

HEADLINE JACK

Written by

Nicole Carpio

EXT. STREET - DAY

JACK, 50s, clown with a sign on his neck that reads: "CLOWN FOR HIRE," stands in front of a circus billboard. He juggles three colorful balls as a WOMAN walk past him.

The Woman knocks down an empty can near Jack as she exits. It dumps out a few coins against a notebook under the can.

Jack drops his juggling balls, then frowns as the balls bounce on the concrete.

EXT. DDC NEWS STATION - FRONT BUILDING - DAY

Jack sits on the sidewalk near the road. He dumps out fifty cents from an empty can. He sighs, then picks up his notebook and flips through the pages.

He passes through a section titled: "LIST OF JOKES." He turns to the last page and scribbles out the word: "JUGGLING."

REPORTER (O.S.)

No, no, no. I have had it!

Jack turns and spots a REPORTER, 24, grey vest with a coffee stain, and GABRIEL HUSTON, 20, white-collar, enter.

The Reporter opens his car, then dumps his stuff inside.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

I'm tired of getting mistreated.

GABRIEL

I said I was sorry.

The Reporter turns to Gabriel and reveals a brown stain on his shirt.

REPORTER

Sorry doesn't clean off the coffee stains, now does it, Gabriel?

GABRIEL

No, but it does clean off shame.

The Reporter enters his car, then starts the ignition.

Gabriel holds onto the handle.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Wait, at least help me capture a--

The Reporter drives off.

Gabriel lets go, then watches the car exit. He turns around, then exits to a building.

Jack looks at the building, then at his notebook.

INT. DDC NEWS STATION - LOBBY - DAY

The NEW ARCHOR organizes their papers as the MAKEUP ARTIST applies makeup on them.

The STAGE CREW sets up the lights and the cameras. A few speak and help each other move the sets around.

MR. CARLSON, 45, red suit and tie with a big belly, enters with Gabriel.

MR. CARLSON

He quit? He can't quit. We gotta get on air by evening.

GABRIEL

Can't we just get someone else to do it?

MR. CARLSON

Like who?

Jack resumes his juggling while wearing a scribbled-out sign that reads, "REPORTER FOR HIRE."

Mr. Carlson and Gabriel stop.

MR. CARLSON (CONT'D)

What the-- Is this a joke?

JACK

No, it's a warm-up trick -- or at least it's supposed to be. I'm a little rusty.

Jack stops juggling. He misses his catch.

The balls bounce on the floor.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well, my name is Jack. Not, uh--

GABRIEL

How did you get past security?

JACK
I dunno anything about security,
but those men in the other room
just let me in.

Jack motions his arm to the exit.

Jack looks at his sign, then at Mr. Carlson.

JACK (CONT'D)
So, I heard you need a reporter. I
just so happen to be one.

MR. CARLSON
Do you have a resumé?

Jack shows him the sign from his neck.

MR. CARLSON (CONT'D)
Any skills?

Jack flips the sign around. The text reads: "I CAN WRITE
FUNNY STUFF (I guess)."

MR. CARLSON (CONT'D)
Would you take less than minimum
wage?

JACK
Uh, yes.

Mr. Carlson looks at Gabriel, then pats his back.

MR. CARLSON
He's all yours, Houston.

Mr. Carlson chuckles as he walks away.

GABRIEL
He can't be a news reporter, Mr.
Carlson. He's a Clown.

Everyone in the room lets out a gasp. They stare at Gabriel.

Mr. Carlson stops, then turns to Gabriel.

MR. CARLSON
Are you judging your new employee?

GABRIEL
I'm just saying that you can't hire
some guy in a clown suit without
any clarifications of who he is.

Mr. Carlson takes out a sticky note, writes down "VISITOR: JACK," then sticks it onto Jack's costume.

MR. CARLSON

I want a good headline by noon.

Mr. Carlson exits.

Jack smiles at Gabriel, then adjusts his new name tag.

Gabriel looks at Jack, turns away, then places his hand on his forehead.

