

[Quan Hyun] Audition: Oh, to compete for a wish

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Chifu. Cheeeeeeeee- fooooooooooooo- Maybe she should spell it with a Q. Or, maybe she should change it! Maybe- Great. Now, she has been so bored she has been thinking about changing her name. Time to spice things up now, eh?

She sent out familiars- they looked just like her!- out into the worlds. A few in this one, a few in another- as always, every single little fox easily seduced those mortals into accepting her challenge, a wondrous fighting tournament set in her own little realm, just for her! How wonderful!

Of course, there are always a few..... Difficulties. See, this world hasn't been that special, but it has been promising. And it would be *annoying* to send her familiar somewhere else. With a hum she checked on her little vixen's progress. Not a single one accepted her offer, often hurrying away before the fox even approached. One with fox ears even petted her little creation, without even heeding the letter it has been clutching in its mouth! It's own kin! What disrespect to a fellow trickster- it's good to indulge a youngster *once* in a while.

Perhaps her mistake has been not sending her creation to those who truly wanted it. The desperate, the needy- but even they didn't want her letter! Chifu scoffed as a beggar looked away from the fox nudging them insistently with its snout. Then perhaps she needed someone foolish *and* desperate- not that it would be hard to find one of those.

Finally, finally, she directed her vixen towards the marketplace. Sure to be full of thieves and go getters, makers of their own destiny too desperate to consider getting a job, and too stupid to figure out how to trick their way up in the world, like any real trickster should do. There were many- some felt full of magic, but couldn't even sit up or see her familiar, while others were weaker, already chased off by those huge wolves one stall had been employing. They were simply too boring to be in her tournament, she wanted a *fight*, not a slaughter.

She already did one of those, and frankly, it had been uninspiring.

Her head snaps down as she lounges in the sky above the marketplace. She saw something. Something fast, now *that* could be enjoyable. Hunter and prey, the best dynamic one could have in a fight!

She hums as she observes- a boy, snatching food from the stall, leaving only a poof of dirt and dust behind him to mark his existence in front of the stall. Her face stretches in a toothy smile as she sends her familiar after the boy.

The little fox trotted at its master's behest into the alley, hiding behind a few boxes, just so Chifu could observe for a few seconds longer, and maybe enjoy a little laugh.

The boy glanced around- ooh blue eyes, pretty- as if to search for any danger- before he unwrapped his skewer and began eating. What has been odd though, has been his hair. Originally down and ratty looking, his black and white hair was now standing up all on its own, and it seemed to rise higher every time the little fox approached closer.

Soo curious~

He had stopped eating and has been just listening now, looking about ready to run at the slightest sound..... Chifu giggled at his serious expression and tried to mimic it, scrunching up her eyebrows and pursing her lips, throwing herself into a fit of laughter.

With a pop, the fox teleported in front of him- the kebab went flying, he went flying, and the little fox perturbed by all the commotion, trotted over to the boy stuck in the wall, delicately handing him the letter and sitting as Chifu howled with laughter above their heads.

"He- he- Oh wow- he really just flew into a wall- Oh my goodness what a *dumbass*-"

She watched a few minutes more but huffed. Boring, boring, boring, just another kind, dumb, naive little kid, with more power than he deserved. She'll be watching him in a bit anyway~ Now off to go finish her preparations for her *epic* battles!

Quan could have *sworn* there has been someone watching him. There's always someone watching him, yes, a scraggly fae with an accent and a penchant for destruction and stealing, who's definitely not from around these parts, but even with all his peculiarities, he shouldn't feel like he's being *scrutinized*. There are enough scraggly, thieving kids around here, he shouldn't stand out as much as he feels he is.

This all, he contemplates as he skulks around the market, tugging his scarf up to his face, tugging the ends, pretending he just got lost- likely picking up food for a traveling family, perhaps, for the lawful ones in the crowd. He can sense the wary gazes of the stall keepers hoping to keep their wares and money intact- but what he's feeling feels more like a god. Someone with power, someone who's laughing at him, and that is far scarier. He pauses at a bread stand- hmm. Not in the mood... He moves on to something that smells far better.

Like that meat stand for instance.

He watches the crowd go by, pretending to inspect the wares at a nearby jewelry shop- he's very appreciative of the luster of the gemstones set in metal- and in a flash, he spins on his heel to swipe the skewer from the fire, meat intact, so quickly that the vendor doesn't even have time to shout, before dashing away down the road, quicker than greased lightning across half the city, dodging anything and everything in his path-

Quan skids to a stop glancing around- hm. He didn't manage to lose them- he wishes it weren't so obvious he has been scared, but he can feel his hair standing on end, stiff enough to stab any potential danger.

Breath. Breath, Quan. He looks around once more- and resigns himself to the ever-there paranoia and-

FUCK-

Quan throws himself as hard as he can away from the noise and from the pop- it could be anything-

And finds himself embedded in a brick wall- *again*.

A little white fox looks up at him, and Quan struggles to keep the scared look on his face. It's probably a minion of some kind and he shouldn't let his guard down- in case its master has been watching.

