

## ***Watch How You Treat People***

*A short story by Henry Cavanaugh*



Chris Pratt usually liked doing interviews to promote his films but today he really wasn't in the mood. He hadn't managed to get much sleep thanks to his young baby demanding attention frequently throughout the night and as such the normally charming and charismatic actor was feeling less accommodating than usual. The interviewer from TrendFilm Magazine had then had the gall to show up a whole hour late and offer the lame excuse of traffic. Traffic?! Maybe that worked when students tried it on their teachers but it was different when it was an A-List celebrity's time being wasted. To make matters worse, the magazine hadn't even sent over a cute female interviewer like Chris had requested - no, he was met by a middle-aged man with a round gut, yellowing teeth and severely thinning gray hair.

Chris didn't even bother with any niceties, just getting straight down to business. "You're here for an interview so let's do this," he said, staring at his watch. "We'll talk out by the pool. Follow me and don't touch anything." The A-List actor got a real thrill out of making people walk through the giant mansion he shared with his new supermodel wife, showing off the luxury that he lived in and that they would likely never achieve. A quick glance back at the overweight interviewer confirmed that he was both enamored with and envious of everything he saw, just as Chris had suspected.

"Wow!" the reporter blurted out before hastily turning his head away and blushing. "Erm, sorry about that. I'm actually rather impressed with your home if you don't mind my saying so." It was true that the house was very impressive, with a huge swimming pool as the centerpiece of the property, surrounded by a large patio area with several loungers and a barbeque. It was here that Chris finally halted, directing the man to sit on a deck chair while he himself relaxed back on one of the loungers. The actor was wearing a tight-fitting tee and a pair of shorts that hugged his muscular thighs as well as showing off his crown jewels - he didn't see the point of underwear when he was in his own home - with the outfit completed by the addition of a glittering silver watch.

"I'll be honest with you," Chris began. "When I agreed to do this interview, I requested someone younger and more attractive... and most importantly, female. What happened?" Although he had a public reputation for being a fairly happy-go-lucky guy, Chris actually had quite the arrogant streak and it rose to the surface whenever he was surrounded by people he deemed to be lesser than himself. This interviewer - whatever his name was - most certainly qualified to be in that group. They were absolute leagues apart! People loved to stare at Chris whereas this guy... Well, he was an eyesore to say the least.

The journalist cleared his throat nervously. "Well, I'm afraid I was the only journalist the magazine was able to send out on the day you requested." He looked around him nervously as though expecting security to descend at any moment. "Oh, um, my name is Marlon, by the way. Marlon Humphrey."

"Pleased to meet you, Marlon," Chris replied in a monotone voice that suggested he was anything *but* pleased. "Now, what did you want to ask me? Let's not waste any time." There was something about the way he spoke that caused Marlon to tremble slightly - it wasn't fear or excitement, merely apprehension.

"Right, well..." the man began, his words barely audible. "What I wanted to know was, erm, well... how you feel about becoming such an unlikely sex symbol."

For the first time since they had begun speaking, Chris actually smiled. "An unlikely sex symbol?" he asked rhetorically, chuckling to himself. "I think that's a bit of an understatement. I'm pretty sure that there aren't many people who wouldn't recognise me if I walked past them on the street, dude. Well, except maybe for those people who are blind, or deaf, or too stoned on drugs to care. Even then, I'm fairly certain they'd still remember my face."

Marlon was truly surprised by just how brazen the actor was. He kept expecting the other to break out into a laugh and reveal that he was putting on a show for him and the real Chris Pratt was actually as humble as his public persona suggested but that moment never came. "Ah, um, okay. Apologies, I just meant to inquire whether that was something you had in mind when choosing which films to accept roles in?"

"C'mon man, of course! When you look this good, of course you deliberately choose roles where you can show off as much skin as possible. That's the only reason I took the lead role in Guardians Of The Galaxy - because I knew that I could wear practically nothing and no one would bat an eyelid. It was all part of the plan. You know, like, 'the look' - the whole package. I mean, obviously it doesn't hurt that I'm also a good actor, but it's mainly about looking hot." The last sentence was uttered with a smirk, a knowing nod towards the reporter's obvious admiration for his body.

