

## ***Face Of The Company***

*A short story by Henry Cavanaugh*

"Wait, wait, wait... you want me to do all the work of a CEO but you're going to use Jake as the face of the company? What the hell does that even mean? If I'm doing the work, why shouldn't I be the one getting the credit?" Liam was absolutely furious. Despite toiling away at his job for over a decade and slowly rising through the ranks, he was being fucked over at the last minute just because he apparently didn't look the part of a CEO. No, they wanted to promote one of the brainless interns just because he was young and muscular and would therefore bring in more potential customers. Not only that but Jake would be earning the exact same paycheck as him! How in the everloving hell was that fair?!



Jake Arden was exactly the kind of guy who made Liam's blood boil. He was young, dumb, and full of himself. But this time it wasn't just any old intern, it was someone he worked alongside every single day and had been forced into training under his supervision - not that the idiot had ever seemed to actually bother learning anything. From Liam's point of view it was a miracle that Jake could count as high as twenty and even then it was probably only because it was the amount of reps the gym-loving fool did on whatever exercise he was currently doing. Yeah, the only thing that Jake seemed to care about was his image. He was always focused on how he could look better which was why he regularly flunked off work early to get to the gym or showed up late after deciding to sneak an early workout in. Being the golden boy that he was, Jake never got punished for it either and Liam was left to stew in his bitterness.

Finally the overworked and overqualified thirty-six year old reached breaking point and conspired to do something about his younger nemesis. He wasn't in the business of petty revenge though, nor would he go so far as criminal behavior - it simply wasn't his style. No, Liam decided to take a more subtle approach to this upcoming payback, turning to the services of a warlock operating through the dark web. It was hard to find any information on the shadowy figure but he offered what Liam was looking for: a way to make Jake suffer. Since the younger man loved his big muscles and youthful glow so

much (and the company saw it as the perfect match for their brand), he was going to make sure to strip both of those things away from him!

After receiving a hefty sum from one of Liam's off-shore accounts, the warlock concocted a spell that would gradually make Jake's muscles deteriorate while restoring Liam's own health. The younger man's loss would be the new CEO's gain! The spell wouldn't be instantaneous but rather do its work over a period of days, during which Liam would be able to see the results for himself. Of course he was excited to see his own muscles growing and some youthfulness return to his features but the part he was much more excited about was the damage that would be done to Jake's beautiful body. By the time it was all over, Jake would be too ashamed to ever step foot in a gym or in front of a camera ever again!

The first part of the plan went off without a hitch. Liam was in the office when Jake arrived, late as always and so distracted that he'd almost collided with Liam's receptionist. He didn't apologize though and instead brushed past her and walked right into the new CEO's office without so much as knocking on the door. "Oh, hello Jake," he said, pausing in his typing to look up at the handsome man standing before him. There was a hint of malice in his voice, but Jake being as dimwitted as he was, Liam knew that the other man wouldn't even pick up on it. "Only an hour late today, this might be a new record for you!"

"I'm sorry, mate. I'll make sure to come in earlier tomorrow." Jake did his best to sound apologetic but Liam was able to see right through it. That promise to arrive earlier the following day was a complete lie - if that happened then it meant pigs were out there flying somewhere. Liam watched as Jake threw himself down in one of the chairs on the other side of the desk and ran a hand through his beautiful golden curls. "The board wants you to coach me on the company goals and stuff, right? For the big handover speech next week or something," the younger man grunted, throwing his feet up onto Liam's desk and drawing even more ire from the new CEO.

Biting back the urge to snap at Jake, Liam instead sighed and shook his head. "We can get to that in a little bit," he declared, knowing the comment would catch the other by surprise. Usually Liam was the type to try and keep all conversations focused on their work, mostly because he found Jake unbearable at the best of times. "How did the gym go this morning? Make any personal bests?" Never in a million years would Liam actually care about the progress Jake made in the gym; his question was instead with the sole intention of seeing whether any aspects of the spell had come into effect yet. Judging by the way the younger man squirmed in his seat, it seemed as such.

"Nah, it was actually a rubbish sesh," Jake replied, deliberately averting his gaze as he spoke. "Wasn't quite hitting my usual numbers. Kinda pissed me off, to be honest."

Liam immediately took notice of this and leaned forward, reaching for the bottle of water that was sitting on top of his desk. "Jake, I know what it's like to have a bad session in the gym," he began, taking a long swig of water before wiping his lips with a napkin.

As he did so, Jake just laughed. "You do? I didn't know you'd even seen the inside of a gym before, mate," the younger man retorted. Liam forced himself to continue smiling, even though he desperately wanted to twist the expression into a snarl and remind the younger man that they weren't mates. Jake might have lucked into a senior position at the company but Liam was still the CEO and he deserved much more respect than he was getting from the young meathead!

