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Close, but no cigar: Where's the Academy's love for Glenn?

In year where sentimentality made 'Green Book' a winner, star still left statuette-less

Glenn Close's 2019 Oscars dress weighed 42 pounds — 4 million tiny glass beads, hand-sewn on sheaths of golden fabric formed into a shimmering caftan — the vestment of a Hollywood high priestess.

As she circulated on the red carpet, Close resembled an Oscar statuette: part mascot, part majesty. Everyone believed she was about to win the Best Actress award for her portrayal of Joan Castleman in "The Wife."

An aspiring writer while a student at Smith College in 1958, Castleman was warned by an alumna author that no one would publish a book by a woman; and, if by some miracle she were published, no one would ever read her book.

Joan gets the message and promptly sublimates her writing career to that of her philandering husband, Joe Castleman (Jonathan Pryce). He's an English professor who leaves his wife and

child for her, forever entrapping her through guilt and obligation in her precocious youth, never to reach her own potential.

Their mutual literary efforts are indistinguishable until the early 1990s, when he wins the Nobel Prize in Literature. Then things start to fall apart.

"The Wife" follows the Castlemans from the day of the Nobel call to the evening of the award

ceremony. Two bookend moments epitomize the couple's entire relationship: As newlyweds, when Joe is first published, he invites Joan to jump up and down on their bed as if they are playful children, chanting, "We just got published! We just got published!"



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This flashback is foreshadowed when Joe is notified of the prize and grabs his wife to jump with him on the bed while he chants, "I won the Nobel Prize! I won the Nobel Prize!"

He's that guy.

As times change, Joan imperceptibly changes with them. The decades pass and she becomes host not only to Joe's literary parasitism but to his psychological

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parasitism. Joe acts out with affairs and callously distances himself from his aspiring-writer son, a distraction from his own inadequacy.

Christian Slater plays a small but pivotal role as Nathaniel Bone, the journalist who wants to write

a biography of Joe and insinuates himself into the Castleman family to ferret out their secrets.

"The Wife" is a nuanced character study of a woman repressed and the narcissist who represses her. The suspense is whether she recognizes her situation.

Like her golden gown, Close's performance is both ambitious and delicately exquisite. But also like the dress, the movie is inexplicably bland despite its intricacy.

Olivia Colman, who ultimately won the Best Actress award, was unimpeachable as Queen Anne in the outré costume dramedy "The Favorite."

But after seven Academy Award nominations, Close, who on this evening appeared to be the corporeal embodiment of Oscar, had seemed like a cinch.

Surely an Academy steeped in enough sentimentality to give Best Picture to "Green Book," a bromantic "Driving Mr. Daisy," could be expected to vote with its heart for the hometown favorite.

Why no love for Glenn?

My theory is that the Academy, 80 percent of it comprising male baby boomers, represents a demographic still rattled by the ghost of Alex Forrest, the vengeful mistress of in 1987's "Fatal Attraction."

The Forrest character is identified with Close as indelibly as James Bond has imprinted Sean Connery. At the height of the AIDS era, Alex presented as a generational metaphor for risky sex. They will never forgive her for boiling that bunny.

Onward to number eight.