



The Weekly Man

Episode 72: The Family Message Board

Monday – Jack

Having a blast here. This was a great idea. Missing Valerie, but it's only for a month. And we'll meet up as soon as I (we) get home. Still can't get over the fact that I have a family let alone knowing that I'm sharing a body with the entire family. No wonder I always felt like I was being watched or that something weird was going on, not that you guys are weird. Well, maybe you're a little weird, Jacques. Glad that we decided to keep our clothing closets separate as per usual.

Just kidding.

Just finished reading your latest book. Like Jackson said, racy. I really liked Heavy Load though. Can't believe that you wrote all those books without any of the characters speaking to each other when they're all in the same building and connected by some kind of, whatever. Nice work, brother.

Getting all kinds of ideas for my strip. Something about the ocean close by and the festive atmosphere here. It brings out the creativity. Which I need right now. Came to a complete dead end. But I think that might have had something to do with *everything* coming to a head. I mean, all the mysteries and questions over the years. They were starting to build up like a boiler steaming up to the point of exploding. I thought I was beginning to go crazy or something. I think maybe that bump on the head was the last straw for me. Hard to just shrug something like that off and ignore it. It hurt. I mean, it really hurt. But that's all ancient history now. Now, everything makes sense. All those questions without answers are gone. And I have 5 brothers and a sister. Wow. I was so lonely until Valerie came along and now I have her "and" a family. And I'm so glad you all had a chance to meet her when she and Uncle Manzer came around to tell each of you the truth. I can understand Mom's reasons for keeping everything secret, especially from the rest of the world. Who knows? Maybe we would have all ended up in some kind of institution being studied by a bunch of wacko shrinks. And maybe we would have all collapsed into one person and we would have all lost our identities as individuals. That thought is kind of scary. I like being me and I'm glad we're all still ourselves. Anyways, those are my thoughts and I think you guys all feel the same.

Jackie, thanks for going easy on the rum. That first day was tough. Much appreciated for today. I'm not sure, but I think Jacques is the only one of us used to drinking. But I kind of wonder, if he drinks...does that mean that the rest of us build up some kind of tolerance to alcohol?

Jac, that swimming in a cave thing sounds cool. Might be able to fit something like that in my strip. Sign me up. Might seem weird with it seeming like I'm going to the same place over and over, but I figure if we all just say that it's the most incredible experience we're ever had, then it might not seem suspicious.

And Jac, leave Jax alone. He means good. Even if that font he uses is a little over the top for a family message board. What's with that Jax?

Jackie, thanks for the change of mind. I'd hate to have to get a whole new wardrobe. Or would we be sharing yours? I think Jacques wouldn't mind that.

Just kidding.

No, I wasn't.

Yeah, I was.

OK, I'll leave you alone.

And Jacky, like Jackson said. We're all with you brother.

Went to the mall today. Plaza America. Hey guys, it has three bars. There's an open air courtyard in the center with a mini bar and two restaurants with patios facing the beach. The one on the second floor has the best cheese pizza I've ever tasted. And there's a sort of market attached to it where you can get some really cool souvenirs and handmade goods really cheap. By the way, how are we going to handle bringing stuff back? I mean, we'll be buying for 7 people and packing for one. Open for ideas. I'd like to bring back a bottle of Havana Club but I'm not sure how much we're allowed. And Jacques, I'm pretty sure you'll want to bring back some cigars. And thanks for not actually smoking them. Maybe we could mail a bunch of stuff to ourselves?

Almost the time. Have a good one everyone!

Jack

People: Met the crazy lady. She called me Phil. So far though, I've been playing the romantic lone tourist. I guess it just makes things easier until we can all work out some strategies for dealing with things like this. It's still all so new. And kinda cool.

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Tuesday - Jackson

Had a great day at the beach. Spent the whole day lying on a beach chair under a wooden umbrella drinking rum punches (Slowly though, Jax, so that I don't pass a hangover on to you. And I eased off the booze a few hours before bed.). I don't think I've ever been so relaxed in my life. I was kind of uptight the first day, you know, off in a tropical paradise after years being cooped up in the flat and working every single day of my life...well...you know, the part of my life I was aware of.

