

A templative tale from  
**Mischief Marketing**

## **Mischievous Harrison Ford**

[ Excerpted from Chapter 10 (print edition) ... ]

... Now let's look at how another celebrity got a foot in the door, and see what we can learn from his experience.

### **The Surly Carpenter**

An actor is having trouble getting a break in Hollywood. Why? Because he doesn't kiss ass the way you're supposed to in the Mecca of Moviedom.

Take his film debut, for instance — a sixty-second shot at playing a bellhop. A movie executive sits him down after opening night says something like, "You'll never make it in this business, buddy, and let me tell you why. Your scene wasn't spectacular, my friend. Sorry. Y'know, when Tony Curtis did a bit part like that in his movie debut, playing a grocery delivery boy, the audience thought, There's a movie star!"

To which the actor leans across the desk and replies, "That's funny. I thought they were supposed to think, There's a grocery delivery boy."

This pattern of brashness with Hollywood VIPs continues for a while, so the actor decides he'd better learn a trade while pursuing his film career. He goes to the library, checks out some books on carpentry, and soon becomes an excellent carpenter.

A producer named Roos takes a liking to the surly man, and tries to get an audition for him on a new film. Almost daily, Roos regales the film's director to see the actor, but to no avail. So Roos crafts a ruse. He hires the actor to work near the set of the new film — as a carpenter. And more: he arranges for him to construct a very elaborate door that will take a long, long time to finish.

One day the break comes. Someone doesn't show up for rehearsal on time, or someone isn't available (this is how these real-life stories really always go, by the way) and the director needs a replacement — fast — "just" to read lines for the other actors.

And guess who just happens to be available, because he just happens to be hammering away at a door nearby?

**Harrison Ford.** And the film for which director George Lucas decides that Ford was perfect, based on that fateful reading? **Star Wars.**

## Tailoring the Tale

There are a number of highly intelligent, scholarly people who believe a very strange thing. They believe that the world may be a kind of “text” that you can read like a book, or that it may be a kind of dream that you can interpret like any other dream.

Such scholars might point out that this tale is particularly striking because Harrison Ford was working on an actual, literal door when he “got his foot in the door” of the film business — in other words, that he was both literally and figuratively building a point of entry into the film business for himself.

Now, was Harrison aware of this symbolic connection when it was happening? Did he unconsciously accept a job working on a door at a movie studio because he somehow knew it would “open a door” for him into the movie business?

Or would he just spit at an idea like that if we brought it up to him? Are we ourselves “reading too much” into this story? Are who are “we” anyhow? Why do I keep saying “we” as though dozens of people are writing this book? Do you think I should increase my medication?

In any case, a friend of mine, Mark, once told me about the time he learned how to hunt by studying with a Native American teacher.

Mark and the teacher had wounded a deer, but it had gotten away from them. They had no idea where it had gone. Suddenly, a bird flew overhead. The teacher pointed in the direction in which the bird went and said, “The animal is that way. Let’s go.”

Puzzled, Mark asked, “Did the bird smell the deer’s blood?”

“No,” replied the teacher.

“Did the bird see the wounded deer?”

“No.”

“Well, then how do you know we should go that way?”

“Because the bird is flying that way.”

It took Mark a few minutes to realize that the teacher was following the bird, *not* because he thought the bird knew anything about the deer, but because he was “reading” the bird’s flight path symbolically — in other words, because he was treating the world as though it were a story, a text. (And yes, they found the deer. And yes, it did lie in that direction. But I’m not a big fan of hunting, so I’m not going to talk about that part.)

Now, is the world really a kind of book? Is it really possible to “read” events that happen to you as though they were signs or messages? Who knows. Probably not. In fact, it’s probably crazy to think such a thing. But that’s not the point.

**The point is that it is useful to *imagine* yourself as living in such a world.**

Do you want to grow a successful business? Do you want to market an important product, service, or idea? Do you want to get across a powerful idea to people?

Then start thinking of yourself as a *living* being in a *living* world — not as a cog in a machine, not as a victim of circumstances, not as a dead thing in a dead world.

And why should you do this? Because it’s true? Not necessarily.

**Here’s why: Because it works.**

To believe in a world that has meaning, to believe in a world that interacts with you, that responds to you, that makes sense; to believe in a world that is, in short, *alive* — this act of mental gymnastics; even when, or especially when, it is difficult — does something spiritually muscular and extraordinary: it makes *you* more alive.

It makes you alert to new opportunities. It makes you more cheerful and pleasant to talk to, more enjoyable to be with, more fun to do business with. It makes you shine.

You think more clearly. You assess business situations more astutely. You make better decisions. You become more creative. Your offering becomes more fascinating to people because YOU become more fascinating, fun, attractive, engaging.

The American philosopher William James was a pioneer of the idea that something can be good, not necessarily because you can absolutely prove it’s true, but because acting *as though* it were true helps you do other things.

In mathematics, for example, if you act *as though* there's really a square root of  $-1$  (the so-called "imaginary" number  $e$ ), you can get a lot more math and science accomplished than if you just throw up your hands and say, "Oh, puh-*leez*; I just can't believe there is such a stupid, impossible thing!"

The difference between high-IQ mathematicians and the rest of us is that mathematicians don't mind working with an idea that is as hard for a human being to grasp as it is for a poodle to understand that, when you're pointing your finger at something, you don't want Fifi to keep following your finger.

So if somebody says to you or me, "The world is alive with meaning! Look!" — let's not simply stare at their finger and make an easy, sarcastic comment, like a smartass character in a bad sitcom. Instead, let's see what they're pointing at. Let's look at the world.

👉 **Mischievous Foot in the Door Tactic #1 ("*Discover Your Myth*"):** Find (or invent) genuine meaning in the story of your life. **It will prepare you to recognize opportunity when it knocks.**

There is a book called *Man's Search for Meaning*, by Viktor Frankl. In it, the great Austrian psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor spells his name in a way that definitely looks very, very wrong. But never mind that. What he says in his ground-breaking book is that our primary motivation in life is the search for meaning.

The people who survived the Holocaust were the ones who had a sense of meaning and purpose. They were ones who had discovered the myth or story informing and enriching their lives. The people who died — many of them, anyhow — were the ones who lost that sense of meaning. This, at least, is what Frankl theorizes in his book.

[... Chapter 10 (print edition) continues at this point ...]

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