Getting in character: Holiday themed Reindeer tf

Kay sighed as he looked at the note taped to his front door. Just two words printed at the top of the sheet of paper. “Eviction Notice”, it read in large black letters before descending into a dense fog of legalese. He didn’t need to read the fine print to get the message. He was flat broke, and the salary of a barista was not going to pay the bills in Los Angeles.

He morbidly trudged into his crappy one-bedroom apartment dotted with posters of famous actors and blockbusters of years past, many of them as faded and worn as the walls they were nailed to. He plopped the notice amongst the mountain of unpaid bills and past due notices on his kitchen counter. Despite the fact that his apartment looked like a tornado had blown through a pigsty, he was able to spot the poster that he hoped would reverse his fortunes. The message was as clear as crystal, open auditions for a Christmas sitcom special revolving around life at the North Pole. “Polar opposites”- it read in a cheery, tinsel-laden font dotted with cartoon Christmas lights. And the auditions were taking place later today. If Kay was ever going to get his big break, now would be a great time.

Kay thought back to his last gig as he brushed his wavy, dirty blonde hair in front of his bathroom mirror. It was three months ago when he took a small deal to run a few commercials for a toothpaste company. It was not the stardom he envisioned, but it paid. Now that money was long gone and he had nearly given up hope. He brushed that hair like his life depended on it.

He took a shower, breaking out the bottles of soap he bought a week ago but haven’t opened until now. Afterwards, he put on the cleanest outfit he could find, a gray, stain-free tank top coupled with the nicest pair of jeans in his closet. He did a quick check up of himself in the mirror before hopping on the metro towards Hollywood.

It took him a good while to find the address specified on the poster, as the large brick building more resembled a warehouse than a studio”.

. Only a faded banner above the double doors told him he was at the right place. To his surprise, he was the first one there (though a line of diverse people soon formed behind him). He was sweating bullets in anticipation as he watched the line disappear behind the far corner of the building, fumbling through the vocal exercises he’d brought to practice on. He tried to focus his energy, ignoring the awkward stares of the people immediately behind him as he belted out “Jingle Bells” slightly off key.

After standing around for what felt like hours in the mild California winter, the double doors opened and Kay eagerly walked inside, having regained some confidence and ready to strut his stuff. His pride fought a constant battle with stage fright, and he wound up swaggering onto the stage like a lion on weed, wobbling in his steps as he approached the mic.

Looking out over the dimly lit auditorium, he saw three very unique looking individuals in the front row seats, each scribbling ambiguous notes on their clipboards.They were dressed in clothes Kay could not afford on a year’s salary, which made him feel a twang of both envy and confidence. He was going to wear clothes like theirs one day, and Hollywood had better watch out because here he comes. As he got used to the bright lights of the stage, they shifted more into focus.

The man who resembled a stoned Indiana Jones he recognized. That was Cliff Calhoun, the highly esteemed producer of the show and known in the industry as a special effects wizard. He was dressed like a hobo who won a shopping spree to Giorgio Armani, with a loose denim jacket with cuffed sleeves, a white Supreme T-shirt, and khaki shorts that barely fit. His wild bird’s nest hair complemented his rough five-o’clock shadow. A bottle of cognac sat in the cup holder, already half-empty. His expression was hidden by a pair of darkened Gucci shades, although it seemed to constantly shift between “bored” and “asleep.” Kay knew, however, that beneath the shades Cliff was watching his every move intently and studying his every syllable.

He didn’t recognize the other two, a finely dressed middle aged woman with frizzy hair and gold leopard earrings, and behind her a heavyset elderly man with a bad head and bushy white beard stretching down to the top of his chest. He was dressed in a simple Christmas sweater, featuring a happy elf chugging a pot of eggnog in an ugly brown leather recliner. As he stood up on stage, it was the woman that spoke first.

“ Hi! Welcome to the audition!” She spoke in both a charming and soothing manner, helping to ease Kay’s electric nerves. She grinned warmly, and Kay took that as a cue to introduce himself.

“ Um, hi…” he stammered awkwardly, giving a teensy wave with his fingers. Gah! That wasn’t the way to go! Recomposing himself he tried to project an air of confidence and professionalism, or at least as much as he could in a tank top and jeans.

\*Ahem\* “ Um, My name is Kay and I’m here to say, I’d like to audition for the show today!” He kind of bounced the syllables to get the rhyme down, adding a bit of pep to his vocabulary. The woman clapped but the two men remained unfazed by Kay’s introduction. Fine. They were sure to be wowed by his audition piece, a tender and heartfelt homage to one of the great holiday classics. Clutching the mic like it was a mug of warm eggnog, he began to sing.

