

The Clap
by
Jenna Levine

(904)654-4694

FADE IN

1 INT. BROADCAST STUDIO - DAY 1

The Channel 4 News logo and jingle ring-in the morning. The set is home-y but artificial. Bright lights shine down on BONNIE DEEGAN and GORDON MERIWEATHER who have feigned grins plastered on their faces.

BONNIE DEEGAN
Good morning, New York City. As
always, I'm Bonnie Deegan.

CUT TO

2 INT. HALLWAY - DAY 2

JACK ADKINS (late 20s, handsome and charismatic) powerfully glides down the hallway. Employees frightfully make way. SIMON BAKER (late 20s, less handsome) sheepishly follows behind.

CUT TO

3 INTERCUT BETWEEN BROADCAST AND HALLWAY 3

GORDON MERIWEATHER (CTND.)
And I'm Gordon Meriweather. We hope
you had a lovely weekend and we
thank you for starting your week
here with us.

Jack continues to strut down the hallway. He looks like his mom dressed him for his first communion. His suit is crisp. Not a hair is out of place, but he is surrounded by chaos.

BONNIE MADEWELL
It is 9 AM, Monday, June 3rd. Up
next---should you be giving your
dog a B-12 supplement? The answer
might surprise you.

As Jack makes his way to the studio, someone offscreen hands him a CUP OF COFFEE. He chugs it, crushes the cup and throws it.

GORDON MERIWEATHER
But first, our own Jack Adkins with
the weather.

Jack makes it just in time, switching from his suit jacket into his tacky weatherman jacket. He stands in front of a green screen, gesturing as he explains.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

What is happenin', New York?! Are you in for a treat! As you can see, we have got nothing but sunny skies this week. There is a slight chance of showers as we head into this weekend. Nonetheless, you are gonna want to load up on sunscreen and get those towels ready. Back to you, Gordon.

Jack's on-camera facade fades with the lights. The second he's off, he gets ready to leave.

JACK

Where the hell is Deborah? Tell her that if I wanted coffee that bland I might as well drink her personality.

SIMON

She's on maternity leave, Jack.

JACK

Well make sure to use that line on someone else, it's a sick burn.

SIMON

Will do, Jack. Very sick.

Jack tosses a random woman his KEYS.

JACK

Crystal, pull my car around, would you? Thanks, sweet-cheeks.
(yelling)
Suarez! Where in god's name is Suarez?

SUAREZ

Right here, Jack.

JACK

Listen Suarez, your chicken scratch on the cue cards is out of control. Did you see me out there? I was floundering. I almost said "bowels" instead of "towels." I didn't, because I'm a professional and can pick up on context clues. But because of you, I was on the cusp of "bowels." You're fired.

(CONTINUED)

Suarez is distraught. Simon glances at him, apologetically hopeless. Jack is unfazed, he keeps walking.

JACK
Simon, did you get an anniversary
present for Beth?

SIMON
(puzzled)
Your anniversary was last month.

JACK
(loudly, artificially)
What's that? Today's my anniversary
with my wife of 5 years whom I love
dearly? I'm going to need to head
out early to shower her with
affection. I'm sure you understand.

Simon follows him out of the studio. Jack stuffs his
weatherman jacket into Simon's already full arms.

SIMON
There was actually something I
wanted to talk to about about...

4 EXT. BROADCAST STUDIO - DAY, DARK AND STORMY 4

Jack flips on a pair of DOUCHEY SHADES and hops into his
DOUCHEY CAR, not noticing his inaccurate forecast. He drives
away.

Simon looks up to see the eerie and stormy sky.

SIMON
Well, shit.

CUT TO

5 INT. BROADCAST STUDIO - DAY 5

Jack looks like he's been through the ringer. He says
nothing and he walks down the hallway, ignoring the same
chaos from the day before.

Simon approaches.

SIMON
Hey, Jack. I took the liberty of
getting your coffee myself.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
Thank you, Simon.

