

in the mix

These days, Jan Luis Castellanos is living the dream, with roles on Netflix's *13 Reasons Why* and Quibi's *Don't Look Deeper*. But back in 2018, he nearly gave up on acting and headed home to New Jersey. Landing the role of a vampire named Topher on the Hulu series *Marvel's Runaways* changed everything.

"I walked into the audition and couldn't believe I was there," Castellanos says. "The casting director, Patrick Rush, asked me to tell him a little about myself and I just went off for God knows how long. I was broke and had nothing to lose. I didn't even have a headshot."

Some might call that a lucky break. Castellanos credits hard work and classic motivational literature. "I can't run away from what really helped me initially — reading and practicing the lessons in *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and *Think and Grow Rich*."

He was just nine and spoke no English when he landed in the Garden State from the Dominican Republic. Castellanos discovered acting in high-school productions of *West Side Story* and *Jersey Boys*. During college in New Jersey he did a little modeling, but when he arrived in Los Angeles with fifty-six dollars in his pocket, he had a secret plan — one he'd never revealed, even to his mom. He wanted to be an actor.

"I always kept the acting thing very low key," Castellanos says. "Everyone's an actor here. I wanted to mean it when I said it."

After scraping together some money

from modeling, he signed up for classes at Hollywood's New Collective acting studio. His coach there introduced him to his manager, who sent him on that first fateful audition. Since then, Castellanos has come to believe that every failure and every success is meant to be. For example: he flubbed an audition for a pilot the same day he was asked to read for Diego on *13 Reasons Why*.

"Little did I know that all my nervous energy from messing up the other audition was perfect to give to Diego. I was in his territory and able to play up his rage to the casting director. If I had nailed the other audition, maybe I wouldn't have been on *13 Reasons Why*."

Next up, he plays the romantic lead in the sci-fi drama *Don't Look Deeper*, directed by Catherine Hardwicke and costarring Don Cheadle and Emily Mortimer. Originally brought on for a supporting role, Castellanos showed such great chemistry with fellow newcomer Helena Howard that he was upgraded to "love interest."

So far, all the manifesting-success advice seems to be working, but Castellanos takes nothing for granted, adding philosophically, "I'm grateful for the things that didn't happen."
— Hilary Hattenbach

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT GILLIARD, GROOMING BY ARIELNE WILLIS

Notes to Self

With quiet resolve and self-help bestsellers, an actor steers his way to success.

