

Overlooked No More [Part III]

A short story by Henry Cavanaugh

It was the day after his eventful high school graduation that Lucas Lenore put the final part of his plan into action. That night he had gone to sleep with a smile on his face, content that he would no longer be second best to Peter Parker nor would he ever be overlooked by Tony Stark again.

The work began as soon as the sun had risen above the New York City skyline. Lucas had to do some modifications to the Genetic Rewriter and he completed those with great care but he knew that it wouldn't be enough; to really solidify his success he needed a sample of Tony Stark's DNA. Unfortunately he wouldn't be able to get any straight from the source, since the man in question technically no longer existed. Tony's DNA had been permanently altered by the Genetic Rewriter less than twenty-four hours earlier, replacing the man's trim body and brilliant mind with an overweight build and severely lacking intellect. It had been quite the wondrous fall from grace to behold but now it served as something of a frustrating roadblock. Lucas wasn't the type to give up easily though - the events of the previous day had proven as much - and so it wasn't long before he'd come up with a way to circumnavigate this minor setback.

As well as being a master inventor, Lucas also happened to be quite the talented hacker. After a little trial and error he was able to break into the Stark Industries servers, where he quickly started to scan through the various private folders. Just as he'd expected, the files confirmed that Tony had extracted strands of his DNA and kept them locked in a safe hidden in his office. Now all Lucas needed was to get his hands on them and that would actually be much easier than anyone might anticipate. It would of course look strange if a recent high school graduate waltzed into the building and right into the CEO's office, so Lucas had to be smart about it. Luckily he had somebody at his disposal who would be able to help him out...

"So you... you'll make me Tony Stark again if I do this for you?" the overweight elderly man asked in a trembling voice. "I've just gotta go into the office, open the safe and get the samples for you?"

Lucas huffed in annoyance and rolled his eyes. "I've already gone through this *twice*," he growled, cursing his past self for reducing Tony's intelligence so dramatically. "I can only turn you back if you get the samples, so if you ever want to be restored, you'll need to really concentrate and remember the code for the safe."

The former Iron Man nodded eagerly, only for a frown to settle on his face moments later. "But how am I gonna get to the office? There's security and stuff... nobody will believe I'm the boss," he pointed out, suddenly overcome with fear that he would fail before he'd even started.

"That's why I've created a staff pass for you as a janitor," Lucas replied curtly, "They'll scan your retinas at the door and recognize you as Tom Stunton, a tenured employee. Nobody will think twice! Why should any of those brilliant minds pay any attention to a fat old janitor?" A grin had spread across Lucas' face as he spoke. He was having quite a bit of fun tormenting the individual who had up until recently been one of the richest and most powerful men in the world. The other man was clearly upset and miserable and that only further added to Lucas' satisfaction with how things were going.

Once he was certain that 'Fat Old Tom' knew what was required of him, Lucas sent the old man on his way and returned to work on making final modifications to his prized invention. Given what he was planning to do once he had Tony Stark's DNA in his possession, the young inventor was being extra cautious because he knew that even the smallest error could produce catastrophic results. With this in mind, Lucas checked through his work multiple times before finally considering it ready to go. Now all he needed was the DNA sample!

Tom was red in the face and dripping with sweat when he finally returned several hours later. "They were so rude to me," he whimpered as he handed over the satchel, "When I'm the boss again, I'm gonna fire all those jerks!" The experience of navigating Stark Enterprises as a lowly janitor had clearly been distressing for the former CEO of the company, which Lucas was not so secretly pleased about. The former Tony had never really experienced any sort of hardship in his life - he'd gotten where he was due to his family name and his celebrity status, so it was about time that he finally experienced life from a less fortunate perspective.

The other man continued ranting and whining as Lucas pulled a small box out of the satchel and then carefully removed the DNA sample from the box. He tuned the other man's irritating voice out, putting his full focus on making sure the sample had been properly accepted by the Genetic Rewriter. Only once he had received a confirmation on the LED screen that he was good to go did Lucas finally turn his attention back to the man standing across from him.

"So you're going to change me back now?" Tom asked eagerly as he wiped the sweat from his brow, "Like you promised?"

Lucas didn't even try and hold back his laughter. "Like I promised?" he repeated, shaking his head. "I never promised you anything, you big idiot. All I ever said was that

without the samples, I couldn't turn you back into Tony Stark. I never said anything about actually going through with it!"

Tom's face creased into a look of severe confusion and distress. "But... Why did you want me to get the sample then?" he asked weakly as tears began to fill his eyes. He felt totally deceived and so stupid for falling for it!

"Good question. It was so I could do this," Lucas retorted, lifting the Genetic Rewriter to his neck and pushing the needle into his own flesh. He flinched and hissed at the sharp pain, but there was absolutely nothing that would stop him from smashing his thumb down on the button that would activate the machine. For the third time in just over twenty-four hours, the Genetic Rewriter flashed up a confirmation message and began its DNA-altering work, all while Lucas wore the proud grin of a man who knew he had achieved certain victory.

