Cry-baby

It was almost midnight before they got around to giving the Oscars to the really well-known personalities. At first a series of guest stars had awarded the prizes: to the best designer, to the best special-effects man, for the best technical invention for motion pictures during the year, and to all the other people, so unknown outside the industry, but so significant within it.

I looked around the theatre, recognizing most of the weighty faces in the business, but not caring much. You see, I was pretty nervous. Myra Caldwell, whom I had brought to the ceremony, was sitting there beside me, and right across the aisle was Joan Weyland. Now, to get the picture properly, you have to remember that during that particular year Myra had played the sensational supporting role in The Devil Loses and had been called the greatest find in the history of pictures. But that was the same year that Joan Weyland had stolen a big picture called Calumet Centre right out from under the nose of one of the most famous female stars in the industry. The only other actress nominated was not given much chance. Now in a few minutes, they were going to announce who had won the Oscar for the Best Supporting Actress of the year. It was the hottest Contest and everybody was aware of it. Furthermore, it was no secret that the two leading contestants would be delighted to boil each other in oil — win, lose, or draw. And here they were across the aisle from each other. Do you get why I was nervous?

Then the lights went down. They were going to run short scenes from the pictures for which the actors and actresses had been nominated. The supporting-actress pictures were coming on, and here was Joan Weyland in her grand scene from Calumet Centre. The audience started to applaud as soon as they saw her.

After that they ran a short episode from Whirlwind, showing the other nominee, a refugee actress called Tanya Braden. I had never seen the picture of the actress, and the picture hadn't made much money, but there was no doubt she could act! She played the star's mother and she made you believe it.

Then they ran Myra's big moment in The Devil Loses. After it was over, I tried to guess who had the biggest chance.

"I think I won," Myra said to me.

The lights went up. The old actor, who had won the Supporting Actor award the year before, came through the curtains and prepared to present the award. I didn't see how I was going to live through the next few minutes. He got the envelope and began opening it very slowly.

He was loving every second of it, the old man. Then he looked at the little piece of paper.

"The Winner," he said, then paused again, "is Miss Tanya Braden, for her performance in Whirlwind."

Well, I'm not too sure about the sequence of events that followed. I don't remember the applause, because Joan let out a loud cry from across the aisle that drowned out everything else. Then Myra started to cry. I don't mean cry like the ordinary person, but I mean cry so that the building shook.

Then Joan jumped to her feet and started out, and her mother accompanied her. But I couldn't do anything with Myra. The show was interrupted and the whole theatre was staring at her. I picked her up and carried her out.

It wasn't a very pleasant performance, but I think there is some excuse. After all, Joan is 8 years old, and Myra is only 6, and she isn't used to being up so late. I'm a little on her side anyway. And why not? I'm her father.

Joan Weyland and Myra Caldwell were present at the ceremony because they...

1. ...had both played in one film which had an Oscar nomination.
2. ...had been nominated as two of the Best Supporting Actresses of the year.
3. ...wanted to see the well-known personalities of the film industry.
4. ...accompanied the nominees.