



The Weekly Man

Episode 55: Saturday - Jac

Jac couldn't remember ever having waked up so pleasantly. He felt refreshed, exhilarated—exactly like someone should feel after they'd had a good night's sleep and that's what he'd had, a good night's sleep. He knew, without knowing why, that he would never dream about the Bangalore Circus fire again. He'd written it out of his life. Whatever it was that had caused him to have that nightmare repeatedly throughout his life was gone, like an exorcism through words. He was free.

For a second, he wondered if it had been wise to have deleted the novel. It was, after all, his masterpiece, the novel he'd been working towards for his entire writing career. He'd always had a vague plan in the back of his mind that he would write his masterpiece, publish it and then kill himself. He'd never actually written that down anywhere or even given it a clear thought. It just hung around somewhere in the back of his head, But the novel was written, destroyed, and he was still alive and didn't have the least urge to kill himself. In fact, he couldn't remember any time in his life when he felt so alive and *wanted* to be alive.

He thought about the crazy guy and his need to preach some stupid message to the rest of the world and how pathetic he was with a blog that nobody was ever going to read, spreading a message that came from some kind of being that came from the internet...and he tried to get people to kill him because he didn't like his books.

Funny, that, I don't like those books anymore myself.

He realized that he'd been doing the same thing as the crazy guy by wrapping his message of hopelessness in children's stories. People thought of him as a monster and they were right. He was a monster. At least the crazy guy had something good to say, a message of hope.

He might just as well have killed himself for all anyone would care. His death would likely bring a sigh of relief to otherwise loving and non-violent parents. He doubted if any of them would even say something like, "Awful man that he was, it's too bad that he had to die to stop his writing." It would be more like, "Finally, he's gone."

And maybe that's what I deserve.

It started off as a tiny feeling of something positive and right in the back of his head and he embraced it and it grew into something with form and meaning, an idea that seemed better and better as he defined it more clearly.

He would give them what they wanted. They wanted him dead, so he would die for them. It was the least he could do for all the pain he'd given them, the worry, the anguish, and in some cases, the loss. He would give them the death of the monster.

He went to his book site and took down every one of the books, leaving nothing there but a message.

I've deleted all my books. They're garbage. Malicious, mind-poisoning garbage. But not nearly as toxic as my masterpiece, which I've finished and which I've destroyed as well. I've never had much hope for myself or for the rest of the world, but that was me. I had no right to push that fatalism onto the rest of the world, especially onto the weakest and most vulnerable. A crazy guy taught me that.

So, the world will not be seeing any more books of defeat and hopelessness from Simon Pierce. In fact, the world will not be seeing Simon Pierce anymore. I've decided to kill myself and take my message with me to wherever monsters like myself go.

I can't say it's been a pleasure. It hasn't. I could apologize for what I've done, the pain I've caused, the families and hearts I've broken, but what good would that do? I think you would all just rather know that I'm dead. And, by the time you read this, I will be dead.

So, fuck off, try to lead meaningful lives, and watch what your children are reading.

Simon Pierce

That should do it. I think I just made a lot of people happy.

He thought about this a moment and then went into his mail account and deleted it.

Looks like I get the last word A. Fan...not you.

He chuckled to himself. He felt good. He felt better than he could remember feeling. Maybe he'd felt like this sometime before losing his best and only friend and then his mother, but after all the years he'd spent living in a dark place and having the same nightmare every night, he felt a lightness in himself that he'd never experienced before.

He walked to the window and looked out at the park. He'd looked at the park from this window for years but he'd never actually gone down there and joined those people. He'd never walked there, never sat on one of the benches, never even crossed the street to the park. But today, he felt like a walk in the park.

Mid-morning light poured a golden glow over the park, giving the remaining leaves on the trees an otherworldly iridescence. Across the street, the top of the building he lived in shimmered in the ghostly light. Jac had made it as far as the first bench, facing the street right beside the wrought iron gateway to the park. The bench was empty and looked inviting. He'd watched so many people sitting on that bench having animated conversations with friends or just chilling out and staring at passersby. He'd often been tempted to walk down to it and sit for a while but for some reason he'd never actually done it. Generally, by the time he got back from his excursions to the laundromat, it was dark and the bench didn't look nearly as inviting.