And he knows. He can feel it- the master is watching. It's like all the times people have approached him with offers- of safety, food, warmth during the winter. All things he can get. What they really wanted has been *him* in body, spirit, or soul, and there has always been a higher power watching their minions try and get him. Sometimes they were afraid, sometimes simply lazy or dismissive. But there has always been *someone*.

Quan extricates himself from the wall, yanking himself out so he flopped on the ground like a bird shot out of the sky, and he laughs. If you can't laugh at yourself, how can you laugh at anyone else? The fox- probably a familiar, based on its looks with its bright red ears and special markings- has been apparently tired of his shit, and drops the letter at his hand, and Quan lifts his head to read it.

Something, something, god, something uhhh wish? Cross?? Roads??? Chifu.....

He squinted and struggled, and tried to remember the shape of the letters on the note with the script Alexandra had taught him before she died. God. Wish. He has to travel somewhere, and he can be granted a wish by a god? Well, it certainly sounds like something someone would offer a homeless kid- but.

The power he can feel behind it feels legit. Feels similar to the gods and demigods he's passed before- not unusual. But a fox can make themselves feel much more powerful than they truly are, however, it's the power *behind* him, not in front of him that proves it.

Quan nods enthusiastically, tugging at his scarf with pent up energy. "Um!! Yes, I want to get a wish from the god-"

The fox bit him, and he cursed and kicked the fox as his world dissolved around him-

His world fell in place around him again. Somewhere different. Not the cityscape he has been used to, not the countryside or even the ocean.....

A bridge surrounded him, and someone smacked into him from behind as he looked around- a picturesque river flowed by, much like the sea of people weaving around him, barely sparing a glance. The wind through the air alerts him to the clinking at his fingers, and he spares only a thought for his new accessory.

To the left was the town, all reds and browns and cobblestone, while on the right was a large green field, the perfect place to hide.

He runs to the left in a blast of speed, shoving off the ground and leaving only a poof of dust as he moves with a swish. The views of the town blur together as he runs, but he catches a few glimpses of his new location. A colosseum, fancy complexes and plainer ones, a tower, gates, a spring, an ocean- one he observed after scaling a house and sliding down the roof- He takes a few sharp turns so he can see more. This time, a town with green tipped roofs, and trees. Back the other way- the ocean he had seen earlier, fancy houses enclosed into a wall, and a port. Possible escape route! He takes just a few moments to test the water- streaking across it as though it were dry land laughing at the white foam he leaves behind.

This all, of course, happens in a few minutes of a cackling *ghoul*- someone so pale and thin and bulging- from his clothing- and fast all at the same time sprinting around and annoying all the

people in the town, weaving through crowds and stands as though he were born there.

Until someone staggers in his path- both with an unusual speed and unusual swagger and he knocks them over. His eyes bulge out. Rich lady? Between the clothing, her ears, and that.. Flute? It looked like a flute. He was pretty sure. Probably.

She smelled drunk.

He's just about to leave, when he hears the woman start giggling behind him. "You're not even going to help a lady- *hic!*- up?" She giggles again.

"Uh-" He sighs, then turns around with a bright, apologetic smile. "Yeah, I'll help you up. I got distracted, here!" He offers a hand, in which she limply places her own in- until Quan yanks her up easily.

They awkwardly stare at each other for a few moments, Quan holding a smile in place, and the woman looking like she was staring over his shoulder in a daze.

He's about to leave with a wave when the lady grabs his arm and starts talking with a slur. " Mm... your tail is so pretty... hehe... I'll tell X about that- We should, mm, go to the bar!"

"That uh-" He's trying to yank his arm out of her grip, even though his strength wasn't enough? When she starts moving, dragging him along, despite his attempts to escape. "That sounds like a fun idea!" He concedes. Quan can focus on escaping later- it seems a lot better here than anywhere else.

She cheerfully drags him along with an iron grip, her sharp nails digging into his jacket, until they arrive in front of the bar he passed earlier. "And here *hic* we are! The Fox Den! The best bar in town...." She finally releases him, and beckons for him to follow. He shrugs- it seemed interesting, and the competition probably wasn't going to start without him.

“You coming?”

“I’m coming-” He follows in with a bounce in his step, any trace of doubt erased. “I’m coming, hold on lady- speaking of which, what’s your name?”

‘I’m- *hic*- Chifu! The prettiest lady in town! And you must be one of the ugliest.” She announces proudly, before snorting, as though it was a grand award. Really, she seemed to speak like she was the most important person in town at any given moment, he notes with distaste. “Who are you? I don’t- *hic*- recognize you. You’re so *little*.”

As he always did when in a new area, a precaution Alexandra taught him so he wouldn’t get his name stolen- “You can call me An! And yeah, I’m new here, and 16 isn’t little!”

He grumbles a bit. “I’m here for the whole competition thing- have you heard about it? I can’t believe I have the chance to get a wish from a god- a god of kitsune even! It’s always so nice to see that a lesser god gets to be recognized by so many people, they must be incredibly grand, can you even imagine being granted anything you want-” He’s interrupted by her giggling.

