



The Weekly Man

Episode 42: Sunday - Jackie

She felt fresh after her shower. She'd tried something different today, something she'd read about while she was researching sex change operations: The Cold Shower. She'd heard that people took them but could never understand why anyone would want to subject themselves to that kind of torture. But the articles she'd read had talked about how healthy it was for the skin and the circulation, how it increased alertness, stimulated weight loss, relieved depression and eased stress. She'd just spent ten minutes in a cold shower and though it was freezing hell at first, she'd started to enjoy it after the first few minutes and now she felt vibrant. Her skin tingled.

I'll have to do this more often.

Ten minutes, Jackie. You're lucky you didn't get hypothermia. But you're not dizzy or sleepy-eyed, you're awake, alert, so completely in the moment.

She stood before the mirror, eyeing her naked body.

But still in the wrong body.

She wiggled into a pair of jeans and a plain brown t-shirt.

So far, her research had led her to conclude that it would be done in Europe. The Europeans seemed to be more open to the concept and had much more to offer in terms of surgery, treatment and support. She bookmarked another good site, one with lots of practical information and links to other sites. She saved the Word document she used to keep notes along with a list of questions.

She heard a knock at the door, muted, definitely not Uncle Manzer. It was still early.

Who in hell would that be this early in the day?

She remembered the woman who'd come to her door saying they were in love and acting crazy. She wondered as she walked toward the door if she should get a knife from the kitchen.

Why don't the doors here have peep holes?

She stood facing the door for a moment, listening for any kind of noise that might tell her what was on the other side. Nothing. Not a sound. No movement she could perceive. No heavy breathing. She almost wished there would be some kind of sound. The dead silence was chilling. She put her hand on the knob and turned it slowly, quietly. When it was fully turned, she pulled the door open quickly.

In the hall, Krista almost jumped back, startled.

“What are you doing here?” Jackie’s immediate thought was to slam the door and call the police, but there was something vulnerable and almost endearing in the woman’s consternation. She definitely didn’t pose a threat and Jackie was bigger than her.

“I’m sorry,” said Krista. “I know this seems strange, especially after the last time I was here, but I mean you no harm. I just want to apologize about what happened and maybe try to explain. By the way, my name is Krista.” She thrust her hand out to shake.

Jackie stared into the woman’s eyes. There was something in them that she couldn’t explain, something almost familiar beyond the last time she’d seen her, when she was acting crazy. It was like she instinctively liked the woman and her name seemed to ring a familiar bell. She opened the door a bit wider but not enough to let her in.

“Let’s get this straight,” she said. “I don’t know you and you don’t know me. If you start acting like you did last time, I’m throwing you out and calling the police.”

“Fair enough. I promise I’ll keep myself in check. Last week was just a terribly big misunderstanding.”

Last week?

She stepped back and opened the door the rest of the way. Krista walked in and took off her jacket. She wore a green plaid skirt with thick black stockings and a black turtleneck sweater. She motioned Krista to the couch and asked if she’d like a coffee.

“Coffee would be great.”

“Milk and sugar?”

“Black, please.”

A few minutes later, Jackie returned with two steaming cups. She put one on the coffee table in front of Krista and one in front of her. “Careful, it’s hot. Really hot.”

“The way I like it.”

Jackie sat in a blue arm chair across from Krista, sipped her coffee and put the cup on the table. She looked straight into Krista’s eyes. “So, you said that everything was a misunderstanding the last time you were here.”

Krista nodded. “I’ve been having some...difficulties lately. I started seeing someone who I swear is your exact double.”

Jackie smiled. “It wouldn’t be the first time someone’s seen someone else who looks like me.” She picked up her cup and sipped again. “I must have a pretty common face, or aliens cloned me when I was a baby.”

They were both laughing when Jackie had a thought and abruptly stopped laughing. She cocked her head to the side and looked right into Krista’s eyes. “One thing seems strange to me, though.”

“What’s that?”

“How did you know that I live here?”

Krista paled. She hadn’t expected that. She was brought here by Jacky, the Thursday man. How would she have known about Jackie, the Sunday man? How would she have known where

he lived? Jackie, she'd been told, rarely ever went out. There was no way that Krista could have seen her outside anytime recently.

C'mon, Krista, think. How did you know that she lives here?

