



The Weekly Man

Episode 53: Thursday – Jacky

Jacky was famished. He felt Krista's rump pressed up against his and he heard her soft snoring, followed by a loud elongated growl in his stomach. He decided it was time to get up and eat no matter how much he wanted to just lie there and feel her body pressed against his. The curtains over his bedroom window were partially open, letting an oblong ray of light with particles of floating dust shine across the room and onto the opposite wall. It was still early.

He thought about what he should make for breakfast. He would have to cook for two. If he was this hungry after a night of sex, she would be as well. But he didn't feel like cooking. The neighborhood was peppered with coffee shops and restaurants, all of them serving up delicious breakfasts. He decided they would eat out. He put his hand on her shoulder and leaned down to kiss her.

And stopped.

Something wasn't right.

What is that? Something isn't right here. What is it?

He moved his head closer, sniffing her shoulder and it came to him.

Her perfume. There's something different. It was musky.

He was sure her perfume had been musky the night before. In fact, he could remember commenting to her about it and she'd replied that it was called Aphrodisiac or something like that and it was intended to turn a man on. What he smelled now was like—roses or something heavily fragrant. And definitely not musky.

He couldn't imagine her getting up during the night and changing perfume.

Why would she do that?

She moaned quietly, a satisfied sound after a deep sleep. She was waking. He pressed deeper against her and kissed the side of her neck. The silhouette of her smiling lips and closed eyes fascinated him. She wrapped her arms around his arms and said, "This is the way I like to be waked up." In a single blurring motion, she tore out of his arms and was on top of him, bearing down on his erection. "And this is what I like to do when I wake up."

Half an hour later, she was snuggling up to him with her head on his chest. He loved the feeling of her breath on his skin, the heat of her body and the silky feel of her hair on his arm and shoulder. She had an appointment with one of her clients in the afternoon so they had the morning together. He caught a whiff of her perfume. Still the flowery scent.

"That's weird," he said.

"What's weird?"

"Your perfume."

"My perfume's weird?"

"Well, no. I like it. But last night it had a musky smell and this morning it smells kind of...like flowers."

Krista was quiet for a moment and Jacky sensed a change in her breathing.

"That happens sometimes."

"What happens?"

"The perfume interacts with skin and body oils and the fragrance changes. Plus, we had some pretty steamy sex and the sweat from that can really change things."

He wasn't sure if she were serious or not. He'd never heard of fragrances changing from body interaction before but then, he never wore perfume, not even aftershave or deodorant. It was something his mother had discouraged.

"So, the fragrance can change that much. I mean, the musky smell was really strong."

"It can be like two different scents altogether." She rolled over and pulled him on top of her. "I have to leave soon and I can think of something I'd much rather be doing than talking about perfume."

He forgot about the perfume.

Ever since Krista had started driving on cruise, even on city streets, she hadn't gotten a single speeding ticket. Before cruise, it was two or three a year. And those were just the handful of times she'd been caught. The problem was her tendency to drift off into thoughts when she drove. She was aware of the roads, the other cars, the intersections and the lanes but the more exciting the thought the harder she pressed on the gas pedal. She was still aware enough to stop for signs and red lights but sometimes the braking was a bit of a breath-stopper if the thoughts were really exciting.

On cruise, she was fine. And right now, she needed fine. Something as inconsequential as her perfume. Of course he would remember the perfume from his "night before" which was a week ago for her. Laying out the clothing she'd worn that night wasn't a problem—but the perfume? She thought that maybe she should stick with just one scent from now on but there was something about this whole situation that went much deeper than how she smelled around Jacky.

She was in love with a man she could see just once a week. Or was that true? Maybe she could have relationships with all seven of them. She'd be seeing seven men. Changing each day to match each of their personalities. And one of them was a woman in a man's body. They were all so different than Jacky and it was Jacky she was in love with, for everything he was. But she was starting to realize that he was so much more than just Jacky. He was part of a sort of solar system

of personalities spinning around a center. Of what? What was really at the center of their personalities? Could they really be seven separate entities with just the one thing in common, their body?

And if she just saw Jacky one day a week? What about the other six days of her week? In effect, she would be single on those days. She would be alone. How long could she be with a man she could see just once a week?

She would be seeing him that night and it maddened her that this was something that she couldn't talk to him about. That she would have to work it out on her own. She would be lying next to him, knowing something so crucial in his life that he knew absolutely nothing about.

These were her thoughts as she drove through a top sign without seeing it.

The afternoon dragged, each second trudging on like hours, the hours casting a long dreary shadow into days. Jacky thought it was strange how time could fluctuate with mood. He just wanted to get out of the mall, get home and spend the evening with Krista even though she wouldn't be there until around eight, as though just the fact of being home would speed time up.