Kay was halfway through his rendition of “Frosty the Snowman” when the producer stopped him short.

“What’s wrong?” Kay asked. Surely they hadn’t been so wowed by his musical talents that they decided to cast him on the spot? He was good but not that good. But as he caught Cliff’s face looking back at him, his heart fell into his feet. The man looked like he was experiencing the worst migraine of his life, face scrunched up in agony as he rubbed his forehead. It was so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

“Kid, you suck.” Apparently Cliff did not like to sugarcoat things. Kay felt his heart shatter underneath his ribs as he stood there trying to process what had happened. Was that it? They didn’t even let him do the whole song!

“Wh-what? What do you mean I suck?” he stammered in disbelief. “You’re wrong! You’re totally wrong! You just don’t understand my geniu-“

“I’m sorry, kid”, Cliff replied, his face revealing no emotion as he spoke. In fact, even his mopey drawl had a lazy ring to it. “But a rabid aardvark giving birth with whooping cough sounds better than whatever that s\*\*\* was. I’ve seen a lot and been through a lot, so I can tell you this for certain, kid. You just don’t got what it takes.” Kay was stunned, but that slowly devolved into desperation.

“ You can’t do this to me! Acting is all I have! I need this role! Please!” He shook his hands, begging for the judges to give him a chance. To nobody’s surprise, this had little effect on the producer. He’d seen people like this at every audition, young folks who bank their whole careers on acting without a smidge of talent to back it up. And he had the same reaction every time. Just as he was getting ready to call security, however, the woman spoke up.

“ Actually, I think he’s quite suitable for our needs”.

Both Cliff and Kay’s eyes flew out of their skulls.

“What!?” they both yelled in unison.

“Are you f\*\*\*\*\*\* kidding me?” Cliff cried, spitting out the cognac he had just taken a swig of.

“I think he has some acting potential.” The woman replied coyly. Cliff looked like a fuse about to burst.

“He can’t even act his age!” Cliff shouted, gesturing to the sobbing mess onstage. Kay quickly tried to wipe some of the tears from his eyes, rubbing it on his tank top.

“-And as I recall, we don’t have a part that requires a sniveling toddler, so he’s a \*\*\*\*\*\*\*\* useless piece of garbage!” The woman suddenly put an elegant, perfectly manicured finger up to his lips, silencing the man’s tirade long enough for her to pull out a glass of water from underneath her seat. Walking up to the stage, she left Cliff behind to silently adjust his sunglasses while she handed Kay the glass.

“Here, take a glass of water and try again. We all deserve a second chance.” The calmness about her demeanor captivated Kay for a brief moment before he slowly took the glass out of her hand. Up close, her golden earrings looked stunning in the stage light, a prowling pair of leopards ready to pounce at a moment’s notice. They seemed to compliment the entire aura of this woman, stunningly beautiful yet with a fierce side to her. As he sat on the linoleum briefly dazzled by this strange woman, he snapped out of it and realized he should probably not be staring. She dismissed it, however, flashing a reassuring smile before returning to her seat, her black silk dress flowing with her every move and highlighting her curves.

Kay shrugged it off and took a sip from the glass. The ice cold water immediately rushed down his throat, the crisp taste of freshly melted snow filling his tongue. As he staggered meekly back onto the podium, his eye caught the woman flashing him a reassuring smile. For some reason it filled him with a strange sense of confidence and he began his second ballad with a refurbished sense of hope.

That hope was rapidly diminished. Beads of sweat ran down his forehead like raindrops on a windowsill as the words to “Jingle Bell rock” spilled out of his mouth like spoiled eggnog. At least he was sure the garbled noises emanating from his mouth region were the words. The pounding lights from the stage seared through his eyes and into his brain. Before he knew it he had been cut off again.

“See? I told you this kid sings like a wallaby on a bed of nails. We can’t be wasting our time with this.” Cliff steamed, and Kay’s heart once again fell into his stomach. Is this how his career dies? Was he really this bad at something that had been a passion for him since he was a young boy?

The woman, surprisingly, gave a coy smile. “Hush, Cliff, I think we should give him one more chance.” She walked past the seething producer and gave the young man a single sheet of paper, a song sheet with a simple holiday song on it. Something about working for Santa Claus.

“This is a song the character you’re auditioning for sings in the movie. Try this one, and really get into character this time.” She flashed him a coy wink that sent a shiver down Kay’s spine. He felt a sense of unease, but he could not quite place its origin. Why was this lady so interested in him? He brushed back his long hair and swallowed the lump in his throat before looking at the sheet before him.