With each passing comment, the true inner ugliness of Chris Pratt continued to emerge right before Marlon's very eyes. Aesthetically and physically, the man was gorgeous, but that was lost behind his colossal ego. "Okay, okay, I get the idea," Marlon said quickly. "So, how many more films do you have on your Marvel contract? Have you put in any thought as to how long you'd like to play Star-Lord?"

"What, you thinking of trying out for the role once I'm done with it?" the actor retorted, his tone dripping with mockery. The look Chris cast towards Marlon was full of disdain and disrespect, as if the interviewer was nothing more than dirt on his shoe. "Just between us, I don't think you'd fit in the costume, do you?" This latest remark prompted Marlon to flinch; he'd always been insecure about his weight and he'd expected a little more grace from somebody who had famously been much rounder at the start of their acting career. Apparently he'd been hoping for too much from Chris Pratt - everything about the actor that he'd seen so far had been incredibly disappointing.

"Erm, actually," Marlon began, swallowing hard, "I was wondering if you had considered which films you might be taking on next. Are there any non-Marvel movies you're considering?" He was desperately trying to steer the conversation away from his own insecurities, and towards something the star could offer to the world at large. After all, it had been made crystal clear that Chris Pratt didn't care one iota about him personally.

Chris laughed heartily, slapping his thigh as he did. "Oh, Marlon, if only you knew!" he exclaimed, his grin broadening into a wide smile. "You see, I have got plans for the future far beyond anything you could possibly imagine. I'll be bringing in the big bucks while you... what, make ten dollars an interview? Can't be much more or you'd be able to afford better clothes! I guess you're limited when you have to buy 3XLs though, huh?"

Marlon swallowed a lump in his throat. He couldn't believe that he'd been so easily dismissed by such a famous and successful person. He felt stupid, like a child who'd been caught stealing candy from the corner shop. His confidence was completely shattered now and the Hollywood actor seemed to be relishing in the mental anguish he was causing to Marlon, if his smug smirk was anything to go by. "Erm, okay. I suppose you're right," he admitted, having no idea how to respond to the statement.

"Yeah, well, I am," Chris shot back. "No offense intended. Now, are we done?"

"Well..." Marlon began hesitantly, trying to regain some semblance of composure. "Yes, I guess that's it. Thanks for chatting with us."

"Oh yeah, no problem," the actor replied dismissively, turning around to leave. "Have fun with your job, Marlon. Don't work too hard." With that final parting shot, Chris Pratt left the room without another word.

Marlon sat frozen in place, his mouth agape and his face burning with humiliation. What had just happened? Why had the interview turned out so horribly? How could he have misread the guy so badly, despite the fact that they hadn't even met before? He was suddenly overcome with anger and frustration, and a sense of betrayal. He'd been so excited about interviewing Chris Pratt, and here he was, reduced to a pathetic blubbing mess after he'd barely spoken two words to the man. At that moment, he swore he would get his revenge...

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Upon arriving back at his rented flat (which he miserably noted was about one hundred times smaller than Chris' mansion), Marlon discovered a parcel waiting for him on his doorstep. That was particularly strange as he knew for a fact that he hadn't ordered anything to be delivered, nor was he expecting anything from anyone. Still, curiosity couldn't be ignored and so the journalist brought the small box inside and quickly tore it open. Inside was a jewelry box with two letters written in gold cursive: HC. Upon opening it, Marlon caught sight of a beautiful silver watch - one that looked far more expensive than anything he could afford! There was something vaguely familiar about it though and after a few seconds of thought, he was finally able to place it: Chris Pratt had been wearing an identical one during their interview earlier that day!

The journalist took his time examining the watch, marveling at its intricate details and elegant design. It was made from stainless steel, which gave off a rich gleam that contrasted perfectly against the black face of the timepiece. A thin strap circled the wrist, allowing it to be worn without being too bulky or uncomfortable. To Marlon's surprise, the watch came with a customized engraving on the back, which also read 'HC'. If that was a brand, it wasn't one that he'd ever heard before but then again what did he really know about luxury jewelry? It made absolutely no sense that it should find its way to Marlon's door but the man wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth - no, he was going to take advantage of that gift!

