AUDITION SCRIPT — The Jester of Bergheim: The Brood

The following excerpts are provided with additional context to help you understand the characters, their motivations, and the emotional progression of each scene.

Please record only the passages highlighted in yellow. The remaining text is provided for context and does not need to be recorded.

We would particularly appreciate a natural performance that captures the protagonist's dry humor, emotional range, and occasional spectacular recklessness.

Scene 1 — The Jester:

“Mikkel’s jester is better,” thundered a bear-faced giant with a scraggly beard. Bits of beer foam clung to his moustache. The metal-rimmed drinking horn clutched in his huge fist swayed threateningly back and forth before the face of his companion, who had nearly passed out from drinking. “This one is scrawny. Pathetic. Not funny.”

I was in the process of gnawing on something like chicken wings. I was sitting comfortably with my feet on the table, surrounded by pandemonium and drunken madness. I had already been forced to hop around and to do a couple funny skits, gauging the guests’ humor level. A hard and thankless job. And it was all new to an amateur like myself. Until you’re asked to entertain people, it all just comes naturally, but when some scripted shit forces you to tell jokes to hundreds of other bits of script, that’s some apocalyptic shit right there. Something like “you have to persuade your coffee machine to make you scrambled eggs, or you die.”

“Though all these face-makin’ excuses fer men bring great shame to the Frost Union,” the giant went on. I raised my eyebrows, meeting his gaze. I thoroughly chewed and swallowed another bite of meat, staying calm and collected.

The hovding’s house was absolutely packed. Servants rushed about, the minstrels were plucking the strings like there was no tomorrow, the Norsemen were screaming horrible songs, totally out of sync with each other. Some were throwing up. I could hear a fistfight.

Meanwhile I was getting harassed by a Viking, who was wasted almost as much as my life.

“Yer an embarrassment,” snarled the beardo drunkenly. “Why d’ye need him, Harald?” he barked. “Should’ve grabbed a lass outta one o’ ‘em runts! I seen ‘er, she’s a nice-lookin’ broad. Whaddaya need ‘im for? To jump around on tables in that awful hat o’ his?”

That’s what he called my wonderful jester cap that I had made all by myself from a few rags! That was despicable! I had worked hard on that!

The massive dude’s screams were drawing stares. A circle had pretty much formed around us. Everyone must have been expecting me to defeat the wall of muscle and bone. To get the “David & Goliath 5.0” achievement. Hit the level cap in a heartbeat, get a

million Gold, the best armor set, and the love of all the local hotties.

Oh well… one can dream, I suppose.

“Why’re ye starin’ at me, runt?” The big guy was loving all the attention. People were listening to him. He had their interest. They were expecting a show. “Why ain’t ye jokin’?”

Fine.

I gave him a bored stare and flicked a gnawed chicken bone at his face. Forgetting my opponent, I reached for another chicken wing with a sigh. The guy sitting next to the bozo began coughing, his face twisting with laughter. The log was overflowing with system messages about my rising reputation. It was an absolute shitton. Dirty, maimed, rude guys were roaring with laughter all around me. Among this cackling mass, I was a strange, skinny idiot.

With my feet up on the table, though. Wearing great boots. The thick-leather ones. My trusted companions that I had pulled off Casanova’s corpse.

The Viking froze as though his beloved Odin had come down to this very hall and nailed the warrior to the floor with his spear. His trusty battle brothers were laughing right in the poor man’s face. Someone was shaking the chicken bone right before his reddening mug.

“Well, humping hedgehogs,” I mumbled, watching the warrior’s flabby face turn beet-red. The horn cracked and fell apart in his whitened fist. Ale exploded in all directions. The bozo got to his feet and began reaching for me.

“Ivar!” Harald’s voice boomed over the noise. My protector was sitting on his throne and smiling. The smile was soft and amicable, yet the bozo froze. The hovding raised his horn, looking his comrade right in the eye and added, “This is my jester. He is a part of my Pack.”

“He just…” the maddened Viking managed. “I… what ‘e did was—"

It would be a real shame if the hovding became annoyed and stopped protecting me. All the fans I’d have by then! But mom, that mean man started it!

“Get a grip,” I told Ivar sympathetically. “Get it together. Take what you were about to say and run it through your head. It would be best to count to ten. You can count, can’t you?”

Another massive reputation surge. The bozo’s face went all blotchy. Humiliation seemed to be the way to go. With a bunch of simple guys like this, no one would think about how subtle a joke was, its allegorical meaning, or the reference it was making. The more you humiliate someone, the funnier it is for everyone else. Though, of course, you need to tread really carefully.

“You… He…”

I threw a second bone at his face. I raised my eyebrow, and spoke as sympathetically as humanly possible.