The older man placed the now empty glass back on his desk and stood, walking around his own desk to stand opposite Jake. He looked down at the other man, who met his gaze with an arrogant smirk. "Well, I don't pretend to have your experience in the gym but I do understand how disappointing it can be not to hit your benchmarks," he acquiesced. "I'm sure you'll bounce back. You're still young. What are you now, twenty-two?"

"That's right," Jake grunted in response. "Half your age, isn't it?"

"Not quite, not quite! I'm only thirty-six, thank you very much." Thirty-six and growing younger by the second, Liam remarked in his head. Back when he'd been twenty-two he had still been as thin as a rake and as weak as a toddler but with this second opportunity - after taking Jake's virility and musculature - he was going to have much more fun. He'd already noticed that the sleeves of his work shirt were a little tighter that morning, although the changes weren't quite obvious enough yet to be seen with the naked eye. Still, it wouldn't be much longer before Liam would have to upgrade to wearing large shirts just to contain all the muscle he was about to steal from his former intern!

Later that day Liam was walking out of his office with a stack of important documents in his hands when Stacey, his receptionist, called out after him: "Somebody's got a bit of pep in their step today!"

The CEO paused to give her a quick smile of appreciation. "Just excited for what the future holds," he replied before continuing on his way. As he passed by Jake's office (just down the hall from his own), he glanced inside and caught the young man absentmindedly scrolling through his cell phone instead of doing any work, but that was hardly surprising. At least they wouldn't have to waste an office on that loser for much longer!

It was the next morning that Liam really started to see the results of the spell beginning to manifest. His thicker frame had slimmed somewhat, particularly around the waistline,

meaning he had to tighten his belt a whole three notches tighter than usual. Whatever extra muscle there was unfortunately wasn't visible upon inspecting his reflection but he could feel it under his skin, and it felt wonderful. Before he knew it, he was already running up and down the stairs without breaking a sweat, which was something that hadn't happened for a while. This was all he needed to get the day off to a positive start and the good news would keep on rolling almost as soon as he got to the office, as the security guard stationed at the entrance jokingly asked for Liam to share his skincare routine - "You look barely thirty, man! Whatever it is you're using, chuck some my way, will ya?"

Once he'd reached his office on the top floor of the building, Liam was able to inspect his reflection once more and sure enough, the security guard had been onto something. The lines on his face were much less severe than they had been the previous day and the bags under his eyes (a staple part of his appearance since his college days) were almost completely gone! While he still didn't look fresh out of college like Jake, it was definitely an improvement and yet further proof that he hadn't been conned out of sixty thousand dollars by that dark web warlock. The spell really was working!

After he'd sat at his desk for a few minutes, Liam heard a knock at his door and discovered that it was none other than Jake himself. The younger man was uncharacteristically nervous, judging by his jittery behavior as he made his way over to Liam's desk. "Gotta say, I'm pretty surprised to see you here already," Liam said casually, his lips pulling up into a rare smile (at least when he was in Jake's presence). As he gazed across at the other man, he noticed that Jake's shirt wasn't stretched over his muscular torso as it usually was but actually appeared to be a little on the loose side. "What's wrong? Are you coming down with something?"

"No... well, I dunno..." Jake replied. "I think I'm getting sick or something."

"Oh come on, it's probably nothing serious," Liam soothed. "Are you sure it's not just because you've been working too hard at the gym?" Springing up from his seat, the older man rounded the table in order to get a better look at Jake. Sure enough, his face was now subtly decorated with faint age lines - he looked much closer to thirty than his actual age of twenty-two! "Wow! You definitely do seem to be feeling under the weather," Liam added, giving Jake a sly wink.

Jake looked around nervously for a moment before finally admitting defeat. "I don't know what's up with me this morning," he grumbled. "The board wanted me to do a photoshoot for them this afternoon so they can plaster my face all over the website but when I feel and look this rough... do you think they'll be mad if I cancel? I don't want to look unprofessional." The irony was most definitely not lost on Liam. When had Jake ever actually been professional in the first place?!

"Relax, there's no need to panic," Liam reassured his employee. "I'll talk to the board for you, tell them that I need you here helping me. They can reschedule the photoshoot." He pressed a hand to Jake's bicep under the guise of rubbing it encouragingly and sure enough, the muscle under his grasp felt smaller. "Now go on, go chill in your office. I'm sure you'll feel like a whole new man in no time at all..."

As the day progressed, Jake tried to put on a brave face and convince himself that he was feeling much better, but it certainly wasn't easy. His body felt sore and tired, particularly in his back and shoulders where he'd desperately tried to lift the heaviest weights possible during his workout earlier that morning - to no fail. His strength had completely failed him and he'd been embarrassed in front of all his gym friends! Never in a million years would he suspect that Liam was responsible for his oncoming downfall though, the poor sap was dimwitted enough to genuinely think that the new CEO was actually okay with the deal the board had put before them.

