



The Weekly Man

Episode 39: Thursday – Jacky

The park bristled with early morning joggers and baby walkers, though only one of the benches was occupied—an older man with a red hunting jacket who stared into whatever invisible screen played the panoramic, technicolor movie of his life. The others would drift in later in the morning, the late risers who kept retirement hours as something they'd worked a lifetime to earn. The email from Krista didn't make any sense. He'd read it half a dozen times but each time he read it, the less sense it made.

Jacky,

It broke my heart to say what I said to you at the mall, but I was so confused. I think I'm in love with you but I need to see you more than one day a week. I don't understand that. And I can't believe the way you acted today. As if you didn't even know me. And you seemed so different. Like another person. Standing there in those pink pajamas pretending that you'd never seen me before. And then slamming the door in my face. Jacky, what's going on? Why did you treat me like that? Who are you?

Who are you?

The words resonated through his mind.

Who are you?

It was something he was beginning to wonder about more and more. He loved his life, taking pictures of city plants, processing them to bring out all the beauty his camera lens hadn't seen with his actual eyes, spending afternoons at the mall talking to the people who bought his art. And Krista—she was the woman he'd always wanted, the woman he could laugh with, talk to, make love to and walk in the park arm in arm with her head on his shoulder.

Who are you?

It was like an indictment, an accusation with no response he could think of.

Who am I? Jacky Carson, photographer.

He couldn't think of anything else. Just, Jacky Carson, photographer. He felt there should be more, like this was just the surface of a life, the forward for a story that went much deeper than this-is-what-I-do-for-a-living. He'd had this feeling before—that something was missing, something essential, something he was aware of in others but couldn't see in himself. Whenever he'd had these feelings, he'd turned to his mother's advice, her long explanations about his special condition, how it placed a filter over his view of his life, how his life would always be different than the lives of others around him, how he would perceive things differently than others, how it would sometimes isolate him from the rest of the world.

Isolate me from the rest of the world? More like I'm not even a part of the rest of the world. More like I'm some kind of freak pounding away at the doors to the world and every time someone opens the door a crack, they slam it shut as soon as I step forward.

And then there was that woman who mistook me for someone else. She was so sure that I was the other person. The look in her eyes as she turned away. No way was she convinced that I wasn't him.

What was that all about?

The mall was busier than usual and his holo gallery had a constant flow of people. It occurred to him that most of them went through it just to experience a holographic gallery, to see the walls covered with colorful images suddenly spring up around them. Often, though, they would see something they liked and used the holographic cashier to buy a picture.

Busy as it was today, not many people were talking to Jacky, but that was OK with him. His thoughts were still bogged in the confusing email from Krista. None of it made sense. He didn't have pink pajamas. Krista had only been to his place once, and he would never slam a door in her face.

He'd sent her an email practically begging her to meet him at the gallery. His eyes had been darting around the mall all afternoon looking for her, longing to see her long blonde hair heading toward him. He never noticed the woman watching him through the window of a coffee shop close to the exit.

Even after a week, Valerie Vine still had a hard time getting her head around it.

Jack Morrison is one of seven people living in the same body. He exists just one day each week: Monday. And the man I'm looking at right now, the Thursday one, is another one of them.

She was tempted to leave the shop, walk over to the gallery and talk to him but she didn't want to push things until she understood the situation more completely.

And that's why we could only meet on Mondays.

At first, she'd had a hard time believing Manzer Doyle—the enormity of seven distinct individuals living in the same body. She'd heard about multiple personalities and seen the movies for the most infamous of them but this was so methodical. It wasn't something caused by trauma or an accident. This was how they were born. And each of them existed for just that one day. She'd encountered some strange situations and people in her work but Jack Morrison was the strangest.

She wondered also at the seemingly impossible job their mother had in keeping their identities secret from the world *and from each other*. Doyle had explained briefly how she'd done it, giving them a laptop with seven partitions and allowing them to sign into each of their partitions with their own passwords, steering them towards online businesses, guiding them in reconciling their concept of the passage of time with the rest of the world.

And she'd been doing it for over thirty years.

She watched the one called Jacky as the same tall blonde woman from last week walked up behind him.

Krista hadn't slept in days. She'd missed appointments with her new clients and wasn't even sure if she still had any clients. She couldn't remember if she'd eaten that day or the day before. She'd stayed inside for days ignoring her phone, not answering her emails. She was sure that Jacky loved her and she knew that she loved him. But why did he want to see her just one day a week? Why did he pretend not to recognize her on Sunday? He slammed the door in her face. Why would he do that? What kind of game was he playing with her? She was about ten feet away from Jacky, who was looking the other way as he talked with one of his customers, when she heard a voice from her side:

"Krista. I need to talk to you."

