



The Weekly Man

Episode 28: A Place of Their Own

Each day for seven days, the same person showed up for the same room, each with a different bearing and each with a different name. All seven were different, unique in their separate personalities but all of them in the same body, all of them with the same face re-shaped by their distinct personalities. They had just a few questions, most of them about how quiet the neighborhood was and the availability of internet services because they would be working from home.

That was Manzer's idea. It allowed them to avoid the complications of the five day workweek and workmates who would wonder about the differences in personality, the name changes and all the other things that would make working outside of the home impossible.

Jacky had questions about the surrounding neighborhood and the types of plants and flowers he might expect to find. He also wanted to know about the closest mall, where he wanted to set up a virtual art gallery. He talked at length about his plans and Mrs. Gilbert was proud of him and his vision. She always knew that he would be the one to venture out into the world and find ways to adapt to it.

Jack was the most difficult, asking questions about the other tenants, checking behind doors, gazing out the windows from different angles as though he were looking for some hidden threat, and scrutinizing the closets from bottom to top. He even got down on his knees to inspect the insides of the lower cupboards in the kitchen. He seemed nervous and asked who would be coming into the flat besides her. When she mentioned Mr. Joyce coming in to do repairs, he had dozens of questions about him and had to be assured several times that Mr. Joyce would only come in with permission from Jack.

The others looked around casually and seemed satisfied with their new home. There was no excitement from any of them and, once they were moved in, they might have been in the flat all their lives. They blended in with the walls and windows like permanent fixtures.

And for Natalie, it was so good to have her children with her again.

Jackson looked around the living room. The high ceilings and windows reminded him of home and he loved the park view from the windows. Manzer had done his research well. The landlady, Mrs. Gilbert, seemed very nice. And there was something about her. Jackson didn't feel the least uncomfortable around her. Maybe it was the fascination he felt with her wrinkles. He tried not to stare, but that was impossible. He would have to not look at her at all to not stare because the wrinkles were everywhere. But there was something about her eyes that seemed familiar.

"And we have services that are included in the lease, things that some of the other tenants use," she said. "Things like grocery delivery, laundry pickup and delivery, things that make life easier and they're included in the rent."

Jackson smiled. This was even better than Manzer had said. "That would be wonderful, Mrs. Gilbert. I run an online elearning business. Very time-consuming. It would be very convenient to have shopping and laundry taken care of."

Mrs. Gilbert smiled widely, or at least, Jackson assumed she did. It was hard to tell with the edges of her mouth disappearing into the wrinkles. She crossed her massive arms over her chest. "The other tenants are mostly elderly folks who don't go out very often. You may see them occasionally but not often. And they're very quiet."

Perfect. Manzer was so right about this place. It's almost like it was made especially for me.

He couldn't hide the excitement in his voice. "I'll take it!"

It wasn't hard to see from the shine in Mrs. Gilbert's eyes that she was beaming. She was happy to have Jackson as a tenant and he was happy to live in this place with high ceilings across from a park in the city.

And he wouldn't have to see a lot of people.

Sometimes she visited them while they were asleep. She sat by their bed and held their hands as she watched them transform from one personality to the next. It never ceased to fascinate her. It was like a nightly rebirth.

She'd planned for her children to never know that she was alive. The plan was simple: She would become a different person. All it took was a few years of cosmetic surgery that had the doctors shaking their heads because she was doing everything in reverse, going from young and beautiful to aged and wrinkled. She even changed her voice.

By the time the kids were ready to move into her building, she had transformed from Natalie Carson to Mrs. Mona Gilbert.

She'd prepared the building and their flat to protect their secret. There were no other tenants except herself. Mr. Joyce lived down the street. Both Mona and Mr. Joyce had prepared the flat to accommodate all seven personalities with hidden closets and storage accessed by tracing their unique code in the proper sequence.

She finally had her children back. It wouldn't be the same close relationship but she would see them more often and she would see them when they were awake. And they would be under the same roof.

Her computer was tapped into each of partitions on the laptop they shared so that she could monitor their online activities and head off any problems before they became serious.

She could go into their flat and re-arrange things left by one personality to match what the next would be expecting.

Things had been going great for years. There had been close shaves in the past, times when she'd been sloppy and overlooked a piece of clothing or some other belonging from one of them and the next personality might mention if Mr. Joyce had been in and didn't recall giving him their permission. She'd always worked something out to calm their doubts, even if it was to just have them shrug their shoulders and still think that something strange was going on.

But now, one of them had brought a woman home, one of them was trying to get another one killed, one of them was getting closer and closer to meeting a woman who Mona didn't feel right about and one of them had been researching sex change operations.

As if things weren't already complicated enough.