Hey Jac...you mentioned looking into swimming in a cave. Let us know how that goes. I've been sticking around the hotel and maybe it's time to get out and do something. Maybe if you really enjoy it, you could sign me up for it?

BTW, stay away from the pelicans. Watched a girl get bitten by one when she was feeding it a fish. Looked like it bit her pretty hard too. Didn't see any blood but she sure did yell and swear a lot.

Hey Jacky...I hope you're starting to feel better. We all feel bad about Krista. Sounds like she was a really nice person. My heart goes out to you. And I sure hope that knowing you have a family helps. We love you, bro. And those macro pictures you took of the flowers and plants around the hotel were beautiful. Does this mean that I might have photographic talent as well? That's an interesting thought. Can all of us do what each of us can do? Probably not, since we're all so different, but it's an interesting thought?

Jacques, just read your first novel as The Insufferable Bitch. Um...kind of racy and...you know...really racy. Are you sure we're related? BTW, looking forward to hearing about your adventure on the catamaran.

And Jac...please...ease up on Jax. He's on a mission from God. And if you keep it up, he just might bump his head again.

Jax...we're all with you buddy. I like where you're going with the plastic pollution. Saw a documentary on YouTube about a huge part of the ocean that's so full of plastic from all around the world that you can reach into the water and scoop up handfuls of it. Kind of scary if you ask me.

Jackie...so glad you're not getting the sex change. Did I read that right? That you're not getting it...yet? That you're still sort of thinking about it? We kind of like the idea of having a younger sister (since you were the last one born) and you having six protective brothers. Anyways, sounds like you had a great time at the Al Capone bar. Imagine people flocking to a bar because a famous gangster partied there a century ago.

Well, it's almost the time so I better get ready for bed. Having a wonderful time here and just want you all to know that it's so good to have a family no matter how weird the circumstances are. :)

Anyone want me to sign you up for anything? Talk to you next week.

Just a thought: do any of you know how to swim? And how would that work? Would it mean that I know how to swim too?

People: Talked to that crazy woman with the huge shock of white hair that you met last week Jac and she was crazy drunk. Didn't have anyone approach me today so I'm guessing that the rest of you have been staying pretty much to yourselves. Please, just remember to post here anything we should know in case we meet people that we should all remember. Guess that's one of the good things about knowing the truth now, we can work together so that we don't seem strange. So go ahead and meet people. But pass it on. :)

Wednesday – Jax

TO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE MADE COMMENTS ABOUT MY FONT ALL I CAN SAY IS THAT IT'S ME AND I DON'T BEGRUDGE ANYONE ABOUT WHO THEY ARE WITH THE EXCEPTION OF WHO JAC ONCE WAS BUT ISN'T ANYMORE AND