Jake eventually took to his bed and laid there for hours, only leaving it to catch up with his favorite Netflix series and eat a bowl of soup. He hadn't even bothered going to the bathroom until his stomach began growling, prompting him to head upstairs and drag himself into the shower. Once he was under that stream of hot water though, it became impossible for him to ignore just how much of his muscle he had lost. He no longer looked like an amateur bodybuilder but rather somebody in their first six months of training! Even worse, his chest and arms were noticeably flatter than they'd been the previous day, despite his best efforts to pump iron.

His situation was growing more dire by the moment, as his round ass lost its shape while his muscles shrank further. Soon, he couldn't even look himself in the mirror without wincing at the sight of his own naked flesh. With his face a mere shadow of itself and his body looking like a wreck, Jake knew that he needed to do something before it was too late - but what? What could he possibly do to try and stop something that by all accounts should have been impossible? People weren't supposed to lose all their gains in such a short space of time! Jake could only think that he must be deathly ill and that thought terrified him.

Across the city, Liam was having a very different response to his body. The extra padding he'd carried for so many years had disappeared entirely, allowing his muscles to stand out much more prominently. His arms were leaner than ever before, each one tanned and toned. He'd never had the physique of a professional bodybuilder, nor did he aim to. Liam's idea of a dream body was more akin to that of a fitness model, with defined pecs and a tight waist and it seemed like he was well on his way to that!

"Damn, I look good!" Liam sighed as he checked himself out in the full length mirror once more. It felt great to be able to see every single muscle in his body clearly, each

one distinct and defined. He was stronger than ever, his legs and core especially, while his arms remained relatively muscular but not overly bulky. He was suddenly sporting an incredibly impressive six pack, the likes of which he had always wanted, complete with deep indentations between each of his abs. "I feel amazing," Liam murmured to himself as he flexed his biceps and tensed his pecs. "I feel like I could bench press a small car!"

By the time the next morning rolled around, the changes to both men were finally complete. The spell had done its work as thoroughly as it could, stripping the youth, muscle and virility out of Jake and depositing it in Liam's body instead. As Liam rose from his bed and walked in front of the mirror, he was greeted by a vision of absolute beauty. He looked like a man in his early twenties, not his mid-thirties! There was hardly a wrinkle to be seen, like he'd moisturized every day since he'd hit puberty (something he'd actually failed to do prior to the transformation). Liam's skin was smooth and flawless, free of blemishes or imperfections, while his hair had grown out to a luxurious crop that naturally swooped to the side in a stylish fashion.

As he got dressed in one of the new suits that he'd purchased for himself after putting his plan into action, Liam discovered that he'd been quite right to presume that his old wardrobe would be a poor fit for him. These new clothes hung perfectly on his muscular frame, his jeans hugging his narrow hips and thighs and showing off his impressive bulge, while his shirt hugged his broad shoulders and made him look like a true executive. Everything about his appearance screamed 'success' and Liam was thrilled with the result. He was certain the board would agree once they got a look at the new him too.

Jake's wake-up that morning wasn't quite so positive. He stared down at himself in dismay, feeling completely dejected. He looked like a skeleton, a walking corpse, nothing like the confident young man who'd woken up just yesterday. Upon checking his front-facing camera, he discovered that further damage had been done to his previously flawless face. His skin was pockmarked with acne, his cheeks sunken in and his eyes almost impossible to make out behind dark circles. Not only that but he looked at least a decade and a half older than his actual years thanks to the numerous lines on his face. He was a mess, the worst he'd ever looked in his entire life, and he had no idea what had caused it!



The sight of his reflection was enough to knock the wind out of him, causing him to collapse back onto the mattress. All of a sudden, the idea of trying to make his way through the office doors in his current state seemed like a terrible idea. He was already imagining just how badly people would laugh at him! No, he'd have to call in sick and hope that he'd wake up tomorrow to discover this was all just a bad dream...



While Jake was withering away in self-pity, Liam had already arrived at the office and found himself flooded with compliments about his reinvigorated image. "You're looking incredible today!" one of his employees exclaimed when she spotted him coming down the hallway. Little did Liam know that she had always found him attractive before, but now he was positively glowing. Another coworker came over and gave him a firm handshake before commenting on how 'well-groomed' he looked today. Stacey, his receptionist, had even gasped when he approached her desk, then blushed when he winked in her direction as he entered his office.

Once he sat down at his desk, a rush of confidence washed over Liam as he realized that he had truly eliminated the threat that Jake had posed to his position. Everything from here on out was going to be a piece of cake!

With renewed vigor and a smirk permanently etched onto his handsome face, Liam opened up his email client and prepared to send off a message to the head of the board. In it he explained that Jake's services would no longer be needed - he himself was more than capable of being the face of the company, after all. It seemed his physical transformation had prompted Liam's confidence to blossom too as he never would have put his foot down against the board prior to it. Once they got a look at the new and improved him though, he knew they would immediately agree. Liam was the *perfect* face for the company with his handsome looks, large muscles and of course his impressive business acumen. He was going to make them all very rich individuals, all they had to do was have a little faith in their new CEO!