He still wondered about the perfume. He asked one of his gallery regulars, a mid-age woman who wore distinctive—sometimes overly distinctive—perfumes about the scent changing after it was on someone's skin. She told him that, yes, the best perfumes could change with body chemistry, "But, no, I don't really think something as strong as Aphrodisiac could react with anyone's body to smell flowery. It's just not a flowery perfume."

Why would Krista lie to me about something like that? Why would she change perfumes through the night?

It didn't make any sense to him and the more he thought about it, the more it drove him crazy that there was no logical explanation. He touched the top of his head. The bump was completely gone, the cut healed.

The bump—it's not something anyone would forget. Why can't I remember?

"Shrug it off," his mother had said. Each time he'd done that, it made it easier to forget again until, eventually, he didn't even have to try to forget, it just happened.

But now he wasn't forgetting. Whatever had caused the bump on his head was likely serious enough to have caused a permanent injury, maybe even death. And Krista, for whatever reason, had changed perfumes during the night and then lied to him about it.

But why?

That night, when she came over to his place, he was going to find out.

Krista was an hour late and Jacky was beginning to worry. He was tempted to call her but he didn't want to appear to be interfering or controlling. As much as he was sure that he was in love with her, he didn't know her enough to know if she were always punctual. But she was starting her own business and so far she was doing great so he expected that she would be professional and being professional meant being on time. But he wasn't one of her clients. And maybe she was with a client, working late. But he was sure she would have called him if she knew she was going to be late. But maybe the battery was dead in her cell phone. Maybe it was in her car and she couldn't get away from work to get to her phone. Maybe her phone was dead and she was

caught in traffic. He wasn't sure which client she had to see today but he knew that at least one of them lived out of town, probably a one or two hour drive.

He finished up his latest batch of images and turned off his laptop. He walked to the window and looked out over the park. He figured that he'd likely taken over ten thousand pictures in there over the years. It was a peaceful, inviting place. He loved that there were always people, even at night. And he'd never heard of anyone getting mugged, robbed or murdered in the park. It seemed to be away from everything else in the city, as was the whole neighborhood. It was something he'd always wondered about, that the neighborhood seemed to be like an island floating in the ocean of the city, unseen and unnoticed. He rarely saw strange faces in the park or on the streets or sidewalks. And when he was biking, he noticed immediately that, when he crossed into the streets beyond the four corners of the park, it was like crossing into another world, a world less friendly and less familiar.

Where could she be? It's almost an hour and a half. Why hasn't she called?

It still bothered him that he didn't feel right about the perfume. It was too much, too much to expect him to not notice and then pretend that he believed her story about body chemistry changing the fragrance into something completely different. She wasn't telling him the truth and this time he wasn't going to just shrug it off and get on with things like he had all his life. This time he was going to face it head on and find out what had happened.

Why did she change her perfume? Why did she lie to me about it?

Night settled peacefully over the park. The street lights had fewer bugs circling each night as Fall crept closer to winter and the temperatures fell lower each night. He noticed that there seemed to be more runners and joggers at this time of the day than at any other. But then it made sense, more people were off work in the evening and had time to run. And maybe that was one of the things that made the park safe at night: so many runners. People in great shape and in great numbers. Muggers beware!

Where is she?

He was beginning to feel a seed of panic in his stomach. Krista wasn't inconsiderate. She was the kind of person who, if she knew she was going to be late, would call. Even if she had to use someone else's phone. Jacky was worried. He had her number on his cell phone and all he had to do was call her and find out why she was late. It was OK to do that. They were seeing each other. He had a right to worry about her, a duty to worry about her. He walked back to his workspace and picked up his cell phone. He swiped it on and pressed for his contact page. There was her name. There was her number. All he had to do was press on it.

Do it.

He pressed her number and put the phone to his ear. It buzzed a few times before a voice came on. It was a woman's voice. She sounded stressed. But it wasn't Krista's voice.

"Yes?"

There was a sadness in her voice, a lifelessness that chilled Jacky. His stomach knotted.

"Is that you, Krista?" But he knew it wasn't her.

Silence.

"Who is this?" said the voice.

"My name is Jacky. I'm a friend of Krista's."

There was another silence. Jacky was certain that he could hear sobbing, very faintly, muted.

"Is something wrong?" he asked. "Is Krista OK?" The knot in his stomach tightened. He knew something was wrong. Krista was in some kind of trouble. "Hello?"

The sobbing became louder.

“I’m Kasia, Krista’s sister.” Silence. “There was an accident.” The voice weak, faltering.
Oh no.

“She was always so...” A subdued moan. “She...she drove through a stop sign. A truck hit her. Krista is...she’s dead.”

The connection died.

No.

He fell to his knees.

No.

He stared at the wall, shaking his head slowly.

No.

He stayed on the floor, on his knees, staring at the wall until it was the time and he fell forward and sprawled on the floor, asleep.

Downstairs, Natalie, still weak from her heart attack and slightly dizzy from the drugs, slept on her chesterfield, the one she’d snuggled up on so many times with all her children.