THE FONT I USE IS THE FONT THAT RATLAS HAS CHOSEN FOR ME TO COMMUNICATE ITS MESSAGE TO THE WORLD THAT IS IN A FREE SWING DOWNFALL WITH MOSTLY PLASTIC POISONING THE OCEANS AND THE RIVERS AND LAKES OF THE WORLD AND I HOPE THAT NONE OF YOU ARE USING THE PLASIC CUPS THEY SERVE THE DRINKS IN HERE WHEN YOU THINK OF HOW MANY OF THOSE PLASTIC CUPS MIGHT MAKE IT INTO THE BEAUTIFUL GREEN WATERS WE'RE ALL HAVING THE PLEASURE OF EXPERIENCING IN THIS BEAUTIFUL PLACE AND YES I MESSAGE WITH MY EYES CLOSED AND JUST FOCUS ON THE MESSAGES IT'S MY DUTY TO GIVE TO THE WORLD INCLUDING MY WONDERFUL FAMILY AND THAT MEANS YOU TOO JAC AND I'M VERY HAPPY THAT YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR OUTLOOK ON THE WORLD AND I'M HAPPY THAT I DIDN'T HAVE TO KILL YOU BECAUSE YOU DID FINALLY TURN INTO A GOOD MAN EVEN THOUGH SOME OF THE THINGS YOU SAY TO ME ARE BELOW WHAT YOU'VE BECOME BUT YOU'RE MY BROTHER AND I FORGIVE YOU AND I WANT ALL OF YOU TO KNOW THAT I THINK WE'VE MADE A GOOD DECISION TO COME HERE FOR A MONTH WITH ALL THESE PALM TREES AND SUN AND BEACHES AWAY FROM THE STORMS OF WINTER BACK HOME EVEN THOUGH THE INTERNET CONNECTION HERE ISN'T THE GREATEST AND I'VE BEEN CUT OFF FROM ITS WORD BUT I LOOK FORWARD TO WHEN WE RETURN HOME AND HEAR WHAT NEW AND DWONDERFUL MESSGES IT HAS FOR ME TO PASS ON TO THE WORLD BUT IN THE M EANTIME I'M VERY MUCH ENJOYING AND I'M VERY HAPPY THAT LL OF YOU ARE ENJOYING YOURSELVES SO MUCH (YOU TOO JAC AND SORRY AGAIN FOR TRYING TOO KILL YOU BUT I WAS UNDER ORDERS FROM RATLAS AT THE TIME WHO HAS BEEN FIT TO FORGIVE AS I HAVE AND BTW I WENT TO THE CAVERN TODAY TO SWIM AND IT WAS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE AND I SUGGEST THAT EVERYBODY GO THERE TO EXPERIENCE THE GREATNESS OF WHAT THIS PLANET HAS TO OFFER ESPECIALY WITH THE WATER SO CLEAR AND CLEAN AND FREE OF PLASTIC AND SO HA HA JAC I BEAT YOU TO IT AND I HOPE THAT YOU HAVE NO HARD FEELINGS BECAUSE AFTER ALL IT WAS YOUR IDEA FOR US TO GO T HERE AND YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT IT AS OPPOSED TO THE IDEAS YOU ESPOUSED IN YOUR EARLIER WORKS THAT WERE A HUGE OFFENSE TO THE WORLD AND TO ITS MESSAGE BUT THAT'S ALL IN THE PAST AND WE CAN ALLK SWIM OR AS LEAST I CAN BECAUSE I WAS SWIMMING IN THE CAVERN AND IT WAS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE TO SWIM IN THE CLEAR AND CLEAN WATER OF A PLACE SO UN-TOUCHED BY THE EVILS OF THE MONDERN WORLD AND I THINK I MIGHT GO TO THE MALL BUT NOT TODAY BECAUSE I'M NOT SURE IT IT'S OPEN IN THE EVENING SO I THINK I'LL JUST SPEND SOME TIME AT THE POOL WITH THE METAL COINTAINER I BOUGHT THAT I HOPE YOU'RE ALL USING INSTEAD OF THOSE POISONOUS LITTLE PLASTIC CUPS THAT MIGHT END UP IN THIS BEAUTIFUL GREEN WATER AND RUIN ITS NATURALNESS AND IT'S OCCURRING TO ME THAT THERE IS SO MUCH TO SEE SO MAYBE WE CAN COME BACK HERE SOMETIME AGAIN PREFERABLY IN THE WINTER AGAIN AND I APPRECIATE SOME OF YOU STICKING UP FOR ME AS JAC MAKES HIS RETURN TO BEING A NORMAL HUMAN BEING AS OPPOSED TO A SCURGE ON THE WORLD.

AVOID PLASTIC!!!!

PEOPLE: THE CRAZY LADY IS CONVINCED THAT WE'RE ALL PHIL I GUESS. COULDN'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING SHE SAID AND I THINK SHE MIGHT HAVE HAD CERTAIN INTENTIONS TOWARD ME. BEWARE!!!!

Thursday - Jacky

Hey everybody.

Hope you're all having a great time. Went into Havana today and had a Crystal beer at the same bar where Ernest Hemingway used to go to. Pictures of him all over the place. Have any of you tried Crystal beer? It's pretty good. I just wish that I could have taken Krista there. It was just the kind of place she would have loved. Posted a bunch of pictures on the photo board. Can't believe the colors in Havana. It's a photographer's paradise, so full of history and color. I walked past buildings where I looked inside and the insides looked like they were in ruins from some ancient war and the next building would be like a ritzy nineteenth century European restaurant plopped into twenty-first century Havana. The place is mesmerizing. Some places have ancient buildings with modern architecture soaring up into the sky beside them. Beautiful. I recommend a trip there. It's a full day, but worth it. Halfway there, you stop at a pina colada stand where they make the drinks fresh right in front of you and serve them up in the pineapple they used to make the drink. Never had anything more delicious in my life. Got pictures of the drink in the pineapple on the board.

