

Thanking the Academy

Written by Karen Crackpot

“...And the winner is....” Big, knowing smile from presenter Clint Eastwood. “Karen Crackpot!” Oh my god. I won. I won an Academy Award. I was the underdog, no one expected me to win. It was a wonder I was nominated. Everyone else probably canceled themselves out.

Cameras are pointed at me, and everyone around me is standing up. I’m brought to my feet, a big smile on my face, and tears threatening. Oh. My. God. I won. I won!! My sister/date grabs me in a big hug, replaced by Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney, my producers. “You did it!” they say over and over. Ha! I did it! In my kick-ass Cate Blanchett-at-the-Oscars-in-2000-inspired dress, I make my way to the stage, various A-listers like Steven Spielberg and Russell Crowe grabbing my hand as I pass by them. I manage to get up the steps and accept my award from Clint. He kisses me on the cheek and whispers, “Congratulations, you’re exceptionally talented,” softly in my ear before stepping away.

Turning to the theater, I realize that I now have to say something. I laugh into the lights. “Oh my god, this is very weird. Very wonderfully weird. First, I have to thank the Academy - I can’t believe I just said that! I’ve been practicing in my bathroom mirror for years!” Huge laugh from the audience. I laugh too. “But it’s incredible to have even been noticed. And I want to thank Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney for reading this little script and loving it and believing in it enough to turn it into a movie.” Pause because I think I’m going to cry. Deep breath. “I really was at home watching the Academy Awards last year. I know everyone says that, but I always assume that they were at home in their mansion in the Hollywood Hills having an Oscar party with all their celebrity friends. But I really was at home, alone, in my jammies, with my Papa Johns pizza and a pie special and InStyle magazine for the commercial breaks. Feeling sorry for myself, because I honestly never thought that I would catch my break. I thought other people got lucky, and I would just slave away in obscurity the rest of my life.” Pause for some quiet laughter. I press my lips together to keep from having a crying meltdown. Deep breath. “I really owe this to my friends. My assistant friends who loved and believed in my script, who used their assistant network to get my script to people who would also love it. Assistants really don’t get the credit they deserve, and I really would not be here on this stage without them. And thank you Dave, for giving my one of my first writing opportunities, and for sharing all your knowledge with me. To Steve, for getting it to Clooney and Soderbergh. To Anjalika who always believed in me, and Lisa who thinks I’m more talented than I really am. I know you guys are all watching tonight at various viewing parties. You’re the best and I love you.

“But there is one person that I never could have done this without.” Despite the bright lights, I can clearly see the seat that I just vacated. I can tell that my sister/date has tears pouring down her cheeks. She covers her mouth with her hand to stifle a joyful sob as I continue, “Abby, I never could have done this without your support. You let me stay with you rent-free on the

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condition that I continue writing. You said that I gave you hope that there is more out there. Well, there is. I share this with you.”

I lift it up in that little Oscar salute that all winners do.

Applause. People start to stand up. What is this? A standing ovation? They like me! They really like me! I notice several people in the audience with tears in their eyes. I’m not sure why, since if they are sitting close enough that I can see them, then surely they have already made it. But maybe they really do understand what it’s like to work hard, and slowly suspect that it may be for nothing, only to be suddenly rewarded for it.

“I hope that I didn’t forget to thank anyone,” I say to Clint as he leads me offstage.

“You thanked those who truly mattered,” he tells me.

Dreams can come true.

And of course, I’m on all the best-dressed lists the following day.