



The Weekly Man

Episode 37: Tuesday - Jackson

Jackson didn't spend much time wondering about the bump on his head. He didn't even look at it in the mirror. This kind of thing had happened before and he'd long since learned that it was best to just let it pass. Everything healed.

Besides, his stomach and chest were tight with stress. He was actually going to go outside and meet two of his clients, in a coffee shop, with other people sitting at tables, eyeing him as he walked in. And what if an argument broke out between Jody and Roy? What if they started yelling? What if there were a fight? They might all end up in jail. And they would certainly be noticed. His stomach felt like a piece of petrified stone. Nothing seemed real. The room wasn't spinning but he had a sense of movement that didn't feel right. He felt like he was going to be sick but he hadn't eaten yet so there was nothing to vomit. Why had he agreed to this meeting? Why hadn't he just stood up to the two of them and told them to stick to the normal routine? But it was too late now. He'd already made the commitment. He had to go through with this. He had to go to the meeting, to the coffee shop, outside. But how would he get there? He thought for a moment.

Taxi. I'll call for a taxi.

Outside the window, light rain cast a grey pallor over the park. It didn't stop a few of the seniors who'd brought umbrellas and towels to wipe the water off the benches. The runners looked exactly the same. Just another day on the running route. Two mothers with umbrellas pushed their baby carriages. He walked across the floor to his work station and turned on his laptop. There would be plenty of taxi companies online.

In a few minutes, he had one and wrote down the number. He didn't expect any mail from Jody and Roy since he sent his confirmation but he checked his email anyway.

What the hell?

There were about a dozen emails from them, mostly from Jody.

What is this?

He opened the first of the emails. It was from Roy.

Jackson my man, you stood us up. I'm surprised. Didn't have you figured for something like that. You're usually a little more professional so I'm sure you had a good reason. Jody was furious, so you can expect a nasty email from him if you haven't already gotten it. Let me know what's going on, Buddy, and maybe we can schedule another meeting, and maybe you'll make that one.

We didn't talk about anything. We waited about half an hour with coffees in front of us and not saying a word until I said that maybe you weren't able to show. I said that maybe we could reschedule and he just nodded his head, picked up his coffee and left.

It was really weird Buddy. But maybe we can reschedule.

If you're sick, hope you get better soon.

Roy

What? What's he talking about?

He opened an email from Jody.

Mr. Gabriel,

I was very disappointed that you did not show up at the meeting this morning at nine o'clock AM at the Floret Coffee Shop at 481 Wetmore Street. Perhaps you had the wrong address or there was a last minute emergency. In either case, it would have been professional of you to have notified us as to the reason for not showing up at the meeting at the Floret Coffee Shop.

As you well know, Mr. Pickering and myself are busy individuals who really cannot afford to have our time wasted. And it was exceedingly uncomfortable having to sit with Mr. Pickering for thirty minutes without anything to say until you arrived.

I just want you to know that, in view of your recent behavior, an incident of this nature makes it difficult to trust in your continued professionalism.

Mr. Pickering suggested that we reschedule and I agree. I strongly urge you to contact both myself and Mr. Pickering for a rescheduled meeting.

I look forward to your compliance.

Jody Blake

What is going on here? The meeting's not till nine. What are these two talking about? And what does this asshole mean by my recent behavior? And he's looking forward to my compliance?

There were still about a dozen more emails. He decided to skip to the end and opened the last one from each of them, Roy's first.

Jackson my man, when we signed our first contract, you made it clear that there would be just one communication day and I'm guessing that you made the same deal with Jody. I've always thought that was a little odd, but it's what we agreed to.

Practically forcing you to come to the coffee shop for a personal meeting outside that day wasn't fair and it was definitely in contradiction of our agreement. You've made both of us a bundle of money over the years and I for one am willing to let the whole thing go. We can reschedule a meeting or we can just continue with the way we've always been doing things.

Whatever you want, Buddy. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Roy

Have they both gone out of their minds? The meeting's not for another two hours. Another two hours!

He opened the last of Jody's emails.

MR. GABRIEL!

I'm not one to be ignored! You've consistently refused to reply to any of my emails demanding an explanation of your actions, or should I say inactions. Your failure to show up to the meeting was nothing less than unprofessional and displayed a high degree of inconsideration. After all the years of our collaboration, I find this behavior of yours to be inexcusable! I find that I have no alternative but to terminate, immediately, our business dealings.

Jody Blake

Jackson felt like his mind was spinning, like his whole world was spinning. None of it made any sense to him. The meeting wasn't for another two hours, yet both men had sent emails accusing him of not showing up. It made no sense. He read through the other emails, one of them from Jody accusing him of going for days without getting back to him with an explanation. How could days have passed on something that hadn't even happened yet? He put his hand on his head and felt the bump.

