



Folk Tales

For -

(A better understanding)

Will Kavanagh

Love is-seeing your self in others

Contents

1. Traveller's Rest
2. Cat's Whiskers
3. Finn's Last Rainbow
4. The Pursuit of Flower
5. Hobson's Voice
6. Morgan's Treasure
7. The Trial of Eva O'Pen
8. The Life and Death of a Bad Man
7. Saratu's Curse
8. Epitaph

1. Traveller's Rest

Abel Smith looked around the place that he had called home for the last 18 months with a very diverse mixture of emotions. It was only an old mobile home that would have been better suited at a holiday camp in the warm summer climate than the cold winter morning that he said his final goodbye. The cold had finally driven him out as the old gas fire was too far from the bed room to be of any service. He had often slept in the front part when it had got too cold just to be near the heat. He had survived the first winter though the drifting warmer air crossing with the cold front of the bed room had made its own weather system and the ceiling above his bed became like a cloud dripping condensation like rain on his head first thing in the morning.

The summer months more than compensated for the cold winter but he had often thought of the place like a shed with windows and begrudged paying the £50 a week rent and band A community charge that came with the territory. His possessions were easily packed away in the saddle bags of his Honda CB 500 low-rider as his nomadic nature meant that he never carried the dead weight of materialism. Eighteen months was the longest he had stayed in one place since the death of his wife Angela in a hit and run accident 8 years ago. He had kept his anger and bided his time until he had avenged her but now the deed was done he was drifting again with no purpose just to get by.

A small stocky man with an inner strength of mind that defied logic Abel could turn his hand to most things practical and seldom hungered longer than a couple of days. He was in his late thirties but looked a lot younger which was surprising really for the lifestyle that he found himself in.

He locked the door behind him and left the key under the mat for the site warden to pick up later and walked over to his old and rusty steed. The bike kicked into life first time despite the cold and he rode off into the cold winter air. He had no particular place to go and so was in no hurry to get there. He had it in his mind to ride south and see what the work situation was like but his bike had other ideas. He had gone about 5 miles when the bike just cut out suddenly and he found himself stranded on a country lane with no habitation in view. He cursed his misfortune and tried to kick it up again but to no avail.

"Bleeding alternator," he said loudly to himself and was about to kick the bike in temper when a voice stopped him dead in his tracks. "Come home Abel," and Abel went deadly pale. He recognised it immediately as Angela's and looked around in shock and confusion. "Angela," he said under his breath and then dismissively, "No, it can't be."

"Abel come to me," the voice came again though Abel did not know where it had come from. He felt a strange attraction to what looked like an old track and grabbing his saddle bags left the bike to its own demise and walked off into another dimension.

The track itself was overgrown and barely discernible as such and this made it quite hard going for Abel and his baggage. The track veered off to the right and soon the road was no longer visible to Abel though as the attraction had now turned to a pull he was no longer conscious of what was behind him. Trees sprang up all around him and blocked the sunlight making it difficult to see but still he persisted though the terrain was uneven and he nearly stumbled on frequent occasions. His thoughts had drifted back to the bond that he and Angela had once shared and sadness took its hold. "Abel, come to me," the voice said again and he shouted, "Angela," again and again until it became more like a wail. Forward he moved quickening his step as if his life depended on it as a deep sense of panic had now set in. A fleeting rabbit breaking through the undergrowth drew his attention to another path that was even more overgrown and he turned to it with a sharp pull that made him forget about Angela for the time being.

Much to his surprise he saw in front of him a great old country house that was in a remarkable state of repair and he hid behind an oak tree to try and get a better look. It was a large Georgian house and though not quite a mansion was large enough to stand out like a sore thumb amongst the wilderness of its natural surroundings. He studied the house confused as to why it should be there at

all as he was sure that he would have known about its presence. He assumed that it must have had gardens at one time but that had long since fallen to the natural order of chaos that Nature perpetuates. The house itself was square in shape and looked like it was still lived in so Abel was very wary about approaching it. He just stood there looking at it until a voice brought him back to ground. "Abel Smith, come and join us." He swung around quickly and saw a man in his early fifties with flecks of grey hair looking at him.

"Who are you," Abel said, "And how do you know my name?"

"You have been expected. Come with me and all will be revealed." He walked past and Abel followed him like a lamb to the slaughter as if he was in instinctive mode like it was a dream.

As he approached the door opened and an eerie wind left the place and sent a cold shudder down his spine. He wanted to turn and run but he could not. It was like he was in a spell and did not have the power to break it. Another man appeared and beckoned him with an inane grin that the first man had now adopted. "Is it he?" the second man said to the first, "The one that they call Abel."

"It is he. He has come at last."

As soon as Abel entered the house his reason returned although as he looked around the hallway curiosity made him stay. He saw portraits around the walls and they all seemed to be of him though dressed in fashions of long gone ages.

"Abel Smith," the first man said, "I am the Gatekeeper and I have kept this house in order for you. You may have it as your own but you must follow two rules."

"Rules?" Abel repeated wondering why the man should be giving him the house and what the catch was.

"You can not alter anything inside nor can you get rid of the people that are to work for you."

"Woe, woe, woe," Abel said shaking his head as if it was too much for him, "What do you mean? Are you saying that this is my house?"

"Are you not Abel Smith and are those not pictures of you?"

"Er, yes. Well I'm Abel Smith anyway. What's going on?"

"Time will reveal all. First things first we must get you settled in," he turned to the other man and said, "Is everything as it should be?"

"All is prepared. By your leave I will show the Master his room."

"Very well," the Gatekeeper answered and turning to Abel said, "If you care to follow."

Tiredness quickly overcame Abel and he followed the man up the stone staircase. Pictures adorned the wall yet they were all of Abel. With each step up he felt strangely lifted and by the time he reached the top he was positively floating. He passed doors on either side of him and turned at the top of the corridor.

The man said nothing until they got to the turning, "This will be your room Master."

Tiredness came back again and Abel opened the door and entered without saying a word. The room itself was fairly spartan but compared to his previous abode was positively luxuriant. Day light shone through the large curtain-less window and lit up the plain wooden bed. Beside the bed was a table and on it was a book that had no title. Curiosity made Abel pick up the book and open it. The first page only had one sentence which read 'He who lives by the sword dies by the sword but he who lives by the Word lives forever.' He put the book down and thought about the words as he fell into a deep and restless sleep.

Abel found himself living out a past gory in a back alleyway litter strewn and cased in dirt. He was administering rough justice to the man who had taken Angela's life. He was like a man possessed as he plunged his sheaf knife into the man's stomach again and again. Blood flowed copiously and covered Abel's arms and tee shirt but still he persisted until the man's Spirit saw fit to leave him. Only then was Abel sated and he took time out to rest awhile to regain his breath with no fear of being caught. As he leaned against a brick wall he looked up into the sky and saw a sight that had no place in his concept of reality. High in the sky he saw what he thought were seven aircraft in rows of two with one up in front as if it was the leader. On closer inspection he saw that they were

not aircraft but dragons and a certain amount of fear took its hold.

The alleyway had turned into an outdoor buffet and Abel found himself alone and sensed the name Belphegor as one of the dragons had adopted a more human form and appeared on the ground coming towards him. Dwarfs appeared all around him and Abel ran as panic set in like stone and could only be removed by waking up. He woke up sodden in sweat and panting for breath until a knock on the door brought him firmly back to consciousness.

"Come in," he said still in confusion and desperate for answers. The Gatekeeper entered and as if he was on the same wave length as Abel said, "Tell me of your dream."

Abel told him about the events that transpired and the Gatekeeper listened patiently until he had finished and said, "Did this dragon have a name?"

Abel thought for a while before he said, "The name Belphegor came into my mind," and was startled by the Gatekeeper's reaction. He laughed loudly for a few seconds before he said, "So you defeated sloth by running away from it, very good Abel." With that he turned and left Abel alone with his troubled thoughts.

Abel had never really been one for dreams as usually he could never remember them. This one was different though as he was fully conscious in it and its vividness made him think that reality and dream-time were one and the same. He found his eyes drifting to the book on the table and he picked it up and opened it. Under the first sentence another one had appeared. 'The demons of your mind are rife and they will always lead to strife.'

He put the book down wishing he had never read it as it had left him with more confusion. He thought as hard as he could but never made any headway so he got up and went to see if the Gatekeeper could enlighten him. As he made his way down stairs he felt strangely drawn to one particular picture and studied it intensely. The figure that looked like him was sitting astride a horse and wearing a costume that he had not seen the like of before. The horse itself was little more than a pony and had neither saddle nor stirrups. The figure held it with a thin leather strap that made for its reins. The costume itself came from an era long before portraits and this made Abel think that it was pure fabrication. A great cloak covered the figure held in place by a gold brooch and the only other item of attire visible was a leather sandal with straps criss-crossed up to the knee. Behind the horse and rider was a wooden house that would not have looked out of place in the Bronze Age but what really caught his attention was the figure by the doorway.

He studied it closely, unsure but with a sense that it was too familiar for him to contemplate. It was that of a woman with long brown hair and a slender figure that was greatly enhanced by the leather dress that hung around it. He looked closer to try and sate his curiosity. Confusion set in as he studied it more closely. It could not be and yet he was sure that it was. It did not make sense to him for he had never held a belief in re-incarnation. He had believed that once you died that was it and all his early teaching of Heaven and Hell had made him cynical to anything that involved non scientific imagination. His closed mind was resisting against it, trying to dismiss it but it was there in front of his face. He could not doubt what he saw with his eyes yet it went against everything that he held dear to. He looked at it again hoping that he was wrong but knowing that he was not. Then it finally hit him.

All he could do was say, "Angela."

Chapter 2

He stood and looked for what seemed like ages and knew that it was her. All he could say was, "What is happening to me? Am I going mad?"

A voice behind him knocked his thought train for six, "Perhaps you are finding your sanity?"

He looked around and saw a giant of a man at the foot of the stairs. He stood in at around six foot ten and had a barrel of a chest and stature that told Abel he was not a man to be trifled with.

"Who are you, what's going on?"

"I am your inner strength and I am here to put some motion in your life. I was the man in that

picture.”

“But he looks nothing like you. He looks more like me.”

“Only to you, when I look at that picture I see me for when you were once me that was how you used to look.”

“You say that I was you once, how can that be?”

“Rebirth, the cycle of life has turned full circle and whilst the shell turns to dust the Soul lives on forever. Rest assured Abel for though you might get killed you will ever die.”

“Reincarnation, no it goes against everything that I hold dear to.”

“You hold dear to your life yet you know nothing about it.”

“Sorry?”

“Abel Smith, what are you in essence?”

“Human,” he answered thinking it a silly question.

“In your essence I said. Not in your shell.”

“That is my essence surely.”

“No, you are an evolving Soul on the Path of Light. You are the murdered brother of Cain.”

“What,” Abel said not able to take it in, “That was just a story.”

“Just a story you say. You are half right but as it’s symbolic of the envy between the Will and Imagination I would say that it was more than just a story.”

“I think that this is too much for me. I thought that they were just inventions.”

“Just like me maybe. The legacy of Adam was self consciousness when man thought more of his image than his imagination. Your journey has only just begun Abel for you still have that mark. Time will give you the understanding to free the madness that has beset you.”

“I don't know about that for from where I'm standing it seems to be growing.”

The giant laughed at that and said, “Well you started by defeating sloth. That was my downfall.”

“Really, you don't look like the idle type to me.”

“I wasted my life through divine ignorance. I had the understanding but Cain proved too much for me. I was a warrior with a travelling band of Celts. It was a fairly nomadic sort of existence for the vast plains offered plenty of scope for opportunity and my usual restless nature took to it like a duck would to water.”

“That does not sound like sloth. It seems to me that you had a lot of drive.”

“Mental sloth I’m talking, that’s ignorance of the divine nature that is within us all.”

“But how would that kill you?” Abel said thinking that maybe he ought to be paying more attention.

“Cain killed me although he went under a different name. He too was a warrior from a different clan though. I wasted my life but sloth was my downfall.”

“I think that that needs a little explaining,” Abel said as he had got lost a couple of carriages back in the conversation train.

“Let's start again then. Divine ignorance is life wasted on a mental level. I had the understanding but it was buried deep in my subconscious and I was too lazy to look for it.”

“Yet you knew it?”

“It was not until I was killed that I found I knew it. Without it my mind was weak and I grew in ignorance. As time moved on the cause became the effect thought and I became captive to the negative emotion called sloth. I lost Brigit to Cain and though I fought for her he proved too strong.”

“Brigit, do you mean Angela?”

“She was Brigit to me though she might be Angela to you. I hope that's cleared any confusion.”

“No in fact if anything I think that you might have added to it.”

The giant laughed and disappeared. Abel stumbled back in surprise and was even more surprised to find the portrait gone. He went down the stairs looking for the Gatekeeper but he was not to be found so he decided that he must be outside. He made a move towards the door but where it had been open before it slammed shut on his approach. He turned the handle and pulled with all his

might but to his anger the door was shut solid.

“You may never leave this place,” a voice said from behind him, “Until you have found what you are looking for.”

Abel turned to see the Gatekeeper and pondered on the mystery of his appearance. He had searched everywhere and knew that he was not there before. He studied the man as he questioned his sanity because the nearest thing he could come up with was that the house was haunted.

“I am as solid as you are. Where is your faith?”

“My faith?”

“Your inner strength, have you not listened to your Spirit?”

“I want to leave this place. Why have you locked me in?”

“I may be the Gatekeeper but it is you that holds the key.”

“Look,” he said, his anger returning, “All you are giving me is riddles. What the hell am I supposed to be looking for?”

“When you find it you will know,” the Gatekeeper said and disappeared.

Abel just sat down and bemoaned his fate. He wished that he had never left the road and set eyes on the house. He wallowed in self pity for what seemed like hours, cursing his misfortune and the previous tribulations of his hectic life. Eventually he got up and tried the door again but it was no use. He looked around the house again checking all the doors and windows but though all the internal ones were unlocked the external ones were not. He could see no way of getting out and the appeal of the caravan grew in his estimation.

Night time had closed in by the time he had finally come to terms with the fact that he was a prisoner and tiredness crept back into his mind. He was reluctant to sleep though as he saw it as part of the game and he had no interest but to leave the place and put it down to a night mare but the tiredness persisted.

“Abel come to me,” Angela's voice came back but all he could do was sit at the foot of the stairs with his head in his hands and bemoan his fate.

“Abel come to me,” the voice repeated and an eerie wind brushed past him and sent the hairs on the back of his neck rising.

“Help,” he said, “Help,” and again but more softly as he drifted off once more. He found himself back at home or what he assumed was his old house, the one he shared with Angela. Things were out of place but that did not register in his semi conscious mind. In place of the three-piece suite there was a plush leather upholstered one with dark oak arm rests. Pictures adorned the walls, ones that were unknown to him and the rooms were decorated in the more expensive wall paper. He sat there awhile and Angela came in from the kitchen and started to massage his neck much to his relief. Her hands slipped down the inside of his shirt and stroked his chest sending him into a mild state of rapture. She pulled him back and started to caress his lips with hers and he could feel each and every sensation as if it was his own. Her soft hands unbuttoned his shirt from top to bottom as she reached for his man hood.

