



The Weekly Man

Episode 38: Wednesday – Jax

“You must not fail my directive.”

I must not fail.

“I have given you the key.”

I have the key.

“You must kill the vermin that poisons the masses.”

Kill the vermin.

“It must be done tonight.”

Tonight.

“And there will be celebration.”

Celebration.

“And there will be celebration.”

Celebration.

“And there will be...”

Celebration.

I'm going to be saved. We're all going to be saved.

He heard a knock at the door. He wondered who would be knocking at his door this early in the morning. He wasn't expecting anyone. It could be Mrs. Gilbert, but she always called in the afternoon if she needed to see him about something and there were no repairs that would require a visit from Mr. Joyce. He stood up and walked to the door. As he stood before it, he wondered why there was no peep hole so that he could see who was standing in the hall waiting for him to open the door. Could it be Simon Pierce? Was Pierce on to him? He was somewhere in this building, knowing that Jax knew where he was and was coming for him. Was he, in turn, coming for Jax? Was he at the door now? Another knock. And then a voice: “Jax? Are you home? It's Uncle Manzer.”

He opened the door.

Shortly after Manzer left, Jax was back at his computer. He felt bad for Mrs. Gilbert and he thought that maybe he should go to the hospital to visit her but Manzer had said that Mrs. Gilbert really didn't want to see anyone while she was in the hospital.

Then he had asked Manzer about the other tenants in the building. Manzer had looked a little confused at first, possibly even flustered but Jax had persisted, "I don't think I've ever seen any of them, which seems strange for the length of time I've lived here. I don't even hear them walking in the hallways or see them leaving or entering the building."

Manzer suddenly smiled, as if something had just occurred to him. "Well, Jax, the number of tenants has been dwindling. Mrs. Gilbert has been planning for some time now to do some extensive renovations so, when a tenant leaves, she hasn't re-rented their flat. It's something she's been talking about for years now, and I sometimes wonder if she'll ever actually do it. And as far as I know, and I'm not sure of this, you may be the only tenant currently in the building."

The only tenant?

It didn't make any sense. Simon Pierce had to be in the building somewhere, whether Mrs. Gilbert knew about it or not. And Manzer wasn't entirely sure that he was the only tenant left. Whatever the case, it was his calling to find Pierce and kill him...and somehow, he would do it.

He'd tried several times to get back into Pierce's computer but he couldn't remember the password. In fact, he couldn't actually remember having known the password. It had been something he'd just keyed in without being consciously aware what he was keying in. He touched the bump on his head and noticed that the cut was almost completely healed.

But aren't they always?

If not for the bump, he might have started doubting that he'd been on Pierce's computer and had searched the attic to find and kill him. He thought about this. Find and kill him. He had a knife. He was going to find Simon Pierce and stab him until he was dead. There would be blood. Gurgling noises. Maybe screams of horror. Begging for mercy. The feeling of the blade tearing through flesh. What would that feel like? Would he look into Pierce's eyes as the life drifted out of them and dissipated into the air? Would his eyes be wide with terror or would they close peacefully, grateful that the agony of his life was finally over?

He rushed to the washroom and vomited for nearly an hour, most of it dry heaves.

Back at his computer, he wondered why Ratlas had given him the job of killing Pierce. He wasn't a killer. He wasn't an assassin. He was the carrier of the word, the message. He was like a carrier pigeon. Why would Ratlas choose him to do something he was so unequipped to do? His head was still spinning from the hour in the washroom. His whole body felt puffy and unnatural. His mind was a blank when he thought about killing Pierce. He just couldn't see it.

It suddenly occurred to him that he hadn't checked his email. There would almost certainly be a comment from Pierce.

Just how crazy is this?

Manzer chuckled.

He doesn't realize that he wants to kill himself. Good thing they'll never meet. And a good thing that he's decided to do it himself and not hire someone else to do it.

He wondered about Jax getting access to Jac's partition on the computer though. It shouldn't have happened. Unless, somehow, there was some kind of crossover between the characters. Manzer figured that, if all seven personalities occupied the same body and brain, it might be possible for one to occasionally slip into the other. In this case, Jax might be stopping himself from hiring an outside killer, knowing that he would never be able to do it himself: and thus, they both stay alive.

Unless Jax accidentally kills himself while trying to kill Jac.

Manzer smiled and chuckled at the irony.

Again he wondered about the work that Natalie had done for so many years, keeping their identities from each other, the continual balancing acts to allow each of them to function in the world outside their separate identities, knowing when things were getting out of control and devising ways to bring things back into balance. He pictured her as a juggler of lives in an act that never stopped and continuously switched the stage out from under her feet with all the pins still in the air. And the only fuel she'd ever had was her love for each of them. He'd asked her once why she was so afraid to let them just be one individual.

"That would be murder." She'd left it at that.

But over the years, they'd discussed the dark side of the world her children were born into. None of them would ever be married. What woman would marry one man who was really six men and a woman? How would she cope with the barrage of seven personalities going through all the changes in life, the mood swings, the separate needs, the daily wants and desires of seven separate people.

And now one of them was planning on getting a sex change at a time when the outside world was beginning to barge in with a fury that Manzer couldn't imagine any amount of juggling bringing it back in tune. The pins were about to fly in whatever direction they would fly.

And Natalie was in the hospital.

Jax's hands were shaking as he opened his blog and saw the comment.

Of all the people to leave comments, it has to be the greatest of evils that must be purged from the firmament to stop its flow of vitriol into the veins and arteries of the world.

His skin crawled as he read the comment.

