

THE HANDSHAKE

by

Ann Clifford

An original short film

Ann Clifford
11 Hastings Road
West Ealing
London W13 8QY

Tel: +44 (0) 7974 300201
Email: mail@annclifford.co.uk

1 INT. WILL'S BEDSIT - MORNING 1

A hand is held out, as if expecting a handshake, in front of a mirror to be whipped away determinedly and stuffed into a suit jacket pocket.

WILLIAM WICKFIELD (aged 34) as lithe as a lamppost, as lithe as elastic, who speaks with a stutter, stands in front of a 'tall boy' mirror. Reflected in the mirror is a wooden cross hanging on the wall. Dressed in a shirt, woollen waistcoat, suit jacket and cycling leggings is standing practising resolutely, hiding his right hand.

SOUND OVER: a clock ticking. The clock chimes the half hour 8.30am.

Will, momentarily paralysed with horror, is galvanised into a tornado of gathering and rushes out of the door in a panic.

2 EXT. STREET - DAY MONTAGE 2

SOUND OVER: street sounds

Quick flash of the following:

Will cycling to within an inch of his life - every light is red.

He is chased by a dog on the street.

He passes a church with a notice outside "Turn the Other Cheek". His eyes fix on the saying.

He fails to look where he is going and a bus cuts him up.

He veers off into an oncoming car getting a mouthful from the driver.

He nearly runs a CHILD down on a zebra crossing, but stops to help them pick up what they drop.

3 INT. OFFICE - DAY 3

Arrives in a panic outside the office of DUNKERLEY, DUNKERLEY AND SPANK and disturbs a pigeon that flies into the air and promptly shits on him.

He looks with despair at the catastrophe and wretchedly tries to wipe the shit off his suit jacket and succeeds only in leaving a white tell-tale streak.

Mindless with fear he takes the bike inside the door, where it gets stuck.

He forces it through and breaks the rear mudguard.

4 INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

4

SOUND OVER: Silence except for the creak of the stairs, Will's hyperventilating breath and the sound of laborious footsteps ahead.

Will climbs the Dickensian sepia narrow staircase two at a time until coming to a full stop behind a large ascending backside.

MRS CLARA CREAKLE (aged 50), as round as a roly poly pudding is laboriously, but urgently climbing the stairs.

Her breathing becomes louder and louder.

She hears someone behind her and turns and smiles in relief that it is Will.

Her face changes almost immediately into one of intense concentration on climbing the stairs as quickly as possible.

Fear is gripping Will's throat as he realises he cannot pass her wedge-like posterior.

5 INT. OFFICE GENTS TOILETS - DAY

5

Will's backside is struggling to put on his suit trousers.

He is aware of another and sees MASTER SAM JINGLE (aged 17) as small as a jockey and as thin as a rake in front of the mirror anxiously counting his acne spots.

Despair hits Sam's face.

Head down he disappears out of the door.

The clock chimes are heard for 9am.

Will looks horror struck and dashes out of the toilets his flies unfortunately undone.

6 INT. OFFICE - DAY

6

Will charges into a large sepia-toned office with four aged desks in a row, computers a seeming anachronism, placed equally to attention alongside their member of staff.

Mrs Creakle - recovering.

MISS ADELINE SPOT (aged 30) black, as small as a bird and as shapely as Venus with unflattering, ill-fitting, glasses.

Sam stands his head still bowed as before a hangman.

Will is halted in mid rush by MR JERUBBABUL SPANK (45) as thickset as a Welsh prop forward with very bad breathe, dressed in a suit, with a benevolent smile on his face, his hand raised like a policeman sorting traffic congestion.

With his other hand he holds a post-it pad and pen.

MR SPANK
Late Mr Wickfield.

A post-it is written on and promptly despatched onto Will's forehead with LATE written on.

Will reels from the bad breathe.

WILL
Sssorry.

Mr Spank looks at him.

WILL
Mr Sssspank.

Will takes his position by his desk.

Mr Spank begins his tour of inspection.

He looks at Sam's acne with disgust. He then looks at his collar.

MR SPANK
Number of spots Mr Jingle?

Sam looks miserable.

MR SPANK
(shaking his head with a
deep sigh)
Hhmm. Brush Mr Jingle?

