



# The Weekly Man

## Episode 52: Wednesday – Jax

*Why are my feet so sore? And my legs.*

Jax reached under the blankets and rubbed his feet.

His left leg felt like it would spasm at any moment. He stretched and wiggled his body around until he felt his leg relax. His back was sore as well.

*Must have had some active dreams...like, running a marathon or something.*

It wasn't long though before recent events washed over the pain in his legs. He'd always been driven by the hope he drew from Ratlas, knowing that if he kept listening to the message and passing it on that someday people would listen and create a world without plastic, a world that he would have helped create by spreading the message. .

But now, there was just emptiness and silence. He sat, staring at his laptop, waiting for Ratlas' message, but there was nothing. No music from the convergence of all that inhabited the internet, the comings and goings and interactions and postings and comments and emails and articles and videos, every bit and byte from the billions of souls pouring out their happiness, misery, joy, consternation, curiosity, hopes and fears, questions, doubts, findings, worries, every feeling and thought. He stared into the screen, waiting, hearing nothing, feeling nothing.

He was alone—swamped by silence. For the first time in his life, he was afraid. For the first time in his life he felt meaningless, that his life was pointless and that he had no purpose.

He stared at the screen for hours before it occurred to him that he hadn't checked the blog.

Sure enough, there was a comment. It was from Simon Pierce. Blood rose to his face and made the vessels in his forehead stick out like crimson vines on red brick.

Hey crazy guy,

Just finished a nice cold bottled water, plastic bottled water along with takeout Chinese in plastic containers with plastic knives, forks and chop sticks. Putting it all in the same plastic garbage bag as the wet stuff. Recycling is a myth. Your blog is drivel. You are an idiot.

Nobody reads this blog. Nobody. You're wasting your time. And even if anybody did read your blog, it's too late. There is no hope. You might as well just give up. The world is in a tailspin and the pilot has long since bailed out. Indifference is killing the world faster than plastic. Reality TV shows have replaced reality.

And just wtf would you know about a "field of honor and consequence" you little fuckwad? And wtf does that mean? I have a 4-part plan for you:

1. Buy a case of wine
2. Crawl under your bed with it
3. Stay there
4. Forever

Do you think you can handle that?

Your only reader,

Simon Pierce

And BTW, thanks for the inspiration. You just helped me write my masterpiece.

More than anything in the world, Jax wanted to kill Simon Pierce. He wanted to jump up and down on his chest and feel his rib cage cracking and collapsing under his feet. He wanted to feel Simon Pierce's organs squashing into mush. He wanted to spit in his face as he pulverized it with a baseball bat. He wanted to hurt Pierce, make him feel pain, humiliation, remorse, fear. He wanted to bare Pierce's psyche in front of a mirror and show the monster how inconsequential he was.

Blood vessels in his hands bulged with fury. He breathed deeply, slowly, malevolently.

He needed to kill Pierce. It was no longer a matter of being ordered by Ratlas, or plugging the leak of pollution into the world that Pierce was. Now, it was a matter of just wanting him dead. He wanted—needed—Simon Pierce dead and he wanted to be the lucky person to make him dead.

*Dead. Dead. Dead.*

He rebooted and tried to recreate the sign-in screen that had given him Pierce's address but he couldn't do it. He wondered even more about whether or not he'd actually seen that screen. He wondered if he'd just imagined it.

*Maybe it was just a dream?*

If it were a dream, then it was the only one he'd ever had that he could remember. He knew that he'd dreamed before. In fact, he could sense the variety and intensity of his dreams in his waking state but he could never remember happened in them. The knowledge of them was just...there.

And just how crazy was it to think that the monster lived in the same building as him?

He re-read the comment.

*So, Simon Pierce...you won't meet with me in the field of consequence and own up to the devil that you are. Then, somehow, I'll have to hunt you down.*

He thought about this. He wondered how he was going to hunt down Pierce. Dozens, maybe hundreds, of angry parents and others had tried to locate him, but no one had ever succeeded and the vitriol had continued to pour into the internet. But somehow Jax had to do better. He had to be smarter. He had to be the one to find Simon Pierce and kill him. He was sure that it was the only way that Ratlas would ever contact him again. It was the only way that he could continue to be the messenger.

Being the messenger was the center of his universe and he wasn't going to let scum like Simon Pierce destroy that center.

\*\*\*

After hours of cruising the internet and tracking down obscure search tools to use in his search for Simon Pierce, he'd come up with nothing. It was like Pierce didn't exist, like his books just magically appeared from no physical source..

As far as the internet was concerned, Simon Pierce existed only as a series of books and complaints about the books. There was an email address but it trailed off into a barrage of servers that made it impossible to locate.

And there were the smart-ass comments that he'd made on Ratlas' blog, defiling the word and its message.

*Bastard. How would he know if people are reading my blog or not? And what would he know about hope? Simon Pierce—the biggest pit of hopelessness in the world. And why is he thanking me? How could I possibly have helped him write his masterpiece?*

It struck him like a thunderbolt.

*Masterpiece? He's written a masterpiece?*

The word reverberated in his mind.

*Masterpiece.*

Simon Pierce had written a masterpiece, a book that would likely cause thousands, millions to give up hope.

*He must be stopped. I must find him. I must kill him. I need Ratlas' help.*

He sat in front of the laptop, hands at his sides, opening his mind and feelings, listening for the sounds that only he could hear. He sat for hours. It was nearly the time. He hadn't eaten all day but he wasn't hungry. He was tired. He felt drained both physically and mentally.

And then he heard it. It was faint at first, like a far off sound of pigeons cooing. He slowed his breathing, relaxed his body. The sound grew, interlaced now with a something that hinted of waves crashing into cliffs, not loud, but subdued and far off. He heard children laughing, horns honking, icebergs sliding into the sea, buildings crumbling under the impact of exploding shells and then rebuilding, oceans swaying under the weight of plastic and disoriented aquatic life and light from the earth and the sky shining up and down on the plastic and absorbing it into nothingness. And Jax smiled and nearly laughed. Ratlas was back.

*It has not forsaken me.*

"Jax MacDonald, I am the message that crawls under your skin and swims painfully in the well of your indifference until you accept my message and carry it to the world."

*Carry it to the world.*

"You are not to worry, Jax MacDonald."

*I am not to worry.*

"The evil that is Simon Pierce will be dealt with."

*Dealt with.*

"You are my prophet."

*I am.*

"You will be saved. The world will be saved."

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

"You're tired. Go and sleep now."

*I must sleep.*

\*\*\*

Krista watched as his facial features changed. The changes were subtle and weren't so much physical as the compilation of a series of physical changes, the tightening of muscles in the left cheek, the lifting of an eyebrow over the right eye, a miniscule relaxation of the jaw. They were barely visible but added together, the face of Jax MacDonald transformed into the face of Jacky Carson.

She mentally went through a checklist of things they'd done the week before and looked at the chair beside the bed to make sure that the clothing was exactly what Jacky had last seen her wearing. Everything was in order.

Krista laid her head on Jacky's back, slid her right leg between his and closed her eyes.