



# The Weekly Man

## Episode 19: Thursday – Jacky

Paul Mcdermitt was an amateur photographer who'd bought dozens of Jacky's prints. They covered the walls throughout his apartment as "inspiration." He was short and geeky looking, but then, he *was* a geek, a programmer who'd tried unsuccessfully on several occasions to explain to Jacky what exactly he did. Jacky just nodded and tried to look like he understood.

Jacky was explaining to him how he'd captured one of his macro images. "I used a 70 to 200 lens with a two times extender full out at four hundred and focused in close to the leaf. The trick to getting that nicely faded background, which we call bokeh, is to make sure the background is a good ten feet or more behind the main subject."

Paul nodded profusely as though Jacky were giving him guarded secrets of the inner workings of photography. "And I always thought you had to get up close."

"That's for doing extreme macro, when we're isolating a part of the subject and the background is going to be featureless. And the best way to really take out any background is to use a flash. The background will be black."

"No kidding? Black."

"That's right. And when we want those nice circles in the background we use a telephoto lens and keep the background far away."

Paul looked at his watch, a complex piece of machinery with several windows that looked more like a wrist computer than a watch. "Oops. Gotta go now Jacky. Lunch time's over. Thanks for the macro tips. I'll try those after work. You going to be here tomorrow...no...that's right. I'll see you next week."

"I'll be looking forward to talking to you again, Paul."

Paul shuffled off quickly, looking back and waving to Jacky.

Jacky smiled. He liked Paul. The geek's life seemed similar to his own, limited. But now there was something new in his life: Krista Coleman. And he would be seeing her at five to go for dinner. His stomach and chest roiled with excitement at the thought of seeing her again.

He had a feeling that she was going to be different than the others. She would stay. The others hadn't and Jacky never understood why. Their reasons never made sense to him, things like him living in another world. He didn't think that his art put him in another world. He'd always thought it rooted him more firmly in the world...in a perspective, in fact, that put him in the world more than most people. He saw things that others passed by every day of their lives and never noticed.

But none of his relationships had ever turned into actual relationships to the point where there was any kind of permanence, let alone living together, and that's what Jacky wanted. He wanted to live with a woman. He wanted to do things that he'd read about and heard about...things like waking up in the morning with a warm body next to him or watching TV while cuddling and sharing a bowl of popcorn. Making love till the wee hours. Sharing household chores. There were so many things he knew he was missing and he didn't know why that was.

But that was all going to change. Krista Coleman had come into his life and he wasn't about to lose her.

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The grey-haired woman with the granny glasses had Jacky cornered. He was stuck at the gallery till five. This was in the contract with the mall. No one was in the kiosk so the holographic walls were down and Jacky had nowhere to hide from her. She'd moved from a couple of questions about his work to talk about her cousin who was a wonderful photographer to stories about her life and family that she, herself, seemed bored with. Jacky just nodded while he thought about Krista arriving at any moment.

He saw her walking toward the kiosk at twenty to five and he very politely said to the woman, "Oh, excuse me, but I have a meeting scheduled with one of my clients who has just arrived. I sincerely hope that things work out with your Uncle Dan, and have a nice day." The woman frowned and was about to say something but Jacky was already walking toward Krista.

She wore a blue dress and her blonde hair, flowing over her shoulders, created an esoteric Asian presence. She walked smoothly and confidently. And she was so beautiful. When he reached her, she put her arms around his neck and kissed him lightly on the lips. "So what do you have planned, Jacky?" she said. "I hope it involves food. I'm starved."

"Food it is," he said. "I made reservations at Jen Jen's for 5:30."

She laughed and hugged him tightly. Her musky perfume sent a thrill through his body. She pulled her head back and kissed him again. "I love Jen Jen's! How did you know!"

"I love their food too. They make the best spring rolls and cheese stuffed mushrooms anywhere. Shall we get going?"

"Yes!" She almost bounced back a foot and grabbed his hand and suddenly stopped looking toward the footsteps winding through the now invisible gallery. "Oh...you have lock up...or something?"

Jacky laughed and squeezed her hand. "Nope. Everything's automated. Works all on it's own. All I have to do when I'm here is talk to people. The gallery does everything else." Still holding hands, he led her to the mall's exit.

The old woman with the granny glasses, still frowning, stared at them from the hall across from the gallery. As soon as their backs were turned to her, she slanted her head and stuck her tongue out at the couple.

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Candle light and mood lanterns located strategically around the room created a dark mystical ambience at Jen Jen's, enhanced by kaleidoscopic oriental rugs hanging on the walls. The place was close and romantic. Krista and Jacky were holding hands across the table. Jacky couldn't remember being happier.

"I'm really excited to see you again, Jacky."

"Me too. I mean...to see you."

*Nice one Jacky.*

He felt a flush rushing across his face.

Krista laughed, full and hearty. She was feeling good tonight. "I didn't mention this last time, but I was just laid off from my job."

Jacky started to say something but Krista cut in. "It's OK. I just landed a very...very lucrative contract. And I'm thinking about going freelance."