Simon is taken aback.

SIMON
Is everything okay?

JACK
Beth left last night.

SIMON
I'm really sorry, man. Since college I always thought you'd, you know, end up together.

JACK
Me too. She said she can't be with someone who doesn't respect her, his peers, or himself...
(clears throat, composing himself)
I'd appreciate your discretion.

SIMON
Look, I'm here if you need anything. Maybe you should take the day off---

Jack, overcompensating, turns his frown upside down.

JACK
Nonsense. There's a storm a-brewin'. We're taking this mess outside.

SIMON
Jack, they think it's going to be a Category 4. You really don't need to do this.

JACK
I can't be the next Al Roker from inside this studio.
(yelling)
Let's move people!

CUT TO

6 EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY (STORMY)

6

Jack looks hyper-focused. He navigates through the foliage. The sound of crunching twigs, roots, and leaves is punctuated by GRUMBLING THUNDER. He fights to walk against the strong wind. He keeps looking forward, unfazed.

NEWS CREW

(concerned, talking over each other)

This is a terrible idea. This is so dangerous. Why are we here? Why are we doing this? Jack is out of control, etc.

Jack abruptly turns around and breaks the silence.

JACK

That is enough! Either slap a smile on and do your job or get the fuck out. You are nothing. You're worthless and you're replaceable. I am irreplaceable. I am king.

The crew doesn't have to think about it. The majority leaves, fed up with how Jack treats them. A few stragglers, including Simon, remain.

There is a long period silence. Jack's remorseless is unwavering.

JACK

What are we waiting for?

What's left of the crew assumes their positions.

SIMON

And we're live...in 5, 4, 3, 2...

CUT TO BLACK

We hear a cacophonous CLAP OF THUNDER.

CUT TO

7 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

7

Three years later, Simon enters flustered. Jack looks deteriorated, like the polar opposite of who he was.

SIMON

You're up.

(CONTINUED)

JACK

I'm up...

Simon hands Jack a TO-GO CUP OF COFFEE.

SIMON

Force of habit... How are you feeling?

JACK

Different.

SIMON

I can't believe it's been three years.

JACK

When I woke up the TV was on. Suarez, huh?

SIMON

They rehired him a couple months after your accident. It was kind of incredible, actually. He worked his way up from nothing.

JACK

(jokingly)

I never thought *he* would be the one to replace me.

He pauses.

JACK (CTND.)

What happened to you?

SIMON

Well...without you I was out of a job. I bounced around a couple places. Currently, uh, I'm assistant manager of a Barnes and Noble. Pays the bills...and I get all the free pens I want, and sometimes a desk calendar if they're feeling generous---

JACK

I am so sorry, Simon.

SIMON

Don't apologize for literally being struck by lightning.

(CONTINUED)

JACK
I need your help.

SIMON
With what?

JACK
3 years alone in my head gave me a lot of time to think. And I realized I'm not the person I want to be or thought I was. And I need your help...teaching me to be better.

Simon takes a moment of silent contemplation.

SIMON
What makes you think I owe you anything?

JACK
I don't. You don't. I just---

SIMON
You treated me like dirt for years. You made me do a juice cleanse with you. You forced me read the entire Twilight Saga **and** see the movies so that when people asked you which you thought was better, you would have a response.
(reiterating)
The Twilight Saga, Jack.

JACK
I know and I'm sorry---

SIMON
I looked up to you...and you never even thanked me. Not once. Actually, you know what. You did thank me. The day of your accident.

JACK
I know. I wouldn't blame you if you walked out of here and never spoke to me again. But think about it. I climbed the ladder in just 2 years as an asshole. Imagine how fast we can make if I showed people even an ounce of respect. And I'd take you with me.

(CONTINUED)

SIMON

Look, Jack, I don't know. I---

A disturbance outside the hospital room door catches Simon's eye. Two little boys loudly play in the hallway. The children's mother quickly quiets them down, apologizes, and closes the door.

