

Directing Superman

A short story by Henry Cavanaugh

“Okay, *cut!* Time out, everyone. Take a break, get some water. Henry, before you go anywhere, let’s just have a quick chat.”

A heavy sigh escaped the lips of A-List actor Henry Cavill as the director’s voice interrupted the scene they had been in the process of shooting. It had been their ninth pass at the scene and they were almost eleven hours into that day’s shoot on a film that was already two weeks behind schedule, so nobody had been happy to hear the director write off their latest attempt. Despite the displeasure, none of them were actually surprised; such interruptions and schedule issues were to be expected when working with a perfectionist like Zack Snyder. The director had a very clear vision for his projects and it didn’t matter how long it took, he was going to get the scene finished in exactly the fashion that he wanted it to be.

With some reluctance, the hunky British actor stomped towards the director’s chair. He wasn’t fooled by the smile on Snyder’s face; the director was less than impressed with what his lead actor had been offering. This wasn’t the first time that Henry had been summoned for a private chat with Zack that day, as the consultations had become something of a regular occurrence throughout the shooting of the *Man of Steel* sequel. At first Henry had been willing to put it down to the extended period since his last portrayal of Superman in *Justice League*, but despite his growing relaxation back into the familiar role, he apparently still wasn’t providing the performance that the director was looking for.

Although he was harboring continually growing frustrations towards the director (certainly not helped by the tiredness that had been brought on by such an intensive filming day), Henry hid those feelings behind a polite smile as he approached Zack. *You were all but begging to play Superman again*, the actor reminded himself. *This is the price you have to pay. Suck it up, Cavill!* He’d been hired to do a job and he certainly wasn’t the type to go rogue and start beefing with the director, not unless the older man



did anything to really upset him, which the optimistic actor didn't believe was in line with Zack's character. An uptight perfectionist? Sure. Not a megalomaniac though.

"Henry, this just isn't working right now," Zack declared somewhat dramatically while scratching at the base of his skull. "I'd like to try something a little different, if that's alright with you. A little... untraditional, you might say, but I would need your verbal agreement before I proceeded."

Although confused by the director's bizarre wording, Henry quickly decided that his eagerness to get the day's shoot over and done with was a greater driving force than the seed of apprehension that those words had planted. "Of course," he replied with a nod, "What have you got for me?"

The six-foot-one actor watched as the director fished an object out of his jacket pocket and was more than a little confused at what was produced. It appeared to be some type of jewelry piece, with hoops that wrapped around Zack's fingers and thumb as well as a red gemstone that now sat in the palm of his hand. After the item was firmly fixed into place, the director then extended that same hand out to indicate he was expecting a handshake. Despite his intense bewilderment at Zack's behavior, Henry consented, but as soon as their hands were clasped with the red jewel between their palms, the most intense chill the actor had ever experienced rippled right through his muscular body.

Henry's initial response was to try and jerk his hand away but strangely (as he knew he was easily the stronger of the pair) he just couldn't break the director's grip. No matter how hard he struggled, the actor was completely trapped; Zack suddenly had the strength of a thousand men and there was no way Henry could compete. The bitter frost that had spread through the actor's body persisted to the point of pain and even kept him from forcing out a desperate plea for Zack to let him go. All rational thought fled Henry's mind and he was left to conclude that he was having some sort of cardiac episode or that the director had exposed him to some fast-acting poison.

The truth was actually quite far removed from both of those possibilities and indeed was actually far beyond anything Henry might have seriously considered to be happening. As the two men locked eyes, the hunky actor was startled to discover an almost demonic glee hidden behind the director's eyes. Zack was clearly reveling in whatever was happening to Henry, but the Superman actor couldn't understand for the life of him why the director would cause such harm to his lead actor. Couldn't Zack see that he would have an absolute PR nightmare on his hands if a Hollywood A-Lister died while alone on set with him?