“I’m sure you can do it! Don’t forget to breathe. Then, I’m sure we’ll be able to understand you. For now, you’re not doing a very good job. Your pauses are too long, and you’re speaking very hesitantly. ‘You, him, I,’ please figure out what you’re trying to say, Ivar!”

On his throne, Harald was roaring with laughter, like a suffocating donkey. The Norsemen’s laughter rang in my ears and made my belly vibrate.

“Immortal, are ye?” asked someone above me. I raised my head and saw one of the hovding’s men standing over me. Toothless Olaf. Harald’s sworn brother was grinning savagely, staring into the distance over the crowd’s heads. Surprisingly, the mad, drunk Vikings did their best to keep away from him. The same way you avoid homeless people on the subway.

Ivar was still standing there, laser-eyeing me. He was massive, at least six and a half feet tall. The Norseman’s right eyelid was twitching. The laughter was slowly subsiding. I think even the minstrels were losing the beat, though they weren’t really hitting the notes to begin with anyway. If the red-faced Viking was a kettle, he’d be whistling by now.

Someone else got up to my left. I slowly moved my feet off the table. Another old acquaintance from among Harald’s men, the one with the ugly mouth. Both he and Olaf were watching Ivar carefully, a bit like predators. And Ivar noticed this.

“Did ye hear what this worm said, Njal?” the giant wheezed. The ugly-faced Norseman simply shrugged. Olaf kept smiling and moved his legs further apart.

“But…”

“He’s the hovding’s jester, Ivar,” Njal said gently but firmly (yeah, that’s a thing). “That means he’s part of the Pack. You understand, don’t you?”

The giant shrugged and shot a look at the hovding.

“The Pack won’t protect ye forever, runt,” he said. How on earth can an NPC show emotion like that? Ivar’s hatred of me didn’t feel scripted at all. “One day Harald will toss ye out, an’ then…”

“By then I’ll have the respect of the whole faction,” I thought, then added: “Hopefully.”

“I don’t need the Pack’s protection, buttercup!” I blurted out. “Just like in that song: let them threaten me with bloody murder, but I’m still a handsome devil in a brawl! A handsome dev-i-i-il! Oh yeah!”

My reputation began skyrocketing again.

“Oo-oh,” Olaf drawled above me. “Let’s get out of here, Njal. The runt wants to die, so let’s leave him to it.”

Ivar looked at me with surprise. Then he looked over at the hovding. Harald had heard everything. He bared his teeth, clenched his goblet, and nodded slowly.

“I’ll shove yer teeth down yer throat!” roared the pleased Goliath. People stepped back and a circle formed around us. A table with the bozo on one side and a small defenseless jester in a red cap on the other. “Ye’ll be shittin’ bits o’ teeth till ye drop dead!”

I jumped onto the table. Ivar raised his head (because yeah, getting onto the table had made me a bit taller). Ivar looked confused.

“Your soul will be mine,” I shrieked as terrifyingly as I could and jumped onto his back, wrapping my hands around his neck. Giggling nastily, I clung to the bozo’s neck and stabbed him in the throat with a knife I’d grabbed off the table.

The Viking tried to throw me off but he couldn’t reach me. I kept hitting him in the neck with a flimsy bit of steel, hanging on the Norseman’s massive body like a hungry leech.

Karl “Iron-Snout” Ivar takes 3 Damage (Low-Level Penalty)
Karl “Iron-Snout” Ivar takes 2 Damage (Low-Level Penalty)
Karl “Iron-Snout” Ivar takes 6 Critical Damage (Low-Level Penalty)

“Bwahaha!” I squealed into the stunned Viking’s ear. He was waving his hands about like a bear swatting away bees, but couldn’t get to me. He just kept spinning around in place, the Norsemen’s faces streaked past me in a whirlwind.

The people were no longer laughing, just observing, without any amusement. Harald half-rose, watching the fight.

I kept stabbing and stabbing Ivar, until the system gave me the joyful message:

Kitchen Knife Has Been Broken.

“Your soul shall be mine!” I kept shrieking, like some possessed guy from a horror movie. “Miiine! I shall devour it! I shall devour all of it! The Gods shall forget your name. NO ONE SHALL SHARE A TABLE WITH YOU IN VALHALLA!!!”

The giant was finally able to reach me. He ripped me off his back like I was a kitten. He smashed me against the floorboards. The impact knocked the breath from my lungs. My vision went dark.

“My booties,” I thought sadly. The confused and (oh, kinky kittens!) scared Ivar loomed over me. Massive and all covered in blood, but still pretty much unharmed. His face twisted with horror; the Viking raised his foot.

I must have the same look when I crush cockroaches.

CRUNCH!

Scene 2 — Personal Loss:

My hesitation was interpreted in two very different ways. Stas immediately went on the offensive.

