

Armitage Shanks Checks Into The Hyatt

by j. h. woodyatt

"I'm sorry," the clerk says. "We need your real name for the reservation."

I scowl at her through an opioid haze. "Armitage Shanks *is* my real name."

The clerk snickers. "Your mum must have really wanted you to be pissed on from cradle to grave, eh?"

"Do you know who you're talking to?" I say, lisping the initial consonant through my missing top incisors.

I'm sure she *thinks* she knows who she's talking to. She thinks she's talking to a skid row tramp. My costume doesn't help dispel her first impression of me. I'm wearing sweat pants and a T-shirt with a lurid cartoon of a dinosaur on it, under a dirty wool leisure suit that I hastily liberated from a corpse I found reposing behind a rubbish bin in the alley behind the hotel not half an hour ago.

I must certainly smell like a battle trench.

I straighten up my spine, and I rock back on my heels to rebuke her in the firmest voice I can muster despite my somnolence. "I am Armitage Tiberius Shanks, Emperor of Antarctica and Protector of Australia and New Zealand," I bellow at her, "and I don't need a reservation."

The clerk looks bemused. "This is the Mount Olympus Hyatt Regency, and I can assure you Mr. Shanks, even Zeus himself would

need a reservation on New Years Eve at this property, but let me look to see if we have any cancellations in the computer."

"I'll cancel the whole lot of you if—" I hiss, but I'm interrupted by a manager bot tugging on the clerk's sleeve and pulling her aside to whisper.

Finally. Now, I'm getting somewhere.

After a moment, the manager punches a few keys on the clerk's computer and steps back. She smiles at me. Perfect teeth. Well-tended hair. Make-up applied precisely according to corporate protocol. "I have a suite on the mezzanine level," she says. "I'll need a major credit card."

I take out my fountain pen and snatch a pad of note paper off the clerk's work surface. I sketch out by hand a nearly perfect drawing of a Mastercard issued by the Bank of Antarctica. The name reads ARMITAGE SHANKS. I tear the sheet of paper off the pad and hand it to the clerk. She looks to be struck dumb for a beat, then she turns to the manager bot, who wiggles his forefinger back and forth and purses his lips.

The clerk takes the paper and types the number off the front into her computer. Hamster wheels turn, and the clerk gives me a nervous smile. I grin back at her, making sure to stick the tip of my tongue through the space where my incisors used to be. She looks back at her computer.

"Mr. Shanks," she brightens. "You'll be in room 399. That's on the third floor. The elevators are behind the fountain—"

"I know where it is," I say, snatching the plastic key-card out of her hand. "Have room service send me a new suit and a dentist, first

thing in the morning. I'm going to bed. Don't wake me up before ten o'clock."

"Yes, sir. We'll be happy to do all that for you."

"Remember," I point my finger right at her nose. "Not before ten o'clock. There will be nine hells to pay if I don't get some sleep soon."

The manager bot taps his earphone and walks to his desk behind the counter with the drawing of the Mastercard I produced. The clerk smiles at me.

"We're happy to have you staying with us, Mr. Shanks."

Not as happy as me. Not nearly as happy as me.