All of a sudden Henry experienced a severe pulling sensation as if somebody had tied him to a rapidly accelerating vehicle, although the actor's physical form didn't move even an inch in response to the strange phenomenon. Henry would later learn that it

had been the moment where his soul had been ripped out of his own body and deposited into the director's body. It wasn't a one-way experience either, as Zack's own consciousness was passing right back through the magical contraption to spread itself out in Henry's much larger body. Given he had been the initiator of the swap, the director didn't experience any of the pain during the transfer that his leading man did, but both men found their sight failing them before being restored a second later - only now from the position of their new body!

Henry's jaw dropped as he stared across at his own grinning face. *But... how?* He was in such a state of shock that he failed to realize he had regained the ability to move until his doppelganger ripped their hand free. They took the magical piece of jewelry too, prompting Henry to let out a cry of pain at how his fingers were twisted by the forceful removal of the item. It was that exclamation that alerted Henry both to his restored capabilities and the distinctly incorrect voice that had come forth from his mouth. It took a few moments but the actor quickly identified that he wasn't looking directly across at his own face but rather *up* at it. He had somehow gotten shorter.

"Figuring it out now?" Zack asked from within Henry's body, folding his massive arms over his powerful chest. The director's attention was immediately caught by how the biceps bulged beneath the tight Superman suit and his stolen eyes lit up in excitement for a brief moment before he locked eyes with the *real* Henry Cavill once more. "Before you start freaking out though, I want you to think rationally about this. We'll be able to fly through the filming process - no pun intended - now that I can deliver the performance that I wanted for my film. No more falling behind schedule! That's what you wanted, wasn't it?" Henry wanted to protest that he hadn't wanted it to the extent of having his body stolen, but the director continued: "Besides, you gave your consent. The magic wouldn't have worked unless you were willing to let me help you."

Still struggling to comprehend the events that had just occurred, the actor glanced down at the unfamiliar hands and the more slender body he was currently occupying. Now that he was fully aware of what had happened, he couldn't help but focus on just how small and *weak* he felt! It had easily been at least a decade since he had last fit into size medium clothing but now the sleeves of Zack's tee were loose around his thinner arms. The only point of tightness was around his stomach where there was a slight gut which itself was a far cry from the tight core and rippling abs of Henry's own body. Oh, how he missed them already!

"I didn't know I was consenting to *this*," he protested weakly, wincing as he heard the director's voice speaking his words. "Come on, Zack. This isn't right and you know it! We're friends, aren't we? Just switch us back and I promise I'll deliver the performance you were looking for. Don't do this."

Henry's pleas for an immediate restoration to his rightful body were quickly met by laughter and the other man shaking his head. "I couldn't switch us back right now even if I wanted to," the body-swapped director claimed, "It'll take at least forty-eight hours for the magic in that jewel to recharge."

"Forty-eight hours?!" Henry cried, his eyes bulging in shock and dismay. "You're messing with me, aren't you? Tell me this isn't really happening. Tell me this is just a dream - a nightmare!"

Zack unfurled his arms and slapped his hands down on Henry's shoulders, with the force of the contact causing the actor to flinch. "Like you said, we're friends. I don't lie to my friends," he replied, speaking calmly as if their conversation was about something as ordinary as a grocery order. "Trust me, this will be so much better for everyone. We might actually finish filming by the end of the month! Don't worry about being in the director's chair either. We'll meet every morning and I'll brief you on what I want you to do so nobody wonders why *Zack Snyder* is acting all weird. These next three weeks will be over before you know it and then you'll be back in this big beefy body of yours!"

It took Henry several seconds to pick up on the information Zack had so casually slipped into his last remark. "Wait, three weeks?! I thought you said that you'd switch us back in forty-eight hours!" His voice - no, Zack's voice - had risen to a yell as his face twisted into an expression of rage. Despite the intensity of his reaction though, the director continued to wear a smug grin like he had innocently stumbled upon a winning lottery ticket.

"I never said that," Zack pointed out, "I just said that the magic wouldn't recharge for another forty-eight hours. We'll swap back once filming wraps up and I'll do nothing unsightly in your body in the meantime, you have my word. Now, keep your voice down. People will be coming back to the set any moment now and you don't want them to think their director's had a mental breakdown from the stress, do you?"

