

he said yes. Two weeks later, I got a call about this script, and an audition. The Daniels were gracious enough to send the script over so I could prepare, and I read it and was blown away. I was so hungry for a script like this, for a role like this. I remember reading it until 5 a.m., and in my head I had all these ideas of what I wanted to do with this role. I was looking out the window, the sun was rising, and I said, "I have to go to sleep," because my audition was in the afternoon. It had been more than 25 years since I'd auditioned—I was so nervous, I was shaking. The Daniels were so sweet. Sarah Finn, the casting director, was amazing. And then I didn't hear from them for two months. I was miserable because I wanted this role so bad. Finally, I went to audition for a second time, and then that phone call came. I was screaming so loud. I was jumping up so high. And to this



Hustle

day, I still cannot believe how everything came to be.  
**FARRELL** So cool! Twenty-five years, brother? That's intense!  
**And Ke, a quick follow-up: Who did your deal for the movie?**  
**QUAN** Jeff Cohen, who was in *The Goonies* with me—he was Chunk—is all grown now and he's an entertainment lawyer. *(Group bursts out in laughter.)* When the producer of our movie was trying to make my deal, he said he never imagined that he'd have to talk to Chunk and Data for his movie. Anyway, then I did the whole thing, too—hired an acting coach, a dialogue coach, a voice coach—because I'm playing three different versions of the same character. I also hired a body-movement coach, and he'd pick different animals for me to practice as. One was a squirrel. I

watched countless videos of nothing but squirrels on YouTube. I was on all fours, trying to move like a squirrel.  
**SANDLER** Chunk got you a good deal, by the way?  
**QUAN** Jeff is an outstanding lawyer.

**Colin, you and Martin McDonagh worked together on *In Bruges*—with Brendan Gleeson, who is again your co-star in *Banshees*—and 2012's *Seven Psychopaths*. Were you all looking for another thing to do together?**  
**FARRELL** It came out of the blue. I actually tried to talk Martin out of hiring me for *In Bruges*. He said, "That's interesting. Why?" And I said, "This script is so good. You don't want anyone coming in with the baggage that I have." He said, "Noted. I want you." *In Bruges* was a big turning point for me. And Brendan I adore—he's a soulmate. It doesn't make sense—we're so different in age and look, we live very different lives, we move through the world in very different ways, and yet, I swear to God, I've known him longer than the 46 years of my life. But, yeah, we had no idea it was coming. Martin had written the script seven years before. Then he put it away. The one I read seven years ago was better than the majority of things you read, but Martin thought it was shite.

**Adam, you've always been into sports—which pops up in *Happy Gilmore* and *Uncut Gems*—and particularly basketball, which you also play, and which I know can take a toll on the body...**  
**SANDLER** *(Laughs.)* Yes, got a new hip three months ago. Moving just fine.

**On *Hustle*, you were surrounded by NBA stars and legends, which must've felt like fantasy basketball camp.**  
**SANDLER** Sure. LeBron [James] and Joe Roth had this script. It was about a scout. They thought I might be interested. And I got excited from there. Like you said, I love basketball. And I loved this guy who cares a lot about another human being. He cares about himself, but he also kind of falls for this guy, Bo Cruz, and just wants the best for him, and is selfless, and will go as far as he can to make sure this kid lives up to his potential. It was exciting to play that guy.

**Jeremy, you were essentially playing your writer-director, Elegance Brattann. How did you guys find each other, and what's it like when the guy you're playing is always just a few feet away?**

"I guess I just worried people to like me." Sandler says of his goal when he started in the business. "I started caring about coming up to other stuff the older I got."



"I WAS AN INCREDIBLY SHY KID. BEING AROUND OTHER ACTORS, SUDDENLY I FELT LIKE I'D FOUND MY TRIBE. I STARTED WANTING TO BE AROUND OTHER PEOPLE."

AUSTIN BUTLER



Elvis

**POPE** An agent sent me the script and was like, "I hope you love it as much as I do—but even if you don't, you should meet this human. I think you guys are of the same mind, creatively." I read the script, fell in love with the words and wanted to know what happened to him after boot camp. Then we met, and he was just such a light. I felt like it did with Tarell, who actually helped fund and support Elegance's first documentary; we instantly bonded. But then there was nine months of waiting. I was like, "I thought we connected. What happened?" But it was just life doing life and studios doing studio things. Then I got the call. I'm grateful for the experience. I wanted to protect him because I knew that he was being so vulnerable by giving us this story. This was his feature debut as a Black queer man going, "I want to be in Hollywood. I want to tell my story." So I thought, "Let me be the person they have to meet before they see you." This is someone who got kicked out of his home for being gay and lived on the streets for 10 years, so he didn't see this for himself.

**Brendan, Darren Aronofsky says that he looked at a ton of people for the role of Charlie in *The Whale* but wasn't sure anyone could do justice to it until he came to you.**

**FRASER** He didn't know if he was going to make the movie or not when I met him. I didn't even have sight of the screenplay before I met him. I was just glad that he was interested in me doing this, and he did intimate that it was important to him to hire someone who was hungry, no pun intended. When I did get sight of the screenplay, it made my teeth sweat. He staged a reading at St. Mark's in Greenwich with Sadie Sink and [the *Whale*'s playwright and screenwriter] Sam Hunter—it is, like with Elegance, Sam's story in a way—and eventually we moved forward.

**Let's close with the best piece of advice you've received.**

**BUTLER** Make it about the work. There's so much noise around, so much that can end up blowing you like a flag in the wind.

**FARRELL** Before I did my first American film, Pierce Brosnan got me in a bear hug, picked me up and said, "Keep being held." I don't know that he knew that I was bold, but it was a lovely thing to hear.

**SANDLER** A lot of the guys I've worked with over the years, older actors

and actresses, like to say before we move on from a setup, "Let's go one more and see what happens. We're here. It's set up, let's go one more." Sometimes you land on something you weren't expecting.

**FRASER** Ian McKellen [Fraser's co-star in *Gods and Monsters*] said, "Approach each role as if it's the first and the last time you will act," and that's stayed with me.

**POPE** "Audiences are unreliable, but you are not." When you do the work and investigate and excavate and find out your why, the sky can be the limit. They will always be unreliable, but when you do those things, you are not.

**QUAN** Had you told me a year ago, "Ke, you'll be among these amazing actors," I would've said, "Get the f out of here." Winning the lottery would be easier than being at this table. So I hope my story inspires others. If they have any doubt about what they can accomplish or that their dream can come true, well, look at me. My dream came true. Be patient. Your time will come.

*Interview edited for length and clarity.*

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