JAX, I LIKE THE IDEA OF COMING BACK HERE. LIKE YOU SAY, IT'S JUST FOUR DAYS FOR EACH OF US AND THERE'S SO MUCH TO SAY AND DO. AND THE WEATHER IS GREAT CONSIDERING WHAT IT'S LIKE BACK HOME THIS TIME OF YEAR. AND, REALLY, JAX, IF YOU WANT JAC TO LAY OFF YOU, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER NOT REMINDING HIM THAT YOU TRIED TO KILL HIM AND CALLING HIM THINGS LIKE AN EX-SCURGE. REMEMBER, WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER. FAMILY.

And thanks, guys. Still feeling kind of down, but this vacation is helping. Sometimes I find myself wishing she were here so that I could share it with her, but I try to keep myself busy.

If any of you want to use my camera, I've put it on auto and I've left instructions for charging it and knowing when it needs to be charged. But please be careful and keep it away from water. If you're going to be drinking, please don't take it with you. But it might be a good idea for everyone to be seen with it at some point. I mean, you don't own a camera like that and not use it in a place like this as much as possible.

Been doing a lot of thinking about our lives and like you said Jack, all the questions and mysteries make sense now. Still find it hard believe that we managed to spend all those years just shrugging off so many things. Like you said Jack, that bump on the head was a biggie, the kind of thing that I might have had an easier time ignoring years ago, but when you pile up a whole lifetime of it, you can't just ignore it anymore. I don't like the idea that we might have grown up in an institution or having to see "experts" on a continuous basis and being treated like we're some kind of freak. Some of the things that Krista said to me make sense now. And all the failed relationships make sense.

But that's all in the past now and I'm kind of excited about having a family. And I'm having a pretty good time here. Love you all and looking forward to reading about your adventures in paradise.

BTW, If anyone wants to bring back a bottle or two of rum, maybe we could all share them. Not much of a drinker myself, but I'll have to admit, Havana Club isn't bad, especially with pineapple and coconut milk and whatever else they put in it.

People: Talked to a father and daughter on the bus into Havana. Same ones you saw on the beach Jackson. She still has a nasty mark where the pelican bit her. Didn't get his name but her name is Cassie. She hates pelicans and jelly fish. Didn't ask about the jelly fish.

Friday – Jacques

Yes, Jackson, we're related. Live with it. And thank you for reading my novels, though you might want to avoid the Insufferable Bitch novels as I'm sure they'll only get racier as time goes on and I really get into the milieu. And yes, whomever mentioned it, I think we should keep our separate wardrobes. Related though we are, even the closest of siblings need their own personal spaces.

The cavern swim sounds intriguing. I think I'll try that so, please whomever, sign me up. And btw, Jackson, so glad you don't mind all of us signing up for things under your name and using your credit card. You don't have to worry about us paying you back. After all, you know where to find us. 😊

And yes, I would like to take back some cigars. These are the best cigars I've ever experienced. I think we're allowed something like 40. Being a beer drinker, not really interested in taking any booze back so you guys go crazy with the Havana Club or whatever else you want.

As for any and all jokes about my writing and "ways of writing," just know that you're shooting plastic darts at a steel wall. And so much for that.

And now to tell you about my adventure. I went on the catamaran. (And thanks, Jax. for signing me up. And thanks, Jackson, for paying for it.) 😊

It was amazing. We were out on the ocean under a beautiful blue sky on a boat full of partiers. I've long dreamed about what it would be like to sail on the ocean and even the best of those dreams didn't come close to the real thing. They have a rope deck at the front of the boat where you can lay down and soak up the sun and the rum while you feel ocean water spray into your face and across your body. The boat even stopped for a while and everyone went snorkeling. Well, not everyone. As beautiful as the water is, I can't help but feel that there is a constant concern about sharks. I mean, really, who knows? It's a big ocean.

