



The Weekly Man

Episode 48: Saturday - Jac

For the first time since he could remember, Jac waked from a dreamless sleep. His bed was dry, his mind and body were calm. He smiled.

What is this guy's fixation on plastic? Jac chuckled as he read the blog. He wants to meet me on the field of honor and consequence? For a duel?

Jac re-read the post. He noticed that his address wasn't used this time. He wondered about that. Maybe the crazy guy had made some kind of wild guess that wasn't paying off? Maybe he knew but couldn't do anything or didn't know what to do or how to do it?

He hasn't done anything yet except talk and taunt. If he were going to do anything, he would have done it by now.

It still nagged him that the blog had mentioned his physical address, twice. But since he was likely the only person on earth to read the blog, it didn't matter how many times the crazy guy mentioned his address. No one except himself was ever going to see it.

Looks like the internet has gotten so big that you can hide on it just like you could hide in some remote godforsaken place on planet Earth at one time. Well, crazy guy, I guess I should meet your challenge and raise you. Whatever.

He wrote for exactly sixty seconds and laughed as he clicked the Post button.

This one's gotta hurt. Let's see how the little arsehole responds.

There was a knock at the door. Jac immediately recognized it: Mrs. Gilbert. He walked to the door and opened it, and there she was, smiling, twinkle-eyed and looking like she hadn't seen the inside of a hospital in about, oh, a hundred or so years.

"Mrs. Gilbert. It's so good to see you. And looking so healthy."

“Well, Jac, it’s good to be out of the hospital and back home. I’ve always said, hospitals are for sick people and I’m not sick.” The words seemed to roll through the valleys of wrinkles around her mouth.

“I would never guess that you’d had a heart attack, ever. I meant to come...”

She raised a hand to pass it off. “No matter, Jac. I needed to stay focused on one thing in there, getting better. Visitors would have just been a distraction. I just wanted to check in with you to see if there’s anything you need.”

“I’m fine, Mrs. Gilbert. It’s good to see that you’re back and doing well.”

It wasn’t a long novel, more like a novella, but Jac was certain that *Circus of No Hope* was going to be one of the pivotal works of literature in the Twenty-First Century if for no other reason than the outrage it would cause. He wasn’t going to make any friends with this book and those who already hated him would hate him more and there would be many more A. Fans.

He felt good about this, that he would make enemies, that people would hate him. It constructed a wall around him that kept him safe from attaching himself to anything that might bring him all those things destined to end in tragedy and sorrow. Things like love, joy, happiness, euphoria, bliss, affection, pleasure...his pleasure was the avoidance of pleasure, the knowledge that nothing could be taken away from him because he had nothing that could be taken away.

He’d felt the horror and pain of every one of his characters in the story. He’d felt their confusion and defeat, their resignation and acceptance that it was time to die because they’d gone to the circus expecting wonders even though each of them knew at the pit of their beings that every laugh and smile, every moment of wonder and glee, was a promise to be broken in the countdown to the horror.

It would take a while to edit the book. That was always the way. He spent more time revising and re-writing than he spent writing.

If you’re going to offend, shock and piss off your readers, then best to do with grammatical correctness and a well-honed sentence.

He read through the story, making comments and highlighting passages that would need editing when he did his third pass. The first pass was a quick read to identify the big problems. He enjoyed the editing process. For him, the first draft was like digging into the ground to extract a dull and cloudy piece of stone and the successive drafts were like cutting and polishing the stone. The whole process was a revelation of chaos rendered into order and symmetry.

He had a sudden thought.

My god, I’m enjoying this.

He felt a chill.

I’m enjoying this.

It settled into his mind like ash raining from the sky, burying his mind in a smothering thought: There was something that could be taken away from him. His writing. His words. His carefully constructed sentences and paragraphs. They were all a source of joy, accomplishment, something dangerously close to rapture.

He wondered why he’d never noticed this before. He’d been so careful to keep anything that he could value out of his life, to not attach himself to anything or let anything attach to him. But all this time he’d been attached to his writing. He’d derived pleasure from it. And he’d enjoyed, almost loved, the criticism and the threats. He’d been everything he was writing against.

And the dreams. Every night. The dreams that haunted his sleep. Always the same. The circus. The families. The children. All dying. And his mother dying. Alex going away, and knowing that there was something strange about that, something that had nagged at him for years. He'd always suspected that he had something to do with Alex not coming over anymore. Bits of overheard phone conversations. The way Alex's mother looked at him when she dropped him off.

There was a pointlessness to everything, an expiration date on the continuance of all things. There would always be a time of loss. For everything. Owning anything was futile. It would only bring pain and sorrow. No ownership was safe. No feeling of joy was safe. No sense of security was safe. And there was absolutely no value in telling this to the world. He was, in a sense, trying to own something. What was it?

What am I trying to own?

And it came to him. He was trying to own the message. He was trying to pass on a warning to the rest of the world. He was trying to stop everyone from feeling the things that had brought him so much grief and pain. He was trying to shove his own disillusionment down everyone else's throat. He was just as bad as the crazy guy.

He sat in front of his laptop without thinking much about anything. His mind was in a space without definition. There were no thoughts in his head, at least none that were real enough to draw his attention. He was in this blank space when he felt the time coming on. It snapped him back into the real world of a thousand thoughts occurring simultaneously and one thought emerging through the depth of numbers. He smiled as his finger pressed down on the delete button. He smiled as he opened his Trash and deleted everything in the folder. His masterpiece was gone. But so was the dream.

What now?