

## Chapter 22: DeGenerate Barbarian

**WB Offices, London. April 2006.**

“Alright, gentlemen. I have a job for the both of you.” When an influential movie producer says that to two young boys in front of him in a closed room, the first thought that goes through anyone’s head is ‘*please don’t say the word blow in the next sentence.*’

“I’m in. As long as it involves copious amounts of rest and a lack of any responsibility.” David Heyman was not impressed.

“As you well know, we’re on break for the next month, pertaining to a large portion of the student actors having to take their O-levels.” He stepped over my comment like a particularly stagnant looking puddle.

“I reckon you mean Emma’s got her GCSEs,” Grint griped. “Not like the rest of us didn’t have exams over the last couple of years. Didn’t get a break for that, did we?” You tell ‘em Rupert, this blatant favouritism cannot stand!

“Then perhaps you should have made that request like Emma and the others did. Months in advance, I might add.”

“That... makes insanely good sense.” I nudged Rupert. “Son of a bitch has got us, chief.”

David continued to skip over me like hopscotch. “Now, instead of focusing on what you didn’t do, let’s switch tack on what you’ll do do.” I opened my mouth but lost that race to David’s finger that pointed right at me. “I heard it before I said it. Keep it zipped.”

I felt the satisfying squelch of someone finally stepping in it.

“As I was saying, both of you have tasks you must accomplish during this period, given your relatively open schedules. In between the light shooting we’ll still be doing, you will go on a bit of a press tour.”

“Together?”

“No. I’m not that stupid.” Hey, man... “For you, Rupert,” David shifted back, reached for the drawer to his left, and pulled out a dossier that covered our schedules. “We’ve got you tabled to join *BBC Breakfast*, *8 Out of 10 Cats*, *The Kumars at No.42*, and *Jonathan Ross*.”

Rupert received the sheet David handed him and surveyed it with an audible gulp. “Blimey.” Fair response. It’d be his first time on the big shows on his own, not to mention some of the more chaotic ones in our local British programming. But the selection was really quite clever because-

“Hitting every possible demographic, are we?” The productive members of society, the younger crowd, the international population, and even the night shift sufferers, respectively.

A smirk and a wink shot my way over from David. "Points for you, Bas." At least he didn't do finger guns. "The producers have given each show general guidelines of what topics they can and can't broach. We've also provided some early footage to use for marketing. Rupert, for Ron, we have the early cut of *Weasley is our king*. Naturally I would have preferred some of the DA scenes but forget the CGI we haven't even begun filming that yet."

"No Top Gear?"

I thumped Grint on his shoulder. "I was just about to ask!"

"We did ask, but disappointingly, they urged us to enquire only after you're all able to *legally* drive."

"Can't blame them, I suppose. They get in enough trouble as it is. But if I'm basically hogging the domestic screens, what's he going to do?" Rupert waggled his thumb at me.

"The States, obviously. Bas, before I get into yours, I must remind you that your interviews will specifically be for Potter. Inevitably you will be asked about Tokyo Drift since it's releasing soon, but I urge you to keep that to a minimum and limit yourself to our films as much as possible. Warner Brothers and Universal are still competing companies."

"I hear you."

"Sincerely, I hope so. You'll already be on loan in June for that premiere for a weekend, as well as your contractual obligations for the *San Diego Comic Con* panel in July. This time is very much for our little franchise." Business was business, couldn't blame the guy.

"Did WB and Uniqlo take a look at my proposal for comic con?"

"Ah! Yes, they did. We're still ironing out the details, but we will organize something for you after the interview panel. Pending the success of this year, we may very well take Harry Potter on the road for the next film."

Sweet. "Alright, then. Lay it on me. Am I being thrown to wolves or piranhas?"

David slid my timetable across the table.

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**Burbank, California. May 2006.**

A blonde lesbian danced over, across, and around her table. I stood backstage on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*.

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**Rockefeller Plaza, NYC. May 2006.**

A redheaded man who looked like a lesbian sat behind his table. I stood backstage on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*.

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An assistant director stood in front of me, complete with headset and clipboard, as Ellen cued up my introduction.