The scarcely hidden threat in those words sent a shiver down Henry's spine. Given he had never anticipated that Zack would go to such extreme measures to bring his vision to reality, Henry knew that it wouldn't be good for him to underestimate the director. Just a few minutes ago the actor would have laughed off the idea of being body-switched but Zack had accomplished that, so who knew what else he could do to pull Henry in line?

"Okay," the actor mumbled in defeated fashion, bowing his head in a display of submission. Just as the director had predicted, the crew were beginning to return to the set and they would soon be looking to Henry for direction, as well as glaring daggers at him when his back was turned, misguidedly under the impression that he was the reason they were still working at such a late hour.

“I knew you’d understand!” Henry flinched once more as the other man slapped him on the arm in what would appear to everyone else on set as a friendly gesture. From his perspective though, that simple action was laced with mockery and there was absolutely nothing he could do but stay silent and take it.

“Now, why don’t you get everyone in position?” Zack suggested while rolling his broad shoulders and tensing the muscles in the powerful arms he had inherited from the lead actor, “I’ve got a feeling that the next take is going to be just what the director was looking for and then we can finally all go home... right, *Zack?*”

The actor just nodded, too conquered to even offer any more words, but that was enough to please his director-turned-tormentor. “Good talk, buddy! I’m sure you’ll have fun directing your first film. It’s a real rush, but it’s a pretty different game to acting. Oh! Speaking of acting, I guess it’s finally time for me to show you how to be a better Superman, huh? Maybe you could take some notes.” Henry silently seethed while Zack took a few steps back and sighed dramatically. The director couldn’t leave without offering one more biting comment at the actor’s expense though: “Working with actors is the toughest part of any director’s job, didn’t you know?”

You’re gonna live to regret this, Snyder. Henry glared at the sight of the broad back muscles (*his muscles!*) retreating towards the set and shook his head. *Just you wait...*



↔

Henry Cavill had been trapped in the body of Zack Snyder for the past ten days and he really wasn’t enjoying himself. Sure, the movie director didn’t have all that bad of a body, but it was the mere principle of being ripped out of his own body and replaced that really grated on the actor. He’d always thought of Zack in a rather positive light despite how his perfectionist nature could cause for long hours on-set and frustrations among the rest of the cast and crew, but now the British actor’s opinion of the man was vastly different. He now viewed Zack to be just as villainous as the antagonists that Superman



would be fighting in the movie they were in the midst of filming. Not a single day had gone by since the body swap without Henry demanding that they be switched back, but the director's response was always the same: "It's quicker and easier for everyone if we stay like this until the end of filming." Considering just how far behind schedule they already were, Henry had to reluctantly admit that there was a kernel of truth in that - even if they were to swap back, Zack would absolutely drag his feet and keep the frustration boiling over for everyone on set. Despite that, the actor would still much rather be back in his own body and so he had begun doing some research into the occult while cooped up in his hotel room after filming had wrapped up for the day.

It had taken Henry a fair amount of time to uncover anything of any actual value; he'd firstly had to get past all of the body swapping fetish content that populated a surprisingly

large part of the web. Henry simply couldn't relate to these people's desires to have their bodies stolen - he certainly wasn't experiencing any sort of sexual gratification when he woke up and saw the director's face in the mirror every morning! Out of sheer curiosity he'd even read a couple of the stories written by users such as "Soul Controller" and "The Craftsman" but all they managed to do was leave Henry with anxiety that perhaps *Zack* was one of the people who found pleasure in the concept of body swapping. Just what was the director doing with his bodies behind closed doors? He'd given his word that he wouldn't do anything "untoward" while in Henry's body, but did Zack's word even actually mean anything anymore? It seemed clear as day that Henry couldn't actually trust him...

After getting past the fetish fiction, the actor finally started to uncover various tales of spiritual exchanges and bodily possession that were supposedly rooted in reality. These tales mostly came from letters written hundreds of years prior, but there were even a few from within the past century. Although he couldn't be sure as to their validity, it was as close to a lead as Henry had, so he continued his investigation. After several days of despair, he finally came across an ancient Greek story that involved the "Jewel of Althea" which was purported to have switched the body of a mighty warrior and his conniving slave. The Jewel had been disguised as a piece of jewelry and it seemed as if

the exchange had been triggered by the clasp of their hands - this had to be it, this Jewel of Althea was what Zack had used on him!