Abel wanted her so much and his ecstasy heightened to a pitch that he had not felt for years. Closer she got but something strange happened. He felt that there was something wrong but he did not know what. A fear came over him as his silk shirt now fully open fell away from him. She had come around to the front and started the same routine, only this time with her lips. The further down that she got the more the fear persisted until it reached the peak just as she got below his naval. She looked up and smiled an evil grin as she said, “Materialism.”

Abel woke up with a cold sweat not knowing what had happened but his tiredness remained. He looked out of the window and found that it was still dark so he climbed the stairs to the first floor to get a more comfortable rest. As a last act of defiance he decided to sleep in another room but much to his dismay he found that they were all locked except his so he ended up there.

Abel entered the room and the light from the corridor shined directly on the book that was on the table and drew him to it. He picked it up and opened it to find, “In the beginning was the word and

the word was light but Man clothed it in darkness.”

He did not understand what it meant and tiredness drove him to sleep once more.

Abel found himself high on a mountain with nothing for company but a goat. It was an old grey thing with a slightly bent horn and it was eating the rough thistles of a thorny bush. Abel felt a twinge of loneliness on seeing his surroundings and waited around for something to happen. He knew that it was a dream and he was being tested in some way. The goat carried on with its meal even though the bush had caught fire and in turn the goat itself ignited though carried on regardless much to Abel's surprise as he thought that it would have long since ran away. It seemed glued and oblivious to its surroundings until both the carcass and bush had turned to ash.

As Abel watched the spectacle a voice interrupted him, “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust.”

He turned around to see the man who had opened the door when he first entered the house dressed as a monk.

“How did you get into my dream?”

“Maybe I'm just a symbol to guide you on your way.”

“To what purpose, why have you put me here?”

“Me? I thought that it was your dream.”

“Then why don't I know what it's all about? What has a burning bush being eaten by a burning goat got to do with anything?”

“Could be gluttony perhaps, what do you think?”

“That's just it I don't know what I'm thinking. I don't know why I should dream this? It must have come from me as you said but I never chose it.”

“Not consciously for it had to come from your unconscious. That will come to light later but first the dream.”

“I don't think that it was gluttony. It doesn't feel right.”

“Good. In most cases the dreams are personally symbolic and you go with the maxim if it feels right go with it. Think hard and see what you can come up with.”

“Am I the goat?”

The man laughed and said, “Close Abel very close but think of the fire as avarice that might help you along the path.”

“Why avarice I don't see the connection.”

“It eats up everything in its path and hungers for more. The bush is your Spirit and the goat is your Self. What the dream is doing is telling you that avarice is catching and should be avoided at all cost.”

“But why the mountains?”

“Obstacles, the world around you plus it puts your concentration firmly on the goat.”

“What did you mean earlier?”

“Earlier?”

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust?”

“Avarice is harmful to your evolution, I should know.”

“Sorry?”

“Let me show you,” the man said and disappeared along with the mountains and the whole scene that had become Abel's reality.

Chapter 3

Abel found himself in a scene that was strangely familiar to him. He was standing by a slow winding river and in the distance was a large country house. It was a bright sunny day and this was reflected into the river and made it sparkle like grated glass. He felt strangely uncomfortable as if he was being watched though when he turned around he saw no one in the large cluster of trees that was behind him.

Abel walked forward and made his way to the house and though the feeling never left him he

felt a lot safer the closer he got to the house. At the door a woman in her late thirties greeted him with a smile, "You have visitors Abel."

"Really," Abel found himself answering for he was not in full control. "I'm not expecting anyone." "They are waiting in the drawing room. They have come all the way from London so it must be important."

Abel followed her into the house and she left him to go out on a visit. He made his way to the drawing room where two men were waiting for him. The larger one said, "Mr. Abel Thompson?"

"I am and whom might I be addressing?"

"Lord Chrimbourne," he said, "And this is my associate Baron Von Strausse." with that the other man nodded his head curtly in almost military fashion, "I have heard that you are a business man that likes a gamble."

"If the odds are right. What have you in mind?"

"Africa. They say that there are diamonds as big as your fists. We are heading on a journey to find King Solomon's Mines."

"King Solomon's Mines," Abel said with scorn, "I am a business man not a dreamer."

With that Lord Chrimbourne produced a map and a leather bag tied at the top with string. "I too was a sceptic," he said as he was doing it, "Until I heard the full story."

"Go on," Abel said his interest picking up slightly, "Elaborate."

"It was last September when I was over there on an expedition of exploration for Cecil Rhodes. I don't know if you know the man."

"Only by reputation."

"Well I came across an old Irishman called Patrick O' Toole and he told me a strange story."

"Rather typical of an Irishman,"

"So I thought. As I said I too was sceptical at first. Anyway he told me that he had been kidnapped by natives and taken many miles across deserts and jungles until he arrived at a large plateau that stood up like a table amongst the lush vegetation that surrounded it." He opened the map and said, "Mind if I use your table?"

"Go ahead." Abel said and the map was duly opened and the points of interest showed to him. Africa at the time was pretty much uncharted and the details surprised Abel more than a little. He listened with keen interest and by the time the Lord emptied the bag on the table he was positively beaming with excitement. "This is all uncharted however did you manage to remember all the detail?"

"He had an eye for the stars and it also helped him being a map maker. So you have heard the story what do you think?"

"The idea sounds plausible but I'd like to know where I come in?"

"Otto," the Lord said and the other took over, "The logistics of such an operation are huge. From what O' Toole was saying it would take many men and guns. We are in need of more finance and are offering you the chance to be cut in."

"How much are we talking?"

"As much as you can afford the bigger the stake, the bigger the share and as you can imagine there is quite a fortune to be made." the Lord cut in.

"You can buy and sell nations ten times over," the Baron said taking over, "Rooms full of gold and diamonds enough to fill houses."

Abel was well and truly hooked by now and saw it as a chance that would never come his way again. He arranged to meet them the next day and called in all his resources. He was worth a considerable amount of money and it was all duly processed and turned into liquid assets. Abel woke then as a noise disturbed his slumber. He went downstairs to see where it had come from though was stopped in his tracks by the sight of the house in one of the pictures. He could see himself and the woman who was in the dream but only now she had took the form of Angela. He found his eyes strangely drawn to the bushes where he had first felt he was being watched.

“Patrick O' Toole,” a man's voice said.

“I felt that I was being watched from there.”

“He was my Cain and you could not have met a nicer thug.”

“So what happened? Did you ever get to Africa?”

“I did not even get as far as those bushes,” the man said and tilted his chin back to show where his throat had been slashed, “All my possessions were stolen and Catherine was murdered. It was definitely a cut throat business.”

“So how did he manage it, how did you get fooled?”

“I got fooled because I was a fool. I guess they must have done it before as it was all planned too well. They spun me a line about getting it all in ready money and quickly as they had heard that there was another map in circulation. I guess it panicked my greed as I had it all in the house just ready for them.”

With that the man disappeared along with the picture. Before it had sank in a voice said, “Are you nearer the key?”

Abel looked around and saw the Gatekeeper holding the book that had previously been on the table in the bed room.

“Is that the key? Will that get me out of here?”

“It will help,” and read, “In the beginning was the word and the word was light but man clothed it in darkness. In the world of matter materialism seems to matter yet in the world of mind what matters is what you find.”

“What? That means nothing to me.”

“Darkness is ignorance of the divine for the divine is light.”

“But why did man clothe it in darkness?”

“Ignorance begat ignorance and bred self gratification causing injustice and inequality. You are actually put on Earth so that you can mentally grow but if you are too concerned with material growth you can quickly forget evolution and go for short term gain.”

“Mentally grow?”

“To become divine to recognise the God in your self and the God in others for true equality. You have defeated two of your demons and should be feeling stronger now.”

“I'm not sure about that I'm still confused.”

“That will soon pass,” and giving Abel the book, “Keep this with you and it will guide your path,” with that he disappeared leaving Abel to his own devices.

Abel looked around the ground floor and found himself strangely attracted to a picture close to the front door. It was a scene set in Roman times and he was sitting on an ornate chariot with two large white horses as its power. Behind him was a large villa that looked as if it was well kept. In the distant fields slaves toiled in the field and he saw Angela looking out one of the windows. She was waving and much to his surprise the scene came alive and he watched with awe as the picture moved.

“Days gone by,” a voice that he recognised as Angela's said.

He turned and said, “You have come back.”

“No I have moved on now. You have committed a grave sin and it grieves me that you did it for me.”

“He deserved it. He should not have been drunk behind the wheel of a car. He was just an accident waiting to happen.”

“An accident that is all it was but what you did was murder. There was no justification for it.”

“An eye for an eye, is that not the way?”

“Mental revenge brought about by your anger. My death was on his conscience and he would have had to deal with it on judgement day.”

“Judgement, I never thought.”

“He who lives by the sword dies by the sword. Physically and mentally.”

“Is it too late for the deed has been done?”

“It is never too late. Repent and atone and we shall be together. Disregard and you will surely die.”

“What must I do? How can I atone for the man had no family?”

“Get rid of your anger for with that inside you, you will surely do it again. You have tasted the scent of death and if you are not careful you will taste it again.”

“How?”

“Just follow your dreams and deal with the cause. What does it say in the book?”

Abel opened the book but it was empty. He showed it to Angela and she said, “Now must not be the time. You will know when it is ready.” With that she disappeared and left Abel pining for her return.

After five minutes though it seemed a lot longer the front door opened and a man of similar size and build entered. He had a Mediterranean appearance and was scarred heavily around his left eye.

“Abel Smith you have lost your temper but now I am back again. You have faith and temperance so hopefully this time you will keep me.”

“How will that help?”

“Patience for your faith tells you that there is but one judge and it is not your place to take that roll. Your temperance will help to balance your mood swings and cope with the strife that the world throws at you.”

“My mood swings? I was not aware that I had any.”

“Whenever you say that you were not yourself for actions committed by you, you recognise your other half.”

“My other half?”

“Masculine and feminine, yin and yang call it what you must but once you recognise it, it disappears.”

“I never seem to recognise it until it is too late. I can't control it.”

“You can now for now you are conscious of it and with that it will sink in your memory and gather strength. I am your temper and I don't want you to make my mistake.”

“Your mistake, was anger your downfall?”

“It had a great deal to do with it but divine ignorance was the cause. I could only see the God in myself for I only had faith in myself. I was intolerant and quick tempered and I wasted my life wallowing in divine ignorance.”

“Was that you in the picture?” Abel said thinking back to the man on the chariot.

“That was me. As you could see I had a very rich lifestyle but in the end it did me no good.”

“You can't take it with you. I know what you are saying.”

“It was more than that for in the pursuit of worldly good I lost my path and reason for living. In fact if anything my goods were a hindrance.”

Abel thought about the rich man and camel and the man picked up his thoughts because he said,

“There is a lot of wisdom in those words for while you are rich someone must be poor. The scales of equality may tip in your favour when you walk this world but when the final balance comes in it is you that is poor.”

“Balance, is that what it's all about?”

“Got it in one. Remember that if you take more than you need someone must go without and we are all equal in the eyes of the Lord.”

“But I've never really thought of myself as materialistic. I've never been around long enough to collect anything.”

“Times will change as you get stronger chances and opportunities will seem to just fall at your feet. Temptation will be all around you and you may evolve in the wrong direction.”

“That will never happen. I could never see myself being like that.”

“You might not even be aware of it; it just seems to creep up on you.”

“Then I will not be able to cope if I am not aware of it.”

“You have a chance if you say a mantra seven times, twice a day. You will expand your mind and

keep your feet firmly on the ground.”

“A mantra, what's one of them?”

“Think of it as a prayer.”

“What must I say and what if I forget?”

“You will not forget for it is written in the book.” With that he disappeared and so did the picture of the man on a chariot. Abel opened the book and read the words, “I surrender my will to the greater will the will of the divine. I will to will thy will.”

Chapter 4

He read the words aloud seven times and something strange occurred. He felt a surge of energy creep into him from the crown of his head and it left him feeling elated. 'Love is healing', a thought came into his mind and he accepted it as his own. The sensation lasted for a couple of minutes and when it had finished Abel felt pretty elated. He saw that the front door was still open and walked towards it to look out onto a bright sunny day.

“You may leave if you wish,” the Gatekeeper said from behind him but he was reluctant to do this.

“Is it over?” Abel said turning around.

“There a few pictures left on the wall but you have the free will to leave at this time.”

“But the job is not done. What's the point of leaving it half finished?”

The keeper smiled and said, “You have done very well and should be pleased with yourself.”

“But I have taken a life I have nothing to be pleased about.” Sadness fully drove home as he was actually starting to come to terms with what he had done.

“I am not your judge that is the job of your Spirit but if it's any help you are going the right way to atone for your sins.”

This seemed to cheer Abel up so he said, “What next?”

“Education. Knowledge of the divine.”

“The mantra, am I to lose my free will?”

“You are to evolve and as that door is open you can leave at any time.”

“I was never one for learning. I could never get my head around it.”

“That was the past but now I am here to enlighten you if you wish.”

“Yes I think that I am ready.”

“First equality, it is the will of the divine that everyone is equal. By degree of understanding it filters through Universal law, Natural law and ends up as the Ultimate Truth which is?”

“It you take more than you need some one has to go without.”

“Correct and it goes to show that the light is sinking in. Now the Law of Justice states that what you sow so shall you reap which I guess you have come across before. The law of Consequences states that in much the same manner but comes over in to the next lifetime. That should keep you going for a while,” and disappeared.

Abel found himself drawn to another picture after he had gone. A hugely obese man with Abel's face looked back at him and Abel's own face turned to one of horror.

“I was not always like this,” the face said back to him much to his surprise, “I, too once looked like you.”

“Who are you and why did you let yourself get into such a state?”

“I am you albeit in another lifetime. You were once called Abel Robinson and lived in a time of great famine.”

“It does not look like it. It looks to me that you had more than you fair share.”

“It was not a fair world that I was brought into but I dare say that I bet times have not changed that much. I was one of those people who thought they were better than the rest and entitled to the finer things in life. The richest food, the most expensive wine anything that money could buy in fact. People starved all around me but that was their problem not mine. We were all given the same chances in life, well nearly anyway but my superior mind needed feeding.”

“What?”

“My craving for knowledge led me to the finer things in life for there is no point striving for mental perfection if you have not tasted gastric perfection.”

“I don't see the connection?”

“It might be a little above your head but tasting the good things in life broadens the mind.”

“But only on a shallow level. You only broaden your mind by increasing your Imagination. That had nothing to do with food it works on knowledge of the divine.”

The man went quiet for he had seen that Abel had seen through him. After awhile he said, “So I got things wrong. We all make mistakes but that was expected of me for I was a gentleman.”

“Making mistakes, is that what being a gentleman is all about.”

“No, understanding the finer things in life.”

“But who said that they were for one man's meat is another man's poison.”

“Society. It was what was expected of me.”

“Society is only for people like you. Who cares about which side you pass the port surely your mind can pass beyond trivial inanity like that.”

“Society is what separates us from the animals.”

“Even the bees have a queen but she brings life into the colony. You just seem to take and usually from those who can least afford to give. You perpetuate a lie and call it civilisation but you still haven't answered how did you let yourself get into such a state?”

“It just crept up on me. Maybe I enjoyed the finer things a little too much. It is all water under the bridge now.”

“But that water returns for it belongs to a cycle,” Abel said quite surprised at his new found articulation, “I hope and pray that I never end up like you.”