“Our first guest today has captured the hearts and imaginations of children, as well those who never grew up, not just across the nation but all across the world.” Without even looking at me, the assistant raised three fingers. “Ladies and gentlemen please welcome,” one finger down two left. “All the way from Hogwarts school of magic.” The music picked up, and another digit descended. “Bas Rhys!” Point and off I went.

The pop beat dropped, but my dignity didn’t. I’d actually have loved to *shimmy shimmy ya* my way downstage, but my shoes were too new and too slick. I’d be doing the wrong kind of breakdancing.

The screaming, *screeching* audience went into absolute uproar. I smiled, waved, and flashed my glistening teeth. I’d send these biddies swooning. Too bad my hair was cut short, otherwise I’d flick my curls, too.

“Hi.” A plastic greeting, a quick hug, a quicker peck on the cheek, and I finally found my rump on the red cushion of the chair.

Ellen surveyed her clamouring audience. I glanced at a production hand instructing the crowd to simmer down. “Wow! You must get that all the time.”

“Not enough to get used to it.” I waved to the eager faces and petering voices again. “Can’t say I hate it, though. Thank you for having me!” Production had to immediately get back to work. Maybe I should have brought ear plugs.

“Not a shy one, are you?”

“More that I just lack shame.” Hopefully, there wasn’t an *applause* sign forcing the chuckles.

“Hey, it worked out for you so far. Can’t call yourself the most famous boy in the world without having an appetite for it.”

“Harry Potter himself plays the bigger role there, I’d wager. I’ll get there someday.”

“Well, if you continue making movies like this,” Ellen gestured at the monitor that’d be playing the pre-approved scene, “won’t take long at all.”

I smiled as I turned to the screen. It flicked on, my grin almost wiped off.

[Giggle. “Hello, Harry.”]

That wasn't McGonagall, it was Myrtle. My uniform wasn't on, but my birthday suit was. This wasn't *Phoenix*, it was *Goblet* - specifically, the prefect's bath scene.

I side-eyed Ellen. I caught her mean smirk. *Motherf-!*

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I watched Conan tap his note cards on his desk as he studied his audience. A young man with an earpiece stood beside me and laid a gentle hand on my upper back. "You know, when I usually look around at my studio, I'm staring at a bunch of middle-aged men with mustard stains on their shirt and beer bottles in hand. But today, for some unfathomable reason, those same men have confirmed a deep-seated fear I have that they have wives and children, because for the first time in this broadcast's history, I have over four women in the audience."

"You're almost up, Mr Rhys." The young man whispered and signaled my imminent entry.

"My guest for tonight needs no introduction, but I'm going to give it, anyway. He's the young man behind Harry Potter, a franchise that has grossed over four *billion* dollars in just five years. He's been in everyone's favourite Christmas movie since *Die Hard*. He has a new action movie on the streets of Tokyo coming out this June, and is currently filming the fifth installment of the magical movies that have ensnared all our hearts and minds. Everybody, please put your hands together for none other than Bas Rhys!"

I strode out from behind the curtain, Conan circled his desk. The spectators jumped to their feet.

Couldn't let them be the only one sharing all the love, could I? Half joking and the other half caught in the cloud of my own ego, I blew kisses out.

The decibels climbed to the fucking stratosphere.

My chance to wave and conduct a human symphony was immediately stolen when Conan gave me a firm handshake, a genuine smile, and easily guided me down to my seat with a hand on my shoulder.

Conan flopped himself behind the desk and exaggeratedly wrung his ears out with his fingers. "I think I just burst an eardrum. The big apple's giving you a piping hot welcome."

"It's my first time here and I already feel at home! Also helps when the first person I meet here is a Weasley." Redheads, they're everywhere.

Quick wit translated to a quick whip of his iconic ginger swoop. "I'm from the Irish clan of Weasleys." He grabbed his mug, took a whiff and a sip. "The Whiskeys. Speaking of, let's take a look at the role that made you famous enough to cause a small scale seismic event. Roll the clip!"

[*Hem hem! Imelda Staunton, in her pink Umbridge ensemble, cracked her creepy, crooked grin.*]

*Maggie Smith kitted out in McGonagall's tartan stalled Harry's career prospects interview. "May I offer you a cough drop, Dolores?"*

At least this time was the correct scene.

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The woos of teeny bopper and soccer mom lust punctuated the end of Ellen's stunt. She didn't even have the decency to allow the full clue to be sung out.

