



# The Weekly Man

## Episode 10: Tuesday – Jackson

Breakfast was simple: buttered toast, boiled egg, coffee with cream and a kiwi fruit. He saved the kiwi for last and ate it much like he would eat an apple, skin and all. He'd had a hard time with that at first but he'd read somewhere that most of the vitamins were in the skin and now he couldn't imagine eating one without it, and it saved time having to cut the kiwi up with a knife. He chewed as he gazed out the window at the park across the street.

It looked to be a good start on the day. No distractions. An aromatic breeze of autumn air flowing lightly through the windows. A sunny day. Not that he would be walking around outside but it was nice to feel the heat on his skin and the breeze on his face when he stood by the window staring out at the people in the park doing their daily things. For a moment, the thought of being out there in the busyness of all those people tightened his stomach muscles and gave him a sinking feeling. He turned away from the window and walked over to his workspace. His laptop was already on and ready for his workday. It looked like he'd be starting with lots of email. Roy and Jody were in the list along with a couple of other clients and a few of the people he contracted for website development, graphics and research.

There was an email from Jax MacDonald: Need course to save the world.

*Well, will I be helping Jax MacDonald save the world or is this guy just plain crazy? Let's just see.*

He opened the email.

Mr. Gabriel,

This is not a religious thing. I am not talking about gods or prophets. I am in contact with a being that is ALL SEEING!!! A being that has permeated the internet and all things electronic and digital. I believe that it has been spawned by all the messages of humanity and is now a sentient being named Ratlas. Its soul purpose for existence is to save the humanity that created it.

My course will teach people  
-how to communicate with Ratlas,

-how to interpret what it has to say,  
-and how to deploy its message.

Much of this message has already been determined by me and I will be including that in the course. I am currently conceiving of how this course will be structured and exactly what material to include. I should be finished this very soon.

I looked over your rates and information on your website and am in agreement. I will contact you again very soon.

Jax MacDonald

*Well, this guy is just plain crazy.*

He clicked Reply.

Mr. MacDonald,

Your proposal sounds interesting. Perhaps we can work together on this, but I'm afraid I'm completely booked up for the next six months. I trust this will give you time to conceive of how your course will be structured and exactly what material to include.

If this doesn't suit your needs, I can put you in contact with other online course developers, or you can contact me in about five months, at which time I'll have a better idea of what kind of work load I can take on.

In the meantime, I wish you the best of luck in preparing what appears to be a very useful and needed body of content.

Jackson Gabriel

*That should get him off my back for a while, maybe forever.*

He scanned his emails and decided to open one of the feuders: Jody. He wondered if there would be a response to Roy's attack on BetterThanCollege.

Mr. Gabriel,

I'm not sure if you've read Pickering's accusations on BetterThanCollege,

*Yep.*

but he's gone too far this time. He's attacking my credibility.

*If credibility attacks are the problem, he's been going too far for years, Jody.*

He's questioning a course that you designed for me, using my extensive knowledge on the subject of conflict resolution in the workplace. I'm not sure how it happened that we came out with similar topics at the same time. I'm not suggesting that you had anything to do with that. I trust you implicitly. You've been good to me ever since we started doing business together and I'm sure that Pickering contracted you to do his courseware only because you were doing it for me.

For these reasons, I'd like you to do something for me that I think is only fair, and a good business decision since we're working together on the same product. I want you to post a rebuke of his accusations on BetterThanCollege. If you could explain to their readership that the ideas in my course are, in fact, mine and not stolen from someone who wouldn't understand anything about conflict resolution in the workplace even he worked in that area for his entire life. Maybe not that strongly worded, but something to the effect that my course, my original and insightful course, is the definitive tool for understanding and implementing conflict resolution in the workplace.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts on this matter, and to discussing my ideas for another course I'd like you to develop for me. This one will be the definitive tool for building relationships and an extensive network of contacts for effective multi-company collaborative project management.

Sincerely,

Jody Blake

*I swear these guys are going to drive me nuts. But they pay the bills. Well, here goes.*  
He clicked Reply.