We went to an island called Cayo Blanco (White Island) where the sand was so white and the water was like walking through crystal fluid. They have a long beach shack that must seat a couple hundred people for a cafeteria style lunch of barbeque chicken, pork, lobster and delicious foods that I couldn't even identify, but were delicious. After I finished eating, I walked along the shore and noticed a road leading into the jungle behind the lunch shack so I followed it into the jungle and all the way to a bridge across a tropical swamp where I saw baby jellyfish floating in the sun. On the way back, a huge iguana (about 3 feet long) walked right out in front of me and stopped by the path as I stared at it and it stared back at me. It had a big swatch on one side that looked like it had been burned, or maybe diseased, so I didn't try to pat it.

On the trip back, everyone partied and danced and sang and drank vast quantities of rum punch. I came up with a million ideas for some really steamy scenes in some of my future Bitch books. I very much recommend going for a catamaran trip. In fact, I signed up for a return trip next week. It's the ocean for me, my friends.

And yes, I'm up for coming back here for our next vacation. It is only four days each and that really doesn't give us a lot of time to explore everything. I hear that you can go kayaking down mountain streams where tarantulas might fall on your head as you sweep through the jungle on a surge of crazy white water.

It's so nice to know that we're all here together (as Jackson, of course) and that everyone's having a great time. After the initial shock of finding out who we all are and that our mother was still alive and living all those years right under us, I think this trip is exactly what we all needed to begin adjusting to our new life. It certainly feels good to have all those questions answered. They were starting to drive me nuts, especially that big bump on the head. Jax, don't ever try to kill Jac again. 😊

Love you and see you all again next week. Jacques.

People: Spent my time making notes for future novels so didn't really socialize much. The lizard's name is Ralph, in case you meet up with him.

Saturday – Jac

You're right, Jax, it was my idea to go to swim in the cave, so I'm not going to let your attempt at one-upmanship stop me from saying I WAS SWIMMING IN A CAVE! I was swimming in a cave! It was great. It was like descending into the primal porridge and swimming in it. At first, it just looks like a huge horizontal crack in a giant rock cliff, but as you get closer, you see that it goes down down down into the cliff. I mean, it turns into a gargantuan cavern with massive stalactites hanging from the ceiling and equally massive if not more massive stalagmites on the floor of the cavern and sometimes the two crash into each other to form thick stony columns. I won't say anymore. Just, everybody, go there. You won't regret it. It's called the Saturno Cave. Jacky, take your camera. Everybody, take a couple of bottles of water for the cab driver, especially if you plan on swimming for a long time. And what Jax neglected to mention is that there's a bar and restaurant at the entrance to the stairs leading down to the cavern. You can go for a swim, have a beer (or two) and some lunch, and then go back for another swim. As many times as you want. Don't forget to take towels.

And yeah, Jax, what's with all the scourge stuff? I'm over that. Time for you to get over it too. You might want to mention that to the Rat. You know, tell him I'm over it. Time for you and him to get over it as well. And for the sake of family peace, that's all I'm going to say about you and the internet message thingy.

For myself, it's like a breath of fresh air every day to get up in the morning, go out to the balcony, look over the palm trees of paradise and into the ocean and love every second of it. This was something I wouldn't have allowed for myself at one time. I would have turned my back on it and run away, afraid that it would somehow give me a hundred times more pain for every moment of pleasure. It's kind of crazy, but the more I realize how wrong I was and how evil it really was of me to write all those children's books that ruined the lives of children and led one child to kill himself the more I feel guilty about it. I faked the death of the supposed writer of those books and realize that any kind of atonement that might mean imprisonment or other severe punishment would affect the rest of you as well and I can't do that to you. The best I can do is write under a new name and with a new approach to life, one that promotes life and encourages love of life. I'm not sure how I'm going to do that, but I'm working on it and this place is giving me the introspection I need to do that. I wouldn't mind coming back here at all.

You know, I think I might start with something along the lines that even though we might not be able to keep all the things we love, we can keep the memory of them and the love we had for them. Like, we'll be back home at the end of the month, but we'll all still have the memory of this

place. And no one can ever take that away from us. Maybe that's what I should write about, a set of children's novels in which a child in each one of them travels to someplace in the world. Hell, maybe I should start writing books for adults. So many options. So many possibilities.