Unfortunately just because he now had a name for the device that had been used to switch his body with that of his former friend didn't mean he was any closer to finding a way to switch them back. Much to his alarm, the ancient Greek story ended with the slave in the warrior's body killing his former master, brutally and effectively destroying any chances of them switching back. *Bloody well hope Zack's not planning to run me through with a sword*, Henry thought to himself, a grim smile appearing on his borrowed face for a fleeting moment. That in itself was a rarity as he hadn't had all that much to smile about for the past week and a half. It was difficult to find any enjoyment in anything when somebody else was parading around in your skin and effectively getting away with identity theft to the highest degree...

Although he had always loved passing himself off as other people enough for it to be his job (in his true body at least), Henry really wasn't having much fun pretending to be Zack. It didn't help that being in the director's body had proven to be an incredibly lonely experience. Due to the man's reputation as being a hard taskmaster and most of the crew fearing that they might get fired if they even looked at him wrong, Henry often went hours without a real conversation. The only people who even seemed to actually want to talk to him were the man who had stolen his body (although even then it was only so that he could gloat) and the intern on set whose sole responsibility seemed to be getting people coffee. The intern, whose name Henry eventually learned was Luke, was in his early twenties and had a slender frame and a kind face. He had expressed that this was his first time working on a Hollywood film set and that he was both incredibly excited and nervous to be around A-List celebrities and prestigious filmmakers. Despite not loving that he was being lumped in with the second group, Henry still found the younger man charming. With each passing day the two became more conversational to such an extent that Henry soon considered the brief exchanges with Luke to be the highlights of his day.

Then, after a week of burgeoning friendship, Henry elected to tell the intern the truth of what was going on. It was a moment of pure desperation and he wasn't exactly holding onto much hope that the other man would believe him, but to his great surprise Luke hadn't immediately laughed in his face and suggested that he was either insane or attempting to pull a silly prank on the new guy on set. "That... actually makes a lot of sense," the intern muttered after several long seconds of silence. The words came as quite a surprise to Henry, but he soon understood when he asked Luke for his reasoning: "Well, I'd heard all of these stories about how down to earth Henry Cavill is - how *you* are, I guess - and he's been totally big leaguering me this whole time, like he's above being polite to a lowly intern like me." To learn that Zack's actions in his body had been causing damage to his reputation prompted serious alarm to Henry. As if this

whole ordeal wasn't already bad enough! "I was pretty sure that I'd read somewhere that you're a big Warhammer fan too, but when I brought it up, he told me that he didn't care about such *nerdy shit* and that I needed to grow up..." There were tears in Luke's eyes as he offered up his recollection of the events, only further stoking the anger that was burning away inside the actor. How *dare* Zack!



Given the director's horrific treatment of the intern, Luke had been more than willing to help Henry try and uncover a way to switch back into his rightful body. To the actor's amazement, the younger man showed up to the set just a few days later with an excited grin on his face and shared that he believed he had found a way to switch them back without them even needing to get their hands on the Jewel of Althea! If they hadn't been standing in the middle of a crowded set with Zack only thirty feet away, Henry might have pulled Luke into a big hug. Instead he just glared across at the body thief (who was in the process of posing for a photo with "his" castmates) and whispered to Luke to meet him in his trailer during the lunch break later that day. Henry really didn't care how weak the chances were of Luke's finding actually helping get him back into his body - he was willing to give absolutely anything a try!

Despite the filming process actually moving along much quicker than it had when Zack had been solely the director and not also the lead star, Henry found the days to be torturously slow. That day was especially bad, as the six hours between his brief words with Luke and the lunch break felt like triple the time. When Zack finally permitted Henry to send the crew to lunch, the body-swapped actor couldn't hurry back to his trailer any quicker! Frustratingly he was forced to wait several minutes for Luke to arrive, but as soon as he did, Henry was slamming the trailer door closed behind him and demanding that the intern share whatever it was he had discovered in his research.

