



# ***The Weekly Man***

## **Episode 25: A Big House in the Country 2**

Through the kitchen window, Natalie watched Jack shimmy up the rope ladder to the treehouse. Sometimes he took his meals there along with a sketchbook and pencils. Once a sketchbook was in the treehouse, it stayed there and Natalie never saw what he drew in it.

One evening before bed she asked him why he didn't spend more time in the house. He looked at her suspiciously and contemplated her for nearly a minute before answering. "It's safer in the treehouse." There was a hint of nervousness under the surface of his words as though he were giving out information that might better be kept secret.

"Safer from what, dear?"

He thought about this for a moment. When he spoke, he spoke slowly and quietly—almost a confiding whisper. "I don't know. And that's what I'm afraid of."

Natalie looked into his eyes.

*Does he suspect the others? Does something in his mind have a feeling that he doesn't know the whole story about his life and he feels threatened because of that?*

She knew then that he would spend his entire life in whatever treehouse he could find. And she knew that he knew that.

*And he's not even ten years old.*

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Sunlight filtered through the stained glass panel at the top of the window, spreading an orange and aqua sheen over the room. It was a large room with tall walls and a fireplace and the furniture and decor were spotlessly imitation colonial.

Jackson stared into the darkness of the fireplace. He'd been quiet and detached since he'd waked up. Natalie wasn't worried. They all acted like this from time to time. She wasn't sure what caused it but she suspected it might have something to do with changes in their minds and

bodies that were happening to them along with their siblings. If Jackson was like this, one or more of the others would act the same way this week.

“Is something wrong, dear” she said.

Jackson turned his head towards her. “No, Mom. I was just thinking.”

“What were you thinking about?”

“I’m not sure. I have thoughts sometimes. I’m not sure what the thoughts are or what they’re about. They’re just thoughts.”

He turned back to the fireplace. Natalie had heard the same from the others. She wondered if those thoughts came from one of them— maybe having dreams in whatever state they were in when their personalities were buried under one of the others.

“Mom?”

“Yes, dear.”

“Will I have to leave here someday?”

“Yes, Jackson, you will. When you’re all grown up, you’ll have a place of your own, a job and your own life.”

“Will I have lots of friends?”

“Yes, you’ll have lots of friends.”

As he stared into the fireplace tears began to flow over his cheeks. Natalie walked to him and sat down. “What is it, Jackson?”

He wiped the tears from his cheeks with the back of his hand and looked into Natalie’s eyes. She saw fear in his eyes.

“I don’t want lots of friends. I don’t want any friends. People scare me. I just want to stay here with you, Mom. I just want to stay here with you all my life.”

Natalie put her arms around him and he pushed hard into her. He was shaking and his breath came in gasps. “I just want to stay here with you all my life.”

Tears glistened on Natalie’s cheeks. She knew what she had to do and how much it was going to hurt Jackson. She had to get him ready. She held him tight as he cried.

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“There’s something bigger than all this,” said Jax, pointing his finger in an arc to include the forested area to his left and the rolling pasture lands to his right.

“How is that, Jax?” said Natalie as they walked along the long driveway leading up to a road where the mailbox showed a red flag. Mail today. Jax looked at his mother as though he’d said something that needed no explanation.

“You don’t feel it? It’s under everything, just below the surface. It’s in the movement of the leaves in the trees and in the roots of the grass and the weeds.”

Seeing the look in his eyes, Natalie decided it was best to just nod agreement rather than ask him for an explanation. He would explain anyway. It was in his nature. It was what he did.

“I can feel it all the time. It’s trying to communicate with me. I don’t know what it is, but it’s trying to talk to me. I know it is.” Natalie noticed the plea in his look—the need for some kind of affirmation from her. She nodded and this seemed to appease him. He looked past her into the sky. “It’s even in the clouds. Sometimes I see the clouds take shapes that seem to be trying to tell me something and just when I begin to understand, they break apart and start to form a new message. If they would just give me time to understand. But they move so fast.”

He lowered his gaze to the asphalt driveway and they walked in silence until they reached the mailbox. Natalie lifted the metal door, reached in and scooped out a bundle of flyers and envelopes. She closed the door and pulled the flag down and they started their slow walk back to the house. After a couple of minutes, Jax looked up to her and said, "There's more to my life than what I see, isn't there?"

Natalie wasn't sure how to respond. She thought for a moment and, just before she was about to speak, he grabbed her hand and they stopped and faced each other. "I can feel it, Mom. And it's something I know. I'm more than just myself. I'm part of something bigger, something bigger than just myself. And that's what the trees and grass are trying to tell me."

"You're a very sensitive person for just being nine years old, Jax. And, yes, I think there might be a message for you somewhere in all of this." She pointed in the same arc that Jax had earlier. "And someday you'll understand it."

Jax's face lit up and a wide smile stretched across his face. "Yes, I will! And when I do, I'm going to tell the whole world what it is."

He almost danced as they walked down the driveway to the house.