



# **The Weekly Man**

## **When the Characters Take Over and You Miss Sunday Coffee Break**

I'm not sure if I've written about how I create characters yet, but here goes for, hopefully, the first time...and maybe the tenth.

I started my first novel with three characters and no story. No plot. No idea where any of it was going because I had nothing that was going. I had two men and one woman. I had a rough idea of what they looked like, though their looks changed a little as their characters evolved.

For months, I did character studies, wrote about their dreams, their likes and dislikes, how they dressed in the morning, what they ate and what would make them vomit. I put them in conversations with the other characters and with people I created just to have conversations with them. I got into showers with them. I had sex with them and became them having sex with others. I had conversations with them on the bus and over coffee. But mostly, I went into their minds and memories and created back stories for them.

Back stories are significant snippets from a person's past, things they experienced that changed the course of their lives, kept them on course, or changed the lives of the people around them.

Backstories are almost always intense, interesting scenes in which important, character-shaping things happen. For instance, what does the skinny ten year old do when he sees the school bully heading toward him with a malicious smile draped on his jaw?

Does he run? Does he stay? Does he cry? Does he fight back? Does he give up and suffer a few minutes of humiliation?

Whatever he does, it's going to travel with him. If he runs, he'll likely run again and again. If he stays and fights, he'll likely never take shit from others. Back story moments define our lives and make us who we are.

I spent months writing back stories for the three main characters and for the minor characters and, as I wrote them, the plot for the novel unfolded in their stories.

I've always respected what my characters have to say about their fates and the paths they take through the novel. I let them lead the way and I never question their decisions.

And this was a long, roundabout way to say that there will be no episode of The Weekly Man this Sunday because that's not the way the characters told their story. However, Jack will be back on Monday (just as weird as ever) and the story as a whole will be taking a sprint into the world of crazy.

Maybe you could read one of the free short stories here: <https://biffmitchell.com/the-weekly-man>.

In any event, have a great weekend and may all your coffee breaks be magic.