The sensation that rapidly spread throughout Lucas' body was unlike anything he had ever experienced before or would ever experience again. Parts of his body felt like they were on fire while others were ice cold and this severe contrast caused him to begin violently shaking. The sudden movement caused the Genetic Rewriter to slip from his hands and crash to the ground, several fragile pieces of the device breaking off and skidding across the floor. Damage to his prized invention would have most certainly mortified Lucas if he hadn't been so preoccupied with the dramatic changes that were beginning to happen to his physical form.

Although Lucas had always cared much more about his brain and his inventions than he did about his appearance, the nerdy young man had secretly harbored some extreme anxieties about his looks. He had always been one to shun mirrors, knowing that his reflection would only show him a face littered with ugly pimples and other blemishes. His glasses might have been stylish if they ever sat on his face properly without sliding down the slope of his thin nose. The rest of his body was hardly much better as Lucas had been easily outsized by freshman even in his senior year of high school and an eighty year old grandma could probably kick his skinny ass in a fight!

Both these features and the anxieties attached to them would soon vanish as Lucas' five-foot-six body stretched out until it reached an even six foot. While this was happening, his slender body was also gaining some much needed muscle mass. It was just enough to give him a lean build like that of a swimmer, but compared to how skinny he had been prior to the interference of the Genetic Rewriter, the differences were as clear as night and day. A pair of subtle pecs had risen on his previously flat chest and they soon became decorated with bristles of dark body hair, something Lucas had previously lacked. His twig-like arms also beefed up; the modest muscles of his biceps, triceps and forearms becoming further pronounced as the seconds passed.

With the changes to his body largely hidden by his clothes, it was the slow modification of Lucas' face that was most obvious to the sole onlooker. The former Tony Stark watched in abject horror as the high school graduate's gaunt face gained a healthier countenance, with fuller cheeks and clearer skin. Although the various spots and scars had been wiped off of Lucas' face, they were soon replaced by age lines, particularly around the eyes and mouth. These weren't the only additions to give the eighteen year old a more mature appearance though, as bristles of dark hair pushed forth around the lower half of his face to form the iconic goatee that Tony Stark had sported for much of his career in the limelight.

The swamp green pupils of Lucas' beady eyes darkened to a rich chocolate brown, while his eyesight rapidly improved to the point that he would no longer need glasses. Having adjusted somewhat to the strange sensations that continued to spread through his shifting body, Lucas was able to rip the glasses free from his face and fling them aside once he realized they would no longer be of any use to him. As he did this, the young man's mop of unruly black hair adopted a more stylish cut with shorter sides and a longer top, finally completing his full transformation into a perfect copy of Tony Stark!

Rising up to his new height, the former Lucas rolled his shoulders back and breathed in heavily. Unlike Peter and the real Tony, he hadn't been subject to any mental changes as part of his experience with the Genetic Rewriter. He was already enough of a genius and he was sure that once he'd had enough time to settle into his new life, he'd gain the arrogance that Tony Stark was so well known for. Subjecting himself to a physical transformation had already been enough of a risk and Lucas hadn't been willing to put his brains in potential danger. His continued success relied on him retaining his genius intellect and considering his brain was still working as quickly as ever, it seemed like that wouldn't be a problem going forward!

"I don't think anybody will be overlooking my genius anymore, will they?" the new Tony asked, smirking across at his janitor as he walked towards where the main body of Genetic Rewriter had fallen. While maintaining eye contact with the man whose body and life he had stolen, Tony brought his foot down on top of the fragile device to smash it even further. "Better safe than sorry. Can't have anybody trying to fix it, can we?" He hadn't missed the way the janitor's lower lip had wobbled at the moment of impact; it only made him more smug. He was going to have quite a lot of fun torturing the former Tony Stark and then once that had grown tiresome, he'd fire the janitor and send him packing!



“P-please, you can’t do this to me!” the other man whimpered, his cheeks slick with tears. The pathetic fool even dropped down onto his knees and clasped his hands together in a begging motion. Tony couldn’t imagine that the janitor had ever begged for anything back in his old life - *oh how the mighty have fallen!*

“Oh I very much can and I *have*,” he pointed out proudly, placing his hands on his hips and puffing his chest out. While tormenting the other would definitely be fun, there were a whole host of other things that Tony was looking forward to doing now that he had a body and reputation that better matched his genius. Getting into an Iron Man suit for the first time and flying around New York City was definitely fairly high on that list. He was sure that he’d be able to make a number of improvements to the suit that the former Tony had never even considered!

Before he did that though, Tony had something else in mind. He was going to pay the new Peter Parker a visit and see just how talented the slutty himbo’s lips were. He’d make the slovenly janitor watch too for some added humiliation! Yeah, that was a perfect plan and one he was going to put into plan straight away. It wasn’t like he needed to rush into playing superhero, after all. He was going to be the one and only Tony Stark - the world’s favorite playboy billionaire philanthropist - for the rest of his days and nobody would ever be able to take that away from him!