



# The Weekly Man

## Episode 41: Saturday - Jac

The bump on his head was almost gone and his fingers could no longer pick up the trace of a scab. He tried not to think about it but for some reason the thought persisted. This usually didn't happen. He just acknowledged, accepted and put it back on the shelf. He wondered why he couldn't let it go this time. He dropped his hand to his side.

*What's happening?*

There was something going on and it bothered him that he didn't know what it was. It wasn't the crazy guy giving away his address. If the crazy guy wanted to kill him, he would have done it already, and if there was any chance that anyone on the planet had ever read the crazy guy's blog, he'd be dead a hundred times over but he was still alive so therefore nobody was reading the blog.

*And why would they?*

Jac had seen some crazy stuff on the internet over the years but the crazy guy's blog was right over the top, even the screaming font.

He stared out the window at the park as he leaned against the sill. He'd been standing there all morning, watching passersby, joggers, the old people on the benches, mothers and fathers pushing baby carriages, watching them closely, waiting to see if any of them looked up at the windows to his flat. But so far nobody looked up, nobody looked out of the ordinary, nobody posed a clear and present threat.

He was safe in the haven of the crazy guy's obscurity.

*But what about the crazy guy? Where is he? Why did he give my address away? If he wants me dead then how come I'm still alive? How come he hasn't tried to kill me yet?*

*Where is he?*

A cold shiver ran across Jac's back and down his legs. Where was the crazy guy? Where was he hiding? How did he know where Jac was living? Did he know this before he started blogging for his death? Had he known Jac's address all along? If so, why the sudden blog attacks, the calls for his extermination?

It occurred to Jac that it was possible that the crazy guy lived close by. Maybe he was one of the tenants in his building. He'd never met any of the other tenants. He wondered about that. It had never bothered him before because he wasn't interested in knowing his neighbors. He just wanted to write and let the world know how hopeless life was. And given that, why make friends who were just going to die eventually?

*They all die.*

He'd never given it any thought. He was always too wrapped up in himself and his writing and the hopelessness of his fans' emails and the helplessness of their parents' insults and threats, but now it bothered him that he'd never met any of the other tenants. In all those years. Not even a glimpse. Not a "hello" or "nice day" on the stairs or in the hall. It didn't seem right and it sent another chill into Jac's legs.

And there it was again, a sense that something was going on and he didn't know what it was. He didn't like that feeling—the not knowing. He had a good firm grip on his life. He was hidden from the rest of the world, beyond its clutches. And he had no misunderstanding on that part—if the world ever caught up to him, it would be with a vengeance. But the world wasn't catching up to him. A crazy man was. A guy who thought the whole world was going to be saved by some imaginary creature that crawls out of the internet and speaks to him.

*Well, if you're going to be hunted by someone, be glad it's by someone who doesn't appear to have a clue.*

But it still bothered him—he sense of something brewing, an indefinable feeling that something was going on under the surface of things, just out of sight.

He suddenly had a thought. He figured, at first, that it might make him seem as crazy as the crazy guy but as it worked its way into his mind, it seemed like it might actually be worth a try.

*I haven't met any of my neighbors since I've lived here. Time to change that.*

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First, he went to the alcove at the entrance to the building. He'd never noticed it before, never thought that it was odd.

There were no mail boxes. He was certain that email hadn't killed the postal service...yet. And 3D printers hadn't killed off parcel delivery. He did all his business and everything else in his life online but it seemed odd that everyone else in the building was doing the same thing.

*No mailboxes.*

And there were no mail slots on any of the tenants' doors.

It was odd.

Time to knock on doors.

He walked down the hall past the stained glass pouring a dazzling display of color into the stairwell. The light was both relaxing and eerie. Jac rarely went out but when he did, he found a certain pleasure in the light the window cast in spite of his fatalistic view of life. Someday that window would be gone but it would be gone, likely, long past the time he would be gone.

He walked past Mrs. Gilbert's door. No crazy guys in there. A few feet and to the right past her door was the first door. Further down the hall was another door. Only two tenant flats on the first floor. He knocked on the first door and waited. He waited about a minute before he knocked again, a little louder this time. A minute later he wondered if he should knock again. Maybe the tenant was out. Maybe the tenant was hard of hearing or still in bed. It was still early morning. Maybe the crazy guy was curled up in a corner wondering who was knocking on his door.

He walked silently to the door at the end of the hall and knocked. No answer. He knocked again.

*Is everybody out today?*

Time to check upstairs.

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He stood by the window, looking out at the shuffle of movement in the park.

*Not a single answer.*

Except for him, the building was deserted. Or inhabited by a bunch of very unneighborly people. But then, he wasn't the most neighborly person himself. Maybe the building was inhabited with people like him.

Maybe it was time to make a comment or two on the crazy guy's blog.

He walked over to his laptop. He read the latest blog posting.

*I'm the evil of plastic?*

He'd been called a lot of things by a lot of people but he'd never been called anything like this. The evil of plastic. He thought about it for a few minutes. As he thought, he felt something tumbling around inside, not his mind or body, but somewhere else. He didn't try to identify it or its source. He just let himself feel it. He sat at his laptop for about twenty minutes feeling whatever it was as the words passed through his mind over and over again.

*I am the evil of plastic.*

It came automatically, as though he were in a trance with his fingers moving over the keyboard with a mind of their own.

Hours later, he read what he'd written.

They look so confused as they die, even as it begins to make sense. This is the circus nobody wants to go to, the event that casts an indefinable pall as they sit and wait, glancing at the fire jugglers' pots of flame with a vague sense of what's to come, but no clear certainty. Nothing tangible enough to risk the embarrassment of walking through the stares and comments. "Where's he going?" "What's he doing?" "Daddy, I don't want to do this." "What's wrong with him? He's going to miss it." So they stay, aware at some level that they know they're needed here for the event all their lives have been leading toward and there's nothing to be done but watch the acts, cheer performers, laugh with their children...and glance occasionally at the fire pots. Knowing but not knowing. Helpless to change the course of things that haven't happened.

When the fire starts, they know the show is on...and the curtain calls for them.

The scenes that followed were horrific, just like in his dreams, just like the feeling that crawled under the surface of his skin every moment of every day. He finished the last paragraph of the first chapter and read it back to himself.

He watches as one-by-one the players die, as one-by-one it makes sense to them and they relax into it...and it makes sense to him as the fluids in his body stop being fluids and become gas just before he explodes into lotus bits.

*Maybe a bit over the top, but not bad for the first draft.*

It was almost the time but before he hit the sack, he opened his email and brought up the crazy guy's blog to leave a comment.