She glanced briefly to her left and saw the two tall windows. She pointed at them. "I was in the park and saw you in the window. I mean, the resemblance is so striking. It's like you're twins. I thought you were Jacky Carson."

"Jacky Carson? That name rings a bell."

"He runs a virtual photography gallery at the Frederick Street Mall."

Jackie leaned forward and reached for her cup. "Yes! That's it. I've seen that gallery. I walked through it a few months ago." She sipped her coffee. "Amazing work."

What the hell are you doing here? What are you doing? Are you an idiot?

Krista had sworn to Valerie Vine that she would never tell anyone that Jacky Carson was actually seven people living in one body. It had all sounded so insane when Valerie explained it. The man she had just fallen in love with, the man she'd finally met who was going to make her happy and give her a normal life... was actually seven different people.

She might have run from Valerie, thinking that she was some kind of psycho who might have been in love with Jacky as well, some kind of mall stalker who'd been watching Jacky for God knows how long but she seemed so centered so focused, so professional. That part was a bit unsettling but at the same time she didn't seem threatening. And they were in the mall.

On top of all that, there was Sunday. The person at Jacky's place wasn't Jacky, and the overall presence of the Sunday man was so different, the eyes the same, but different; the voice the same, but different; the gait the same, but different. Same body... different person.

She wasn't sure if she understood the mother's reasoning in keeping the seven personalities intact and secret from each other, not wanting to lose any of them by having them all collapse into one personality, or possibly going into some kind of psycho overload and going crazy, or spending their lives as some kind of offbeat scientific aberration. But she was stuck with the consequences of that reasoning. The man she loved existed for just one day of the week—four days a month.

What have I gotten into this time?

And what was she doing here, talking to one of the other personalities? This one was apparently a female. She wondered about that. What must it feel like to know that she's a woman but living in a man's body? She seemed nice enough and seemed to have it all together but Krista couldn't help wondering what was under the smiles and self-confidence.

Why am I doing this?

All she could think of was that it might be a little like being with Jacky, knowing that he was in there somewhere, somewhere behind those eyes that were the same, but different.

It's not him, Krista, it's not him. It's someone else. Now, get the hell out of here before you say or do something the messes everything up.

They talked for a while about Jacky's gallery and about him, what kind of person he was and what he was doing with his art. Jackie was sure that if she ever met Jacky Carson she would like

him. Krista looked at her watch after her last sip of coffee and said that she had an appointment in about an hour and that she should get going and get ready for it.

Even though Jackie felt like hugging Krista before she walked out the door, promising to drop in again sometime, she didn't. She shook hands, wanting so much to hug.

Jackie didn't have any real friends, people she could call up and say, "Wanna hang out tonight? Go to a movie? Go to a bar? Get drunk? Get laid?" She'd never been to a movie, she'd never been to a bar and she'd never been drunk. She didn't have much of a life and it had always been that way. She knew by the indoctrination from her mother that she was different than other people. She wasn't always sure that she followed her mother's reasoning when she'd talked about how other people experienced time and how it compared to the way she experienced—very much like Jackie had pointed out how the scheduler was all wrong. She'd warned her that there would be periods of confusion when it would be best to just shrug her shoulders and go along with things.

And she'd just done that with the cut and bump on her head. She touched the remains of the bump just to assure herself that, yes, that had happened. There had been an accident that had created a cut and a bump. It had not been a minor accident. The cut had been serious and the bump had been big. It had been the kind of accident that she would remember, that anyone in their right mind would remember.

So, is that the only logical conclusion...I'm not in my right mind?

"No," she heard her mother say from deep inside her memory, "you're in a different mind. The others are in a different mind. You're in your right mind. Just let it slide away."

How many times had she told Jackie to just let it slide away? How many times had Jackie had to let go of something she knew was real and pretend it had never happened or existed?

Well, not anymore. Not anymore.

She spent the rest of the day researching sex changes, where the best places to get them were, where they were legal, how much a sex change would cost, the ramifications of having one's sex changed, the long-term effects and side-effects, the effects it would have on family (*No family, no problem.*). The amount of information was overwhelming.

She made notes and organized them. She went into her finances, how much money she had, how much money it would cost and how she would make those payments. It looked like it was going to cost a lot. She might have to save for a bit. She might have to save for a while.

But she was going to get rid of that thing between her legs.