

THE CASTING NOTICE

written by James Russell

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FADE IN:

INT. ACC HLC CAMPUS - STUDY ROOM - EVENING

ERIC (early 20s, optimistic, radio-television-film student) leans over his laptop. Notebooks filled with half-finished scripts. A crumpled screenplay. Half-drunk wine coolers. He scrolls through an intriguing casting website.

CLOSEUP - WEBSITE AD

ERIC (V.O.)  
 "INDIE FANTASY FILM - Male Lead,  
 Early 20s. \$10,000 pay. No  
 Experience Needed."

He hesitates, takes a deep breath, then submits his portfolio to the casting e-mail. Then, he puts his head down on the desk and slowly drifts off to sleep.

DING. An email ping two hours later.

CLOSEUP - COMPUTER SCREEN

The screen reads, "Your Submission is Qualified! Audition tomorrow at 4 pm, Room 2106, Bldg. 2000 - ACC HLC Campus. There will be a \$1000 headshot fee (cash)."

Eric leans back and stares at the screen, suspiciously.

ERIC  
 (mutters)  
 A \$1000 headshot fee? I suspect  
 some foul play here...

INT. ACC - BUILDING 2000, ROOM 2106 - NEXT DAY

An empty RTF classroom. Desks pushed aside. A single tripod stands in the corner, unplugged. One lamp light. SEBASTIAN (late 20s, business casual dress, quick talker) sits in a chair next to the light. He scrolls through his phone with a calm demeanor, observing.

Eric enters in an enthusiastic manner to not allow his awareness of the scam to be detected.

SEBASTIAN  
 Eric? Right on time buddy. Before  
 we get started, we ask for a \$1000  
 headshot fee. An additional fee of  
 \$3000 will be for wardrobe,  
 lodging, and travel costs.  
 (MORE)

(CONT'D)

Helps to establish a commitment and keeps the process going lovely... Of course... we value our trustful clients. Filming will take place around different prestigious parts of the globe. We reserve the finest hotels, cuisines, limousines, and first-class flights. You will receive top notch accommodations with the best quality. I'll... get to more details on that after payment.

ERIC

(eyes squinting; cautious looking)  
That wasn't in the original posting.

SEBASTIAN

(evil grin)

I like to personally inform our talented candidates in person. This is intended to lock in the deal. It also filters out uncommitted applicants. You'd be surprised how many less dedicated ones fail to make the... necessary sacrifice for success. However, of course you are not one of those failures, I hope.

ERIC

(eyes squinting)

Sounds like you have everything planned out accordingly. The opportunity that you present seems sort of... too good to be true sir. Well, we will see how this goes.

SEBASTIAN

Exactly. Classic persuasion in action but with a trust worthy deal, you shouldn't refuse. Everyone pays a cost... it equalizes everything according to plan. You are a true talent worthy of our time, correct? You wouldn't want this fantastic opportunity to pass you by, I hope...

ERIC

(acting enthusiastic)

Okay, I am convinced... Wallet's in my car. Give me one moment.

EXT. ACC HLC CAMPUS - MOMENTS LATER

Eric walks briskly, dialing his phone.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
(whispering into phone)  
He's trying to use that money  
laundering scheme. A classic scam  
tactic, using manipulative pressure  
to get extra money before any real  
audition.

INT. ROOM 2106 - MINUTES LATER

SEBASTIAN  
(pacing slowly around on  
cell phone)  
Yeah, I think he fell for it. Let's  
get the team ready for our next  
move.

REYNOLD (O.S.)  
FBI. Hands where I can see 'em.

Sebastian freezes as REYNOLD (30s, sharp eyes, worn blazer)  
enters with two agents.

SEBASTIAN  
Whoa, hold on. This was just a  
behavioral dynamics study. I assure  
you that nobody got hurt.

ERIC  
(calm, firm)  
You called it an audition. We're  
calling it a busted scam.

The agents move in. Sebastian doesn't resist but continues  
speaking.

SEBASTIAN  
Interesting... I hope you idiots  
know that I do hire the best  
attorneys in town. I am the  
descendant of a Roman Emperor!

EXT. ACC HLC CAMPUS - LATER

The sun sets over the wide ACC campus. Sebastian is loaded  
into an unmarked car. Eric stands beside Reynold, calm and  
collected.

REYNOLD  
You've certainly had sting  
operation potential.

ERIC  
(smiles faintly)  
I was just trying to land a fantasy  
film role.

REYNOLD  
Well... on the other hand, you  
nailed this one.

Eric nods in response.

They watch the car disappear.

**FADE OUT.**