



The Weekly Man

Episode 59: Wednesday - Jax

Jax read Simon Pierce's post three times before it really started to sink in. The books were gone from his website. The soul-poisoning words had disappeared—everything replaced with:

I've deleted all my books. They're garbage.

And he destroyed his masterpiece. The piece he said I inspired. Destroyed it.

A crazy guy taught me that.

Me. He's referring to me. The crazy guy. Me.

I've decided to kill myself

He's dead. Simon Pierce is dead. He's dead.

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?

He had a change of heart. Simon Pierce is repentant. And he's dead. And I taught him that.

I think you would all just rather know that I'm dead.

I killed him. I killed Simon Pierce. I did.

Jax practically ran to the washroom and barely stuck his head over the toilet bowl in time to vomit. He vomited his breakfast. He vomited streams of viscous fluid that clung to his lips and dripped slowly into the bowl. He vomited air.

I killed him. I killed him with my words, with my message. I killed a man.

With each dry heave, the enormity of what he'd done became a reality beyond his plans to kill a man, his intent to stab him to death or to cut his throat. No matter his failure to physically kill Pierce, he'd killed him.

Made him dead. Took his life.

His mind spun around the thought. He grabbed his head with both hands. Tears burst from his eyes. His chest heaved.

I killed him. I killed Simon Pierce. With my words.

He cried for an hour, hugging the toilet bowl.

"You have done well, Jax MacDonald. You have saved the world from the poisonous influence of Simon Pierce."

I've saved the world.

"His venom flowed across the firmament like a foul wave of cigarette tar."

Cigarette tar.

"He was a tortured demon and you put him out of his misery. You saved him.

Saved him.

"This was an act of goodness."

I'm a good man.

"And now you are free to spread my message. You will be saved. The world will be saved."

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

He sat back and stared at the monitor, seeing nothing.

Simon Pierce is dead. His message of hate is no more. Atlas has accepted me again and its message will continue to flow through me and we'll all be saved.

I killed a man.

He sat for an hour before turning his laptop off and walking slowly like a man dazed by the sheer sensation of movement. It seemed to him that he could feel every molecule in the air as he walked across the living room floor to the window where he stared down at the park.

I killed a man.

He felt a powerful urge to walk in the park.

I killed a man.

He didn't see the runners swooshing past him but he sensed the wakes of deodorant and microscopic clouds of sweat. He didn't see crinkled dead leaves tumbling over the grass but he felt the density of the wind pushing like a wall of energy on his right side. He didn't see the people sitting on benches or walking hunched forward into the brisk wind. His presence seemed to float around them without making contact, without any person-to-person acknowledgement. He felt alone, separated from the park and its people, the people he'd been trying to save for so long.

RAtlas had commended him on getting rid of Pierce. He hadn't stabbed him to death as he'd planned and he hadn't incited anyone else to kill him. Somehow, he'd done it with his words, with his message. Somehow, he'd inspired Simon Pierce to write a masterpiece that, Jax assumed, was so vile that its creator could no longer live with his own evil. In a way, Jax felt that

his message on *The Word and All Its Meanings and Forms* had caused the writer to overload on his own evil and then burn out the wiring of his life on his own excess, leaving him with no alternative but to destroy both himself and his work.

I made him a brave man, ready to give up his life to atone for his sins.

He felt good about this thought. It made him feel that he'd not only done something worthwhile for the human race, but for Pierce as well. He'd released the evil-doer from his personal hell. He couldn't even begin to imagine the self-torment of a man who could so thoroughly poison the minds and wills of others, like the odor emanating from a rotting fish. He was the rotting fish.

I killed a man.

He couldn't shake it. It was there. He'd killed a man, not by stabbing or any physical means, but with words and ideas that had eventually driven the man to take his own life.

Or maybe he was a coward who couldn't face up to his actions and killed himself out of fear.

He wondered how he felt about that. Did he, through his messages, somehow instill fear in Simon Pierce, driving him to a level of self-loathing that became so intolerable that he feared life, feared what he had done to it and felt that life itself had turned on him and, out of fear and cowardice in the face of what he'd done, he'd killed himself?

It seemed to him that he walked right through the walkers and the runners, as though he were in some other place far away from them, as though he were in a different world than the one he was trying to save for them.

"Hello!"

Jax snapped out of it, like being waked up by a slap in the face. It was a young woman in running shorts and a skimpy top.

"So...who are you today?"

Jax looked at her, dumbfounded.

The woman stopped running on the spot, walked up to him, pushed her head inches away from his and stared squarely into his eyes. "Hello! Anybody home in there?"

He didn't know what to say, what to think.

Who....?

"Don't you remember me? I got you mixed up with someone else? The photographer at the mall." She paused and thought for a moment. "I guess you weren't in the park yesterday."

Cautiously, Jax shook his head no.

"Or anytime this week?"

He shook his head.

"Well, whoever you are, I think you need to get some serious help." And she was gone.

What?

He closed his eyes and let the message flow into his fingers as they gyrated over the keyboard.

I HAVE NEWS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE: I WISH I COULD SAY THAT IT'S ABOUT THE DISCONTINUED USE OF PLASTIC BUT I SUPPOSE THAT THIS IS ONE STEP TOWARD THAT END WITH THE POISONER OF MINDS NO LONGER BEING AMONG US TO SPREAD HIS VENOMOUS MESSAGE OF HOPELESSNESS WHEN THERE IS SO MUCH HOPE TO BE HAD IN BUILDING A WORLD WHERE THE AIR CAN BE BREATHED AGAIN AND THE SOIL IS HEALTHY AND YIELDING OF BUMPER CROPS OF FOOD THAT HAS NOT BEEN CONTAMINATED WITH

CHEMICALS AND BIOLOGICAL MANIPULATION TURNING IT INTO SOMETHING SO UNNATURAL THAT IT COULD HAVE GENETIC CONSEQUENCES FOR GENERATIONS OF HUMANITY IN A WORLD WHERE THE OCEANS MUST BE SCOURED OF PLASTIC THAT IS GETTING INTO THE FINS OF FISHES AND BECOMING A PART OF THE GENOME OF OUR WATERY FRIENDS AND FOOD AND PEOPLE STILL GO ON USING PLASTIC AND OUR GOVERNMENTS ALLOW ITS CONTINUED USE AS THEY RECEIVE PAYOFFS FROM THOSE WHO WOULD DISRUPT THE NATURAL ORDER OF A PLASTIC-LESS WORLD.

SIMON PIERCE IS DEAD.

BUT PLASTIC IS STILL BEING USED.

STOP IT!!!!