



The Weekly Man

Episode 69: Saturday - Jac

It was a strange but familiar feeling. The presence of a woman. He knew her but he didn't know her. He had a sense of something of himself in her or was it something of her in him? It was blurry and surreal. Like a dream. He smiled.

It was a dream.

Something else moved across the panorama of his waking.

How did I get here?

He remembered being in the park. He remembered sitting on the bench. He didn't remember coming home or going to bed. Again, the female presence came back to him.

What was that? Why was she so familiar?

He remembered the dog, the Beagle.

After a quick trip to the washroom, he was on the phone.

"Yes, the Beagle. It was on your site. I called about it. It was still available."

"You mean unadopted?" The female voice on the other end was young, cold, distant.

"Yes, unadopted."

"I'm sorry, sir. I don't see anything here about a Beagle. It's...oh wait. Yes. It was finished yesterday."

He thought for a minute. He could hear choppy breathing from the other end. "What do you mean finished?"

"Its term here was finished without an adoption."

"So?"

"So what, sir?"

"So what happens when the dog is finished?"

The voice was suddenly arrogant, as though he were foolish or stupid for not knowing "finished". "We had to put the dog down, sir. Its term was finished. We only have so much room here. If an animal hasn't been adopted by the end of its term, we have to put it down. Those are the rules."

“But I called. I told them I wanted the dog. I was going to come in.”

“I’m sorry, sir. I don’t see a record of that. There’s no record of that. There would have been an entry, a record. There’s no record of that. The animal finished its term and was put down. It’s a very humane process. The animal didn’t feel any pain. But there’s no...”

Jac squeezed down on the End Call button.

Fucking idiots. Fucking stupid idiots.

Maybe it's punishment. Or a reminder?

Jac was angry. Disappointed.

He felt down on himself and wondered if maybe he'd been wrong to change his tune on the nature of life.

The first time in ages that I let myself want something.

And I lose it before I even get it.

He noticed people he passed in the park, nodding to him, smiling, as though they knew him or recognized him. He felt a brief flash of panic as he thought that maybe his identity as Simon Pierce might have somehow been revealed but it passed quickly when he realized that, if that were the case, he wouldn't be getting friendly nods. He sat in the same spot he'd had the last time he was in the park. He tried to remember back to then, to remember going home. It didn't make sense to him that he couldn't remember that. But then, there were so many things he'd forgotten about.

The cuts. The bruises.

He put that out of his mind and thought again about the dog. He wanted that dog. There had been something about its picture, something about the dog that had attracted him. He'd almost owned it through the fantasies of taking it out for walks in the park. Scooping poop like a proud dog owner. He'd already started to grow attached to it, to own it, to love it. Everything he'd been telling the world to avoid through his stories.

And the first time I let myself break my own advice...

He thought about the female presence. How real she'd been. How familiar. He thought about his mother. How much he'd loved her. The aroma of food cooking on the stove and in the oven. He thought about the roast beef. The Yorkshire pudding. The mashed potatoes and gravy. He thought about how long it had been since he'd had a meal like that.

A lifetime ago.

He was suddenly aware of himself smiling at the memory. He was physically smiling. An elderly man bunched up with scarves and a heavy coat returned his smile, thinking that Jac was smiling at him. He didn't have his mother anymore but he still had the memories of her and the kitchen. He'd lost so many memories but they were the little things. What he'd loved and cherished most was still so very real in his mind and he was sure that he would always hold on to them.

Would like to have built some memories with that dog though.

The park was dismal. A cold wind cut to the bone under a blanket of cloud. The last of the colorful fall flowers had wilted into flakey brown husks. Boney branches scratched the sky. Jac rubbed his hands together. He tried to remember where in his closet he'd packed his winter gloves. He would need them soon.

Just bad luck, I guess. And maybe stories about me and a dog wouldn't exactly be all that intriguing enough to sell. What kind of adventures do you go on with your dog? I've never been on any kind of adventure. What would I know about adventures period, let alone with a dog?

He thought about that. He'd never been on any kind of adventure. He'd spent his whole life mostly writing, venturing out for the occasional shopping or meal. But he'd never been anywhere, never traveled. He had memories of his mother's house. He had memories of the place he lived in now.

That was it. Nothing else. It was something he never thought about. He'd never had a desire to look beyond his neighborhood. He'd never had a desire to know much about anything except that everything could be lost. Slowly, it dawned on him that he was some kind of hermit. He lived in a flat across from a park. He had no friends other than his landlady. Under his pen name, hundreds, possibly thousands, of people hated him.

No wonder I'm a hermit.

A young couple wearing matching camel hair coats nodded and smiled at him as they walked by, arm in arm.

But everyone seems to like Jac Munroe...without the books about hopelessness. Everybody in this park. The park.

He didn't know anything about adventure. He didn't know anything about dogs. He didn't know anything about the world beyond the park.

So, this is what I write about.

The park.