“Can you even *imagine- hic!*- The competition! Ehehe, lesser gods are so cool, right? I mean like- a *wish*?” That seems to be the part that throws her into the worst hysterics, as she clutches her stomach and leans on the table, her cheek pressed face first into the wooden table’s surface.

“ I don’t know what I would wish for! Maybe money.... or more booze!” It throws her into another fit of hysterics, and this time, Quan joins her.

“Right? I mean-” He pauses and thinks. If he could wish for *anything*? “I think I’d wish for endless entertainment- everything is always so boring! Or I’d ask for something like-” He notices Chifu’s eyes on him and ramps up his energy. “Ooh! Or something like immortality, a glimpse of the future- anything! I’d like to be able to do anything, that way I’ll never be bored or hungry or sad again! Wouldn’t that be cool?”

She nods enthusiastically along with him. "Yes! Your wishes are so interesting, everybody else's just *aren't*, and it's so boring..." Chifu pouts a little.

He laughs as if embarrassed, and tugs on his scarf. "See, I don't even know how the competition works! I think that's kind of important, huh? I have these things-" He holds up his hands with the chains, and tugs up his scarf.

"But I don't know what to do or who to meet- do you know? You seem like- super smart and you feel like you have a lot of magic and stuff- and like! Really experienced- I've been through a lot myself, but I guess I don't live in a place like this." Quan says sheepishly.

"Well, silly!!! You flatter m- *hic!* I can explain anything about the tournament! It's like- A fighting match! And you have to win- Or else, you don't get to compete anymore, *hic!* I think it's called a tournament! And you won't, like, die, or anything. And I think-" Yet another word she draws out.

"Everybody gets these tokens!" She grabs his hand and shoves it in his face, the metal smacking him as the chains swing. "But they're not *all* the same. And you have to steal 'em! Yeah! You gotta steal 'em or, or... Knock them out, I think, I can't remember!" She dissolves into another fit of giggles.

Quan ponders over this for just a few seconds before he snaps back to attention. Chifu looks sleepy, and he should probably ask a few more questions before she falls asleep- and based on the way the bartender is eyeing them, he should probably make his grand escape before he has to pay for a beverage he didn't even drink.

"Do you know what kind of god is granting the wishes? I don't wanna be scammed here, y'know." He nudges her playfully. He bets she doesn't even know what it means to be scammed.

She hums, and sits bolt upright, her chest puffed. "A god just like me! Someone who's just as pretty an' smart an' clever, I bet *she* hates getting bored just as much as I do! You won't get *scammed*, everybody knows she's very super reliable- except when she's at the bar! She hangs out a lot at the bar."

“.....” No way. “I can’t imagine ever running into her- if she’s just like you, you might be the god, huh?”

She stares at him, and it’s as though the world falls away for just a few seconds. Then, she cackles. “HAHAHAH- no way you’re so silly! I’m not strong enough to be a god, I’m a lil old regular kitsune-” She bops his nose, and laughs at his cringe. “Don’t mistake my beauty for power, silly! I like you, kid. I’ll see you later- I can’t wait to see you win! Toodles~!”

Then with a sway and a thunk, she passes out on the table. Quan blinks. If what he thought was true, a god just passed out in front of him. He looks around.

Oh shit. The bartender. And with that, he makes his way from the boozy smell of the Fox Den, and back onto the streets, wandering while he waits for his summons to the Coliseum.

Quan glances up, down, and to the sides, taking in the Coliseum for the first time, and then more importantly the heavy weight on his hands. Quan raises his hand and tilts it from side to side examining the newly found chains on rings wrapping around his fingers like a mockery of jewelry. It has certainly been *beautiful*, but.....

Heavy. Encompassing. Just like the larger, proper chains he used to wear when he was younger.

The intent has been different- but ultimately, both seemed to try and hold him back, he noted with disgust, seeing how the chains were so long someone, most likely him, could get grabbed and swung- strangled even, it could be used as a noose. And they could slip off so easily- he tilts his hand down and watches the rings start sliding down before he closes his hand in a fist, keeping the rings firmly on his fingers.

He has his advantages, a cover for his plans. A young face, a scraggly looking body, and the proof of his brand of honesty.

Honesty is how you speak, not your actions. No one can blame you for sneezing at the wrong time- but they can blame you for having a cold you didn't tell them about. Simple as that.

It's not his first time being mistaken as a child but it's proven to have worked against Chifu. They treated him like a child, but a child he was not.

He's fast and strong- and as much as people hate to admit it, he's smart. He's smarter than *anyone*, because he can think through the information and formulate plans that much more quickly. He's the clearest winner. He hasn't lived through scuffles and destruction for the past 4 years without a plan. Those plans involved running yes, but it had been using his terrain to his advantage. Definitely.

Quan clenches his hands together, and ducks his face into his brightly colored scarf as he watches others explode into being around him, playing up the scene of a scared teenager.

He's going to win.

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