Traffic was light with just the occasional car or delivery truck and one almost empty bus. The air was cool and refreshing and a light breeze created a symphony of snapping and crackling as it shifted the sea of leaves on the ground. There was more pedestrian traffic than vehicles. Mothers with baby carriages, joggers and dreamy-eyed strollers smiled and nodded to him as they passed by. This was something he'd never noticed when he looked down on the park. The people had always seemed friendly and he couldn't remember ever seeing any arguments or fights. But it was more than that. It was warm. He felt the warmth of the people as they walked by, as though just by being there, sitting on the bench, he was one of them. He belonged. He wondered if any of them had ever looked up and seen him in the window staring down at the park. And now, there he was, down here with them and welcomed after all this time. He wondered if they would be so warm and welcoming if they knew who he was, the notorious soul poisoner, Simon Pierce.

But now, Simon Pierce was dead. He'd just announced his suicide and made the world, for some anyway, a better place. He thought about the things he'd written and the effect his twisted life view had had on his readers. His readers, kids. Gullible, vulnerable kids. It wasn't hard for him to view himself as a monster. He'd like to think that it was the recurring dream that had poisoned his own soul and maybe even the loss of his mother and best friend that had made him feel like he had to destroy the joy others found in their lives. He had to take it away from them. He'd let his own fear of being happy be justification for taking happiness away from people he'd never met. Kids. Fortunately his books weren't bestsellers. Most of them sold through the negative publicity and the curiosity of kids who'd heard that the books should never be read by children.

But there was something else, something deep inside himself that he'd never understood. He knew that he was different than others, that he perceived time different. It was his condition, something he'd grown up with, and something that had always kept him separated from other people. But there was something beyond that—the bump on his head. It was serious, possibly life-threatening. It was something he should have remembered, condition or no condition.

But he didn't.

These thoughts, he knew, would lead nowhere and drive him crazy. Time for a new topic.

Let's see now. According to my posting, I'm dead. I can't write under the name Simon Pierce anymore. And do I even want to write anymore? And if I do want to write, what am I going to write about? And I'll need a new name. A pen name. But what am I going to write about?

As morning turned into noon with the sun directly overhead and the temperature rising if not to warm but to comfortably cool, traffic picked up in the street and more baby carriages populated the sidewalks for joggers to veer around but they didn't seem to mind. He felt a general sense of positivity in the park. The morning quiet gave way to a quiet bustle with the sound of engines accelerating but no horns honking. He heard quiet conversations passing by and disappearing into the park. The smell of dying leaves meshed with the fragrance of foods drifting out of the cafes and restaurants. Jac realized that he was hungry. And he had to pee like crazy. He noticed a couple of older men wearing heavy coats in spite of the mild temperature eyeing him and the bench. He stood and walked right by them, hearing one of them saying to the other, "Finally." He chuckled to himself as he crossed the street in search of a place to eat. And pee.

The pastrami on rye with lots of mustard practically melted in his mouth.

Why have I never come to this place before? How could I have been missing this all this time?

It occurred to him that he barely knew the neighborhood he lived in. Until this day, he'd never crossed the street to the park he watched from his window every day, day after day, year after year.

What kind of freak am I?

But then, that would have given him something to look forward to, something to love and enjoy and, as soon as he was completely attached to it, a meteor from space would have vaporized the whole thing and he would be living in a state of loss.

Bullshit. I've been living bullshit all my life. I've been missing life because I've been afraid of losing life.

He bit into the sandwich and savored the taste, chewing it slowly, appreciating the texture and drawing every iota of pleasure he could before he swallowed.

Time to start living.

Sitting with his wrists propped on the laptop, fingers poised over the keyboard, mind blank and open to whatever welled up from the depths of his subconscious, he stared at the blank document. White space on the monitor. Beautiful white space with all its potential and uncharted wordscapes. A space to be populated with people and places, actions and thoughts.

But nothing came. The well seemed to be capped and he'd been sitting over his laptop for nearly an hour wondering what the hell he was doing.

You need a theme in your life and that will be the theme of your writing. What's the theme in your life now? Hope? Happiness? Love? What do you want out of your life now?

He couldn't think of anything he really wanted. He was free of the cloud of hopelessness that had hung over most of his life and it felt good. But where to go from here? There was so much. He had an entire world to explore now that he was free to explore it. He burped and tasted the pastrami and rye. It was good. He looked forward to the next burp.

He realized that the most important thing in his life at the moment, the only theme for the moment, was this new sense of lightness. He felt like he'd lost twenty or thirty pounds of physical weight.

It seemed, that night, that he drifted weightlessly into the time, like sinking back into the womb with its warmth and mindlessness.