



The Weekly Man

Episode 6: Friday – Jacques

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Sunrise reflections from the window danced to the rhythm of traffic on the other side of the curtains. The light came a little later each day as autumn deepened but the aroma of cut grass and flowers still drifted in. It was time for Jasmine Jackson to begin the daily ceremony.

It started with the sheer black g-string flowing sensually up her legs to fit tightly around her thighs with a snap of the band. Then the nylons. Jasmine would never wear panty hose, cheap vulgar panty hose. She wore only the finest nylon stockings, sheer black and strapless. The first nylon unfolded slowly up her smooth white leg, carefully, no wrinkles, just a shimmering smoothness until the nylon stopped short of white thighs.

And finally, the long flowing red gown with slits up the sides to show off those nylon-sugared legs.

Feeling sexy as hell, Jasmine went to her workstation and sat down, legs crossed to the side as though she were riding a horse sidesaddle. In a few minutes, the Jasmine Jackson website filled the monitor with its images of half naked men and women leaning against washers and dryers on the covers of books with the name Jasmine Jackson in bold letters across the top of each volume. She'd never had a bestseller; in fact, she had never sold more than a few hundred of each title but she had a loyal following, fans who waited eagerly for her next book and who sent her a barrage of flattering emails each time a new title was released.

She'd never had a book signing. She'd never met any of her fans in real life and she rarely went outside the building unless it was for research or inspiration in one of the local laundromats. It was so much more comfortable to stay at home and just write because the writing was everything. The emails of adoration were nice but it really didn't matter to Jasmine what anyone thought about her writing. She was in this for the writing. Of course there was the occasional death threat from failed writer malcontents but let them come; the surprise they'd get.

It was time to write, time to light the mood candles, close her eyes and breathe deeply for a few minutes to get that creative high with the right side of her brain well oxygenated and opening the pathways to her creative wellspring.

And then of course, stick the big ass cigar in her mouth, which she'd never light but would hang from her lips throughout the day's writing. They were cheap cigars but they did the trick. It was the only male thing that Jacques allowed when he was Jasmine Jackson, writer. But then, didn't women like cigars?

He opened his manuscript to where he'd last finished writing.

"I can't just go out and screw someone," says Hillary.

Dawn points her fork at Hillary. "And you can't go on forever being faithful to the man who dumped you almost a year ago."

He never wrote till he finished a scene or a chapter. He stopped at the height of things and the next day was like mounting a surf board already riding the crest of a wave—not a bad way to write a book set in a laundromat. All his, or Jasmine's, books were set in laundromats and they were called laundromances. They had their own special rules:

1. They must depict common life.
2. They must be narrated by the laundromat.
3. There must be at least one laundry tip in the story.
4. There must be an element of real or potential romance (they are, after all, romances).
5. None of the romantically involved characters are allowed to speak to each other.
6. The main theme must always be Things Get Dirty, Things Get Clean.

It took a bundle of skill to write a romance story in which the romantically involved characters couldn't talk to each other but in story after story Jasmine Jackson created intense relationships without one word spoken by one entangled character to the other. This was made a bit easier by having the laundromat tell the stories, the laundromat being sentient and all. And who better to tell stories than a being containing so many people with so many stories flowing through it every day. The laundromat dove in into their minds and bodies and found stories everywhere. You just had to accept that a building could do the talking.

Jasmine Jackson rolled the tip of the cigar over her lips as she started the day's writing with an erection.

Thirty pages.

Not bad, Jasmine. Thirty pages in one day. You keep getting more and more prolific.

He packed Jasmine's clothing into its brass box and took it through the hall to the bedroom.

Thirty pages. This one's going to be out in record time.