SIMON(CTND.)

I'll do it.

Jack softly smiles and sips the coffee.

JACK

This coffee is terrible, by the way.

SIMON

It's the thought that counts.

CUT TO

MONTAGE

-Simon teaches Jack how not to be a shit person. Through trial and error, he learns how to open doors for people, to let people in on the highway, and to recycle.

-Jack gets a hired back at Channel 4 and has to work his way up. He starts as someone's assistant, putting up with the abuse he use to dish out (getting coffee spit into his face, getting screamed at).

-He works his way up to cue-cards, being respectful to coworkers and strangers alike.

-Finally, he gets promoted back to head weatherman.

-Along the way, Jack and Simon become close, just like they were as children.

BACK TO SCENE

8

INT. BROADCAST STUDIO - DAY

8

Jack and Simon triumphantly walk side-by-side back into the studio. Their exuberant faces slowly fade as they are greeted by their old crew. Thunder grumbles quietly in the background.

The crew looks like the mob of village people about to storm Frankenstein's castle. DORIS (middle aged, bad haircut) and JONATHAN (middle aged, disgraceful posture) lead the pack.

(CONTINUED)

DORIS

What the fuck, Jack?

JONATHAN

Do you think you can just waltz back in here again and we'll feel sorry for you and forgive you?

JACK

I know it's hard to believe, but I really have changed---

NEWS CREW

(talking over each other)

Bullshit. You're still the same asshole you were 3 years ago. You deserved to be struck by lightning.

JACK

It's true. I treated you all so terribly and I really am sorry. I've changed. Simon can attest---

DORIS

Oh, you and Simon are thick as thieves now?

JONATHAN

Yeah, Simon. Does Jack know what happened while he was out?

JACK

What is she talking about?

SIMON

(to crew)

Stop talking.

DORIS

Oh, wow. Your best buddy Simon didn't tell you? He got married!

JACK

What?

SIMON

Seriously, please stop.

JONATHAN

It was a lovely ceremony.

(CONTINUED)

DORIS

He and Beth make just the cutest couple.

Jack is confused, but moreso upset.

JACK

(to Simon)

Beth? As is *Beth* Beth? As in **my** Beth?

SIMON

Jack, I was going to tell you.

Jack's demeanor abruptly switches from a sad confusion to a silent fury. If this was a cartoon, his entire body would turn red and steam would be coming out of his ears.

JACK

Get out.

SIMON

Jack, I---

JACK

Now.

The mob is silent. Simon looks over at them. They avoid eye contact, realizing what they have done. Simon is visibly upset. He leaves.

JACK (CTND.)

And to the rest of you...I am back. And you *will* respect me. Pack up the equipment, we're heading out to the field.

CUT TO

9

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - DAY (STORMY)

9

Just as before, Jack looks hyper-focused. He navigates through the foliage. The sound of crunching twigs, roots, and leaves is punctuated by GRUMBLING THUNDER. He fights to walk against the strong wind. He keeps looking forward, unfazed.

DORIS

Jack, are you sure this is a good idea?

(CONTINUED)

JACK

Doris, I swear if you say one more word to me I will set you on fire.

Doris backs off. Jonathan approaches. Jack cuts him off before he even has the chance to speak.

JACK (CTND.)

Jonathan, I'm gonna stop you right there. You have the worst personality of anyone I've ever known.

Jonathan sheepishly backs off.

JACK (CTND.)

Let's move people!

The crew quickly sets up. Jack looks determined but the rest of the crew looks like their being held hostage.

DORIS

Alright, everybody. We are live in 5, 4, 3, 2...

CUT TO

Black...

We hear a cacophonous clap of thunder.

CUT TO

10 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

10

Simon lays in the hospital bed. The lights are harsh. The room looks stale and dingy.

Simon opens his eyes.

Jack sits at the foot of his bed.

They say nothing.

FADE TO BLACK