“You never will for I never learned by my mistakes.”

With that the picture disappeared and Abel saw that there was only three left.

“Not long now,” the keeper said much to Abel's surprise as he seemed to be inside him.

“How did you do that?”

“Didn't you know that I come from within? Has it not sunk in yet?”

“So what is this house then,” Abel said thinking that it too must all be in his mind.

“Inner peace, once you have removed the pictures.”

Abel looked outside and saw that it had turned to night fall. He thought it strange that the day should have passed so quickly. Tiredness started to creep up on him so he walked upstairs and after saying the mantra fell quickly to sleep.

He found himself at a disco with flashing lights and loud pulsating music. People were all around him gyrating to the beat and generally having a good time. He was sitting close to the D.J. stand watching the action with no real interest as he had never really been that keen on that sort of music. The D.J. changed the record and soon couples started to disrobe and the whole scene changed to one much akin to an orgy. Couples cavorted with each other regardless of gender and Abel felt a strong compulsion to join in. He watched some more and the feeling got stronger though he fought it with all his might and kept it under control. To his left two men were playing with each other and Abel's stomach started to tighten and he left the club with a strong urge to vomit.

Outside in the sunlight Abel found himself in another time zone and recognised the scene from one of the pictures that was hanging on the wall. It was an Egyptian temple and Abel walked in to find a scene not too dissimilar to one he had just left. The music was different but the sexual acts were the same. He left and went back out into the sunlight.”

“Some things never change,” a large guard said to him in a friendly manner.

“Sounds like they are going around in circles, what a waste of time.”

“Society is falling into decline. You will be safe though Abel for you learn by your mistakes.”

“You mean that I was once you. I should have realised really.”

The guard laughed and said, “Most people can't see what's going on under their noses unless of

course its cocaine. They called you Ichmael when you were me and I fell under the spell and became controlled by my sexual desire. A pox on me and all my kind.”

With that he disappeared and Abel woke to find the moon light shining through the window and a strange noise downstairs that made him go down and investigate.

Chapter 5

When Abel got down the stairs he could not locate the source of the sound but that fell from grace when he looked at the last two pictures and saw that they were pretty similar. This confused him slightly but the Gatekeeper was there to enlighten him, “They are two sides of the one coin. Pride and envy. You see people who put life on levels tend to look down on some and up to others.”

“So who are they? They look like they belong to the same picture?”

“Cain and Abel Murrey. Did you know that you were once twins?”

“Now that is confusing. You may as well say you three are a right pair if ever I saw one.”

The keeper laughed and said, “I guess their parents were courting trouble when they named them. Abel was the first born and with it got the wealth for he was head of the household and was reared especially for the job. Cain became the second son and had to make his own way in the world and jealousy took over and drove him into madness. He was institutionalised and his name became no more than a memory as time took its hold. So which one do you want to do first?”

“Cain I suppose.”

“Envy it is then. So why should the ego envy the Soul?”

Abel thought a while before he said, “I haven't a clue.”

“What is the Soul, in essence I mean?”

“No sorry.”

“It's the breath of God tainted with all the impurities of the world of matter. The impurities being the ego.”

“The demons is that what the ego is then?” Abel said as it seemed to be making a little sense.

“That's right; it is they that matter in the world of matter. Your time on Earth is set aside for purification of the Soul by defeating these character flaws or demons if you like and do you know the purpose?”

“The purpose, to get to Heaven?”

“You could use it for that if you liked but you could evolve a lot more than that.”

“In what way?”

“When your Soul is cleared of all these character flaws it is pure enough to merge with the Spirit.”

“How will I know?”

“You will leave your body in a dream and this will make you lose your subconscious fear of death then you can really start to grow. Now the ego unless it merges with the Spirit is only there for one lifetime and so it is envious of the Soul for it is immortal.”

“So you are saying that I could end up immortal.”

“Well that's what you are here for isn't it. So anyway let's get back to envy then. Well Cain got out and killed Abel and then was hung for murder. Not a nice story really.”

“So how would I defeat envy?”

“Answer me this question. Who would you like to be if you had the chance?”

“No one really.”

“Then what need do you have to defeat something you already have.”

“Oh yes. I never thought of it like that.”

“Pride is the last one. When you have defeated that they will both disappear.”

“I did not think that I had it.”

“It's a subconscious thing. Learn to see past the shell and recognise the God in others. The mantras will help you along the way. Never judge as it is not your place and live life for your own development. Never preach but if anyone should come to you that it a different story. By the way

you can also develop by helping others into the light, bear that in mind and you won't go far wrong. I'm afraid that my part of the journey is now complete and I will shortly have to leave you.”

“What. Will I not see you again?”

“In dreams maybe for now you are conscious of me I can help. Well good luck Abel.” With that the keeper disappeared and along with him went the house. Abel found himself close to his bike and much to his surprise it started first time.

2. The Cat's Whiskers

“Frisky, Frisky, here puss, puss, puss,” Elisabeth Brady said as she put the saucer of milk on the floor by the back door. An elderly lady in her late 70's she was still quite agile although her arthritis was known to play up now and again. “Damn cat,” she muttered under her breath unaware that she was being watched by two shabbily dressed urchins.

“Don't go too close,” the elder one said to her younger brother, “She's a witch.”

“No, really?”

“Yes she's got a big black cat. Mummy says that all witches have them.”

“Where is mummy? I want to see her.”

“Now you know that you can't, the angels have taken her.”

“It's not fair,” the little boy said and stamped his foot on the ground.

“Don't do that or the witch will get you.”

“She can't hear me,” and stamped his foot once more, “See.” He ran past the lady and darted in and out of the kitchen and living room.

Elisabeth felt a draft rush past her and said, “Brrr. Winter is nearly upon us. All this cold is no good for my bones. Ah well that cat will turn up when it feels like it I will go and have a lie down.”

“Nigel, Nigel come out of there she will catch you.”

“But she can't see me how can she catch me?”

“She's only pretending. Don't you know that, that's a witch's trick?”

Nigel was not sure so he ran out and quickly found his sister, “I'm bored. What shall we do now?”

“Go and play. I'm busy.”

“Busy, busy doing what?”

“I've got to keep my eye out for that angel. You don't want him to come and take us as well.”

“Why not? At least we will be able to see mummy again.”

“Shh. Quick hide I think I hear him calling us.”

They both hid behind a bush and watched a large man dressed in white glide past them. He did not seem interested in them though but glided through Elisabeth's back door. “Elisabeth Brady,” he called, “It's time to go.”

“Do I have to? Who is going to look after Frisky?”

“She'll be alright but your time here is finished.”

Elisabeth left her mortal body and followed the angel outside. As she got near the two children she said, “What about them?”

“Quick run,” the girl said and they both took off as fast as they could. After they got far enough away they stopped for breath and the girl said, “See I told you that she was only pretending not to see us.”

“Yes, you were right Abigail, I'm sorry.”

“Well they've gone now we should be safe for a while.”

“Let's go back then. Somebody has to look after her cat.”

They went back and entered into the house. They explored the house and made a startling discovery in the bedroom.

“I don't understand,” Nigel said, “Look she is still here.”

“Shh, she is asleep don't wake her.”

“But the angel took her. Why is she still here?”

“He must have brought her back again. Maybe it was when we ran away.”

“Maybe he's looking for us then? Do you think he'll come back?”

“No it was her name he called not ours.”

“Oh,” Nigel said visibly relieved, “Maybe he'll bring mummy back as well then?”

“No,” Abigail said as she knew more than she was letting on, “Mummy won't be coming back.”

“What are you doing in my house,” an angry voice said from behind them. They both turned quickly and saw a large black cat.

“He can talk,” Nigel said, “I did not think that cats could do that.”

“He's a witch's cat. Don't you know that they can do that?”

“I'm not a witch's cat,” the cat snapped, “That is my mistress on the bed.”

“She's a witch,” Abigail said quickly, “Now get off.” and ran towards it. The cat took off at high speed and Abigail said, “See how I protected you from that nasty cat I will to the same if the angel tries to take us away.”

This reassured Nigel no end and they both went back to the garden to play. They hung around the house for a couple of days as there was nothing else to do but Elisabeth never woke up much to Nigel's surprise. He went up once and saw the cat trying to rouse her but she was not having much luck.

“She's probably tired after the angel took her,” Nigel said trying to reassure her.

What do you mean the angel took her, when was this?”

“About two days ago.”

“Why didn't you say?”

“He brought her back again so I didn't think it mattered.”

“He didn't, they don't do that.”

“Well he must have done she's still here.”

“That's just her shell,” the cat said looking at him strangely.

“What do you mean?” Nigel said confused.

“That's not her that's just her physical body.”

“I don't know what you mean.”

“Do the like sweets?”

“Yes I love them.”

“Well imagine a sweet in a wrapper.”

“What do you mean like chocolate,” Nigel said, his interest aroused.

“Yes like chocolate. Well imagine that you are the chocolate and the shell is the wrapper,” before he got any further Abigail came in and shouted, “Get out. Liar, liar.”

“Tell him,” The cat hissed, “It's not fair on him if you don't.”

She ran forward and went to make a grab for the cat but it was too quick and it was out of the room before it came to any harm.

“What did she mean tell me,” Nigel said, “Tell me what?”

“Nothing,” Abigail snapped, “It doesn't matter.”

“It does. What was she talking about?”

“She's just lying. What else do you expect from her she's just a witch's cat?”

“What did she mean about the chocolate and the wrapper,” Nigel persisted, “She said something about a shell?”

“Don't believe her she was just trying to keep you talking until the witch wakes up so she could grab you.”

“Oh,” Nigel said backing away from the body and forgetting about chocolate and wrapper, “We'd better get out then as she could wake up at any time.”

They both left the bed room and went back out to the garden. Nigel kept away from the house for several days too scared to enter in case the witch had woken. After that he reasoned that it was safe as she must still be sleeping. Gingerly he went upstairs and at the top was met by the smell of a semi decaying body. It was a terrible smell that grabbed his nostrils and nearly threw him back down the stairs again. Although reluctant his curiosity got the better of him and he peeked around the frame. His thoughts were that she must have woken up and was in the process of making a witches potion. Much to his surprise she was still lying in the bed although she looked a little different. Her colour had changed to a deathly sort of grey and flecks of skin had started to decay

from her cheeks. He never heard Abigail come up behind him and her voice made him jump. "I told you not to come in here it's too dangerous."

"Look at her. She's gone a funny colour and she's started to peel."

"All witches do that; it's the magic they have."

"What?"

"It makes them look younger. It gets rid of all the wrinkles. That means she'll be waking up soon so you had better be careful."

"But what about that smell. It's horrible."

"That's the magic potion. She's put it all over her. It's that what makes her younger. Now quickly let's go she'll be waking up soon."

Nigel obediently followed her and they both went back into the garden.

"I don't understand," he said once out there, "How could she put the potion on when she's been asleep all the time?"

"Little boys should not ask too many questions. It's bad for you to talk too much."

"What? I did not know that."

"Well it is. Mummy told me so."

Nigel went quiet at that and did not speak again. Eventually after some thought Abigail said,

"Maybe she woke up when you weren't there or maybe the cat put it on her."

"Yes that must be it. I saw her with the witch before you came in."

"See. I told you so."

"Then I won't get bad if I talk too much?" Nigel said as she had scared him a little more than she had intended.

"No, I'll protect you but don't ask too many questions that's all."

Nigel seemed relieved at that and they played a little in the garden.

Chapter 2

Days passed by and the house became a hive of activity. Nigel saw an ambulance pull up at the door and ran to tell Abigail. "Abi, Abi, there's a big white van pulled up outside," he said in an excited tone as he had never seen an ambulance before.

"Let's go and have a look," and they both crept and hid behind a large bush.

"What are they doing?" Nigel said.

"I don't know. Let's be quiet and we'll soon find out."

Two men got out and walked into the house. After a while they came back out carrying Elisabeth on a stretcher.

"What are they doing?" Nigel whispered quietly.

"They are taking her to burn her," a voice said from behind and Nigel turned around to see the cat.

"Then she is a witch," Abigail said, "Because they burn witches."

"They also burned discarded wrappers," the cat said, "Now isn't it time you moved on?"

"Moved on?" Nigel said in confusion.

"We like it here," Abigail said, "We're not going anywhere."

"What does she mean move on," Nigel said to Abigail, "What is she talking about?"

"I don't know. Maybe its witches talk."

"You can't stay here forever," the cat said.

"Why not," Abigail snapped, "No one can make me move."

"What about the child," the cat said, "You are not being fair on him."

"What's she talking about?" Nigel said.

"Quiet," Abigail snapped, "He is happy here. Same as me."

"No I'm not," Nigel protested, "I get bored a lot of the time."

"Well why don't you go out of the garden into the street," the cat said, "There's plenty to explore."

"I can't Abigail told me not to. She says it's too dangerous."

“Yes I'll bet,” the cat said, “Go and find out for yourself.”

Before Abigail could stop him Nigel ran to the gate but could not get through it. It was like some invisible force held him there. “What's happening?” he said in a panic, “I can't get through.”

“It's a witch's spell,” Abigail said, “She's put it around the house so we could not get out.”

“Nice try,” the cat said, “But the witch is no longer here.”

“So,” Abigail said, “It doesn't make a difference.”

“I thought that everyone knew that the spells no longer work when the witch is not around,” the cat said.

“Liar,” Abigail said, “You are making it up.”

“Me and you both,” the cat said quietly to Abigail and then aloud to Nigel, “I should know. I'm a witch's cat.”

“That's true,” Nigel said coming back, “So why can't I get out?”

“Ask your sister,” the cat said, “She knows,” and with that coolly walked off and went into the neighbour's garden.

“What does she mean,” Nigel said, “Why can't I leave the garden?”

“Don't listen to her she's trying to trick you.”

“Tell me. I want to know.”

Look you know what happens to boys that ask too many questions.”

“Liar,” Nigel shouted, “You're making it all up,” and ran away to hide in the house.

“Nigel come back,” Abigail shouted, “It's too dangerous.”

Nigel was in no mood to listen. He ran upstairs and hid in one of the bed room's wardrobes. He started to think about all the events and they did not add up. Why could he not leave the house and why did he not get any taller. He remembered when the witch had first come to the house and how much younger she had looked. She did not look like a witch then but Abigail had told him that she was and so he took her word for it. It seemed that he had been that size for ages so surely he should have grown up. He was confused and did not know where to turn until a voice said, “Nigel Braithwaite.”

He was scared but he knew there was no way out so he opened the door and saw the angel looking down at him. “Come on Nigel,” the angel said with a comforting smile, “You'll be alright.”

Nervously Nigel got out and said, “Don't hurt me”

“I'm not here to do that. I have come to guide you into the light.”

“I want to stay here,” Nigel said. He did not know about the light he just knew that if he went he would not be coming back.

“You can't, you have to move on.”

“What do you mean move on?” Nigel said remembering that the cat had also said it.

“You must retake your place on the cycle of life. You must go onto the next stage of your development. Don't you want to grow up?”

“Why can't I do that here? Everyone else can.”

“But you are different.”

“How, what do you mean different?”

“You are no longer in the physical,” and on seeing Nigel's face turn to confusion, “You are dead.”

“What? No I'm not I'm still here.”

“You are but your body isn't.”