EXT. DDC NEWS STATION - FRONT BUILDING - DAY

Gabriel moves his camera to the back trunk of a news van. He turns away to pick up another set of equipment.

Jack sits in the back of the van as he writes in his notebook. He looks at the camera near him, then picks it up and plays around with it.

JACK

So, how does this thing work?

GABRIEL

No, no. Give me that.

Gabriel takes the camera away from Jack. He places it in the van, then turns to Jack.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

You're not going to take the camera or the microphone. You're a clown. Clowns don't do headlines.

JACK

But it's my job now.

GABRIEL

No, it's not. You're under my care, so that means what I say goes.

Gabriel motions Jack to move out of the way.

Jack get out of the van as Gabriel closes it.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Your job is to stand away and that's it. Understand?

Jack nods, then closes his notebook.

They exit to the van.

EXT. STREET - DAY

BYSTANDERS walk by each other. They stare at Jack as he sits in the van.

Jack watches Gabriel as he try to pull an OLD MAN, 60s, in but he shuffles away.

EXT. PARK - BENCH - DAY

A LITTLE GIRL, 10, licks on her ice cream while she sits on a bench. She stops, then looks at Jack.

Jack crouches down, leans his microphone closer to the girl, and smiles.

The Little Girl squeezes Jack's red nose. It HONKS. She giggles, then exits.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The lights flicker as a YOUNG MAN, 20s, enters with a suitcase. He pulls out his keys, looks up, then stops.

Jack and Gabriel stand in the middle of the parking lot. They walk towards the Young Man.

The Young Man screams and runs off.

EXT. PARK - FRONT GATE - DAY

Jack and Gabriel sit at the sidewalk near the fence. They sweat from the heat.

Two FEMALE JOGGERS, 20s, runs past them.

Gabriel looks at the footage of their encounters so far. He looks at his watch. It reads, "11:50am."

He puts the camera to the side, then sighs.

Jack uses his notebook as a fan.

JACK

I'm sorry for interfering. Comedy
wasn't working for me, so I--

Gabriel furrows his eyebrows as he looks at Jack

Jack looks away.

GABRIEL
It's not your fault. I'm a clumsy
mess.

JACK
You mean with the coffee stain?

GABRIEL
"Gabriel the Terrible," they call
me.

Gabriel chuckles as he digs into his fingers.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)
It's hard to work with someone who
would always fall on their face.

JACK
Well, at least someone wanted to
hire you.

Gabriel looks at Jack's notebook. He sees a list of jokes and
jobs that is scribble out.

An Ice Cream Truck drives by. It plays a nursery rhyme. It
stops near the front gate.

A group of CHILDREN run up to the Ice Cream Truck.

GABRIEL
At least I can drown my face in
something cold before we get fired.
You want something?

JACK
No thanks.

Gabriel stands up and walks to the Ice Cream Truck.

Jack takes the camera, replays the footage, then beams up.

Gabriel stands in line with the other children. He hears a
crowd of kids. He turns to Jack, who has an audience.

Jack starts to juggle his balls while the children laugh.

GABRIEL
What are you doing?

JACK
Saving our jobs.

Gabriel picks up his camera, starts to film Jack.

Jack stops, then catches all three balls.

The children cheer.

JACK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You've heard many people become the
first of something, but have you
ever heard of a clown become a News
Reporter?

INT. DDC NEWS STATION - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

The News Crew watches Jack and Gabriel's headline. They see Jack in various locations. He makes the children laugh and the adults scream.

The News Crew laughs.

Jack and Gabriel stand in the back of the room, anxious.

JACK (O.S.)
Jack was once a Professional Clown,
who had his whole life turned
around when he was hired to be a
DDC News Reporter in Florida.

Mr. Carlson turns to Jack and Gabriel. He gives a thumbs up as he smiles.

Jack and Gabriel smile back, then look at each other.

INT. DDC NEWS STATION - DESK - NIGHT

Jack wears a formal blue suit with his clown makeup.

Jack, Gabriel, and a few co-workers starts to crack up jokes. They laugh while they sip on a plastic red cup.

END