It was a really corny song, honestly, with a bouncy but lackluster tune. Apparently it was sung by the main character in the show, a Reindeer named Dinkles who yearns to join Santa’s sleigh team. Kay sighed, swallowing whatever remnants of dignity he had left. Like he was gonna get the part at this point. He had no idea what the woman saw in him at this point, but what was the harm in one more song? Maybe it would help the itch that had begun to arise in his throat.

As the first words broke his lips, Kay’s eyes widened in surprise. The voice that rang throughout the auditorium was not his at all, carrying the notes in perfect rhythm. He felt almost like his vocal chords had been completely replaced, and unbeknownst to him at the moment, that was actually what had happened. Unfortunately for Kay, it wasn’t the only part of his body beginning to change at the molecular level.

As he marveled at the new sound of his voice, he remained unaware of the itching increasing around his neck and throat as his muscles swelled and thick tawny fur began to spread up and down his widening neck. His Adam’s apple shrank back into the widening mass of flesh and fur beneath his head, his voice becoming more childlike and youthful as a result. Kay paid no heed to the sudden loss of pitch, continuing to sing about his ultimate goal of working for Santa one day. The mere thought of it made the little nub of a tail breaking over the top of his shorts twitch with joy. Kay found it harder and harder to think about anything other than pleasing Santa as he pranced about onstage, arms folded against his chest like forelegs. By the time the first ripples of light gray fur had begun poking out from underneath his tank top, Kay had lost himself inside the cartoonish world of Christmas cheer.

“I dream about the day when I’ll take flight, delivering presents on Christmas night!” He bellowed as he fell upon his hands and feet, the cracking and shifting of bones drowned out by the music. After all, what respectable reindeer walks on two legs? Hard Keratin began to cover his fingertips and toes as they merged with one another into cloven hooves, thumbs receding into his furry forelegs permanently. The clips and clops of his new legs soon filled the auditorium as they pranced about on the tile. His thighs and upper arms swelled with muscle, the thick rippling sort that allows one the power to pull the full weight of Santa’s bag. His arms and legs shifted into the hocks and hinds of a caribou, while being enveloped in the warm tawny pelt proudly sported by Santa’s animal helpers. Kay, or rather Dinkles the reindeer, felt an increasing constriction on his body as his expanding torso and abdomen stretched his clothing to its limits. Finally he felt a burst of release as his cervine body won the battle against the fabric, shredding it into pieces as the strips of cloth gave way to his bulging form. Waves of thick fur, designed for protection against the fierce temperatures of the north pole, quickly covered any remnants of human skin on his body.

Last to change was his face, the man-deer blissfully singing unaware of being anything other than a deer with sled pulling aspirations as the final contortions began. Majestic, velvety antlers grew out from the top of his head, perfect for showing off in front of his reindeer friends. His nose and mouth pulled out into the muzzle of a caribou, but one you’d find in a typical National Geographic issue. He still kept many of his human features, which allowed for displaying a wide variety of emotions in his future role.

The woman gave a sly grin as the former actor finished his transformation into a perfect imitation of the character on screen. Of course, everyone would assume there was simply some high-tech CGI going on, and nobody would ever learn the truth of her genetic alteration technology. She turned around to the producer, who looked like he had seen a ghost on the moon.

“ So, Cliff, what do you think?” It took a few minutes for the stunned man to respond, as he took off his sunglasses for a better look.

“ I-I-“ The man seemed at a lost for words. The woman sighed. Many of their clientele had this reaction when they first saw their work. Oh well. They were defying thousands of years of evolution and the very nature of biology after all. Such a reaction was to be expected.

“I assure you, everything is one hundred percent real. Our formula has been tested and proven to be successful. Do you find this satisfactory?”

Cliff said nothing, his jaw was glued to the ground. When Mr. Gould had drunkenly boasted at a Hollywood gala that he could change the very nature of human genetics, Cliff had thought the man was joking. He still thought it was a joke when he took him up on his offer to sell his formula to Cliff’s production studio for several million dollars. But the evidence was right there on stage, braying about jingle bells and fresh carrots in a beautiful voice. He let out a long and exasperated sigh, reclining back into the plush leather seat.

“ He’ll say his lines, right? And not like-eat the curtains or something?” The woman nodded in reply. Cliff smiled, revealing a set of perfect glistening teeth.

“ Well them I’m quite darn satisfied. Tell Mr. Gould that I’ll forward the requested funds into the aforementioned Swiss bank account. This stuff will change cinema forever.”