“No, no I'm still alive,” he saw an opening and panic made him run. He took off down the stairs and saw Abigail in the garden. “Quick hide,” he said forgetting that they had fallen out, “The angel's here and he nearly caught me.”

They both hid and waited a while with Nigel visibly shocked. After a few moments he said, “The angel said that I was dead, is that true?”

“No you are still here.”

“Then why don't I grow up. It's like I've been a child forever.”

“You don't want to grow up. You have to get a job and things like that. You will never be able to play again, can you imagine that.”

Nigel thought awhile and said, “But I don't want to be like this forever. I'm getting bored with just playing all the time.”

“Well would you rather that the angel had taken you. You know that you'd never come back.”

“That witch did so why can't I?”

“She's a witch. They can do that but you're just a little boy.”

“And why can't I leave this place, that's another thing.”

“It's her spell that keeps you here. That cat was just lying.”

“But why, why would she lie?”

“I don't know. I don't know everything. Just trust me and everything will be alright.”

“How can he trust you when you don't know yourself,” the cat's voice said. Abigail and Nigel had not realised that she had been listening.

“I'll look after him,” Abigail said, “He's my brother.”

“He's your dead brother and yet you can't be trusted to tell him even that.”

“See,” Nigel said, “Even she says I'm dead. What's going on?”

“She's lying.”

“But the angel said it as well,” Nigel said, “And mummy said that angels never lie.”

Abigail saw that she was being backed into a corner and did not really see how she was going to get out of it. She knew that she had to come clean and so she said, “Alright you are dead. The cat wasn't lying. That's why you can't go out into the street and that's why the angel wants you.”

“So I am dead. How can that be? I don't understand.”

“When mummy died in that fire we all did. That's why you did not see the body, it had burned away.”

“So why am I still here if I am dead? I thought that I would be in Heaven or something like that.”

“You don't need to be. You can stay here as long as you like.”

“But I can see mummy again. I can't see her whilst I'm down here. Why did you not tell me, why lie?”

“If you go there you won't come back. What if you don't like it there?”

“What in Heaven? I'm bound to. I mean its Heaven isn't it.”

“It might not be. It might be Hell, have you ever thought of that?”

“No,” Nigel said dismissively, “I've been a good boy.”

“Have you? Can you be sure? What about the little boy who asks too many questions?”

“Don't try and frighten the child,” the cat said, “It's his decision to make and not yours. If you're scared of moving on that's your problem not his.”

“I'm just telling him what he could expect. No one knows for sure.”

“No you're not. You are filling his head with fear that's all. He wants to be with his mother, what's wrong with that?”

“Who said that she'll be up there, no one knows.”

“Well you'll never find out while you are down here.”

“What if we die, no one knows.”

“You call this living,” the cat said, “You can't even leave the place. Besides as I said it's not your decision to make.”

With that they both looked at Nigel.

Chapter 3

“So what do you say Nigel,” the cat said, “Do you want to go back on the cycle of life?”

“That's what the angel called it. What did he mean?”

“You'll know when you get there.”

“See,” Abigail hissed, “She doesn't know herself.”

"I never said that I did. It's a leap into the unknown but it has to be done."

"No it doesn't."

"Well that's his choice," and looking at Nigel, "So what do you say?"

"I'm not sure. I'm frightened."

"See how you've scared him," the cat said to Abigail, "Filling his head with your lies. I hope you are happy with yourself."

"It's not me," Abigail protested, "He has reason to be scared."

"Don't listen to her," the cat said in a soothing voice, "God doesn't want you to be scared that is why He sent an angel to guide you."

"But I ran away, His angel will be angry with me."

"No he won't," a voice said behind them and they turned to see the angel once again. Abigail was about to run but something inside her stopped her, "I am here to guide you and make sure that you don't come to any harm."

"But I don't want to go," Abigail protested, "I'm happy to be here."

"Are you?" the angel said and Abigail hung her head and said, "I'm frightened."

"We all were," the angel said, "But stick with me and everything will be alright."

Abigail seemed to take comfort from that or maybe she had finally realised that her time was over as she said, "Alright."

"Good," the angel said and took them both by the hand. Reality disappeared as they entered a large stone tower and climbed the stone stairway to the top. It was dark but they were not frightened as the angel lit their path. With every step they got lighter and by the time they reached the top they were gliding. At the top the angel said, "Don't be frightened just step off into the air," and without arguing they followed him into the night sky. Upwards they floated, darkness all around until they saw a blue dot in the distance.

The nearer they got the bigger it got and soon it took up most of their vision. It was an unusual blue not seen on Earth except in techni-colour but it was somehow soothing and as it encapsulated them they took great comfort from it. Other colours came to the fore; vivid green and pastel shades of yellow and they found themselves at the edge of a river. A boat moored on the side with a frightening looking man at the helm.

"Half price for children," the angel said and they all got in. the man at the helm said nothing as the boat crossed the great river. He just guided the boat across, his gaze intent on the other side and Nigel got a little frightened.

"It will be alright," the angel said, "You are nearly home."

Nigel looked to the other side and saw the figure of a woman watching them intently. As they got closer he recognised her and said to Abigail, "Look Abi there's mummy."

The boat pulled up on the side of the bank and they got off leaving the Ferryman to return. Nigel ran to his mother and said, "I've missed you mummy," and gave her a hug. Abigail was reluctant at first for she did not know how her mother would react to her keeping away for so long. "Come here Abi," her mother said, "It's alright," and so they were reunited once again.

After awhile the angel said, "It's time to go," and so they followed him.

"Are they to be judged?" the woman said and the angel smiled and replied, "Not at that age, it's the wheel of fortune."

"The wheel of fortune," Abigail said nervously, "What is that?"

"The cycle of life. There are lessons that need to be learned and you will have to go back to the realm of time to do this."

"So what's it all about," Abigail said, "Why do I need to learn things?"

"Your mind has to grow, just as you do."

They went down a myriad of passageways and through a number of entrances, each one guarded and needing a pass word. "Fortitude," the angel said at the first one and a strange shaped creature opened the door and let them in. They walked on, both Abigail and Nigel afraid and in awe of the

beast that seemed like a man but with a long chin and horns. "Temperance," the angel said at the next one and the same thing happened. A different password every time and soon they were outside and looking at a large wheel.

"And this is the wheel of fortune," the angel said. He turned to look at Nigel and said, "And what would you like to learn in your next lifetime?"

Nigel found himself saying, "Humility."

"Good, you are going to try for that one again. So what sort of life do you want?"

"A wealthy one, I want to make it difficult."

"Alright," the angel said. The voice got stronger and Nigel disappeared into its essence. "Well let's see what fate has to offer me this time," he said.

"Another fire perhaps," the angel said with a smile.

"Why the fire? I don't see the connection."

"Purification, you had to get rid of your envy. That's the first stage to humility."

"I don't understand."

"You were always envious of your big sister. You thought that she had everything. You could have grown out of that eventually if the fire had not taken you."

"But it did. Does that mean I'll follow a similar path?"

"No the fire killed that aspect of your Self. Hadn't you noticed how your opinion changed after the fire?"

"Yes, but I thought that that was because my mother had died and so I had no grounds for envying her."

"The fire killed both the cause and the effect."

"Oh right, yes I can see the logic in that. So next time I won't be envious just proud."

"Well you'll still have a couple of other character flaws that you will have to take with you."

"Ah, I forgot."

"I don't think the memory potion has quite worn off yet. Anger and lechery."

"That's right, it's coming back."

"You might be able to get them all if you are lucky. That depends on your choice of life."

"Well a wealthy one would give me better access to pride and probably lechery though I'm not so sure about anger that has more chance of working in a frustrating life."

"Good logic. What about an over bearing father, that might do the trick."

"Yes it might work. Or a sudden change of financial circumstances about half way through."

"Well that's more in the hands of fate. An over bearing father routine looks best. Now what about gender?"

"I'll stick with male again. It might help with lechery."

"Fair enough. Race?"

"Don't matter really. Mind you that fire has given me a taste for a warmer climate so I was wondering about America this time around."

"America, sounds good. Go and have a look on the wheel and see if anything fits the bill."

Nigel went over and had a look at the forthcoming vacancies. As he did this the angel turned to Abigail and said, "Now it's your turn Abigail. What would you like to learn in your next lifetime?"

A voice came from Abigail and said, "Temperance."

"Good," the angel said and waited a while for the voice to take her over, "First things first though we'll have to deal with your last life."

"I thought I was too young to be judged."

"Not a judgement. Now can you remember what the lessons you were down there for were?"

"Anger and sloth."

"Right, the fire killed the sloth but your anger remained."

"Yes that was when I had to start doing things for myself. I did not have my mother to rely on anymore but why didn't it kill my anger?"

“Time would have but fate was against you on that one. You did not do too badly though as it was only a short life so don't feel bad about it. I see that you are a lot less developed than Nigel.”

“Yes I still have anger gluttony avarice, pride and envy left. I was hoping that temperance would take a few away.”

“You'll get gluttony and avarice and maybe go a long way with the other three but we'll get back to that later.”

“Ah,” Abigail said because she knew where he was heading.

“You seemed reluctant to come back. Now that is your choice but you held Nigel back in the process.”

“Yes I'm sorry but I had no control over that.”

“I understand. Hopefully you'll be a bit more developed the next time around so I don't think it will happen again. We'll say no more about it then. Go and see what's on the board.”

Chapter 4

As Abigail joined Nigel at the wheel the angel turned to the mother and said, “Well Jennifer sorry that you had to wait so long.”

“Oh don't worry it went quickly.”

“So it's your turn now. First of all I would like to congratulate you; you came a long way this time.”

“I did,” a voice said from inside her and she blended into its essence.

“Yes, now can you remember what you were down there for?”

“Gluttony and avarice.”

“Quite a combination and you came through them with flying colours.”

“I did?”

“You had dealt with them long before the fire so when that came it was a bonus.”

“In what way?”

“It killed lechery so that means only one left.”

“Pride. It looks like humility next.”

“That's right and then hopefully you will be pure enough to be judged.”

Nigel had come back by then, “I think I've found one.”

“Read it out then and we'll go through it.”

“Reginald Devire. Banker and entrepreneur, only child, American/French abstraction with an over bearing father and a subservient mother. Destined for a good education and all the privileges it gives.”

“Sounds good. If you're happy with that go with it.”

“Well it's not perfect but I can see it has possibilities.”

Abigail had come back by then and she too had a piece of paper in her hand.

“What have you found?” The angel said.

“Mary Peterson. Second child to John and Henrietta. English. Teacher and social worker. Good education and modestly wealthy life style.”

“What made you pick them?”

“I can see the makings of an unhappy childhood. Second child, both parents working.”

“Yes I can see that. Good breeding ground for a multitude of sins.”

“I can see her taking comfort in eating. I can also see her in competition with the elder child so maybe that might lead to avarice plus envy and anger.”

“Ideal. Yes a good a choice if ever I saw one. Any reason that you stayed female?”

“No I was more concerned with the environmental factors.”

“Just you then Jennifer,” and she went to the wheel. As she studied the angel turned to Abigail and said, “Who knows, you might even get pride in that lifetime.”

“You think so? I can't see it getting past envy myself.”

“They are just opposite sides to the coin. It seems you are taking a lot on. Think you'll cope?”

“Hope so. I'll do the best I can.”

“What about you Nigel?”

“I'm looking forward to being an only child but that's about it.”

Jennifer returned and read out what was on her piece of paper, “David Whittaker, only son of Maurice and Joan. Works in government administration and his wife is a teacher. Upper middle class, good education.”

“Why them?”

“Only child, good education, comfortable liberal back ground. I can see a good home for pride.”

“Maybe. Well that's sorted it's time to move on.” they walked past the wheel and came across a pathway of light that crossed a great chasm. It was not solid as such and Abigail felt a little fearful about stepping on it.

“Don't worry,” the angel said, “its safe.”

As they stepped on it the light turned into a rainbow and all thoughts and memories of their previous lives disappeared into the myriad of colours that were beneath their feet. They walked for what seemed like miles before they were at the other end and stepped off onto more solid ground.

“All you previous memories have now gone,” the angel said, “And now you must step into the light. You will forget what your next lessons are to be and all that has happened here. I wish you well and I'll see you again at the end of another lifetime.”

With that the angel disappeared and the rest of them were surrounded by a bright orangey gold light and then they lost consciousness.

Saturday 18th December, 1999. Frank and Mary Devire are pleased to announce the birth of their son Reginald at St. Monica's Hospital, Fort Lauderdale, Florida. A healthy 10lb baby. Mother and child doing well.

3. Finn's Last Rainbow

Finn McCool was nobody's fool though he like to have a drink
He left his home for the great unknown to follow his Celtic instinct
A farmer by trade though his land had decayed he still had a taste for the ground
And would walk in the woods avoiding the thuds for nature was still to be found
A dark winter's night he was walking home tight just coming back from the pub
A strange thing occurred though normally absurd it left with it a nice little rub

**"DBGGG, DBGGG
DAFFF, DAFFF
DBGGG, DBGGG
DAFFF, DDDEFG"**

Again it came over again Finn drifted in its direction
Stronger it got and Finn felt a clot, sanity up for election
He felt his voice though not by choice sing along to the tune
And the sight he beheld his head nearly swelled she was a nice little boon

**"Skin of snowdrop white, hair the darkest brown
Eyes of shining violet, lips a crimson gown
Teeth of ivory white, cheeks of stature proud
Her's a timeless shroud that ne'er old age would shroud"**

She had him entranced his emotions they danced stomach rose up to his throat
She gave him a drink which he quickly did sink expecting a rum and coke
He fell down to Earth in time for rebirth his Spirit went into the sky
While he on the ground heard a strange sound sort of a lullaby

**"Be kind, be civil and keep me from pain
Because if I am the Spirit you are the drain
Another life over but still time goes on
To find life's great answer a battle soon won
Though my Self has now left me my Soul does not die
It transcends its shell quickly and captures the sky
Be kind, be civil and keep me from pain
Because I am the Spirit and you are the drain
Seven great thunders rip my emotions apart
My chakras exploded though I still keep my heart
My essence is lifted and thins out to pure air
My life is now over, here ends the despair
Be kind, be civil and keep me from pain
Because I am the Spirit and you are the drain
Death came a' courting and took me to heart
I saw myself in him as he took my part
I took my life's judgement and relinquished my Soul
My existence diminished my sins take their toll
Be kind, be civil and keep me from pain
For I am the Spirit and you are the drain"**

He froze in his fear just waiting to hear if that was to be his fate
His God was unknown though to Finn on his own He was only a god of hate
He started to sweat the panic had set soon he would be no more
But the darkness around disappeared to the sound as light hit him square in the jaw
He saw a great Lord who held out a sword and with it a golden grail
Who looked down at Finn beckoned to him so that he might not fail

**"Come forward and list for I have tidings of joy
Ignorance's not bliss, there's no need to be coy
My wisdom's for free but it will cost you your life
But my understanding is yours to cope with that strife
So give me your life and I will give you your freedom
And a place in my heart, the kingdom to come
For I am is divine and I offer my sword
Just be my liege for I am your Lord
I'll give you true faith, wisdom through knowing
You'll reap true reward for the seeds you are sowing
I'll give you strength if you have the imagination
I'll take you much higher than man's home made nation
I'll give you life eternal through my infinite power
So follow my path and you'll ne'er fear a shower
Now bow down to God and get rid of that jam
For when you are humble I am is I am"**