Sam shakes his head looking for help but everybody keeps their eyes down.

Spank then takes out a small brush and brushes Sam's jacket.

He writes on the post-it and places it on Sam's forehead with a smile. FACIAL WASH, BRUSH.

He pats him on the shoulder.

Adeline is trying to catch Will's attention to get him to notice his flies are undone.

MR SPANK
Give it time my boy.

Mr Spank holds out his hand and shakes Sam's hand warmly and firmly. Sam visibly shrinks with the touch.

He moves down towards Clara.

He looks at her smiles, shakes his head and tuts.

Sam surreptitiously wipes his hand.

MR SPANK

Larger clothes my dear, smaller
patterns, less food in the office
I think.

MRS CREAKLE

(with dignity)

I am on a diet Mr Spank.

He simply nods, writes SELF-CONTROL on a post-it note and places it on her forehead.

He holds out his hand and shakes hers warmly.

MR SPANK

Good to have you Mrs Creakle.

Clara's bottom lid quivers, her eyes fill, but she holds it together.

He moves on to Adeline who looks demure and dignified.

He reaches towards her, she reacts to the bad breath and he sniffs her hair and her perfume.

He then notices her glasses.

MR SPANK

Probationer you may be, but
designer glasses are a must Miss
Spot.

He writes CHEAP on a post-it note and places it on her forehead.

He holds out his hand but, paralysed with shock, Adeline is unable to move.

Mr Spank waits for a response.

Will suddenly has an unaccountable attack of coughing.

Mr Spank looks over and his eyes narrow with resolve.

Adeline comes to her senses.

ADELINE

Yes Mr Spank.

She holds out her hand, which is grasped and shaken firmly.

MR SPANK

We pride ourselves on our taste.

Adeline, the attention gone from her sneaks a grateful look at Will.

MR SPANK

Mr Wickfield, you are a disgrace to this fine office. Kindly attend to your trousers.

Will does so.

Meanwhile Mr Spank is sniffing. He sniffs the tell-tale white skid mark on the jacket and his face wrinkles in disgust.

Another post-it note is written and placed on Will's forehead, UNTIDY, PUNGENT.

Mr Spank holds out his hand. BEAT.

There is a corporate intake of breath.

Will hesitates. Mr Spank is devastatingly intent.

Adeline's eyes light up.

Will's hand hovers between the outstretched one and his pocket.

Eventually he is defeated and shakes Mr Spank's. The relief is audible.

Adeline's face registers disappointment.

Will shrinks into a shadow.

Mr Spank, reaffirmed as a Master of the Universe, reaches his office door.

He gives a sigh of satisfaction, taps three times on the door frame, grows visibly taller, and disappears into his office.

MR SPANK

Coffee Sam.

Clara sobs, takes off her post-it and places it on a communal board.

There are many notes, NO HORIZONTAL STRIPES, ACCURACY, CLEANLINESS, PUNCTUALITY, STUPIDITY, DUNCE, SPEAK WHEN SPOKEN TO.

She covertly takes out a cake and begins to nibble.

Adeline takes off her jacket to reveal a colourful top with a plain gold cross on a necklace.

Will looks at her with admiration, forgetting the post-it notes adhering to his forehead.

Adeline catches his eye and quickly looks away with modest though delighted embarrassment and nervously fingers her cross.

7

INT. STAFF REST ROOM - DAY

7

A dingy staff room with a kettle, coffee, tea etc.

Will is secretively looking at Adeline, munching his sandwiches and pretending to read his tome on tax laws. He is desperate to talk to her, but too shy.

Clara gets out a huge lunchbox and unpacks it.

SAM
(morosely)
I hate Mondays.

CLARA
For a woman of my experience there must be many options in the market place.

She begins to eat with relish.

SAM
Whatcher think Clara? Clearasil?

He shoves his face next to hers.

CLARA
I am a qualified secretary. (Looks at Sam critically) No squeezing!

Sam nods gratefully and attentively.

Adeline meanwhile has taken out a book about her hero Mohammed Ali and is opening up a poster of the great man, which she intends to put on the wall.

Will gets up and removes a year plan from the wall.

Will watches Adeline, still holding the year plan, while she sticks the blue-tak on the back of the poster.