Jacky smiled. "That's the way to go. Self-employed. You never get anywhere working for someone else. They get rich, you get the work."

"Exactly! I should have done this years ago. But I just never had the nerve."

"So it looks like your misfortune turned out to be the best thing for you."

"It did. From the ashes..." She laughed again.

*God, what a beautiful laugh. And she's so beautiful.*

"So you're the phoenix. Such a beautiful phoenix."

*Such a beautiful smile.*

She leaned in closer.

The waitress arrived and, after she poured water into their tumblers, they ordered the same: sesame chicken with rice and a bowl of spring rolls with cherry sauce...her favorite, and now his favorite. She sipped from her tumbler and looked him in the eye. "I was looking at some of your new images. I think they've been there for a few weeks. The ones with just the leaves from ground plants."

"Right. Got all of them in the morning before going to the gallery at noon. What did you think of them?"

"Well, I noticed they all had something in common. The leaves are all deteriorated. I mean, with holes in them and cuts that look like insects have been chewing on them. I was wondering why you would take pictures of those leaves instead of healthy ones. It seems like a break from the rest of your work. Have you turned your attention to leaves at risk?" She laughed, stopped abruptly, and reached across the table to put her hand on his. "I'm not being critical or making fun of your work. The images are still brilliant but it does seem to be something different."

"Are you ready for a long-winded boring explanation?"

"Go ahead, bore me." She smiled.

"Well, it's not really a complimentary thing about the human race..."

"Go ahead."

"OK, here goes." He leaned closer to her. "I get it from traditional Japanese art. It always has a flaw in it, as though perfection itself is only perfect when it has a flaw. The flaw, or the imperfection, is what makes it perfect because then it embraces everything. It expresses the struggle for perfection as a perfect act in which perfection will always be one step ahead of imperfection."

"So...it's like perfection is actually the *journey* toward perfection?"

“Exactly! Yes! And that’s what I’m trying to express in those images. I just feel that they make a more powerful statement on beauty than the ones that are beauty only.” He leaned back in his chair with a defiant look in his eyes. “Well, that’s my take on it and I’m stickin’ with it.” He tried to hold his serious look but broke into laughter. They both laughed.

“I think that’s a wonderful approach to beauty,” she said.

“Good. Let’s change subjects. All this heavy thinking is hurting my head.”

“OK.” She cupped her hands around her tumbler. “What would you like to talk about?”

“You said that you wanted to see the inside of one of the buildings in my neighborhood.” He felt as though his heart was about to jump up into his throat. “Would you like to see the inside of my building?”

Krista smiled.

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“Oh...look at the banisters,” said Krista. “This is genuine teak.” She ran two fingers across the surface of the wood. “I’ve rarely seen teak banisters like these before.”

“They knew how to build back then,” said Jacky. “They were artists and buildings were art, not jigsaw puzzles.”

They climbed a wide stairway with a circular stained glass window on the second floor. “That must be gorgeous in the daylight,” she said.

“It is. Makes the stairway explode with color.”

“And the lights are chandeliers...in the stairway and halls. This place is gorgeous.”

“I like it,” said Jacky. “You’d think I’d get used to it after a while but it impresses me every day.”

“How long have you lived here?”

“About ten years. Give or take a decade.”

Krista laughed. “Smart ass.”

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A door opened on the first floor and a figure passed through it into the shadows at the base of the stairway facing up at the couple admiring the stained glass window.

*Well, you knew this was going to happen sooner or later,* she thought.

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Jacky lay in his bed glowing with the after energy of sex. He’d wanted her to stay but she had to get up early for the commute to her new client’s home. She’d been so giving and warm and soft. He’d admitted that he was a virgin and she didn’t seem disappointed or anything. In fact, it seemed to stir up her passion. She became aggressive and her breathing became hot and loud. She’d lay him back and sat down slowly on him, swallowing him into her wetness and heat over and over until he exploded with a cry that must have waked up every tenant in the building.

“Do I make you happy?” she’d said later.

The words to answer her question crashed into each other in his mind. He couldn’t think what to say to describe to her how happy he was, how much joy he felt, how much he loved her. She’d looked into his eyes and seen the tears and kissed his face over and over.

They'd talked for a while and she'd wanted to know when she was going to see him again. He'd seemed to have difficulty explaining to her that he wanted to see her every minute of his life and she'd repeatedly said, "But why just then?"

She didn't seem mad, just confused, but they finally worked it out and she said she had to leave so that she could get up early for work.

Jacky couldn't remember ever feeling so happy.

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*You idiot, thought Krista. Why...why do you always pick the wrong men? What is wrong with you? He seemed so nice, so sweet. And he was a virgin. You were his first woman. His tears. He seemed for nice, so natural and down-to-earth.*

She walked fast, carelessly on the sidewalk, not seeing the street lamps with their panicky clouds of insects swarming mindlessly around the street lights.

*And he only wants to see you one night a week? One night a week!*