Fuck you.

Blood boiled into his face. He felt a tingle across the top of his head. A deep shake ignited through his entire body.

Once again, he desecrates The Word and Its Forms and Meanings. And from the very structure where it originates. Simon Pierce must die.

He closed his eyes, opened himself to it, and let his fingers flow into the letters and words, carrying their message.

IT COMES FOR YOU ON JOSLIN STREET SIMON PIERCE. YOUR PUTREFACTION OF OUR SPECIES WILL SOON END. YOUR TORCH OF DARKNESS WILL BE EXTINGUISHED. YOU WILL JOIN THE LEGIONS OF EARTH-WALKING DEMONS TO BE EXORCISED FROM WORLDLY EXISTENCE IN THE LARGE PASSAGE OF TIME THAT IS WHAT IT SEEKS TO SAVE.

YOU ARE THE EVIL OF PLASTIC.

THE USE OF WHICH SHOULD BE DISCONTINUED IMMEDIATELY.

There Simon Pierce. Shudder in the knowledge.

Tonight is the night. If all the other flats are vacant, then there is only one other place he can be hiding—the basement. This time I'll be ready.

He knew what he had to do this time. He needed to put together a kit:

Flashlight.

Granola bar.

Knife.

He laid the kit on the kitchen table, pondering it, thinking about what else he might need. He thought about mace but he had no idea where to buy it. But he did have the knife. He had no idea about the lighting arrangements in the basement so the flashlight might come in handy. He had no idea why he included the granola bar but it just seemed right. He thought about rope but he decided that he didn't want to take Pierce prisoner, he just wanted to kill him. He stuffed the objects in to a leather pouch.

Before he left his flat to kill Simon Pierce, he went to the washroom and threw up.

It had taken him about fifteen minutes to find the door to the basement. He'd never realized how big the building was and it seemed more than a little strange that he was currently the only tenant besides Mrs. Gilbert.

The stairs leading into the basement were steep and led into a musky darkness. He found the light switch and flicked it. Nothing happened. He wondered how Mr. Joyce could have missed something like this but he countered this thought by assuming that, if someone were living in the basement, then Mr. Joyce wouldn't be going there and he wouldn't have known about the light. He felt a thrill. It was beginning to appear more likely that Simon Pierce was using the basement as his headquarters. He reached into the leather pouch and pulled out the flashlight. He thought a moment and pulled out the knife. It felt solid in his hand. He felt safer, assured. Soon the plague of Pierce would be gone. The world would be free of the one who would undo the good that Ratlas was trying to accomplish, the one who would diminish *The Word and Its Forms and Meanings*. He left the pouch and the granola bar on the top step. There would be time for feasting when Simon Pierce was dead.

He felt a need to throw up again. He breathed in deeply three times and the feeling passed. It was time to kill Simon Pierce. He turned the flashlight on and stepped down slowly. He felt a cobweb on his right cheek.

Just the kind of place a demented soul would hide to conduct his war on everything good in the world.

He bounced the flashlight beam onto the walls, ceiling and floor as he descended. When he reached the bottom of the stairs, he shone the light quickly into the darkness to the left and right. With the exception of a huge ancient-looking furnace, the basement was empty.

No. He has to be here. He has to be here. Somewhere in here.

He saw a wooden, crate-like door at the far end of the basement.

There you are.

He shone the light on the floor and started to walk slowly, carefully, to the door. He tightened his grip on the knife. He thought about trying a few practice thrusts in the air but decided that was a little too dramatic. As he approached the door, he shone the light a little to his rear, giving just enough light to see the door and its latch but not enough to alert Pierce. When he reached the door, he faced a dilemma: How to open it? He had the flashlight in one hand and the knife in the other. He decided that he needed the knife more. He couldn't imagine himself beating Pierce to death with the flashlight. That would take too much time, and he wasn't sure how big or strong Pierce might be. The knife was the equalizer.

He bent down and lay the flashlight on the floor, stood up and reached for the door latch. At exactly that moment, an uncommonly large black spider dropped on a thread of web directly in front of his eyes.

He screamed.

It was a long, loud, fearful scream. It penetrated the walls and the beams in the ceiling. When it finally tapered to a whimper, the spider was gone. He couldn't see the thread of webbing and wondered if the spider, frightened by his scream had climbed back up into the ceiling or if it was on the floor...or on his clothing. With his free hand, he frantically brushed the front of his shirt. When he finally calmed down and was able to think rationally again, his first thought was that he might have lost the element of surprise. He reached out to the door latch, pressed down and flung the door open.

He faced a pitch dark room. He picked up the flashlight and aimed it into the darkness. The room was empty except for a single uncovered light in the ceiling. He flicked a switch to his right and the light came on, illuminating an empty room.

This can't be. He has to be here. He has to be here somewhere.

He checked the floor for trapdoors. No trapdoors. He checked the ceiling for pull-down staircases. No pull-down staircases. No windows to crawl through if he'd heard Jax's scream. Simon Pierce wasn't in the basement. The other flats were unoccupied. Mrs. Gilbert was planning on renovations so she hadn't let them out to new tenants.

But I found his address. I found it on his computer.

He started to wonder about that, about how something like that could happen, right out of the blue, for no reason. How would he know the password? His mind flew off in a dozen directions. He felt weak and exhausted. Simon Pierce would have to wait for another time to die. Jax had to figure out what was going on, why he was so sure he'd gotten into his personal computer and why he thought the demon was living in the same building as himself.

Besides, it was almost the time and he was sure he had to throw up once more.