CLARA
It's got to be warm Adeline.

Sam is standing in front of the mirror counting his acne spots.

SAM
3, Tea tree oil is meant to be
good. 4, 5 etc.

This turns into a SOUND OVER of Sam counting underneath the action and dialogue of the scene.

ADELINE
I've tried that. It works.

Will looks at her in astonishment as she doesn't have a blemish.

WILL
Definitely try that Ssam. Adeline
lowers her eyes.

SAM
Right. I'll do that. 20, 21, 22
etc.

SOUND OVER: Sam still counting.

Adeline fixes the poster of Mohammed Ali in all his glory.

Will stands in front of the Mohammed Ali poster and sizes himself up against it imbibing its strength, physicality and mentality.

SAM
33, 34, 35, 36(wearily) again.

WILL
(looking at the poster)
Float like a butterfly, sting like
a bee.

ADELINE
Muhammed Ali, the black superman
who calls to the other guy, I'm
Ali, catch me if you can.

Will replaces the year chart so that it covers the poster.

All sink back into their lunchtime greyness.

8 INT. WILL'S BEDSIT - NIGHT

8

Will, stripped to his boxer shorts, his socks stretched up his legs, stands imitating the pose of the poster.

Suddenly he turns. He has fixed up a pillow on a rope and with great gusto he attacks it boxing furiously.

WILL
 (angry and frustrated)
 Turn the other cheek. Turn the
 other cheek.

In turmoil he gives a final swipe and the rope breaks.

He goes over to a large book and shuts it with a decisive bang. It is the Bible.

9 INT. OFFICE STAIRS DAY 9

Will, dressed in suit jacket, cycling helmet and trousers is racing up the stairs and meets the backside of Clara.

Impatient as he is to pass her he responds to her smile of welcome though the tension is great.

10 INT. OFFICE TOILETS - DAY 10

Will hides in the toilets sweating profusely and hyperventilating.

SOUND OVER: the clock chimes 9am.

11 INT. OFFICE - DAY 11

The personnel are lined up.

Mr Spank notices Will's absence and looks at his watch. Clara and Sam look at each other worriedly.

Adeline looks towards the door hopefully.

Mr Spank looks outside the door and sees the bike parked at the bottom. He smiles.

SPANK
 A moment ladies and gentleman.

12 INT. OFFICE TOILETS - DAY 12

Will is petrified.

WILL
 (whispering)
 Tturn the other chcheek.

SOUND OVER: toilets door opening. Footsteps approaching. Footsteps looking in toilet stalls. They stop.

A shadow falls over Will.

Mr Spank eyeballs him. Then he smiles.

Will, unable to stand up to the man, folds and meekly walks out

13 INT. OFFICE - DAY

13

Will walks meekly into the office.

Mr Spank holds out his hand and Will shakes it, his resolve in tatters.

Adeline's eyes are darting furiously. A set look of determination comes onto her face.

Spank goes straight to Will. He sniffs the shit mark.

SPANK

Mr Wickfield will you kindly assess
the figures for the last quarter.
Will looks at him in horror.

WILL

Nnnnnnow?

SPANK

I'm sure we'd all like to hear
them.

Will slides miserably to his desk and gets the figures.

Adeline is beside herself with worry.

Sam is very red in the face.

WILL

Wwwe wwere aiming ffffor rrreal
internal ssssales growth of
ffffour per cent ppppper year.
Llllast yyyyear our ggggrowthwwwas
up from tttthhhrrree ppppoint
tttthree ttto tttthree...

ADELINE

3.3% to 3.6%. Mr Spank we have all
heard these figures.

Clara gives a sharp intake of breathe and farts loudly.

Sam starts hyperventilating.

They look at Adeline in astonishment.

SPANK

(very quietly)
What?

Sam is in pain.

Clara is mortified with embarrassment.

ADELINE
We know the figures.

She holds out her hand.

Mr Spank moves like a bull to a red rag.

MR SPANK
Miss Spot your work is disgusting.
You are sloppy and idle. Remember
your probation period ends one week
from today.

A tear comes unbidden from her eyes.

He writes a post-it and slaps it on her forehead. SLOPPY,
IDLE, PROBATIONER.

He takes hold of her outstretched hand, smiles and shakes it.

