

NICK (Cristiano)

Character Profile:

A 29 year old single marketing professional living in New York city, Nick visits both sets of grandparents every weekend for dinner. Their house is always uncomfortably warm, and Nick takes the bus there besides. He should always be disheveled to some degree as a result (tie pulled away, hair slightly askew, etc. with the exception of his final scene.

He's often sarcastic to his family but **this cannot come off as mean-spirited**. Consider Ray Romano's portrayal of Raymond Barone. We have to share his frustration[s] but the character has to remain endearing. The audience MUST empathize with him.

So that's the challenge: be a lovable smart-ass.

Accent: subtle but articulate Jersey boy. (NOTE: It ain't "JOYzee". That's over the top.) His heritage may show more when he's really emotional (think Michael Imperioli's Christopher Moltisanti character in 'The Sopranos').

=====

AUDITION: Please be prepared to present NICK's introductory piece, preferably off-book:

#Nick's Soliloquy #1

NICK: (to audience) It was always hot in my grandparents' house. And I'm not talking "I should've worn short sleeves" hot. No, it was more like "it's August in Ethiopia" hot.

Growing up, I remember sitting in their living room, sweating, and trying to figure out my relation to these people who not only didn't seem to share my same environmental needs, but who also had reached an age I could barely comprehend.

But my grandparents firmly believed in the three "f's" of life: family, faith, and food.

So every Sunday for twenty-nine years, I bore the heat and religiously showed up for dinner.

CAITLIN (O'Hare)

Character Profile:

A twenty-something “girl-next-door” type. Charming and sharp-witted, she’s envious of Nick having both sets of grandparents alive and at his disposal when she herself has none. She’s drawn to Nick, but put off by his behavior toward his elders.

So that’s the challenge: simultaneously love and hate Nick,
and get the audience to sympathize with BOTH positions
via their fondness for the character of Caitlin.

Accent: NONE. Well, none to **us**. A natural, midwest dialect is fine. An actress who can deliver a convincing Boston-Irish accent would be ideal, but this is by no means necessary. What’s important is that she stands out as separate and distinct from the Italians who surround her.

=====

AUDITION: Please be prepared to present CAITLIN’s monologue, preferably off-book:

#Caitlin Monologue

CAITLIN: I am sorry about the other day, Nick. You didn’t deserve what I said. It’s just that, well, you see Nick, when I was thirteen and my grandmother was in the midst of reading me “The Old Man and the Sea”...

Well, some days I’d visit and she’d read with such excitement and joy and other days she wouldn’t let me in the door because she didn’t think she knew me.

She would stand there in a panic, screaming at me to leave her alone... her eyes darting back and forth--

That look in her eyes still haunts me and... I’m sorry, Nick. I should’ve told you that the other day.

AIDA (Gianelli)

Character Profile:

Late 70s. Aida believes with all her heart that she can fix anything with food. She loves and worries about everybody, expressing a platonic love for her brother-in-law Nunzio in one of the play's most subtle yet tender moments.

While she's got plenty of funny lines, her impact comes in delivering her catch-phrase for the fourth and final time when she closes the play. Her husband, in-laws... all her family and friends have either died or moved away and, smiling through her tears, she asks:

“Everything came beautiful, didn't it Nicholas?”

So that's the challenge: Win our hearts, and then rip them out of our chests.

Accent: subtle but articulate Jersey. (NOTE: It ain't "JOYzee". That's over the top.) Her heritage may show more when she's really emotional (think Doris Roberts as Marie Barone, without the cynicism; or Edie Falco).

=====

AUDITION: Please be prepared to present AIDA's closing monologue, preferably off-book:

Aida's Monologue

AIDA: Nicholas, do you know where I always wanted to go for years and years? Atlantic City. That's right. Nunz and Emma always came back with such stories, but your grandfather, he would have no part of such a fancy place.

But one day, I left him a plate in the icebox and I went. And you know what? I didn't like it. No.

The whole time I was there, I was wishing I was back home, taking care of your grandfather. I had to take care of him, Nicholas. He needed me to... so much.

How many people can get to be my age and say that... that there was someone who needed them that much?

I can say that, Nicholas. I can't go. Not from here. Your grandfather built this house for me. How can I go?

Stay for dinner. Please.

EMMA (Cristiano)

Character Profile:

Late 70s. Nick calls Nunzio and Emma “the loudest people I’ve ever met”. Their prototypes are Frank and Estelle Costanza from “Seinfeld”.