Finn bowed his head though not from dead he saw Him as a friend
And set this verse and though rather terse he got his knee to bend

**"I am a King in need of a kingdom
I am a leader in need of an army
I am a service to the Almighty
A vassal to His great love."**

The sword disappeared and a minstrel appeared though without a trusty tune
He galloped about dying to shout but rather reluctant to croon
Finn was given the grail though it looked like the mail covered all over with words
Finn read it aloud he never was proud besides ignorance is for the birds

**"Reality to my mind is like a ship that's lost at sea
Unencumbered by restraint it's as free as it could be
For a mind's reality tends to spread itself around
In the pursuit of occult knowledge in seeking it would found"**

Finn looked at the Lord and His newly changed sword expecting a nasty biff
But the minstrel looked down, no longer the clown all he could say was "if"

**"If all that is known is reasoned is all that's imagined sensed
If God gave this world as a prairie why do we need it all fenced
If the Universe has no end how can it have a beginning"**

**If God is eternal love why is it man's always sinning
If the meaning of life's evolution why are we left in the lurch
If there is only one creative power why is there more than one church
If man is dogmatic by nature what need have he for free will
If balance is all that is wanted why do the poor foot the bill
If Nirvana is only God's blessing how are the ignorant wrong
If only I had several hours but I've got to get back to this song"**

The man left the place without a trace and Finn put his eyes to the floor
He thought for a while lit up a smile and into the message he tore
"Could it be just a dream have I got the cream as all the words have gone
Tell me it's true you have to do otherwise this is just a con"
A voice took its place and lit up his face reciting a little verse
Finn gladly sat back enjoying the flack after all it could be worse

**"I see you now in flights of love
I see you in the turtle dove
I see you here and everywhere
So come to me that I might care
I see you now in towers of strength
I see my faith at any length
I see you in that love divine
So come to me and all is fine
I see you now in life itself
I see you in my pristine health
I see that reality is just your dream
So come to me we'll make a team
I see you in the undergrowth
I see you in the fresh made loaf
I see you from my prison cell
So come to me take away my hell"**

Finn felt its strength well warmth at length for it was pure energy
Knowledge was power and that little shower made him fall to one knee
Strangely elated Finn's breath abated he picked up a dire thirst
So he looked at the grail but his senses did fail he must have thought him cursed
For letters appeared and just as he feared another verse in its place
So he read it aloud to help lift the shroud and put a smile back on his face

**"Reality to my mind is like a ship that's lost its crew
It hangs around the port with nothing else to do
For a mind's reality tends to clutter itself with emotions
Handy for reality though it debars itself from notions"**

Finn thought awhile did it in style pondered his inner mind
Got there quite quick though felt rather sick it was an unusual find
"Boredom" he said" spiritual dread ending in desolation
Not moving on imagination has won leading you into stagnation"
The grail it was cleared Finn's voice appeared giving another rhyme
And Finn settled back concentration did lack having a smashing time

**"I hear you now in cheeping birds
I hear you in stampeding herds
I hear you in the whistling wind
The voice of love ne'er did rescind
I hear you in that stormy night
I hear you in the dim twi-light
I hear you in the morning breeze
The voice of love was meant to please
I hear you in the crashing waves
I hear you in those turning lathes
I hear you in the blacksmith's hammer
The voice of love will never stammer
I hear you in those words divine
I hear you in the poets rhyme
I hear you in all things fair
The voice of love was meant to care"**

Finn grew in strength healed at length he looked for another test
But sadly he found the grail hit the ground he must have needed a rest
The Lord looked at him and gave a grin for it was a time of learning
The land of youth the Celtic truth a paradise in yearning
"Purity's the name to combat shame and increase your spiritual love
Have this ring to make you king a marriage with God above"
Mist appeared and when it cleared Finn received his mark
A ring though small said it all he had the purest heart
A verse appeared and Finn near cheered he was back on track
He read it loud like to a crowd his reality did lack

**"Reality to my mind is like a ship without a flag
It belongs to no man's nation as it sees it as a drag
For a mind's reality tends to find itself a cause
And cling to it indefinitely or till death sinks in its claws"**

Finn thought awhile used his guile but made nothing like good sense
He thought away his mind decay seemed like recompense
The Lord said" Finn it ain't a sin just say you don't know
And I'll expand at your command so you might learn to grow
A nation's cause breaks God's laws it goes against the truth
Attachment grows and bigotry sows and you lose eternal youth
Emotional attachment self detachment call it centredness
It don't exist a man made list to get you in a mess"
"Nationalism" Finn said" brotherhood is dead, lack of imagination
Self centredness couldn't care less what has that to do with a nation"
The words disappeared and energy endeared soothing Finn's troubled brow
It came out in a rhyme and Finn counted time..Er how does it go now?

**"I touch you in the morning dew
I touch you in the Irish stew**

**I touch you in that old armchair
I feel you here and everywhere
I touch you in the feathered wing
I touch you when the angels sing
I touch you when you sleep at night
I feel you here and that's al right
I touch you in the purest snow
I touch you in the river flow
I touch you up in mountains high
I feel you with me so I'll never die
I touch you in the butterfly
I touch you in the deep blue sky
I touch you in that fluffy cloud
I feel you now so I'm not proud"**

Finn felt its power though he ne'er did cower he took it in his stride
Next verse appeared, energy cleared he took it with beaming pride

**"Reality to my mind is like a ship that's run its course
Though still in pristine colour the wind ran out of force
For a mind's reality will question never cease
For when it actually knows he will finally be at peace"**

"Enlightenment" he said "Or fulfilment instead when you finally know
What you are and how you feel and how you need to grow"
The board was cleared and energy appeared covering Finn with grace
Back he sat contentment back and a smile upon his face

**"I smell you in the sweetest flower
I smell you in the summer shower
I smell you in the coffee bean
For without you life is obscene
I smell you in the fresh cut grass
I smell you in the fragrant lass
I smell you in fresh ripened fruit
For without you life is mute
I smell you in those crashing waves
I smell you in those beachhead caves
I smell you in the salty air
For without you I just don't care
I smell you in that fresh made meal
I smell you in the apple peel
I smell you in the orange rind
For without you life's not kind"**

Finn's spirit lifted his conscious shifted he looked just like his Lord
He felt so strong his heart beat long he had again a sword
He put it down expecting a clown but the minstrel was not there
In his place a surprising face the woman did appear
His Lord had gone though left a swan who took Finn's heart away

And left his ring for Finn to sing, it was the Celtic way
"Finn McCool you know the rule two puzzles to dissect"
Her soothing voice left no choice his conscious could not connect
He read the grail though like a snail but he was more than willing
But his heart had gone with the swan his memory was illing

**"Reality to my mind is like a ship that's cased in sin
Devoid of spiritual contact in ignorance did begin
For a mind's reality tends to cloud itself in ignorance
An inner case of sloth maybe a deterrent to advance"**

"It's to do with guilt, well that's the lilt" he said after a while
"Self consciousness, emotional stress, discomfort by the pile
Original sin where did it begin could be he mark of Cain
Or subconscious sloth, a deterrent to growth a catalyst for your pain"
The message it cleared energy appeared and Finn sat back for a rest
He felt it heal that was the deal and Finn came out the best

**"I taste you in the sweetest wine
I taste you in your words so fine
I taste you in the crusty bread
For you are my life and I am fed
I taste you in aromatic spice
I taste you in all things nice
I taste you in the morning air
For you are life and now I care
I taste you in the morning stream
I taste you in the fresh whipped cream
I taste you in the strawberry jam
For you are life and I'm your lamb
I taste you in the finest art
I taste you in the purest heart
I taste you in Nature's prime
For you are life though that's not a crime"**

Finn felt the love straight from above a weight just left his mind
He seemed so free he went on with glee to see what he could find
But no words appeared the grail cleared the woman chose to speak
Her soothing voice left him no choice before her he was meek
"So Finn my boy I'll give you deep joy, knowledge from the divine
Prove your best and pass the test and I will make you mine
First the score don't think me a bore I'm here for spiritual growth
So list awhile and I'll pour out my vial for it will comfort both
Chaos reigned till the Lord ordained that we should have some matter
He called His name, the **manred** came and each enclosed His patter
Evolution by grace that was the case a triumph over **cythral**
Life sprang from **annwn** and pretty soon instinct had to fall
The struggle ahead called **abred** is evolution of the Soul
And once you've won **gwynfyd** would come purity took its toll
Two circles won the battle half done what's left is infinity

Ceugant it's called it has God enthralled for that's His divinity"
When she'd spoken as if by a token some letters appeared on the grail
Finn pondered awhile and read it with style know he could not fail

**"Reality to my mind is like a ship sat by an island
Aloof from turbulent waters its vision in command
For a mind's reality needs to stop and rest awhile
Its imagination sated what need of it for guile"**

"Solitude" Finn said "Or meditation instead to find your inner voice
Emotionally aloof or spiritual truth I guess it's just your choice
Take time out find out what it's about there's more to life than living
And when you know you'll truly grow for that's the point of giving"
The grail disappeared his conscious it cleared Finn sat down again
Energy came in to cleanse the last sin and ease his remaining pain

**"I sense you when I'm alone at night
I sense you in the dim twi-light
I sensed you with me as I sleep
For you're my God and I'm your sheep
I sense you in a Lordly manner
I sense your truth and wave your banner
I sense your sword to guard my back
For you're my God my faith won't slack
I sense you in my darkest hour
I sense your strength so I won't cower
I sense your faith in me I'm told
For you're my God and now I'm bold
I sense you in the forest deep
I sense you in the castle keep
I sense you in my ring divine
For you're my God and now I'll shine"**

Finn felt lifted his Spirit shifted his battle was near won
He got wise that was his prize for work that he had done
The woman smiled his claim was filed she just wanted a kiss
To seal his fate he took her date and ended up with bliss

4. The Pursuit of Flower

Humble-bee sat on a Mary-gold and felt sorry for himself. He had good reason too though for of late his life had certainly lost its buzz. He did not know where he stood and for an instinctive sort of animal a loss of direction was the ultimate loss. Before it had been easy he got the nectar from the flower and it was turned into honey for the good of his mother the Queen. It was an easy job that did not take its toll on his mind and gave him his place in the order of things.

And then came the concept of Drivilisation. He barely remembered how it started he just knew that it loaded a hell of a lot of extra work on him. Delegation came into his mind as he remembered his mother laying a batch of his brothers that were somehow different. They were somewhat aloof from the rest which was just as well for they had no wings and were useless for the job that their mother had intended for them. In the normal running of nature they would have been left to die as the Eternal Mother could be quite a hard taskmaster. They were bigger than humble bee and had a deadlier sting that they could use again and again and they said that their job was to protect the hive from Wood Bee invaders. Humble bee had never heard of a Wood Bee before but from their stories they sounded very dangerous. He had met other bees from other hives and had got on well with them for they were just doing their job and as there were plenty of flowers there was no need to fall out. The bigger bees had great appetites but at the start as there were only a few the extra work load was not really noticeable but to Humble and his brothers things were soon to change.

Another aspect of the bigger bee was that it had the ability to procreate without the Queen and soon there was a society that lived within the society that Humble called his own. As the bigger bees never went out they called their society Hive Society and soon they had taken over the complete running of the hive. They had done this through a thing called Sinistration and it covered a multitude of sins. There was a Sinister for War, a Sinister for Peace, a Sinister for Petals, and a Sinister for Stems. In fact there was a Sinister for anything you could mention and they all needed feeding. The bigger bees mutated over time and soon they were hardly recognisable as bees. Some got slightly bigger and developed small wings whilst others got smaller and cold blooded in their aloofness. The smaller ones never saw themselves as bees and started to call themselves Ticks. They said that their job was to work for the good of the hive and each had his own opinion of what that good might be. They formed their own groups with this in mind and from that came Polyticks, meetings every week and more work for Humble. The larger ones with small wings became members of a thing called the Harmed Forces and they decided that instead of waiting for the Wood Bee invaders they would take the fight to them.

They organised and made great fighting plans and stirred up Humble and his brothers with shouts of Ratiotism and set them ready to fight. They could not go themselves though as their wings could only take them half way there (where ever there might be) and so they rallied them from behind.

So now you see Humble's dilemma. Was he a soldier or a Humble Bee? He had been conditioned to be a Humble Bee and collect nectar but now he was being asked to be a soldier. He had a sting and knew how to use it but that was not the point. He knew that if he used his sting he could kill another bee but he also knew that it would be his death as well for to take another's life would be like killing a brother and to kill a brother would be to kill himself in his mother's eyes. He was in quite a quandary and this would take a lot of thinking about and as his mind was not used to thinking it gave him quite a lot of stress.

His thoughts were interrupted by the buzz of a fellow bee that came down to join him. Humble bee looked at him warily for he was not from his hive and said, "Are you a Wood Bee?" The other bee seemed relieved as he said, "I thought that you were."

"No, I'm just a plain and Humble Bee."

"Me too I wonder what they look like?"

"I don't know," Humble said lifting his wings for that was equivalent of him shrugging his shoulders, "The Ticks say that they are mean and have great big stings."

"So you must have Ticks too. I thought it was just our hive."

"Mumble Bees I call them. I hardly understand a word that they're saying. I know one thing though; they are hard to look after."

"Mumble Bees, that's what we call the Flawyers. They're a strange breed."

"I can guess," Humble said as he had never saw one, "This Drivilisation is confusing isn't it. They make things called Flaws and talk about them all the time, it means nothing to me."

"Except more work and don't they just know how to eat. Honey seems to go nowhere nowadays. It's like I'm working non stop. Next thing now is that they want us to attack a hive."

"Me too, which one do they want?"

"Well they say that the one by the large Oak Tree is full of Wood Bee invaders just waiting for their chance."

"By the Oak Tree," Humble said in shock, "That's my hive."

"You're not a Wood Bee though. The Mumble Bees must have got it wrong."

"Are you from the hive near the Sycamore Tree?"

"Yes that's right."

"There's something wrong here. They told us that you were Wood Bees."

"Strange, why would they want to waste our lives? You do know that once you kill you are dead."

"I know. You can not kill your brother that is one of mother's rules."

"So why do they want to go against mother? That's like going against your instinct."

Humble bee thought awhile and said, "They don't come from mother."

"What? I thought that everyone came from mother."

"Originally but they can now procreate themselves."

"So they are not our brothers. That would explain a lot really when you think about it."

"It would?"

"That must be why honey affects them in a different way. I've noticed that and also it would explain why they view us so cheaply."

"Maybe. Any Humble Bee knows that life is precious it's what mother told us."

"So if they are not our brothers why are we wasting our energy feeding them? How did they manage to get control?"

"Drivilisation," Humble said upon realisation, "That's when things started to go wrong."

"What is Drivilisation anyway? When I ask them all they say is that I don't need to know it is not my job."

"Refinement was all I was told. Yet the only refinement I know is turning nectar into honey."

"Your nectar into their honey I guess that about sums it up I suppose but don't you think they are taking this refinement a little too far?"

"A Sinister for Petals, I know what you mean."

"Oh you have Fumble Bees as well. Well isn't that a surprise."

"Not really I suppose," Humble said lifting his wings once more, "Except I call them Jumble Bees as they create a lot more work for me."