"So when can we expect to see you on the cover of *Men's Health*?" It seemed that fourteen was old enough here.

"When I turn eighteen. Even then, I'm more inclined towards *Good Housekeeping*. Maybe my washboard abs will actually have some use there." Keep it cool, keep it light, even when the weight of sleaze pressed my shoulders.

Ellen laughed, as did the audience. I just kept *smiling*.

"I'm sure people have found plenty of use for them. You have, as well. I've heard it said that you have another topless scene in your next movie also." She addressed her audience, "Fast and furious, Tokyo drift out this June, ladies. Mark your calendars." She pounced on me again. "And I also know that you're going to have your first on-screen kiss in the next Harry Potter movie. Are you single?"

"I am. And nowhere near ready to mingle."

The crowd *aww'd*. "You're breaking millions of hearts, Bas. I'd prefer that to happen on my show rather than on the big screen." Ellen shouted over at the audience, "who here wants to be the first to lock lips with Bas Rhys on camera?"

It was a weird feeling, both flattery and disgust simultaneously, when I saw the disconcerting number of hands shoot up.

"I'm sorry, everyone, but I have a nut allergy." No prizes for guessing what nuts with reference to these crazies.

"C'mon, lighten up. I was just kidding!" My ass.

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The end of the clip was greeted with applause. "Even the nursing home is fighting after you. I bet there isn't a single boy out there who wishes they weren't in your shoes today. We've all gotta know; how does one become Harry Potter?"

"Oh, that's easy. Jump off a tall platform headfirst into a pool."

“Uh huh, uh huh.” Conan took his pen, licked the nib, and pretended to jot down notes. “So, be insane.”

“Being a few marbles short never hurt anybody.”

“Except you!” He flung the card offscreen. “We know about you doing your own reckless stunts. Fighting monsters, crashing cars, drowning yourself. Where does it end?”

“Probably in the middle of one of those stunts.” Keep it dark, keep ‘em laughing.

“I’ve put hundreds of people on that couch and interviewed them. Of those, I can count on one hand - and have fingers left over - the people who are butts to nuts, bounce off the walls, looney tunes crazy like you. And you know what? They’re all wildly successful.”

“Guess that means good things for my future.” I hopped in my seat and tested the springiness of the cushion under me. “You don’t mind if I jump on your sofa, do you?”

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Fingers ushered me back to the green room. The first thing I spotted was Anita in a corner, glued to her phone, and furiously yelling at someone on the other end.

There wasn’t a point in my opinion, the damage was already done.

“Ellen and the staff at *The Ellen Show* thank you again for your participation, Bas.” Fingers rose to attention. “The taping went well, and we would like to show you our appreciation with this luxurious gift basket for you to take home.” She pointed at the plastic wrapped bouquet of chocolates, perfumes, and other assorted gifts.

Somehow, I doubt Cadbury would let me keep anything in there without putting it through an X-ray first.

“I’d rather have a word with Ellen.” I wasn’t asking.

Fingers touched the headset over her ear, nodded, and responded. “Ms DeGeneres is busy at the moment. We’ll add another gift basket as an apology.”

I walked over to the assistant and tugged off the headset without hurting her. “You talking to her on this thing?”

“Hey-!”

I gripped the mic and spoke into it. “Keep the consolation prize for next time.”

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The green room didn't stay that colour for long as a pasty white face and a bright orange head of hair peeked in the doorway. "Knock knock!"

The first thing Conan probably saw was Anita in the center of the room, having a congenial chat with one of his producers. I waved him over to my corner where Cadbury was straightening out and packing away my dinner jacket. "Over here."

We'd only just bid farewell on stage a scant few minutes ago, but I found my hand once again wrapped in Conan's "Thanks again for coming on the show. I hope you had as good a time as I did. We've got a fantastic episode on our hands."

"No worries. I had fun! My only regret was we didn't also film a remote segment together."

"Maybe next time Conan takes a trip down to Hogwarts?"

"You have my number. Call me, we'll set it up."

"I'm not sure it's that easy, but I won't be a stranger. Even if that doesn't work out, return whenever you want. I'm serious."

"Don't worry,"

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It was funny. The last thing I said to both hosts held the same words, but the intent couldn't have been more different.

"I'll be back."