The dynamic of Emma’s character is summed up well in this exchange with her husband:

EMMA: Shall we say grace?
NUNZIO: Since when do we say grace?
EMMA: Shut up! We have company!

But she also exhibits wisdom and vulnerability (see monologue below).

So that’s the challenge: Make the audience laugh at Emma one moment,
but take her seriously the next.

Accent: subtle but articulate Jersey. (NOTE: It ain’t “JOYzee”. That’s over the top.) Consider the above-mentioned character of Estelle Harris as a blueprint for Emma.

=====

AUDITION: Please be prepared to present EMMA’s monologue, preferably off-book:

#Emma’s Monologue

EMMA: Maybe you feel bad for us, because you love us.
 But you’re not sorry. And I think that’s good.

You have a wonderful life ahead of you in Seattle. Why waste time being sorry? If I was sorry for every sad thing that happened in my life, I wouldn’t be able to get out of bed anymore.

One thing I know for sure Nicky... you can’t keep the people you love most around forever. You can pray and you can scream and you can cry... but you can’t keep them forever.

Funny, ya know... I never really thought you looked like your Uncle Nicky much. You were named for him, but I couldn’t really see him in you. But now I look at you and-- you look exactly like him.

Just try to be happy, Nicky. Okay? There’s nothing for you to be sorry about.

FRANK (Gianelli)

Character Profile:

Late 70s / early 80s. He's the patriarch of the family, having been put on a boat to America by his father when he was 14. Sent to live with distant relatives, he found they'd moved on when he arrived, forcing him to live on the streets for a time and become a self-made man.

He'll tell that story as many times as you'll listen to it.

Frank is a proud man, and deservedly so. One of his lines sums up his character very well:

"We're not PEOPLE, we're FAMILY!"

He has a few tender, introspective moments. During these, he has to be vulnerable and sincere. He hates revealing this side of himself, but sometimes things simply need to be said. Still, he loses his in-your-face demeanor at these times, delivering lines while wistfully looking out the window, etc. These are the moments when Frank cements himself in the audience's hearts.

So that's the challenge: be a lovable hard-ass.

Accent: subtle but articulate Jersey. (NOTE: It ain't "JOYzee". That's over the top.) His heritage may show more when he's really emotional (think James Gandolfini's Tony Soprano) but that has to fade when he's more low-key. The last thing we want is for any character in this family to be interpreted as mobster-esque.

=====

AUDITION: Please be prepared to present FRANK's introductory piece, preferably off-book:

#Frank's Soliloquy #1

[FRANK is seated in his usual chair.]

FRANK: (to audience) The very day I turned fourteen, my father put me on a boat. In my pocket, he stuffed two hundred lira and the address of a cousin in a place called Hoboken, New Jersey. The only advice my father gave me -- "Tengo famiglia." If you just said that in English, it

would be "I support a family."

But in Italian, it means more, much more:

"I am a man, I am doing well for my woman and my children, I have a reason for being alive."

NUNZIO (Cristiano)

Character Profile:

Late 70s / early 80s. Nick calls Nunzio and Emma “the loudest people I’ve ever met”. Their prototypes are Frank and Estelle Costanza from “Seinfeld”.

Nunzio’s character has two distinct facets: The first (loud and lovable) stands in stark contrast to the second (wise and selfless). We discover that Nunzio is dying and, as much as he’d like to leverage his condition to coerce Nick into staying with the family, he puts aside his self-interest for his grandson’s BEST interest.

So that’s the challenge: tickle our funny-bones, and then break our hearts.

Accent: subtle but articulate Jersey. (NOTE: It ain’t “JOYzee”. That’s over the top.) His heritage may show more when he’s really emotional (consider the aforementioned Jerry Stiller character) but that has to fade when he’s more low-key. He can’t be so cartoonish that the audience can’t connect with him emotionally.

=====

AUDITION: Please be prepared to present NUNZIO’s monologue, preferably off-book:

#Nunzio’s Monologue

NUNZIO: Nicky, remember when I told you I’ve been thinking about your Uncle Nicky lately? Well, I been thinking about him ‘cause... well, I been thinking about when we had to say goodbye.

Strange, you know, he would've been in his fifties now, but I can only think of him as young. I always think I should be able to picture him as older, having lived the life he should’ve lived.

But no, all I can see is this young, perfect man, waving goodbye in his uniform. And I knew how dangerous Korea was... oh, I knew that. Still, I just stood there and waved back.

But inside... inside I was wishing so hard that there was something I could say or do...anything... anything... anything at all, that would make him stay.

But there was nothing, Nicky. Nothing.