"So I found this... uh, I guess it's a spell? Anyway, it can supposedly cause two people to switch bodies!" Luke exclaimed, holding out his cell phone to show Henry a picture of his digital findings. As he looked down at the image, all Henry saw in the image were a series of strange symbols on a stone tablet. "It's in ancient Sumerian or something, but I

found it on a legitimate historian's website rather than a tumblr page or anything, so I've got a good feeling about this one!"

Letting out a long exhale, Henry reached up and ran his hands through his hair, grimacing at how thin the bristles were compared to what he was used to. "It might be a long shot but it's better than doing nothing," the actor huffed, refusing to allow himself to get too hopeful. The odds were probably a hundred thousand to one that it would actually work. "What do I have to do, just read it out?"

"I think you have to be alone with the subject," the intern explained, "So I probably wouldn't read it now unless you were scheming to take my body..." The younger man's smile suggested that he didn't believe that to be the case. Luke was a handsome guy, there was no denying that, but Henry had no intention of going anywhere other than back into his rightful body!

"He'll be in my trailer right now," Henry muttered, already marching past Luke and towards the door. He probably wasn't going to get a better opportunity to get the other man alone! The nerves were beginning to build as he crossed the short distance between the director's trailer and that of the supposed lead star, so much so that he paused for a moment to regain his composure. Glancing back down at the phone, Henry sighed in relief when he discovered that the historian had included a guide on how to phonetically pronounce the words written on the tablet, although there was no translation into English like might have been expected. Once his courage had been appropriately gathered, Henry reached out and grasped the handle on the trailer door. To his great relief, Zack hadn't locked it behind him and so there was nothing to stop Henry from charging in and stealing his body right back!

Catching sight of his body standing proudly in the middle of the trailer, still wearing the skin tight Superman suit, brought about a familiar acrimony deep within the very core of the actor's being. A smug smile spread across the other's stolen face as he turned to face the intruder. "Well to what do I owe the pleasure, *Zack*? Come to give me notes on my acting in today's scenes?" the real Zack Snyder asked, his words dripping with barely disguised mockery, as had become



typical of him whenever they exchanged words. To make things even more frustrating for Henry, the body thief didn't even seem all that surprised to have been burst in upon.

Determined not to give the other man any opportunity to stop him, Henry immediately cast his eyes down to the image on the cell phone in his hand and began to read aloud the strange and unfamiliar words that had been transcribed from the stone tablet. Under any other circumstance he would have felt like a fool, but the situation was dire enough that all the actor could focus on was his intense desire to get back into his own body. Once he was safely tucked away in his hunky British flesh once more, he'd then get a restraining order against the director and start a campaign to make sure Zack never worked in Hollywood again. Who was to say that he wouldn't pull this same stunt with other actors he worked with?

It was somewhat difficult to get the strange words out, but the glimmer of fear that he saw flash upon the other man's stolen face was enough to make Henry speak with even more conviction in his voice. The Superman actor wasn't sure that he'd be able to look at his face in the mirror for a while even after they switched back because the previous two weeks had conditioned him into loathing the sight of it, particularly as Zack was always wearing a smug grin whenever their gazes met. The uncertainty that Zack currently displayed was the first time there had been even the slightest crack in the other man's facade which was both encouraging and a triumph in itself. As long as everything went as planned, Henry was about to show Zack that two could play at his body-swapping games!

Once the final word of the incantation had left his lips, Henry began to feel a building pressure in his skull before suddenly a strange ball of ethereal blue light burst forth from his forehead! A similar ball of light - this time red - meanwhile launched from Zack, being propelled forward just as Henry's was, until they slammed into each other's bodies. The force of the impact caused both men's eyes to flicker shut and their bodies to feel incredibly weak for several long moments. Then, once he had finally settled, Henry opened his eyes and prepared to look across at the man he'd outsmarted... only he was still looking over at his own body!

"But... I don't understand!" the actor exclaimed, flinching as he discovered that he was still speaking in Zack's voice. "The spell was working! Those balls of light had to be something!" His tone rose into a higher pitch as panic began to set in. The other man no longer looked nervous or even uncertain but was instead back to grinning like he had just won the lottery. "You did this, didn't you? What did you do?! We were supposed to switch back!" By this point, Henry had progressed into outright yelling and this escalation of noise had brought Luke in from outside the trailer, where he looked between the two men.