"They told us that they would save us a lot of work but all I see is more honey gone."

"Expensive labour saving. Perhaps if they had to fetch it themselves they would be a lot more sparing."

"Perhaps," the other bee said but at that they were interrupted by another bee landing. This was a different sort of bee than they had seen before but it seemed friendly enough.

"Blessings from mother," it said by way of greeting, "Mind if I rest a while it's been quite a long flight."

“Go ahead,” Humble said, “You’re not from around here are you?”

“No I’m a little off my path. I got lost and taken by the wind.”

“It has been strong,” the other bee said, “So what do you know about Drivilisation?”

“Drivilisation? I’ve never heard of it. What is it, an animal of some sort?”

“You could say that,” Humble said with a laugh (well as near to a laugh as a bee can make- imagine an intermittent buzz), “It takes a lot of feeding.”

“An expensive animal then but it must have some good or you would not want to feed it.”

“I don’t know about want,” the other bee said, “For we don’t seem to have a choice in it.”

“Sorry, I don’t understand. Why would mother force you to feed it?”

“She doesn’t. It forces us to feed it.”

“How does it force you to feed it? What sort of animal could do that and why does mother let it get away with it?”

They told the strange bee about the mutant bees and he could not believe it at first. He thought it was a joke and they were taking advantage of a stranger through ridicule. When he finally did believe them he asked again what mother was doing about it and this led Humble to think a while.

“Now you mention it,” he said eventually, “I have not seen her for a while. The Ticks said that she was too busy to be disturbed when I last asked about her.”

“That sounds suspicious,” the strange bee said and when the other bee said the same, “Very suspicious.”

“What do you mean,” Humble said, “How so?”

“Our Queen would never be too busy not to see her children. That does not make sense.”

The more the other two thought about it the more suspicious it got.

“You’re right,” Humble said in the end, “I think that I want to see her to make sure she’s alright. You talk a lot of sense though you are not a Humble Bee are you?”

“No,” the strange bee said, “Like I said I’m not from around here. I’m a Wood Bee.”

Chapter 2

“What,” Humble said backing off slightly, “Are you here to invade us?”

“On my own?” the Wood Bee said laughing.

“You might be a scout.”

“I live miles away. I was blown of course anyway why should I want to invade you? Are we not brothers?”

Humble relaxed and said, “The Ticks said that they were to protect us from Wood Bee invaders.”

“Well they would wouldn’t they. It sounds to me like they are living off your fear.”

“Living lavishly as well,” the other bee said upon recognition, “It’s all starting to make sense now. How foolish of me.”

“So what now?” Humble said, “We’re stuck. We can’t go against mother’s rule.”

“Mother’s rule,” the other bee said, his temper rising, “They are no brothers of mine and beside how do you know if mother is still alive.”

“There’s a lot of questions want answering and no mistake,” Humble said. He looked at the Wood Bee and said, “Do you mind coming back to the hive I want to show my brothers what a Wood Bee invader looks like.”

The Wood Bee thought awhile and said, “That sounds dangerous, I’m not sure. Beside I thought you said that the Ticks could not leave the hive.”

“Most of them. A few can come a little way out. Why?”

“Bring a few of your brothers out to me and the word will quickly spread. I can’t see the Ticks letting me too far into the hive.”

“Good idea, wait here and we’ll get off.”

“What,” the other bee said, “You want me with you?”

“Well they are talking about invading your hive so it might be a good idea to show that you are not a Wood Bee.”

“What,” the Wood Bee said, “I've told you I'm no threat.”

“One step at a time otherwise things get complicated.”

The two Humble Bees went back to the hive and were soon in the thick of the activity needed to keep the system going. Word got around that the hive to be attacked was full of Humble Bees and resentment started to murmur. A collective wave of malcontent spread and went from hive to hive in the process. This was enhanced as Humble Bees met others and mutiny was being talked about. By now though Humble had made it his task to find out if mother was still alive and nothing was going to stop him.

“What do you want?” a large wingless mutant said, “You have no business here be on your way.”

“I want to see mother,” Humble said without a trace of fear and this unnerved the larger bee a little.

“She's too busy. Be on your way.”

“No, not until I've seen her.”

“Are you disobeying an order,” the larger bee said menacingly, “You do know the penalty for that.” As it had never been done before Humble bee did not and so he said, “No I don't, what's the penalty for that?”

“Death.”

“No, it can't be. It goes against the rules to take another's life.”

The larger bee moved forward lining up to sting and panic took over Humble. He attacked the larger bee who was too sluggish to defend itself and fell quickly to his death. Humble had noticed that his sting was still intact and this surprised him a great deal. He moved forward but did not get too far before he was stopped by a Tick. “What do you want?” it barked, “You have no business in this zone. Get out.”

“No, I've come to see my mother.” he emphasised the ‘my’ much to the Tick’s horror. He was not used to being talked to in this manner by a mere Humble Bee and this unnerved him slightly. That was greatly enhanced by the fact he said ‘my’ for it meant he knew the Ticks back ground.

“Look,” he said in a calming voice, “She's busy at the moment,” and looked around for a guard to help.

“He's dead. He'll not help you now.”

“You killed him?”

“That's right.”

“But you are still alive how can that be? You have broken mother's rule.”

“Guess he wasn't my brother and I still have my sting. It makes you wonder doesn't it?”

The Tick backed off slightly and looked like he was going to make a run for it so Humble said,

“And how far do you think you would get?”

“You'll not get far,” the Tick said trying to brazen it out, “We are too powerful for you. What good do you think will come of it?”

“I only want to see my mother and then I'll be on my way.”

The Tick’s mind was working overtime as it devised a new strategy, “Come this way,” and led Humble bee to a large honey filled chamber, “Take your fill. You can have as much as you want.”

“I don't want any. Look what's going on here. I want to see my mother.”

“You're different from the rest of them you have something about you. Why don't you join us you need never work again? Think about it.”

“So what's it all about then?” Humble said throwing him a false line.

“The pursuit of flower you are what you know.”

“What. Straight talk or nothing.”

“See all this,” the Tick said showing the honey once more, “That's what it's all about. This is what keeps the hive going and all the others beside. Whoever controls it controls everything. Are you with me so far?”

“I can understand that to some extent though you seem to make a lot out of it. I mean after all at the end of the day it's only honey.”

“Only to you but a lot of Wood Bees would see it different.”

“Like the ones we're fighting soon I suppose.”

“Yes that's right. That honey means a lot to them. Now you can understand why we need to protect it.”

“Funny that. I met one of those so called Wood Bees earlier and he turns out to be just a plain and humble bee just like me.”

“What,” the Tick said as if it was news to it, “That's not what I've been told.”

“What do you mean told? Didn't you want to find out for yourself before risking the brothers lives.”

“I can only go on what I'm told,” the Tick said and something told Humble that he was not lying,

“That's why I said you are what you know. I can only act on information given. It's the same as you I suppose.”

“In what way?”

“You have been conditioned to collect nectar. You are what you know.”

“Then why do you send me to war especially since you know that he who lives by the sting dies by the sting.”

“I thought that the hive was being threatened. That's what I was told.”

“Who told you that anyway and by what authority did he get his information?”

“It was the Sinister for War. I mean he should know about things like that it's his job.”

“What, how can he know he never leaves the hive?”

“I can't tell you that it's more than my jobs worth. It's not in my power.”

“If you want me to join you I will have to know what it's all about.”

The Tick thought awhile and said, “You will have to observe the Official Leak Writs Act.”

“How do I do that? I've never heard of it before.”

“Because it's a secret I will say it to you and you must swear I do at the end.”

“Alright, go on.”

“Do you swear not to tell anything to anyone for the good of the mother and of the hive?”

“I do.” Humble said surprised at its brevity.

“Alright then you are right. The War Sinister does not leave the hive. He does not need to he has flies.”

“Flies?”

“Yes they tell him what's going on around him.”

“But why flies, it doesn't make sense?”

“They are used to dealing with shit and in that kind of business that's a good a reason as any.”

“That's no reason. I would have thought you'd be better off with Humble Bees.”

“Oh we couldn't do that. As I said you are what you know.”

“I don't see the connection,” and thought awhile, “Unless you are using it to keep us down.”

“To keep them in their place. Got it in one.”

“So why do you want to do that? Why keep me in my place?”

“Not you, you are one of us now. You have sworn the Official Leak Writs Act.”

“Oh that's alright then is it, so what happens now then?”

“Now, in what sense?”

“About the invasion, are you calling it off?”

“Ah we can't do that. It will not look good.”

“What do you mean not look good? They are not Wood Bees they are Humble Bees the same as me.”

“We can't be seen to be making mistakes it will reflect on our leadership abilities.”

“Well your biggest mistake was telling me for I will tell everyone I see.”

“You can't do that you swore the Official Leak Writs Act.”

“It means nothing to me. Not when my brothers lives are at stake.”

“I can't let you leave. You know too much.”

Humble was in no mood to carry on with the conversation so he stung the Tick and left it dead.

Chapter 3

He walked out into the chamber and headed towards where he thought the Sinister for War might be. Thoughts of seeing his mother had subsided and thoughts of saving his brothers had taken over. He thought that if he saw the Sinister and warned him that the Flies had got it wrong he might be able to do something about it. He reasoned that the Tick wanted to keep it quiet to save face but as the Sinister was faceless he would not have that problem.

He hid and let a couple of guards go by and listened into their conversation. It was dull and he learned nothing from it only guard duty. Each to their own he thought to himself and headed on his way. He found the Sinister alone and feeding of some honey. "How did you get in here," he said with a mix of surprise and anger, "You have no business in this sector."

"It's alright I have sworn the Official Leak Writs Act."

"You have?" The Sinister said and thought that it must be true otherwise he would not have known about it, "Very well, what do you want?"

"I've come to divert a disaster. The invasion tomorrow, it must be called off."

"What, what do you mean called off?"

"They are not Wood Bees; they are just normal Humble Bees. Your Flies have got it wrong."

"No that can't be. It's impossible."

"I saw one earlier. He is not a Wood Bee; in fact he thought that we were."

"You're lying. Who sent you? It was those Wood Bees wasn't it?"

Humble had not expected this and was somewhat taken aback by the outburst. The Sinister could not seem to come to terms with the fact that his Flies could be wrong and Humble might be right. He came towards Humble and stung him whilst he was unaware. Much to Humble's surprise it did no damage at all and on seeing this the Sinister backed off and tried to make a waddle for it.

Humble blocked his path and said, "Now you will listen to me. Your Flies have got it wrong. You must tell the Ticks and they must stop the invasion before it is too late."

"No, no my Flies are never wrong it is impossible."

"Then you are useless but the invasion will stop even without your help."

"Then you are working for the Wood Bees and they sent you here to stop us. Guards, guards," he shouted and left Humble with no choice.

One sting later Humble was on his way. His thoughts had gone back to his mother and he reasoned (well as far as a Humble Bee can) that the word about the other hive being full of other Humble Bees would have got around and so the invasion would be forced of the agenda. He made his way onwards to where his mother would be found dodging guards and sentries as he moved. He came across a large room with an open door. He did not enter but instead hid and looked through the entrance. A large group of strange looking mutants were sitting in a circle and debating strategies for the forthcoming invasion. Some had large heads with no wings whilst others were Rumble Bees. They talked of expected bee losses though seemed more interested in the aftermath planning subjugation and what to do with the excess honey. Humble listened with disbelief as he became a number to be sacrificed at their will and his anger rose with every word that they spoke. He kept his temper and waited for them to finish and signalling one out followed it until he was on its own.

"How did you get in here?" it said when Humble cornered it. He was about to shout for the guards but Humble stopped him, "I wouldn't even think about it. Where's mother?"

"She's busy," The wingless bighead said, "How did you get in here?"

"I ask the questions. What are you anyway I've not seen your sort before."

"I'm a Flawyer," it said proudly, "I am the one that keeps us Drivilised. If we did not have Flaws we would be like the rest of the insects."

"So it's you is it. You're the one that I have to blame for all this extra work."

"What," it said condescendingly, "Without me none of this would be possible. I am the one that keeps the hive running."

“Don't make me laugh, it was running alright before you and your ilk took it over.”

“What without Flaws impossible.”

“Mother made the rules and we all knew our place. No bee shall kill his brother that was all we needed to know and yet you want to try and break that just for someone else's honey.”

“We've got to get them before they get us it's as simple as that. These Wood Bees are very cunning you know.”

“They are not Wood Bees go and peddle your lies somewhere else.”

“What do you mean they are not Wood Bees,” it said and humble thought that it too might be ignorant.

“They are just Humble Bees, I met one earlier. So you are sending brother off to kill brother. How does that make you feel?”

“They are Wood Bees, they must be. The Sinister for War personally assured me that they were.”

“He was wrong, his Flies were mistaken but as that war will never happen it does not matter.”

“What do you mean never happen?”

“That's not your job to know. I want you to take me to mother so I can find out what she has to say about it.”

“I can't. She's busy.”

“I don't think that she is. She's never too busy to see her children now lead on or feel my sting.”

“You can't do that it's against the rules. You kill me and you will kill yourself.”

“That's what the Tick thought but in the end I guess he was not my brother. Now lead on or die.”

Reluctantly the Flawyer took him down a myriad of passageways until Humble did not have a clue where he was. He stopped at the entrance and the Flawyer said, “”She's through there.”

“After you,” Humble said and the Flawyer went in. Humble followed and nearly collapsed at he sight he saw. His mother had died and by the look of it not recently.

“This must never get out,” the Flawyer said, “If they ever found out about it; it would be the end of the hive.”

“The hive is nothing without mother. You know it and I know it. That is my mother lying there, you disgust me you really do,” and turned around to sting him.

The Flawyer backed off and said, “I'm thinking of the hive. It's greater then any individual. Can't you see that?”

“The hive is nothing without the mother. When mother dies so does the hive. How long do you think you could keep up a charade like that?”

“Forever, we can procreate without her.”

“You can create mutants, Mentle-Bees that live of others work but what about when the others die? Who's going to keep you fat on honey?”

“The Wood Bees that we capture. We will take their mother.”

“Fool, you self deluded fool. They are not Wood Bees they are normal Humble Bees. I'm willing to bet all the honey in the hive that their mother is dead as well.”

“No it can't be. The Sinister of War personally assured me that they were Wood Bees and we would capture their mother.”

“He was talking out of ignorance. He never leaves the hive the same as you. His Flies got it wrong.”

“Wait until I see him. He will answer to the Ticks for this.”

“He's as dead as mother so he will have to answer to her but where does that leave you?”

“I don't know. This it all new to me.”

“Didn't you think? It happened here so it must be happening else where.”

“What do I know about else where. I'm stuck in here working for the good of the hive.” Humble almost felt sorry for it but then it said, “And what do I get for it, nothing.”

“What, you feed of my work and get fat of my sweat. You could not even look after mother properly. I thought that was supposed to be one of your jobs?”

“Its not easy being a Flawyer you know. We spend long hours keeping this hive going.”

“You should have been watching mother that was your job. If you would have looked after her the hive would have looked after itself.”

“No we have to protect the hive first. That is paramount.”

“From what? From bees like you I suppose.”

“From the Wood Bees. They are after us.”

“No they are not. Have you ever seen one?”

“No but that's not the point. I know they are out there.”

