



# **The Weekly Man**

## Episode 23: Monday – All My Children

Her screams splattered against the corridor walls and rolled through the halls like slow thunder for twelve hours. She screamed and she blamed the absent father, “You did this to me, fucker! Fucker!” She blamed the world and she screamed, “You did this to me! Fucker!” She blamed herself and she screamed, “What have I done! Fucker!” She blamed God and she screamed. “Why? Fucker!” She screamed for forgiveness and she screamed for it all to end, but no amount of screaming could stop the life struggling out of her womb.

So she laughed.

It felt good. She laughed some more.

Then she screamed some more and wished that she had hung herself when she had the chance.

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“Push! Push!”

The nurse was getting on her nerves.

*What the hell does she think I’m doing, trying to hold the baby in?*

Natalie glared into the nurse’s eyes above the blue mask. She wanted to tear them out of her head. She screamed and laughed into the nurse’s face as she glared into those two sympathetic blue eyes. She pushed and clenched her fists, splitting the corners of her mouth as she wailed while, inside her body, a tiny life began to feel something akin to alarm as Natalie’s pushes and its own struggling changed the nature of things

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Jack

The screams and laughter had dissipated into the walls and ceilings; the wards and halls seemed to breathe easier. The sound of loud sucking emanated from Natalie's room. *Life flowing into life*, she thought as she looked into the wide, startled eyes. She sensed fear in the small life. His breathing seemed forced and panicky. His body shook, even though he was wrapped tightly in blankets. His eyes darted around the room as though looking for something that might pounce at him. Something terrible was unfolding in this baby's mind on his first day of life but she would protect him and make whatever threatened him go away.

She'd had no idea what she was going to name him but the name Jack suddenly bubbled up from her subconscious and that was his name. "My little savior," she said tenderly. Feeling the exchange of life. "Some day, you'll do great things. I know you will. You've already done them for me."

An old man from down the hall, Manzer Doyle, had walked in and remarked how beautiful her baby was, and how beautiful Natalie was, and how beautiful they looked together. He'd promised to drop by and check in on her the next morning, maybe even bring her some chocolate.

She had a friend and for the first time in her life, she was beginning to feel things.  
More surprise.

Jackson

There was just one thing wrong. This wasn't the baby she'd given birth to the day before. This was another baby. This baby was quiet, almost introspective, and exuded confidence and grace. Even the lips suckled differently.

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Manzer Doyle had an eye for the exceptional, a trait had driven him into one of the most powerful offices in the public service, a position obtained by surrounding himself with people who went beyond the norm—not an easy thing in the public service where thinking rarely deviated from the policies and procedures that guided the career-bound through the minefield of the current party in power. He cultivated relationships with exceptional people and maneuvered his career so that he worked only for the brightest managers until he'd retired as one of the most prominent of those extraordinary people, a man with real power and influence and the ability to make things happen. Manzer Doyle was exceptional and he recognized it in others. Like in Natalie's baby.

This was no ordinary baby. This baby had something about it, a glow or vibration. This baby was different in a way that separated it from others. And Natalie was right. This was not the same baby whose eyes Manzer had looked into the day before. This was a completely different personality, unmistakably.

He shifted in his chair, his weight raising a storm of creaks as the chair's metal frame shifted with his weight. His pale blue pajamas looked pressed and ready for a formal pajama party with dignitaries. He'd wandered in to say hello the previous evening and she'd told him that she'd be in the hospital for another week or so while the doctors kept an eye on certain "complications" that Natalie didn't want to get into. He liked this woman and her baby fascinated him. "You're

right.” His voice was deep, resonating. “This isn’t the same baby. Even the body seems just a little different, if that’s possible.”

Natalie let out a long sigh. Relieved. If Manzer agreed then maybe she wasn’t crazy. “But how?”

“You’ve got me on that.” He leaned forward and stared into the tiny calm eyes.

“That’s what I thought too. His eyes…”

“Not like any baby’s eyes I’ve ever seen.”

“But today…?”

“Yes. A whole different personality. This baby’s…” He crossed his arms over his chest and sat back in his chair with a flurry of grinding metal. “I don’t want to alarm you.”

Natalie smiled, laughed quietly. “You have no idea how far past I am from being alarmed. At anything.”

Manzer looked into her eyes and smiled. “This baby was troubled yesterday, infear of the world and today…he’s in charge of the world.”

