

"It's hopeless, Joe. I'm not going to audition. I can't risk it after what happened last time." I said, sighing deeply afterwards. My best friend, Joe, looked at me like I was crazy.

"Excuse me? What did you just say?" he responded with a slight edge to his voice. I frowned, not understanding the paper thin menacing tone that he was implying.

"I said," I repeated. "It's hopeless-"

*Smack!*

I felt a sting on my cheek as Joe slapped me. "Ow! Why'd you do that?!" I asked angrily.

Joe looked at me steadily, and told me, "Bob, getting this role has been your dream."

"I should just give up. It's too hard." I mumbled.

Joe ignored me and continued. "I've seen what you're up against. Those lazy, arrogant actors you're competing with can't even put two lines together! You have practiced for months without end, while they barely even practiced! And now you're telling me that it is hopeless?! If so, you need to get a mental checkup, my man!"

I turned my eyes away from him and looked at the floor. "I can't do it. Remember what happened last time?" I mumbled.

"You're a much better actor now!" he replied.

"I can't risk the humiliation again,"

I waited for another slap from Joe, but I didn't get it. I looked up to see Joe deep in thought.

His face lit up as he realized something. "I know just what you need, Bob. Meet me at the zoo tomorrow at 8:00 sharp! I have something to show you." With that, he walked out of the room and went home. I decided to meet him there and see what he had in mind.

The next day, I met him at the zoo with no clue about what he wanted to show me. He led me to one of the open hippo care enclosures and pointed to one.

"Notice anything off?" he asked.

I peered at the gigantic hippo for some time until my heart skipped a beat when I saw that the only thing keeping it from escaping was a small rope tied to one of its legs. I gasped. I looked around for the nearest care agent and got his attention.

"Why is that massive hippo bound by that small rope?!" I asked urgently. "This is an open enclosure! It could break free at any moment and go on a rampage!"

He chuckled in such an easy going manner that I thought he was insane.

"Kid," he replied in the same manner. "That hippo, like every other hippo in this enclosure, has been bound that way for its entire life, and none of them have ever made any effort to break free."

He saw my confused expression and continued.

“When the zoo got these hippos, they were only babies, and back then, the tiny ropes were enough to keep them from escaping. They thought that there was no way they could break free. When they were big enough to do so, they didn’t try because they still thought that the ropes were unbreakable. Now, when all of them have thrice the amount of strength to escape, they don’t because they think they can’t.”

I slowly nodded and got back to Joe. “Did that sound familiar?” he asked.

“Yes. Yes it did.” I replied, finally understanding why Joe brought me here. Joe nodded in satisfaction.

I had decided to do the audition after that, and when the day finally came, I walked onto the stage, ready to show off all of my hard work. All of the other actors all laughed at me when I showed up, remembering how I humiliated myself last time. All I said in response was, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, laugh all you want. But today is going to be different.”

“Yeah, different as in you’ll do much worse!” one of them said, which made them all laugh harder. I shook my head and thought, just you wait.

As soon as I stepped onto the stage, I let all the months of practice flow out of me like an endless river. The judges were very impressed, unlike with all the other actors.

After the last actor had auditioned, the judges announced that I got the role. “Yes!” I had said, while everyone else looked at me in disbelief.

It was hard to believe that I would’ve lost the role just because I didn’t want to try. It was hard to believe that I would’ve given up on my dream just because I thought I couldn’t do it. Yet, I knew that millions of people around the world give up on their dreams just because they think they can’t achieve it, and they even refuse to try. I used to be one of those millions, but not anymore.