Adeline gags as if she is going to be sick, Mr Spank steps
back in alarm.

MR SPANK
Mrs Creakle show me your lunchbox.

Wobbling with fear Clara obliges.

Mr Spank takes out at least half of it and throws it in the
bin.

He writes a post-it. SELF-CONTROL. He places it on her
forehead.

He shakes her hand. Momentarily her legs give way.

CLARA
Oh my.

His hand effectively stops her from falling.

MR SPANK
We are here to help and we only
have the highest standards. Good
morning to you.

He walks over to Sam who is alarmingly hyperventilating.

Mr Spank smiles and shakes his shaking hand.

MR SPANK
Good morning Master Jingle.

Mr Spank walks to his office door.

Focus on his hand giving three triumphant taps on the
doorframe.

MR SPANK
Coffee Sam.

14 INT. WILL'S BEDSIT - NIGHT 14

Will in front of the mirror dancing like a boxer doing the Mohammed Ali shuffle.

WILL
"All I need is prayer..

Will turns and on top of his Bible is the Mohammed Ali book open.

..because if that prayer
reaches the right man, not
only George Forman will fall..
He raises the book high above his head.
.. but mountains will fall."

15 EXT. STREET - DAY MONTAGE 15

SOUND OVER: Rocky type music begins.

Quick Flash of the following:

SOUND OVER: Street sounds, but Rocky music is rising

Will is cycling to work. It is a beautiful day. Today every traffic light is green.

He watches the dog that chased him on the street, run across the road causing the bus from the opening scene to swerve and bang into the car from the first scene.

Both bus driver and car driver get out of the vehicles mouthing off at each other.

The zebra crossing is clear and the child waves as he passes.

He arrives at the offices. Smiles.

A bird rises from the ground and hovers over his head.

The bird shits, which he neatly side-steps. He watches it rise into the sky the sun behind him illuminating his head like a halo.

WILL
Float like a butterfly, sting like
a bee.

He sees the bird disappear and smiles.

16

INT. OFFICE - DAY

16

Will walks into an empty office and takes his place, waiting.

The others walk in and look at Will with surprise, then horror.

He is first in line, particularly neat, and his feet are dancing.

Adeline gives a special though sad smile.

Sam and Clara line up expecting the worse but eyes bright and attentive.

In walks Mr Spank, a master of the universe!

He looks at them all and then notices that Will, now still, is smiling directly at him.

Mr Spank makes straight for him.

Mr Spank stands in front of Will eyeballing him unmercifully and holding out his hand.

Mrs Creakle cannot watch.

Sam is holding his breathe.

Adeline is urging Will on with her body language mirroring his stance which is that of Mohammed Ali.

Suddenly Will's feet start dancing.

His hands go up as if to box.

The tension is unbearable.

Mr Spank waits though slightly unnerved.

Suddenly Will exuberantly and extravagantly, flings his arms around Mr Spank and kisses him full on the lips for what seems like minutes.

Once released Mr Spank stands as though zapped by an immobiliser.

Will is completely shocked, overcome with surprise by his action.

Suddenly Adeline starts clapping and the whole office erupts into loud, exuberant applause, gathering round their hero.

Will's hands are raised in a Rocky type excitement.

SPANK
 (rasping as though he
 cannot breathe
 properly)
 Get back in line.
 (stronger as if trying
 to reclaim his power)
 Get back in line.

The noise stops abruptly and as one, they all turn and look at him.

He shrinks before their gaze, red-faced and bewildered, a shadow of himself.

Sam goes over to Mr Spank and brushes his collar as if for dandruff.

Clara, a large fluffy cake now in hand, stands in front of him and eats it delightedly.

Adeline steps up to him, grabs his post-it notes and pen out of his hand.

She scribbles BAD BREATHE, BULLY, SPANK OFF, and slaps it on his forehead.

Together they turn their backs on Mr Spank, and walk out of the office.

Clara first, followed by Sam who as he leaves grows inches and taps three times on the doorframe.

SAM
 Spank!

Spank follows meekly, a broken man.

Will smiles beatifically at Adeline.

WILL
 Me.

ADELINE
 We.

Adeline's hand finds Will's and lingers there.

His fingers wrap themselves deliciously around hers.

THE END