



The Weekly Man

Episode 13: Friday – Jacques

The laundromat. What better place than a laundromat to inspire romance? Jacques wondered how many thousands—millions—of couples around the world had met in a laundromat. How many lifetime relationships had started over soap bubbles and clothing spinning in dryers? It was a personal place, a place where you revealed yourself on an intimate level. Others could see your taste in clothing, your bedding, your skivvies. At some level you almost knew the person using the washers next to you. Jacques had seen a few relationships start in the time he'd been frequenting laundromats. They'd start with small talk, grow into full conversations and then he would see them coming to the laundromat together, their laundry merged in shared baskets and garbage bags.

He'd written thousands of pages of notes over the years. He was ready and armed with all the details he would ever need to create a sense of setting so that his readers could actually feel like they were there listening to the rumble of industrial size washers, the sound of buttons clicking in the dryers and the chi-chang of quarters slotting into the machines. He wanted his readers to smell the detergent and the bleach. He knew every detail, the bulletin boards with their badly spelled notices, the laundry carts scattered around the building and the heat generated by the machines.

And there was the silence of the people. Jacques guessed there was something about a laundromat that invoked a hush. People talked in low tones or they didn't talk at all. Maybe it was an uncomfortable withdrawal from so much of their personal stuff being visible, even for just a few seconds, as tattered and soiled underwear was quickly rushed into the washer. Quickly or not, it had been exposed in a public place.

Of course, this didn't apply to the budding romances. They talked quietly, almost conspiratorially, to block out the rest of the world and make their cozy shared space something for themselves only.

He saw the laundromat as a place of regeneration. People lugged in their dirty clothing and left with baskets and bags of newness. There was a sense of relief as they walked out the doors. They were no longer under scrutiny and their laundry was done. Whew.

Not too much was going on today at the Wheeler Wash. A large woman buried herself in a copy of the National Enquirer, frowning and shaking her head, eating a chocolate bar and washing it down with no-name soda. An elderly couple folded clothing and bedding slowly and meticulously and placed it into square red hampers. They didn't say a word to each other. They didn't look at each other. But they were like a single machine, not getting in each other's way, taking one article after another from the table and folding as though they'd done this so many times that talk wasn't needed and they didn't have to look to know the other was there and what the other was doing, where their hands were, what article of clothing they'd just taken. They just knew.

Maybe he would use them as incidental characters in one of his books, props in a story about someone else. He didn't think there was a place for them in his current book. He already had his main characters and all the incidental ones. He had the plot, the location—laundromat, of course—the theme (things get dirty, things get clean) and the backstories. The backstories were crucial. These were the lives of his characters up to the point where they came into the book. The backstories were the landscapes and horizons, the caverns and hollows, the oceans and skies of everything each of his characters had felt, smelled, heard, tasted and seen in their lives, every thought they'd had, every tear and smile. Before Jacques wrote the first word in any of his novels, he'd thoroughly worked out the backstories of each of his characters enough that he trusted them to do and go wherever they wanted, even if it meant changing the plot.

He even knew their fantasies.

You could learn a lot about someone by getting into their fantasies and then comparing the fantasy with their real lives. Fantasies evoked victory or defeat, acceptance or rejection. The successful CEO who perpetually fantasized living alone on a desert island wasn't smiling inside.

Jacques' latest novel had three main characters: two men and a woman. They converged on the Washing Green laundromat on a Saturday morning. The female, Hillary, was getting over a bad relationship with a man who turned out to be an asshole but with whom she'd had her first orgasm. One of the male characters, Jeffrey, had just been busted by a woman he worked with as a panty fetishist and he's dreading Monday morning when everyone at work will be giving him that knowing look, giggling and winking to each other behind his back. The other male character, Baxter, is a jock who'd recently become impotent after finding out that he was sexually abused by his mother when he was a child.

Somehow, Jacques had to get them to help resolve each other's problems and start a romance between two of them without any of them saying a word to each other.

For this, he had the laundromat on his side.

The laundromat was a sentient being that gets into the minds and bodies – where memories are stored at the cellular level of its customers and tells their stories. That was one of the rules of a laundromance, it had to be narrated by the laundromat. It was never easy but he'd done it a dozen times and his current novel was coming along nicely.

He was getting bored watching the old couple and the National Enquirer woman. He packed his notebook in his backpack and decided to get a coffee before heading home to go through his email.

Oh shit.

It was like being run over by a bus. He couldn't believe that he'd done this. He read the email a second time.

Dear Jasmine,

I don't have the words to respond to your email. I was shocked. I had to read it several times before I could admit that I was really reading what I thought I had read. Why would you write something like that to me? It was bad enough that you would use such foul language, but to tell me to find another pastime to fail at?

What is wrong with you? Is this the way to respond to all your fans? To think that I've spent good money to read all of your books. You're supposed to inspire people, not discourage them.

Well Ms. Jasmine Jackson, I'm going to forward your email to every readers and writers group that I know of. I'm going to let the whole world know what a monster you are.

By the time you receive this email you'll already be losing fans.

Judy Armstrong, an ex-fan.

He felt his blood turning cold as he checked his Sent folder.

Dear Judy,

Thank you so much for your kind words. May I offer this sincere piece of advice on writing? Simply put, the next time you write thirty pages and give up, find some other fucking pastime to fail at

Thank you so much for your kind words. And, from one author to another, wishing you the best of luck with your writing.

Jasmine Jackson

Oh shit.