“Well I have,” Humble said and the Flawyer went quiet.

Chapter 4

After a moments silence the Flawyer said, “You've seen one what do they actually look like?”

“Not much different to me but a hell of a lot different from you.”

“So what did he say,” ignoring the last remark, “When is the planned invasion?”

“There's no invasion, he's a peaceful bee the same as me.”

“I don't believe you,” and thought awhile before he said, “Unless of course he's fooled you.”

“He didn't fool me he has no intention of invading us. It was just a big lie that was all it ever was.”

“No I don't believe it. They want to subjugate us and take all our honey away.”

“Our honey. The only bees after honey are bees like you. Don't judge others by your standards.”

“I work for the good of the hive, I don't covet honey.”

“What,” Humble said almost falling over, “Don't get self righteous with me not since I've seen what you eat?”

“I take my fill and no more that's all I ask.”

“You take a hell of a lot more than me. So tell me why your fill should be more than mine? How can you justify that?”

“I deserve better for I work harder.”

“Are you serious; is this some sort o joke? You could never do my work.”

“Maybe not but that is because I am not made for it but nevertheless my work is harder and you are not equipped for it.”

“Don't make me laugh your work is not real work. It was work that was created just to give you something to do. You make our lives complicated just to keep yourself busy. I'm the one that carries the load. You don't do anything to bring honey to the hive you just feed of our toil.”

The Flawyer went quiet because he did not know what to say. On seeing this Humble said, “So what about mother?”

“You can't tell, it will be the ruin of us all.”

“We already are but you are that blind you can't see it.” He turned and left the Flawyer to his sorrow. The Flawyer would have called for help but he knew there was nobody about. He was in a highly classified area and only a very select few were allowed to be in there. He just stood there in his helplessness wishing he had a sting. Humble had long since gone by the time he actually saw someone so he kept quiet hoping to avoid any embarrassing questions.

When Humble walked out he had a lot on his mind. He knew that they were all doomed but what could he say. He could have told them that their mother was dead and probably all the other mothers in the vicinity but that would be the ruin of them all and it would take away what little hope they had left. He decided to keep quiet in the end and let nature take its course.

Meanwhile the Rumble Bees were rousing the brothers up for the big invasion plan, “Sons of the Hive,” the head Rumble Bee said, “Your mother is in danger and needs your help. The hive is going to be attacked by Wood Bee invaders and unless we move very quickly we will be done for.” A hushed murmur of discontent went round the crowd though this was not heard by the Rumble Bee as his rabble rousing technique was now in full flow. “We have decided that attack is the best means of defence and so we will take the war to them. We believe that it will save a lot more lives if we surprise them and to that purpose we will attack at first light for the most reasonable chance of low casualties.”

A voice from the back shouted, "The hive is not in danger this is just a big lie."

"What," the Rumble Bee said, "We have a traitor in our midst, arrest that bee."

Half a dozen flightless bees moved forward but gauging the mood of the crowd did not get too close. They looked at the Rumble Bee for some sign but it did not come.

The voice from the back shouted, "How can you call me a traitor I am not from your hive."

"What?" The Rumble Bee said.

The crowd opened up and the bee came forward. It was the one that Humble had seen earlier. "Do I look like a Wood Bee to you? I am willing to bet that I could disappear into the crowd of my brothers and you would never find me."

The crowd's aggression grew and by then Humble had got back and slipped unnoticed into the commotion.

"I don't know what's going on," the Rumble Bee said to the guard next to him, "Go out and fetch a Tick I don't like the look of this crowd."

The guard did as it was ordered and before long a Tick was on hand with appeasement in mind, "Brothers of the Hive mistakes have been made and I'm here to rectify them."

"How," a voice shouted, "And why did you make them?"

"That is not for you to know," the Tick said, his arrogance taking over. It soon disappeared as the crowd got more menacing, "We were misinformed," he said fear now gripping him, "But that has been rectified now and no harm done so why not let bygones be bygones and we'll all move forward for the good of the hive."

"For the good of you more like," a voice shouted and was echoed by angry murmuring around the crowd.

"Brothers I am just a Humble Bee the same as you. I have my job to do the same as you. We all work for the good of the hive."

"You're no brother of mine," a Humble Bee said stepping forward "You would not send me out to fight another brother if you were. That's against mother's rule."

The Tick backed off on seeing his approach and said, "It was all a big mistake. If I had known that they were fellow brothers I would not have even thought of sending you out. I was told they were Wood Bees."

The Humble Bees seemed content at that and this led Humble to think that they did not know about the Wood Bee. This surprised him so he decided to fly off to the flower and try and find out what happened. When he got there much to his surprise he found it empty. He had not a clue where the Wood Bee had gone and very little chance of finding him again. Without the Wood Bee he could do nothing as the Ticks ultimate threat was the invasion lie and no one would believe that he had actually met one. Later down the line he had heard rumours of a top secret zone in the hive called Area 51 and its contents but it had always been denied. With his knowledge of events he put together a story that was plausible enough to satisfy his curiosity. He guessed that in all the excitement of the invasion the other bee had took too long and the Wood Bee had gone to check on progress. He had been captured by Rumble Bees not knowing that they could actually come out of the hive and taken prisoner. It made sense to Humble and so he could put it behind him and think of other things. You see Humble found out that once you start thinking you just can not stop.

He recollected the Tick mentioning a thing called the pursuit of flower and this took a lot of thinking time up. From his conversations he had, had with the Tick, the Sinister of War and the Flawyer he gathered that they knew little else except what they were equipped to know and this intrigued his little mind. Yes it was true that Humble had knew little else but how to milk flowers but once he had met the Wood Bee all that reality that had once been his strength disappeared. His ivory tower was destroyed and so now he could rebuild it in any fashion he wanted. He was still equipped to milk flowers but now he could do anything else he so desired and would spend a lot of time in contemplation. In the pursuit of flower he decided that to get to the top you have to be very single minded. The higher the stem you got the more honey you were entitled to and this was an

incentive to climb higher still. He could not see why honey was such an incentive but guessed that s they were not from mother they must be of a different nature to him and left it at that. If he left it at that he was happy because one thing about Humble Bees' is as long as they know where they are they are happy so I guess you could say that Humble was still quite instinctive at heart.

5.Hobson's Voice

Act 1 The Merchant of Menace

Dark nights cover a city already bleak, a litter strewn alleyway sees a tramp stop for a leak
Rats scamper around aloof from his plight as Hob talks to himself desperation in sight

Hob.

I wandered the streets, those dark crowded places looking at misery in a myriad of faces
Friendless and Soulless just walking around in need of some company but none can be found
So what of this city, its streets full of woe that holds me in bondage and won't let me go
I've nowhere to go and no one to listen my well has dried up, its water ne'er glisten
Low self esteem, my confidence lacking afraid of my shadow my courage is slacking
I'm stuck in a rut of that no denying sometimes it occurs I'm better off dying

An opening door causes Hob's flow to stall and onto his shoes some urine did fall
He looks to his left, sees a large burly man who surveys with disdain as he was not a fan

Restaurant Owner

Be off you rat, vermin of the night leave this place get out of my sight
There's nothing here for you to feed upon don't waste my time just get gone

Hob

Please sir have some charity, just some scraps to feed my self pity
Look at that bin they're only going to waste those left overs of yours might just be to my taste

Restaurant Owner

Not for you vulture of the night you are responsible for your own plight
You ask for alms don't make me laugh sod off now and have a bath

Hob

My consequences are my own affair it's not for you to add to my despair
I'll bid you goodnight and leave you to your fate for I can see you are a man of hate
Maybe one day your circumstances will change and you'll find yourself within my range
And come across a man that's just like you devoid of humanity and scruples few
If there's a God and I hope that, that's the case he'll find a way to put you in your place
A life of desolation is your path and maybe then I could have a laugh

Restaurant Owner

You dare curse me you roving heap of rag I'm not one to tote a superstitious tag
Don't play to my fears for they are null and as for my circumstances they are full
Nomadic rogue you create your own despair and come to me as if I should care
That's not my place, that's not my role so get off quick, sign on the dole

Hob

I'll leave this place for I'm not welcome here and walk the streets although with great fear
My expectations though very low are not fulfilled so I must go

Hob walks off into the cold dark night in search of sustenance to comfort his plight

A few chips here, leftovers from a drunk but to hungry Hob God's grace to a monk
He walks on for an hour until tiredness takes its turn so settled down his feet starting to burn
A patch of wasteland was his new found bed so he lays down trying to find his head

Hob

Senses tingling emanating, bringing pleasure pain vacating
Lift my spirits take me high and then I'll know I will never die
Tiredness calls and I must listen and sally forth a dream to glisten
I feel my consciousness lose its hold a dream perchance to make me bold
So vagabond of the night come forth and show your wares
You vivid image unsurpassed, your range of chosen fares
Yield your wisdom seldom seen and prophecies untold
Give me strength to cope with life and keep me out of cold

The wasteland turns to a dungeon cell leaving Hob with thoughts unwell
His eyes adjust so he could have a look but all he saw was a large brown book

Hob

A darkened room is this the place to be with just a book for company
What fate befalls me in my hour of woe, perchance I'll read, this book might know

The Book

A memory is only a thought, so how do you get rid of a thought? Become its memory and forget about it

Hob

A talking book what marvel to unfold, what joy what mirth what wisdom too untold
Give me your strength its power to my mind and with it hope to see what I can find

The Book

Just look within for the truth is on your lips to cope with life you'll need some real good tips
To find that strength just look within it's worth much more than sustenance from a bin
Feed on wisdom and let your Spirit grow it'll give you strength to stave off any foe
It gives great comfort might even make you bold, an inner warmth to fight off any cold
Fear not the shadows they seldom do you harm and inner peace will surely be your balm
Fear not your life for that is there to live, fear not your love for that is there to give

Hob

I have no love no one to care and as for life I just find despair
A darkened room sums up my state just chasing shadows in a world of hate
Your words though wisdom fall on mute ears for to my torment I just see fears
I need some hope, something to grasp just like a staple needs a hasp

The Book

You need some spirit I conclude so list a while and get some fortitude
It will numb your sloth, your self pity and help you cope in the big bad city

Hob

Words of wisdom, I don't know but it might just help my spirit to grow
Say your piece and I will list and on that spirit I'll get pissed

The Book

Sloth's so easy to obtain just sit back and let it reign
So give me fortitude to resist or that demon will persist
Strength of being, pure endurance its life quality is self assurance
Low self esteem is sloth's way, feeds off idleness and mind decay
Spirit's willing Will is weak without this fortitude I am meek
Give me your strength oh Divine Light and then I'll have you in my sight

Energies tingle inside Hob's head and very soon that sloth was dead
He felt the power and it soothed his pain mental electricity to his brain

Hob

Goodly book I feel your power and with your words my hope does flower
I feel your essence bide within I feel your spirit cleanse my sin
I'm feeling good nay even lifted and with your aid my consciousness's shifted
You give me hope something to exude I thank you for your fortitude

The Book

Then list some more for I have things to tell, inside knowledge to do you well
Walk in truth for knowledge is light and with understanding all is right
When it comes to mind you are what you know when it comes to life you reap what you sow
When it comes to love you are what you give when it comes to God you are how you live
So bare that well and forget it not and always be thankful for what you have got

Hob

I hear your words and take them to my heart and thank you dearly for my start
But life is hard, the knocks are heavy they take their toll and what a levy
My spirits weak though I have no sloth I need something to aid its growth
For my circumstances are still a pity sigh and very soon that spirit just might die

The Book

I see your state and hear your words of truth for to bite at life you need to have a tooth
you need something to get you off that fence to aid your life and give you recompense

Hob

Too right good book what have you in mind something that might make life more kind
a little boost to help me on my way though you have helped a lot with what you have to say?

The Book

Then list awhile for I have more to give sweet confidence in how your life will live
another spirit one to give you luck for I am truly a wondrous book

Hob

I have no doubt about you power show me now life is just a shower
Fleeting pain that's there to help me grow give me the confidence so I might truly know

The Book

Equality is given by the Light Divine don't let envy dull its shine
With this confidence watch it grow and then that demon will have to go
For this spirit is easily found just have faith and it will abound
We're all the same underneath this shell so lose that envy and you'll fare well
Look to others as unto yourself don't measure people by their wealth
Love is mutual and faith is true you don't need envy to make you blue

More energies tingle inside Hob's brain he felt his envy go down the drain
With deadwood gone he felt much lighter he had his confidence he was a fighter

Hob

I hear the truth in what you say and now I hold envy at bay
I feel the warmth and take in its glow the seed is planted it just needs to grow

The Book

Time moves on first lesson over now you need to get in clover
You need some luck, a lottery ticket a little boost will get you out of the thicket

Hob

Would that I could for your logic is sound but to my sorrow I don't have a pound

The Book

Not a problem that you make for you will find one when you wake
It's by your feet don't think hard go out and get that first scratch card

Act Two-The Turning of the Screw

Hob finds himself back on waste ground his sleep though sporadic was pretty sound
He feels strangely lifted unaware of the dream but looks to his feet and he has the cream

Hob

I feel funny, every things sunny seems like a bright new day
Look to the ground is that not a pound maybe lucks coming my way
Looks like I will eat ain't that a treat what need have I for a bin
Fresh food for a change that's pretty strange not eating food out a tin

Hob picks up the coin and in his pocket did sink
He walks to the shop to buy food so did think
But on his way there something strange he did find
Food lost its appeal he was changing his mind

Hob

Ponder awhile consider my guile maybe I'm out on a roll
A gamble is needed for luck has been seeded I've got to get out of this hole
What does it cost a pound to be lost I think that's a risk worth taking
I'll go without food besides in this mood there's a fortune out there just waiting

Hob opened the door and walked in with a spring
Like the shop was a court and he was the king
He walked past the food and to the counter did reach
And asked for a card against the shopkeepers beseech

Shopkeeper

Pray sir, don't take this wrong and think I'm being rude
But don't waste that money gambling why not buy some food

Your circumstances are despair and gambling is not the answer
Buy some nourishment instead for gambling is just a cancer

Hob

I thank you for your advice sir you seem a genuine sort
But today I walk with luck well that's what I purport
My food will be a plenty with a winning ticket
Why put up with one tree when I can have a thicket

Hob got his card and away he did scratch
With thoughts of winning and apprehension to match
He jumped for joy when he saw he had won
250 pounds now that's a job well done

Hob

Pray sir, I ask a boon and I am very willing to pay
I need to bath and shave so tell me what you have to say
To you I'm just a tramp some might say a skiver
But my money's pretty good and I'll go up to a fiver

The shopkeeper thought awhile and came to Hob's aid
He let him use his bath and not a price was paid
Hob soaked away the grime and wallowed in the water
Then got a razor out and to his beard did slaughter
By the time he had finished he looked not a man of hunger
In fact if anything he looked a whole lot younger
The Shopkeeper was impressed except for Hob's attire
For the rags Hob was wearing looked like he trawled the mire
But help was there at hand the trader had a plan
He gave Hob some old cloths(saves going to Oxfam)
Hob was pleased with that in fact he overjoyed
But a strange thought came to haunt him one with which he toyed

Hob

Woe is me sitting here all snug
Tortured by thoughts of that man so smug
He would have let me starve to sate his narrow zeal
I'll get him back, I'll make him heel
He won't recognise me in these cloths so fine
So to his restaurant I will go and dine
I'll watch him fawn and know his place
And then remind him of my other face