Hello Jody,

Nice to hear from you and excited about your idea for a course on building relationships and networks across companies, and I assure you that the development of similar courseware products between you and Roy Pickering was completely coincidental. Given the number of courses both of you have developed, conflict resolution being a major concern in the workplace, it was likely just a matter of time before there would be convergence.

I read the posting in BetterThanCollege and agree that Mr. Pickering's remarks appear to be unduly harsh. I considered your suggestion that I write a rebuke of some sort in response to the posting, but I'm afraid that would put me in a tenuous situation in which I would appear to be taking sides with one client against another client. As I recall this was a choice considered to be inadvisable in your course, Avoiding Client to Client Conflict Issues. So, I should really heed your excellent advice and professional insight on this matter.

However, I can direct you to a consultant I know, Cynthia Parker, who specializes in responding to negative exposure in social media and mass communication platforms. She's very good at what she does and her fees are reasonable. I've referred clients to her in the past and have received excellent feedback on her work. Perhaps we can schedule a face-to-face to discuss this service and your new course idea?

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.

Jackson

*That should do it. I hope.*  
He opened the email from Roy.

Jackson my man, I just checked the stats on "Toward a Sweeter Working Environment" and I'm very happy. 300 units sold in just over a week! That's a new record. I'm betting it's doing much better than Blake's sorry excuse for a course. No insult meant to you. The course looks good but the content really does suck, and I know that you were stuck with what he gave you to work with. Whatever merit the course has obviously comes from you (ie, it looks good and that's about it).

I'm writing this because I just received a really nasty email from Blake. Like the big baby he is, he's crying over something I posted on the BetterThanCollege site. You know him. Can't take any kind of criticism without getting all blathery. Anyways, he hinted that he would be getting in touch with you and that he's had enough. Again. Just wanted to give you heads up that he'll be contacting you with another sob story.

I've been thinking about a few ideas I have for more courses. Not much to say right now but I'll be fleshing them out over the next few weeks and maybe we could meet to talk about them and see what might and might not work. All the best buddy.

Roy

He spent an hour reading through emails from clients and contractors. With the exception of the crazy guy and Jody, everything was going smoothly. Clients were getting their feedback in on time and contractors were meeting their deadlines with remarkable graphics and brilliant programming. All was good and he had time to do some web browsing.

An email notification popped up. It was from Jody.

Mr. Gabriel,

I'm disappointed in your response to my plea for your help in rectifying a wrong that, in a sense, you could be considered complicit in, with you working for both myself and Pickering. I'm not accusing you of anything, but there it is. Being that I'm a client of yours and spend thousands of dollars each year on courseware development, it would seem to me that you would be a little more forthcoming in protecting my reputation in the face of an outright assault on my credibility. I believe this would also be in your interests given that your name and reputation could very well be at stake in this matter.

I also did not appreciate your putting me off by using one of my own courses to justify your lack of support. And on the matter of pawning me off to yet another consultant at extra cost to myself is, to say the least, unsettling. After years of a close working relationship and, as I mentioned, thousands of dollars invested, I am disappointed. Very disappointed.

I believe that you should give this matter some serious thought before the face-to-face that you suggested. I've enjoyed working with you over the years and I would hate to have to find another, more supportive courseware designer.

Jody Blake

*Yes, you bastard, you've spent thousands of dollars each year...and gotten it back in spades.*

Jackson didn't like the implied threat but it wasn't the first time something like this had happened; he'd dropped a few clients who'd become more of a problem to deal with than worth the revenue stream. His response was short and terse.

Hello Jody,

I'll schedule the face-to-face and we'll see we'll see if we can work something out.

Jackson

He started to think that life might be a lot easier if he didn't have both Roy and Jody as clients and Jody was looking like the more likely candidate to eliminate. In any event, he wasn't going

to mar his reputation by taking sides against one of his clients no matter how much either was right or wrong.

*Wait till the face-to-face, Jackson. See what happens.*