It was a woman almost as tall as her and with blonde hair like hers. She'd never seen the woman before. "What? Who are you?"

"Hurry," said the woman. "Into the coffee shop over there before he sees you. My name is Valerie and I have some interesting things to tell you about Jacky Carson."

It took Valerie about five minutes to explain the situation to Krista and almost an hour answering questions and repeating key points before she began to accept the truth. Sometimes she was in tears and sometimes she laughed. Overall she was stunned. The man she loved existed just one day of the week and was replaced by others the remainder of the week. How about that?

So, I'm not crazy. He's crazy. No...not crazy...just...

Just what is he? How can he exist for just one day a week? Where is he the rest of the week?

But she knew where. He was in some form of hibernation while the personalities of the others emerged for each of their days. At first she'd thought *Three Faces of Eve*, but this wasn't like that. These personalities didn't surface because of stress or some random occurrence—they had a schedule: one day a week. Every week. Week after week. Year after year. For decades.

And none of them know about the others.

She wondered about this, about how it was even possible as she approached Jacky. She wasn't sure what she was going to say to him, how she was going to handle this. She just knew that she loved him and that she wanted to be with him, even for just one day a week.

Krista had her knife. She still wondered why the hell she'd brought a knife.

Jacky heard his name called quietly and immediately recognized the voice. He turned to see her just inches away and didn't have a chance to say a word before she put her arms around his neck and practically rammed her lips into his. He wasn't sure how long they kissed but he was aware of people starting to gather around them. Krista finished the kiss with a loud wet smack and buried her head in his chest. The people who'd stopped to stare began to move on, smiling for the most part.

"I won't leave you again," she said. "I understand now."

Jacky thought for a moment. It was good to feel her head on his chest and her arms around him but he wasn't sure that he knew what she meant by *understand now*.

"You understand?"

She looked up into his eyes, realizing that she had to be careful about the words she used, at least for as long as he didn't know about the others.

"I understand that you need to have time to work on your art and I shouldn't be gobbling it all up on you. I understand that you love me and I love you and we're going to be together." She smiled and kissed him again.

They'd practically torn their clothes off as soon as they walked through the door to Jacky's flat. The revelation that Jacky was actually seven people living in one body slipped away as quickly as their clothes. It wasn't until later when they lay together with her head on his chest that she started to think about what a relationship with Jacky would mean. She would be lying with him like this only once a week. They would have dinner together once a week. They could never go on a week long vacation together. They would never spend a weekend together. He would be her weekly man.

She'd met the Sunday one, and what a coincidence that their names sounded alike. But the one on Sunday was definitely another person. And those pink pajamas. Where did the Sunday one keep them so that Jacky would never find them? And how...?

Once again, the questions flooded her mind. It was all so complicated and weird. She couldn't imagine how their mother had managed to keep it all secret for so many years.

And then there was the matter of Valerie Vine. She was interested in one of the personalities, the Monday one, apparently a paranoid comic strip artist who'd been standing her up on dates for ages. Would she have to share Jacky with her as Jack? It was too complicated to think about now while she could feel his chest against her face and her legs wrapped into his.

Yes, just focus on this moment for now. There will be lots of time to figure things out later and, after tonight, you won't be seeing him for another week. Maybe I can sneak in next week after the Wednesday one falls asleep and actually wake up with Jacky.

Jacky didn't know what to say or where to begin saying it. He had so many questions but he was afraid to ask, afraid that this moment with her head on his chest and her body pressed against his would suddenly dissolve in the light of answers that neither one of them wanted think about.

He just wanted to feel her breath on his chest and the warmth of her body forever.

So, this is how it happens. And it happens every night.

Krista sat on the side of the bed staring at Jacky's face. She'd lay with him for almost an hour after he'd fallen asleep and then she got up slowly, silently and dressed. It was around one o'clock that the change began. It was so slight at first. A faint twitch around the mouth, movement under the eye lids. Then the body changed, the shift in posture followed by the shifts in his face, almost like its structure was changing. It was all so subtle at first and then it all came together in just a few seconds and the man in the bed, the man she loved, was gone, replaced by a man who would rise in a few hours, put on a red dress, pretend to smoke a cigar and write romance novels under a woman's persona.

At least he's not the one wearing the pink pajamas.

She went into the living room and opened the front door, picked up the box that Manzer had put there and went to the refrigerator before she left.