sandwich to a bum... and I recycle.
These things take time, and you
can't do it alone! Besides,
sometimes I just had to live a
little...

It is darker now. On the ledge, across the river is MANHATTAN. Its skyscrapers against the fading blue sky, glitter in the background. The office lights already on, the setting sun spends its last minutes bouncing light off the glass walls.

STRIPLING

Are you famous?

WRITER

Look, you got your priorities all
wrong. Friends and family are
most important. I make a good
living, and I get respect for
what I do...

The Stripling stretches his arms and makes a large gesture towards the horizon.

STRIPLING

Where is the terrific, epic drama
about the gray horizon that
reveals the destiny of Mankind?
Have you written the immortal
masterpiece that the Gods of the
Olympus could be proud of?

WRITER

Look, no actor can portray the gray horizon, and the budget would have been astronomical! And frankly, the Gods of the Olympus could not care less... there was no way to finish that... but I made a jingle out of the idea, and it paid three month's rent. Do you want to hear it?

STRIPLING

(disgusted)

No!

Too late for that...

WRITER

(singing)

"Oh the Gods of Olympus on the mountain of Olympus they are dancing... they are dancing and everlasting dance!"

STRIPLING

Congratulations. So... did you marry your Soul Mate, at least?

A foghorn sounds off in the distance.

WRITER

Do you want to meet the wife? She is a very beautiful woman with a brilliant personality. I had to chase after her, and I conquered her. And she loves me! I am somebody now, just like you wanted!

STRIPLING

You conquered her. The Mountain went to Mohammed and dropped to its knees!

(a beat)

Now tell me, why doesn't SHE come here?

WRITER

She does not come here because... I am a Gentleman. But she is really good in bed... when we are we are on good terms, that is.

STRIPLING

Not tonight...

WRITER

You are a child lost in fantasies,
I am right and you are wrong! I
am an adult now and I came to
understand life. What do YOU know
about life?

The Stripling steps up close to the Writer and looks into his eyes. The Writer looks away.

STRIPLING

I did not want to get to know
life, I wanted LIFE come and get
to know me! You look at me like
that, but deep down, you know
that I am right, and YOU are the
crazy one... the small one, the
sad, old, pitiful nobody... I
dare you to look into my eyes!

The Writer turns away, making awkward gestures.

STRIPLING

Just remember that you have met
me one last time. Look at me,
stare into the sunset... tell the
story of how I left you and walked
into the twilight, young,
infinitely free... never to see
you again!

The stripling starts walking.

WIFE

What's going on, is everything
all right?

The Writer turns toward his wife. The Stripling places the script with a fountain pen on a stone ledge, and disappears into the darkness.

WRITER

(to the Stripling)

Wait... you...

The Writer picks up the pen: it is familiar... he takes script, and puts it under his arm, just like the Stripling.

The walkway is empty. The couple walks down the path, and comes across a strange, abandoned curbside café. It has just one outdoor table, right in front of the old steam boat.

it is fully dark now. They take a seat, not noticing anything strange. The water makes some noise. After a while, a waiter appears out of nowhere.

WAITER
Hello Ma'am, good evening Sir...

The Wife ignores him, the Writer nods casually.

WAITER
Something to drink?

Ignoring the Waiter, the Writer takes out his freshly found fountain pen and tries to write on the script, but it is out of ink.

WIFE
Bring me a glass of red wine...

WRITER
(impatient)
...and a bottle of Higgins Eternal Black!

WAITER
I apologize Sir, but we are out of Higgins Eternal Black.

WRITER
What do you have then?

WAITER
The Caran D'ache Hypnotic Turquoise has excellent shades of color Sir, I'd highly recommend.

WRITER
Hell no! Bring me a bottle of Encle Bleu Sérénité!

The waiter leaves the table.

WIFE
Who was the young man ont the path?

WRITER
Oh... he's just an old acquaintance of mine... never mind.

WIFE
He has bad manners. Why didn't he introduce himself? He looks just like you though...

The Writer stares at the thick script on the table. The waiter brings out a glass of wine and a bottle of blue ink on a small white plate.

The Writer fills up his fountain pen with a childish grin, puts on his glasses and places the script on the table. It is titled

"MASTERS OF THE OLYMPUS".

As he raises his cup, the breeze lifts the cover and we see that...

ALL OF THE PAGES ARE EMPTY!

He's shocked, shows the pages to the Wife:

WRITER

Look...

WIFE

(indifferent)

What? Are you all right?

WRITER

(to himself)

Hmm, the theme is OK... not good for a commercial, but a nice story... quick, satirical... maybe a short film. That's it!

Energized by the idea, he turns to the title page, crosses out the words "Masters of" and writes a few words with the pen. The title now reads:

"STRIPLING ON THE OLYMPUS"

The old steamboat is cracking and crying in the background. In the distance, we barely hear the Stripling, laughing hysterically.

The wind picks up. The Wife gets uncomfortable, she gets up and leaves without saying a word. Her parasol is left lying on the ground.

The Writer, not noticing or caring, leaves a few beats later. Walking, his grin is disturbing, eyes fixated to the open script.

It is fully dark now.

THE END