And what's that all about? How did I cut my head? How do these things happen? He recalled a conversation with his mother. It was in the big kitchen many years ago.

"You're a very special person, Jackson."

"Why is that, Mom? Why am I a special person?" He smiled sheepishly. She'd said this to him so many times. He had it all memorized word for word but he never tired hearing it.

"It's your mind, honey. It operates at a much different level than the minds of other people. It's almost..."

"...like it operates in a different world." He giggled.

"That's right, Jackson. It's like a gift that will allow you to do things that others can't." She put her hand on top of his. "But there will be things that might confuse you, things that come from people who don't have your abilities, people who live on a different plane of being from yours. There will be misunderstandings and times when things happen that you may not be able to explain. When this happens..."

"...just shrug it off and move past it." He giggled again. "It's the others who aren't making sense. Because they're in a different world."

They'd had that talk so many times and it had always made sense to him. It was like the bump on his head. It was there, but he had no idea what had happened or when it had happened. And this had happened many times in the past. What always bothered him, though, was that this didn't seem to be from the outside world, from the others. This was something that had happened to him, something that he'd done. It was his head, his bump. He'd been personally injured and he should remember how it had happened and when. But, as in the past, there was no memory, no clues, nothing. Something had happened to him and he didn't have a trace of memory of it. Just like every other time.

And now he was being accused of missing a meeting that hadn't even happened yet.

And now there was a knock at the door. He assumed it would be Mrs. Gilbert as he opened the door and was surprised to see Manzer Doyle facing him, his massive body cutting off most of the view through the doorway. His smile seemed so out of kilter with his body, warm and friendly, and completely unimposing.

“So,” he said, “are you going to invite your Uncle Manzer in?”

It took Jackson a few seconds to grasp the situation before he almost jumped to attention and swung the door fully open. “Yes! Yes, Uncle Manzer. Come in.” He moved aside to let the huge man into the room. “Would you like a coffee or something?”

“That would be good, but I’m afraid I have a lot of things to do this morning and right into the afternoon. I’ll be here for a few days, so maybe sometime soon.” His chest heaved as he sighed and the smile fell from his face. “But now, I’m afraid I have some bad news.”

“What is it, Uncle Manzer?”

“It’s Mrs. Gilbert.” He paused for a second. “She’s OK now, but she had a heart attack and she’s in the hospital. She’ll be out soon but in the meantime, I’ll be managing a few things in her place. Mr. Joyce is on a weeklong canoe trip somewhere in the middle of nowhere with no way to contact him.”

Jackson almost lost his balance.

Is the whole world coming undone?

“A heart attack? Mrs. Gilbert? But I was just talking to her. She was the picture of health. When did this happen?”

Manzer thought about this for a moment. Jackie had had a hard time believing that she would miss something as dramatic and obvious as an ambulance coming to the building and taking someone away. He decided to change the facts a little.

“Apparently, she felt something coming on and took a taxi to the hospital. She arrived there just in time. The heart attack started in the admissions room. It seems that she was in the right place at the right time.”

“I wish she had come to see me, though, so that I could have gone to the hospital with her. Why wouldn’t she have done that? I mean, something that serious and just taking a cab by herself?”

“Well, you know Mrs. Gilbert, always looking after others and refusing to let anyone look after her. Besides, everything turned out alright. She survived the heart attack, and that’s the important thing.”

“Would have been nice if she’d mentioned something, though.”

“She most likely felt a sense of urgency and probably wasn’t thinking her clearest.”

“Yeah, I guess you’re right. So, she’ll be home soon?”

“That’s what the doctors say. She’s a strong woman and she hates hospitals.”

Manzer stayed for a few more minutes, assuring Jackson that if he needed anything he would be there for him. As soon as he walked out the door, Jackson was back at his computer trying to figure out what was going on with Jody and Roy. The meeting was in another hour and he had a slew of emails accusing him of missing it.

It was late. Jackson had been staring at his laptop screen most of the day. Since he’d returned from the coffee shop, he vaguely remembered going to the washroom, making a sandwich at some point, but most of the day was obscured by a deep funk. Too many things had happened

over the years, and the things his mother had told him to explain those things weren't as assuring as they used to be. He wanted to know how he'd received the bump on his head. Something as traumatic as an accident that would cause a bump the size of the one on his head would be something not easily forgotten. There had to have been blood and intense pain. How could he forget that?

And this thing with Jody and Roy. What was that all about? He'd gone to the Floret Coffee Shop and arrived there exactly on time but neither men were there. It didn't make any sense that they would be angry at him for not making it to a meeting that hadn't even happened. And when he tried to make it happen, they weren't there.

Just before it was time, it finally sunk in on him. There was nothing wrong with the rest of the world.

There was something wrong with him.