The bedroom, like the rest of the flat, was high-ceilinged with tall windows overlooking the park. He walked to a bare wall on the far side of the room and pressed his right thumb into it. A section slid open to reveal a large walk-in closet lined with clothing and boxes. He placed the box with Jasmine's clothing on top of a stack of other boxes and reached for a blue housecoat from one of the hangers. He threw on the housecoat and opened a drawer in one of the dressers

lining the closed wall opposite the hangers, pulled out a pair of boxer shorts and put them on. Goodnight feminine me, nice writing, and hello masculine me. Back in the bedroom, he glanced around. It didn't seem strange to him that the only furniture was a king size bed and a bedside table with a lamp. He figured his real world should be sparse so as not to encroach on his fictional world, which he liked to think was more real than everything else because it was the world of his own creation.

It was time to make supper, read his emails and rub elbows in cyberspace.

Street lights poured copper light through the windows. Candlelight flickered from the candles on the computer desk and on the coffee and side tables in the living room. Jacques' face glowed eerily blue from the laptop. The writing was more important than the fans, but still, he loved reading emails from his fans. To them, he was this mysterious beautiful woman named Jasmine who wrote romance stories set in laundromats. They didn't know where she lived or what she looked like. They had questions for her that she left unanswered, responding to their emails with simple notes.

Hey Jasmine

I've read every one of your books and look forward to your next one. I'm a single mother with three kids and I spend a lot of time in the laundromat so your stories are so close to me and my life because I spend so much time there. I really do wish I knew more about you. Everyone does. You're so mysterious and maybe we shouldn't know too much about you because I suppose that's the way you want to live your life. But I do have one question for you if you don't mind answering. Did you spend much time before you became a famous and rich novelist in the laundromat? It's important to me to know this because I spend a lot of time in the laundromat. I wish you all the best and look forward to your reply. And your next book. :)

Coral

Well, Coral, next time you go to the laundromat, take a notebook and pen like I do night after night, day after day, listening to the sounds of machines, the gushing of water filling the machines, the clicking of buttons and zippers in the dryers, the smell of bleach in the air, bulletin boards with their desperate messages and the thickness of the air. And by the way, Coral, I'm not famous and I'm not rich. I'm a writer. This is what he thought.

This is what he wrote:

Dear Coral,

Thank you so much for your kind words. It's people like you who keep me going and keep my stories coming. Thank you so much.

Jasmine

It wasn't that he felt any sort of disregard for his readers. He set his stories in laundromats because that epitomized the core of his readers' desperation—the hum of the machines, the sorting of clothing, the screaming kids—this was the stuff that defined them and he felt that by elevating the laundromat he might elevate their lives a little. Which meant he had to keep his

identify secret—cigar sucking man in red dress wouldn't cut it. He also noticed that most of his readers were single mothers and Jacques was sure that Jasmine's books were the closet any of them ever came to romance.

Dear Jasmine,

I'm forty-three years old and have been living alone since the breakup of my marriage almost ten years ago. During that time, I've tried over and over to write a novel, but I get twenty or thirty pages into it, and I lose it. I've had some good ideas, and some compelling plots and characters, but I just can't seem to keep any of the books going to the end.

I know you're very likely busy and you don't even know me, but could you give me just one clue or piece of advice that will help me finally finish a book?

And, by-the-way, I'm a big fan of your novels, and I make a point of reading them when I'm at the laundromat. Can you imagine?

Take care and all the best.

Judy Armstrong

Well, Judy, just stick with your next book until it's finished instead of giving up when the writing becomes work.

Nothing annoyed him more than people who thought there was a magic piece of advice or a simple trick that would turn their daydreams into a national best-seller. Maybe it was because that was how he felt a long time ago until he just sat down and suffered through the work.

Well, Judy...

Dear Judy,

Thank you so much for your kind words. May I offer this sincere piece of advice on writing? Simply put, the next time you write thirty pages and give up, find some other fucking pastime to fail at

Um, no. Maybe when you have thousands of obsessive fans.

Thank you so much for your kind words. And, from one author to another, wishing you the best of luck with your writing.

Jasmine

She'll be reading this a thousand times and tell all her friends that she and Jasmine Jackson are fellow writers. My good deed for the day. I need a beer.

Mysteriously, there was always a six pack of Bud in the refrigerator.