“Did it work?” the intern asked, his voice filled with nerves.

Henry opened his mouth, about to cry out that he was still very much stuck in the director’s body, but it was Zack who got his words out first: “Just as we planned, babe.” He winked in Luke’s direction, prompting the younger man to blush, while Henry attempted to understand what in the living hell was going on. *They were working together?* The realization filled him with abject horror. *Luke played me! They both did!* While the actor had been living fairly consistently at what he had believed was rock bottom for the duration of the swap, this felt like a new low. He’d put his trust in the intern and been absolutely stabbed in the back!

While Henry attempted to understand how he had been so humiliatingly tricked, Luke approached Zack and wrapped his slender arms around the man’s broad shoulders. Then, surprising Henry even further, the director-turned-body thief lowered his head and pressed his lips against the intern’s. The decisively straight Henry was forced to watch as his own body made out with another man and neither Zack nor Luke was holding back - their hands were all over each other and they were moaning into each other’s mouths for the duration of the steamy kiss. When they finally broke apart and turned to face Henry once more, both men wore triumphant smirks.

“H-how could you?” the actor asked weakly, tears brimming in his eyes. “I thought you were helping me...” Aside from just wallowing in this new misery though, Henry still had questions about what he’d just been tricked into doing. “That spell. What did it do?” It definitely hadn’t swapped them back into their rightful bodies like he’d been misled to believe, that was for damn sure.

“When’s your father’s birthday, Henry?” Zack asked suddenly, catching the crying man by surprise. What did that have to do with anything?! As the seconds ticked by though, a new horror crept through Henry. Why couldn’t he remember his own father’s birthday? Surely that was something he was supposed to know! “It’s November 7th, dummy. Weird that you can’t remember it, right? What about the name of the dog you had as a kid? Surely you remember that, don’t you?”

Once again Henry distressingly found himself drawing a blank. This was knowledge that he absolutely *should* have had and yet there was an empty void in his mind where it should have been! That wasn’t entirely true though, as the blank space was rapidly being filled with memories... only they weren’t Henry’s own. No, these featured a family that he didn’t quite recognize at first and covered events that the actor felt a strange disconnect from. As he continued to search through his mind, Henry discovered that he could no longer recall his years in acting classes or being on set of the various productions that he’d starred in. Those spaces were instead filled with memories of him in a director’s chair, alienating the crew around him as he continually demanded

reshoots so that his vision was perfectly captured by the cameras. These were *Zack's* memories - and judging by how he'd answered his own questions, Zack had Henry's!

"I think he's worked it out, babe," Luke purred as he wrapped himself around the muscular torso of his secret lover. "He should retain just enough to remember that he was once Henry Cavill but without any of his personal memories, he'll never be completely confident that it wasn't just a strange dream." The words sent a chill down Henry's spine. Was it really possible that he might completely lose his sense of self? Even as the thought formulated though, he knew the miserable truth - it was more than just possible, it was almost a complete guarantee! When he looked across at the muscle bound body that stood several feet across from him, the name *Henry* came to mind rather than *Zack*. It was already happening!

As he collapsed down onto his knees, the overwhelmed former actor began to croak out desperate sobs. Rather than showing the crying man any sympathy though, the new



Henry Cavill proceeded to make out again with his faithful boytoy. Seducing Luke and convincing the intern to help with his plot had been for the best and he was more than happy to reward the younger man for his part in helping the new Henry keep this hunky British body for good!

The world would probably be surprised when Henry Cavill showed up on the red carpet for *Man of Steel 2* several months later with a younger man on his arm, but the scheming body-swapper had a plan for that too. Any such surprise would likely be overshadowed by the interviews Henry planned to give where he'd outline all of *Zack's* stalkerish behavior towards him during the filming of the movie. He'd also be making a not so innocent suggestion that the troubled director be blacklisted from Hollywood so that he couldn't repeat such practices with other actors. After such a damning assessment from a noted Hollywood Nice Guy like Henry Cavill, there was no way Zack would ever make another blockbuster movie, let alone be anywhere near the revitalized Superman franchise!