Hey Jax, why don't you ask the Rat what he thinks about that? Till next week, hope all of you have a great time!

We can take back two bottles of rum. I'm up for it. I mean, it's on Jackson's dime.

People: The girl's father is Tom. Her hand is looking not too bad but she still hates pelicans. And jelly fish. Apparently, she was stung by one on her first day here. Haven't seen the crazy lady around. Maybe she left? Met a Russian couple at the main bar. Her name is Natashia and his is Boris. Can you believe that? She has brunette hair and has a scar on her left cheek. Tall, beautiful woman. She's a teacher. He looks like an accountant, but he's a marketing agent. Short dark hair and sort of wide eyes. I told them I was a writer working on my first novel and working as a photographer to make money in the meantime. I think they were sufficiently drunk to forget everything else I said.

Sunday - Jackie

Hey boys...

Loving this place! Went for a long walk along the beach this evening. The sunset was so beautiful. Had some kind of fish for supper. No idea what it was but it was delicious. How's everyone else enjoying this? I've been making notes at the end of each day. Getting all kinds of ideas for my next play. And it's going to be so much different than anything else I've ever written. Can't believe we're here for an entire month...well, four days for each of us. Isn't that strange? I still can't get over it. I have six brothers. Six brothers! And I absolutely love all of you.

Saw the most beautiful sun dress at the Plaza America and almost bought it, but I guess that would be kind of embarrassing for the rest of you. Ha ha! The cab driver was really cute and I think I might have made him a little uncomfortable...you know...staring at him dreamy-eyed and all that. Sorry guys, couldn't help it. You might have to live with a few weird stares from the cab drivers. Ha ha! Guess you should have brought Valerie with you, Jack. God, can't even imagine how that would have worked. I think it's going to take a while before we get a lot of things sorted out. I'm just glad that (like the rest of you) that everything is finally making sense.

Count me in on wanting to come back here. This place is paradise. The people are so friendly, the scenery is to die for and the food is delicious. I can't understand why so many of the comments in the travel forums say negative things about the food. Maybe they've just never eaten real food before. So yes, I'd love to come back.

I had an idea by the pool today. Wouldn't it be kind of cool if we worked together as travel writers? We could travel around the world and be paid for it. You could do the photography, Jacky, and the rest of us, well, I'm not sure what you'd like to do, Jax, the rest of us could write the articles. We might even get free travel if we can land specific assignments. Just throwing it out there. A little poolside fantasy. Don't the rest of you have a feeling that anything is possible now that we all know the truth, now that we know about each other and we can actually work together to go on vacation and do the things we've always just thought? Putting a couple of things I was looking into on hold for now (which I'm sure you're all glad to hear). There're just so many possibilities.

Love you boys and looking forward to hearing more about your days here.

Jackie

People: The crazy lady is back. She spent a few days in Havana with friends. Still don't know what her name is. She sat with me at supper. Kept everyone away. Don't have a clue what she talked about. Jackson, I think those kids you said she mentioned are cats, not kids. But not sure.

Email to Valerie

Hello there Valerie Vine,

I can't even begin to tell you how much I miss you, and it's only been a couple of weeks. Wish I could write more often, but the internet connection here isn't all that great. Some days it works, some days it doesn't. Some days you have to wait hours to get on. But I think we needed this time together, you know, just the seven of us. Just cracked up after I wrote that "just the seven of us". But it means we can work together to do things that are going to make our lives a little more like other people's lives. You know, normal. Not that we'll ever be completely normal, but at least we won't be leading our lives wondering why we have this scratch, that bump, this misunderstanding with someone. We've messaged each other about this and we all felt the same (well, maybe not so much Jax...he'd be living in another world no matter what). It's just good to know the truth. As much as our mother tried to protect us, it would have been good to have known years ago. But then, maybe things wouldn't have turned out the same. Maybe we wouldn't have been set in our own personalities enough to keep them and not merge into one person. That was mom's greatest fear, that she would lose all seven of her children.

But I'm glad things turned out the way they did, especially with mom gone and Uncle Manzer in really bad shape. After finding out the truth and thinking about things, something occurred to me. Manzer must be somewhere in his nineties, and I wonder if he stuck around this long just to be there for my mother. I remember when...