Upon removing the watch from the box and slipping it on over his wrist, a shiver rushed through Marlon's entire body. As he fixed the clasp in place, a hot flush activated, catching him by surprise. The watch seemed to glow and emit a soft light, almost as though it was alive. It was mesmerizing and Marlon found himself staring at it, completely transfixed. As he did this, his overweight body began to shed the weight that he had tried and failed to lose so many times over the years. His skin grew taut and smooth, and his muscle tone improved dramatically within moments. For a brief



moment, he was so slender he was practically stick thin, but this soon changed as his muscles began to expand to accommodate his new physique. With each passing second, his chest swelled and his arms bulged, until he looked like a seasoned gym-goer. Before long, his chubby frame had transformed into a ripped and toned body that was far more appealing than anything he had ever possessed before.

Marlon's heart skipped several beats when he saw how much leaner and healthier he now appeared. His stomach was flat and toned, his limbs were thick and solid, and his shoulders were broad and powerful. He couldn't believe how different he looked from just minutes ago. Despite all of his efforts over the years, none of them had made any difference whatsoever, yet this watch had completely transformed his body in a matter of seconds. He couldn't help but wonder why but the answers would have to wait as his transformation continued. Soon, his clothes began to change shape to suit his new form. First, his loose fitting T-shirt shrank into a tight-fitting tank top that stretched over a pair of beefy pecs; then his jeans became a pair of slim fit trousers that hugged his muscular thighs. Finally, his shoes morphed into a shiny pair of black boots that encased his feet. When everything finished changing, Marlon was a totally different person. In the blink of an eye, he'd gone from a fat slob to a superhero physique!

While his body had undergone a complete transformation, that wasn't quite the end of things for Marlon as his face soon began to shift in order to match the much more aesthetically pleasing appearance of the rest of his body. In fact, he was beginning to adopt some familiar features, namely those of the actor he'd been so rudely dismissed by earlier that day!

With each passing second, his formerly round cheeks shrank down in size, eventually transforming into a square jawline and a set of razor sharp cheekbones. His nose was refined and sharpened, whilst his lips became plump and full. Even his eyes changed to become more angular and defined, while his brows now fell gracefully across his forehead. The only remaining part of his face that remained unchanged was his chin, which was still rather large, but not nearly as pronounced as before. His previously saggy jowls had tightened up and become more firm, while his once puffy double chin was now noticeably less so. His skin was remarkably smooth, supple, and radiant, with a natural glow that had never been present before. Finally, his thin hair grew back with renewed thickness and was combed back and styled,



leaving him looking younger and far more attractive than he ever imagined possible. Even in his younger years Marlon had been cursed with greasy skin and frequent oily spots and blemishes. Now there wasn't even the vaguest hint of imperfection!

Throughout this whole thing, Marlon remained completely transfixed by the clock face of the watch until he was finally released from its hypnotic grasp and allowed to perceive the dramatic changes that had just occurred to him. The watch had done something remarkable to him, something that he'd never even dreamed of, but he certainly wasn't complaining. He didn't care what it was that it had done, so long as it worked. It had transformed him and made him look like a god. No, better than a god: Chris Pratt! After all, the real deal had clearly considered himself to be the best thing since sliced bread - now it was Marlon's turn to enjoy that enormous ego.

While all this was happening, back at the Pratt mansion, the Hollywood A-Lister was forced to endure a much more unpleasant transformation. After all, since Marlon had become Chris Pratt, somebody would need to replace the overweight journalist that he'd so openly mocked earlier that day! That would be Chris' fate. He was still resting on the lounge by the pool when his transformation started to take effect. At first, he felt no immediate effects, but after a few minutes, he noticed that his clothes were becoming tighter around his waist and hips. Opening his eyes and looking down at his formerly flat stomach, Chris was horrified to discover that it had bloated up with fat in a matter of minutes. He looked like he'd swallowed a whole planet! His skin was moist and greasy, making him seem like a complete mess. His hair was a total disaster, falling into disarray and causing his normally immaculate coif to resemble a bird's nest. Not only that but it had severely thinned, leaving huge bald spots, and what remained had turned a miserable gray!

Worst of all, his face looked absolutely horrible. His cheeks were sunken and puffy, his nose was wide and bulbous, his eyelids drooped, and his eyebrows were bushy and unruly. His Hollywood good looks were gone in an instant, replaced by the visage of the very man he had enjoyed mocking. His gut wasn't the only part of him that was inflating with new flab either, as his butt and chest had grown considerably too. Everything else about him was also getting larger, including his hands and feet. Eventually, his entire body ballooned and expanded, causing him to gain an additional forty pounds of fat, turning him into an entirely different person - namely Marlon Humphrey!