Mona looked deep into the eyes of the baby in her arms. “I have two babies.” Manzer smiled in agreement. “Little one, I’m going to name you…Jackson.” She hugged the baby. “Let’s see which one of you is back tomorrow.”

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Jax

It was unmistakable. This was not the same baby that Natalie had birthed two days before, nor was it the same baby that had sucked from her breasts yesterday. This was a whole new person. Manzer nodded agreement.

“Natalie,” said Manzer, as he gazed into the baby’s eyes, “You definitely have another baby here. Someone very different than the last two days. This one seems almost, mystical. Look at his composure.”

She nuzzled the baby with her chin. “He looks so meditative.” She nuzzled him again. The baby smiled and made a soft purring sound.

“Maybe another Houdini,” said Manzer. “A spiritual guide for the masses. A…”

“Manzer…” Natalie’s voice seemed hinged on regret with a trace of worry. “Where are the other two? Jackson and Jack. Where are they today?”

Manzer leaned forward and stroked the side of the baby’s head with a massive hand. The baby gurgled happily. “I’m sure they’re in there somewhere. They’ll be back. In their time.” The two sat in silence for a few moments as the baby stared into a space just beyond its nose and gurgled happily.

“So,” said Manzer, “what are you going to call him.”

Natalie ran her fingers lightly through the downy strands of hair on the baby’s head and thought for a moment. “Jax. With an x,” she said. “I’m going to call him Jax.”

“Jackson, Jack and Jax.” I’m seeing a pattern here. He chuckled. “Any reason for the names?”

“No. No particular reason. Just the names that jumped into my head.”

“Well, I’ll let you spend some time with your new son. I’ll drop by later for a visit.” He stood up and stroked the baby’s head again. “And tomorrow? Who knows? We’ll see who’s back, or see who’s new.”

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Jacky

“Very determined looking,” said Manzer. “And definitely another baby.”

“But where are the others?”

“They’ll be back. I’m sure they will.”

“But what if I have a different child every day...” She shrugged lightly as the baby sucked.  
“...for the rest of his life?”

Manzer chuckled. “I don’t think so. We’ll see. And the name?”

“Jacky.”

Manzer’s deep laugh rolled through the air. “Why am I not surprised?”

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Jacques

“That’s one very misty-eyed baby you have today, Natalie.” Manzer’s huge head dwarfed the baby as he stared into its eyes, seeing yet another person in the tiny body.

Natalie smiled. “I think I might know what’s going on in his little head.”

“And what would that be?”

“What could be so sublime as to make a new baby squirm and coo like this?” Natalie bounced the baby lightly on her breast. Manzer thought for a moment and it came to him. He smiled and nodded and said, “Love.”

Natalie brushed the side of the baby’s head with her palm. “This one will be a hopeless romantic.” She stared into her baby’s smitten eyes and said, “Won’t you, Jacques?”

Jacques shivered and shook his arms and legs with the madness of his feelings.

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Jac

Natalie wiped sweat off the baby’s forehead as he struggled and twisted from God knows what nightmare haunting the mind of someone so young that he shouldn’t have enough knowledge to have a nightmare. Again, this morning, she awakened with a new baby inhabiting the shared body of five other completely different people. “How crowded it must be in there,” she whispered as she ran a cold wet cloth over the baby’s cheeks.

The baby thrashed wildly in Natalie’s arms as though wave after wave of horror flooded through his world.

Natalie pressed the baby close to her chest. Manzer sat on a chair by the bed and shook his head. “I think you’ll have a tough time convincing this one there’s any good in the world.”

Natalie glanced quickly at him and looked back into the baby’s eyes. “Jac. That’s your name, Jac. I promise I’ll make whatever it is that terrifies you right.”

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Jackie

“There’s something definitely different about this child,” said Manzer, peering deep into the baby’s eyes.

“I know,” said Natalie staring as well into the deep blue of the seventh baby’s eyes, the Sunday child. “I have a feeling I know what it is but I can’t quite put my finger on it.”

“Well,” said Manzer, rubbing his bristly chin with the joint of his thumb, “they’ve all been different, different people all in the one body.”

“But this one’s *more* different than the others, like night and day.” She jostled the baby lightly on her breast. “And what *is* your special secret, little one?” Staring into the infant’s eyes, it suddenly occurred to her. “Manzer,” she said, “I’d like you to meet Jackie. My daughter.”