

Alex, a 20s to 30s drifter.
From the play **Termination Dust**.

I really feel bad for the team who worked the Oscars this year. They kept dropping things and making loud noises. Everybody notices the big one, the one where Jeremy Irons flinched while he was trying to present some award. But really, it was all night long. Smash. Bang. "Oops." I'm not making fun of them. I relate. When I was in college, I took a gig working a follow spot at some concert. Some guitarist... Yngwie Malmsteen or... Ace Frehley... or, you know, one of them. He had a more normal name. Jeff Somebody, I think. Anyway, I kinda lied and said I knew how to work a follow spot. When I got there, they sent me up on the tall, rickety cage thing... not a cage... just a tower, with chain link on it... twenty, thirty THOUSAND feet tall. I climbed up and got worried. It shook, and the spot had a lot of little levers. I felt very distant... listening to the instructions coming over the headset, trying to guess what they meant. The worst one was when the guy running the show said "All to red... go!" I tried to make that happen, but the sliding gels got stuck. "Number one..." That was my name on the headset... "Number one! Go to red." There was the lead guy, wailing on his guitar in a lime green spot surrounded by a supporting band in red. Joe. It was Joe Satriani, that was the guitarist. I remember because at the top of the show, that guy said "Number one, follow Joe." "Joe?" "Joe, Joe SATRIANI!" That guy really didn't like me. God, I think I'd blacked that out, I was supposed to be on the star of the show. When it was over, I scurried down my platform thing as quickly as I could. It probably had something to do with that guy's final words to me. "Number one, I would like to see you now." And the last thing I wanted to do was let him see my face. I was poor, but I was willing to give up the paycheck. Which I did. It probably was moral not to take money for doing something that badly. So I feel their pain, those stagehands at the Oscars. Even though none of us know their names, they know them. They know what they did. They know how they screwed up. They'll carry it with them. I know.