“We’ve all been here a very long time, Mr. Yegor. And the whole time we’ve been treated like… trust me, I can’t even think of a good comparison. They haven’t allowed us into town. They haven’t helped us in any way. We have no kind feelings toward these pieces of code. And I fail to understand why you do.”

“I don’t quite understand it myself,” I admitted. “Do you guys think you’ll get to the mountain passes in time?”

“Of course!”

“And you think you’ll get past those Cliff Children?”

“Children of the Cliff,” Stas corrected me. “We should. Megamind did, after all! We’ve grown stronger.”

“We can still level up really well here.” I tried a different angle.

“Fucking level up? We need to get the hell out of this place!” Yury exploded. “Quit stalling already! Let’s just get up and go. They’ll just get fucking reuploaded to the server. No one gives a shit. We need to get out of here.”

“We don’t lose XP when we die. It’ll be really tough and painful, but if we work together with the karls, we can level up really well.”

“No. Screw it all,” Yury said flatly.

“I agree.” Stas nodded. “What do you think, Mr. Ignat?”

“I want to go home,” he replied indifferently. “I don’t care how.”

“Mr. Oleg?”

“We go.”

“Mr. Yevgeny?”

“Forgive me, I know nothing about what’s happening out there. I’ll take any way out, as long as there is one. I have a family.”

“Everyone has a fucking family,” Yury said through gritted teeth. Everyone went quiet. “Maybe LoLio here doesn’t.”

I gave a wide smile. I felt a lump rise in my throat, and my ears filled with the crunch of wipers against the smashed windshield. My mouth went dry.

“I’m right, aren’t I?” Without knowing it, the Thief had kicked me right where it hurt.

My vision went dark. I half-closed my eyes, inhaled, then slowly exhaled. I gave a weak nod. Yes, I have no family.

Not anymore.

Scene 3 — The Scriptwriter

It was drizzling. The light rain rustled almost inaudibly against his hood. The Scriptwriter smoked, hiding the light in his fist. Across the street, beyond a wall of leafless poplars, a pharmacy on the ground floor of an old five-story building was living out its final days. The first letter on the sign had burned out.

Harmacy. Quite fitting, really.

The smoke made him dizzy, filling his brain with light nausea, but the old friend Andrey had given up long ago felt like family.

His fingers were cold. The Scriptwriter warmed them with his breath, not taking his eyes off the building.

The dark side street was silent. A bit further, by the intersection, the lights of a central avenue blazed—likely named after Lenin or the Revolution. Remnants of the past rooted deep in Russia's cities. He could hear the sound of cars hissing down the wet asphalt. There was the blinking yellow splotch of a traffic light.

There were people.

The Scriptwriter waited. The plan was risky, but he had made preparations. He had gotten there by commuter train, spent a few hours at the cemetery, tidying the grave of some Olga Ivanovna Kovalenko, playing the grieving relative. He had barely encountered anyone, but he played the part well. Once it got dark, the Scriptwriter made his way here, avoiding the main streets, hiding his face beneath the hood of his gray raincoat.

This walk reminded him of his very first release. A spontaneous and risky one. Full of mistakes. Her name had been Maria. A whore, as it usually goes. For many men, their first time happens with fallen women. The Scriptwriter was no exception.

He had picked her up from a roadside café on Vasilyevsky Island, under the gazes of her drunk colleagues. Maria had introduced herself as Angela, the way the cheap ones tend to do.

For a week Andrey had kept her in his basement, silently observing her plead, beg, and fly into bouts of rage. He would sit in a chair across from the chained woman and watch. He never raped her. He never hit her. He observed.

Having power over a human being who'd had a childhood, broken dreams, hopes and feelings, was exhilarating. He enjoyed simply observing his victim. The way she changed over time. The way she went mad from confusion.

The Scriptwriter hadn’t uttered a word all week. She was the only one who spoke. She flattered, she threatened, she begged, she promised, she hoped, she lost hope, she swore, she cried, she laughed. Andrey listened.

Then he strangled her. There was no spark.

None of that fancy criminal psychology stuff about the need to satisfy one’s sexual urges. To fuck this? Never. The Scriptwriter realized exactly what he enjoyed. He realized this was not enough for him. Too crude, too rough, too direct. It would have been much more enjoyable if there had been two victims. Or three.

But back then he couldn’t control that many people at once. He couldn’t have handled it. The risk was too great.

Maria had been the first. For almost a year, Andrey had lived in fear that he’d left behind evidence and would be found. He had even used his own car back then. But lost souls from the sticks are sometimes unimportant even to their families. He had gotten away with it. A year later, the Scriptwriter was more careful, more cautious. He escalated, studying reactions, enjoying the shock of his victims who were forced to play through his quests. Before The Project, his work for “Magical Realms” barely gave him an outlet.