Chris was shocked by how much he resembled Marlon, but there wasn't much time to dwell on his misfortune as his transformation continued. Suddenly, he was hit with a wave of nausea, followed by intense abdominal pain and cramps. Then, his tank top ripped apart as the seams gave out under the pressure of his expanding frame. The sudden loss of his upper body clothing caused the room to grow increasingly cold, but

Chris hardly noticed. He had a much bigger problem on his hands, namely his rapidly growing belly. It kept swelling and pushing against the confines of his shorts, threatening to burst them open at any moment. As he tried desperately to contain it, the material quickly began to tear, and with a loud ripping sound, Chris' pants split down the side. This caused his oversized belly to pop right out, revealing his flabby gut to the world. For a brief moment, he felt a rush of embarrassment, but that feeling was short-lived. His mind soon reverted back to his old self, and with a cry of 'Holy shit!' Chris got to his feet and ran away from the pool house.

Back in the smaller apartment, the man who had once been Marlon Humphrey was still standing in front of the mirror. His reflection was now that of Chris Pratt and he was having the time of his life flexing his muscles and seeing the actor's handsome face reflected back at him. As he did this, he knew that his wish for revenge had been granted - from then on, he was going to be the one and only Chris Pratt. Considering how the actor had treated him, he was going to make sure to be a much better man than the real individual had been, although it didn't seem like that would be too difficult. His main goal was simply to get back at the man who had humiliated him so badly, and he had just the plan to do that.

Upon arriving back at the Pratt residence, the former journalist turned actor was immediately ushered inside by the doorman, who seemed confused as he hadn't seen "Chris" leave. Once he was inside, he made his way through the house until he was able to find where the former actor was hiding. As soon as they locked eyes, the new Chris Pratt burst out laughing. "How you doing, *Marlon*?" he asked, enjoying calling the other by his former name. "I thought I asked you to leave my property, hmm? What are you still doing here, creeping around like a pervert?"

"No, no, this can't be happening!" the other man exclaimed desperately, his chubby cheeks wet with tears. "You switched our bodies! You've stolen everything! You can't do this to me, I'm Chris fucking Pratt!"

"That's where you're wrong, buddy. *I'm Chris Pratt*, now and forever," the new actor retorted smugly, folding his muscular arms over his chest. "And you're on my private property right now. If you don't want trouble, then leave, because I won't hesitate to call the cops if you don't."

Marlon gasped in horror. He couldn't believe that he'd fallen victim to such a cruel prank. He'd never anticipated that his behavior could possibly have any consequences, especially not one that would cost him his body and livelihood. The situation was all too surreal, and he was completely unprepared for it. He already knew that if he was to try and tell anyone the truth - his supermodel wife, for example - then they would laugh him off. Nobody would ever believe such a ridiculous story as a body swap between a

Hollywood A-Lister and an overworked and overweight film journalist! With his hands trembling uncontrollably, the man shook his head and muttered, "Okay, okay..." before slowly backing away towards the door, utterly defeated.

The actor watched him go, chuckling to himself as he admired his physique. He was incredibly excited by how far he'd come in such a short amount of time. After all, the real Chris had slaved away for months to become physically fit and attractive whereas he had achieved it in mere minutes! Only that morning, he'd been a slovenly, overweight mess who couldn't even bench press more than twenty pounds, yet now that felt like a whole lifetime ago! He had his whole life ahead of him - life as a celebrity stud with a gorgeous wife and more money than he could possibly know what to do with. What could be better than that?

With an unmatched cocky smile on his face, Chris walked back into the house and heard the sound of heels against the marble floor from just a few rooms away. It seemed his new wife was home from whatever photoshoot she'd been at that day which meant that she could help him carry out his plan to further acclimatize himself with his new body. The idea of being able to convince her so easily that he really was the real Chris Pratt was incredible and he couldn't wait to give it a go.

Standing there with his arms folded across his chest and waiting for his wife to arrive and drop down onto her knees in front of him, the new Chris Pratt felt absolutely unstoppable. He had the whole world at his feet and more than enough arrogance to go with it!