Hob waited till evening to fulfil his plan
And went through the door like a brand new man
Unrecognised by the man who was duly chastened
Inviting him to a meal quickly hastened

Restaurant Owner

Come in sir, pray take a seat you've picked a good place in which to eat
The finest food the bestest crowd and for my service I'm duly proud
So take you pick, we'll gladly cater anything you want just ask the waiter

Hob

I thank you sir with all my heart the finest soup will be my start
then I'll have the most expensive dish of the day
What ever it is I will gladly pay

Restaurant Owner

So I see for you're a man of leisure
And I'll serve you myself with the greatest of pleasure
you look like a man that gives good company
May I join you just to see

Hob

You may serve me but in truth I eat alone a man aloof
I crave no company as my wont I need solitude to satisfy my want

The food was served and Hob tucked in heartily
He ate and ate until the point of gluttony
The bill mounted up to an enormous tag
And by the time he had finished his stomach did sag

Restaurant Owner

That was quite a feat which you did perform
I've never seen such before it was quite a storm
A hearty appetite does show a man of breeding
And may I say it was a pleasure feeding

Hob paid his bill and then made his play
He would make quite sure the man rued that day

Hob

I thank you for your service and was glad to watch you fawn
And know that in a chess game you are just a pawn
They say that money talks and you've just proved it true
And when you come to know me I bet that you feel blue

Restaurant Owner

I'm afraid you have the advantage has something gone amiss
There's no need for this rudeness I thought the food was bliss
It seems I've caused offence though I know not what I've done
So pray sir please enlighten me so I may join the fun

Hob

I'm afraid you are the fun for that's my little joke
You are an easy target it seems a shame to poke
Though you seem a little different to how you were last night
When I was in your bins you hardly aided my plight

The man he looked aghast as Hob walked out the door
And Hob laughed to himself as he heard the man swore
Hob's pride duly sated as he had won the fight
So with the rest of the money he got a lady of the night
He walked the red light zone and duly one was found
And after such a night he was left with just a pound
Devoid of finance now he went off to get some sleep
And he went back to the dungeon just to have a peek
The book was still there though in an awful mood
It had a go at Hob and it was very rude

The Book

What a waste, what a show why do I bother let me know
I give you a chance you throw it in my face
All that money, gone without a trace

Hob

I'm sorry book I guess I just forgot but now I know I feel such a clot
Pray give me a chance another try and with your wisdom I'll surely fly

The Book

You don't deserve it with your lechery you pay for sex female company
you squander the rest on a man of smarm
Sounds like you need the funny farm

Hob

I wanted to show him, a lesson was needed
To quell his pride on which he feeded
I taught him well, he'll not forget
To mess with me is something to regret

The Book

A lesson learned, to fill his bulging pocket
What wit is that just give him a rocket
Your logic seems to lead you on a dance
Perhaps it's time for temperance

Hob

I think you're right but don't be cruel
For now I know I'm but a fool
I've made mistakes I'm afraid I've erred
My logic seems a tad absurd

The Book

Balance is needed not obese and with equilibrium hunger will cease
Self fulfilment is my aim so don't let gluttony be a drain
Taste the life some might say, though excess fat is not the way
I need that temperance to define to make me wholesome nay divine
For the spirit's equal body and Soul so a life of gluttony takes its toll
So eat for hunger to appease otherwise it's just mental sleaze

Energies all surged around Hob's head and very soon that demon lay dead
He felt lifted self fulfilled he had his temperance as was willed

Hob

Thank you book I feel your strength I take your wisdom at any length
I feel much stronger now I know and pray forgiveness that it might grow

The Book

Forgiveness granted but have you got what it takes
to move on forward and learn by your mistakes
I have more wisdom for you to grow
you just tell me if you want to know

Hob

All knowledge welcome I need your help
for when it comes to wisdom I am but a whelp
Give me something that's plain to see
that I might fight my lechery

The Book

Lechery in small doses just the thing to cure moroses
But give me faithfulness every time then I'll know you're truly mine
For love is faith in the purest that road to tread is the surest
So bide within and then I'll know that our love will surely grow
For love's eternal never ending always yielding never bending
Not for sharing wholesome only so with lechery you end up lonely

Energies all around and Hob nearly falls to the ground
He feels the power all aglow he just stays there and feels it grow

The Book

Well Hob tomorrow's another day the game of life you need to play
There's still some luck to be found so utilise that final pound
But listen now and don't be greedy or you'll end up poor and needy
Morning comes you must awake just one gamble is the chance to take

Act Three-Much Aggro About Nutting

Hob finds himself back in the reality of the day
With a pound in his pocket to help him on his way
He feels strangely lifted with a tinge of regret
About wasting his money on adventures ill met

Hob

What stupidity, curse that lechery all my money has now gone
I must have been crass to waste it on a brass, ah well the deed is done
And what of that feast, I was a glutton at least I must have been a fool
Giving that man money after he was funny I'd hardly call that cool
This time I'll be wise get food to tantalise and put hunger back on the run
I'll not waste it this time I'm doing fine the damage has been done

Hob sets on his way the pound and him to part
But halfway there he has a change of heart

Hob

Hold fast a moment and ponder awhile maybe I still have luck on my side
A gamble is needed to prove it will bide if that's the case my fate has been tied
Tis only a pound and one which I found that's not really much to lose
My stomach's still full after that cull so it's not much of an option to choose

Hob gets to the shop and walks in with a spring
He greets the Shopkeeper like he was the king
He buys a fresh ticket and guess what he's won
No not £250 it was only a ton
He takes hold of his winnings and bids him goodbye
Walks out of the shop and he's still feeling high
But as he walks on his greed did return
Suppose that's the case having money to burn

Hob

A thought has just occurred though to some it's absurd I'm on a winning streak
Although I'm just a rookie I'll take it to a bookie my fortune I do seek
I'll take the longest odds trust it to the gods see what fate doth bring
All that extra money, a life of milk and honey I could really start to sing

Hob walks to the bookies with gambling on his mind
Scans down the the racing list to see what he can find
He chances on a horse with odds much to his favour
And with the name of Lucky Tramp it was certainly one to savour

Hob

A tenner each way with tax to pay and at 20 to 1 I should be okay
A glimmer of hope a name pretty apt give me some joy and have me enrapt

The bet was placed and the race ran it's course
His horse finished last had luck lost its source
He studied some more and came up with a name
He did not see losing he just saw a game
The next horse that he chose was called Magic Book
Though unaware of the dream it had a slight hook
The same stake as before the odds slightly longer
And though the horse did not win it finished much stronger
His money half spent he started to worry
He needed to win and win in a hurry
He saw an old man who seemed a permanent fixture
So he sought his advice he might have the mixture

Old Man

Stick with me I know the craic I know the horses you want to back
I know this jockey who gives out tips though if anyone asks they're not from my lips

Hob

Sounds good to me I could use a break

I'm losing too heavy it just seems to take
I go for the long odds and bet on each way
But I'm getting nowhere I can't make it pay

Old Man

The first thing to tell you is all on the nose
You'll want a good double with long odds I suppose
Now I know the next race and the favourite will win
Though at only 3to1 the odds are quite slim
Lucky Lady's the name it will do it with style
It will give you a win though you won't make a pile
A nice little stake to put on the next race
And I've something in mind that should take first place

Hob listened enthralled as the man made his play
He spoke pretty well and Hob followed his say
He did as was bid and put it all on the nail
And waited attentively not wanting to fail
The first race commenced to a result pretty close
The favourite did win Hob's luck had a dose
He jumped up with glee to the old man's surprise
Though with the next race due the old man put him wise

Old Man

The first race is done and I've not let you down
And proved to the others that I'm not a clown
They didn't believe me thought I was the fool
Lucky for you, you did not follow that rule

Hob

Is this some sort of joke what are you actually saying
Have you got this contact or are you only playing
Why should all the others think you a clown
My horse had better win or you'll both be going down

Old Man

My word is my bond of that no denying
Your horse it will win it will do it by flying
The race has just started you'll see that I'm right
No need for us to argue besides I'm too old to fight

The race was in motion and Hob listened unsure
Was this man a liar as well as a bore
Though it led from the start it's courage was slacking
And by the close of that race that position was lacking
He looked at the old man who just shrugged and went 'tut'
So Hob lost his temper and fair dropped the nut
The Police they were called but Hob got away
And went into hiding for the rest of the day
When night time did come Hob fell quickly to slumber

And on seeing the book thought he might be in lumber

The Book

Hob you fool, you waste of time you can't be trusted with money
What goes on in that mind of yours it just seems to send you funny
Knowing about luck is knowing when to stop
And as for that senile old man did you really have to pop

Hob

I did not do too well today I know that to be the case
my reward is being poor for avarice showed its face

The Book

You recognised your frailty well at least that is a start
for knowing of your weakness it will quickly part
half the battle over you need contentment on your side
Keep it with you always for it will never chide

Hob

Words of truth you say again I guess to you I'm just a pain
Bare with me I'll try my best to alleviate this greedy pest

The Book

Mental sated by such matter material relief is avaricious patter
So take equality word and deed never take more than you need
Short term gain is not God sent it thrives on growing and becomes Hell bent
Take time out and rest awhile do you really need the latest style
It fills your mind with just despair and tells the world that you don't care
Don't get rich it's against God's law don't you know that He loves the poor

With that the energies returned again Hob felt lifted without the pain
The demon died and Hob felt lighter his spirit rose again the fighter

Hob

Thanks good book for my aid I feel so good like I've just been made
I duly pray that your patience is rewarded and future actions are now lauded

The Book

Saintly words that just might prove that you have learned enough to move
if that's the case life's turned a page but first things first control that rage

Hob

I see your point and take it to heart for this temper tears me apart
I lose control and just swing wild sometimes I feel I'm just a child
Help me book then I'll walk tall because with this rage I just seem to fall
Although not worthy give me a chance burst this boil with your lance

The Book

Peaceful existence be your gain don't let anger be its bane
To lose your tempers not a goal breath in deeply take control
Tranquillity calls you must follow null that rage don't let it wallow
Time will prove it be the way a stress free life no mind decay
This spirit gives you understanding unlike anger that's too demanding
A sea of calm man's evolution a tempest cry for devolution

With that the energies returned and entered through Hob's crown
Tingling sensation all around that forced Hob's anger down
He felt so good to feel the glow and took it in his stride
He felt so strong he was amazed and let the spirit bide

The Book

Well now Hob a change of tact to show you're not to blame
You could not cope with money how would you cope with fame
A good idea has come to mind to aid you with your plight
It has come to my attention that you should start to write

Hob

To write you say I'm not so sure it seems so hard to do
I wouldn't know where to start I just don't have a clue
Plots and plans verse and scans it's well above my head
Not for me oh Wondrous Book I guess that plan is dead

The Book

Not so fast don't give up for I will send it down
All you do it copy it a job for any clown
You'll think you did it by yourself but we will know much better
For all the knowledge is within I've got it to the letter

Act Four-Awful Fellow

Hob awoke very broke and in a forlorn manner
No money today, financial decay, luck did not fly his banner
He sat awhile, gave up in style now he had lost his luck
But a voice from within came out to him suggesting he wrote a book
Hob laughed aloud scaring a crowd of birds that had gathered around him
Though the more he thought the idea it caught though the light was to try and grow dim

Hob

No pen and paper how's that for a caper I haven't the tools of the trade
Shame I suppose I'm sure I'd compose though without them no progress is made

Hob scanned round the streets his eyes to the ground
And before very long a ball point was found

He picked it up quickly and made sure that it ran
And on finding some paper his work really began
He started to write and it flowed like a river
Chapter and verse both easy to deliver
His hunger now left him as he wrote it all down
Thinking he was the author instead of the clown
The book when completed was soon found on the shelf
And Hob rich in spirit was now rich in wealth
His ego well pandered self delusion set in
And at all the good parties he made quite a din

Hob

One suffers for ones art, strength of character plays its part
Though it can be so demanding to achieve this understanding
Well take me to prove a point is that two's up on that joint
A man that walked the road and got experience by the load
I think that Dickins once said oh it's gone right out my head
But I guess it doesn't matter he's not here to hear my patter

Host

Mr. Hobson you're so deep, it's an honour to hear you speak
You've really made my party with your eloquence so hearty
But one thing could you tell me as my impatience holds the key
When will your next book be ready and will it be so heady

Hob

I've got one in the pipeline though it's just finding the time
To channel thought to pen I've yet to make a when
It's not an easy thing to get my Soul to sing
So you'll have to bare with me and we'll both wait and see

Host

I look to that with relish for my life it will embellish
Because sir you are the greatest I will wait upon your latest
You are an inspiration and a credit to the nation

Hob's delusions they grew with mental masturbation
And he soon saw himself the inspiration to the nation
Time came to pass and so he decided to write
His thoughts into notions a second book was in sight
He sat with his pen his thoughts to unlock
But instead found the concept some call writers block

Hob

Where will I start, straight from the heart
But what will I say it's all gone away
What about the plot it's all gone to pot
Oh what's the use I'm just being obtuse

Hob tried his best but nothing came out
He wanted to scream but he was too tired to shout

He fell quickly to sleep tiredness took him away
And he met with the book who had plenty to say

The Book

Hob has returned and a writer no doubt
With all his prestige he has plenty of clout
People dote on his words to them he's the top
But now all that fawning has made him a fop

Hob was took back he did not know the score
He remembered the book although nothing more
His temper it rose his work compromised
The book was the target and it was despised

Hob

How dare you talk to me like that I'm well thought of in my sphere
A self made man who came from nothing, renowned by all who hear
What right have you, you jealous book to sneer and put me down
You talk to me like I am nothing just some sort of clown

With his rage his memory returned and Hob finally knew his place
He went quiet and to his shame he tried to hide his face
He shuffled nervously around not knowing what to say
But the book would not let it lie Hob was going to pay

The Book

Delusions of grandeur is that it now you're a tramp no more
Your life has turned full circle and now wealth's come to the fore
You've forgot your self Hob my son carried by your pride
But now I've got you in this dream you have no place to hide

Hob

What is happening to me how could I be so wrong
I took in everything they said and through it pride got strong
Every shallow line, every fawning word, went straight into my head
What a fool an idiot I wish that I was dead

The Book

Well now you've had your chance we'll just wait and see
For you still have one spirit left, it's called humility
If you can cope it will do you good, a tonic for your life
But if you can't the bad new is you'll end up in deep strife

Hob mulled awhile, the danger signs, they all ran through his head
His paranoia came to the fore he might just end up dead
He had no choice, it was obvious, he had to face his fears
He nodded his head, hiding his eyes, for they were close to tears

The Book

The spirit's humble in its being its essence is the power of seeing
Recognise him in each other, we're his children one another
To see him everywhere is the aim an insight turning pride to shame
Act accordingly and grow for humility's the seed to sow
The first's the last, that's how it goes, the king's the servant in another pose
Recognise the God within but not just yours for that's a sin

Energies swirled in Hob's mind, he thought them cruel but they were kind
He felt so lifted, he was whole now he knew he had a Soul

Hob

Blessed is me good book for now I know the truth
Everything has come to life I have eternal youth
Wealth less riches beyond belief how could I be poor
Thank you Lord, eternal word for opening that door

The Book

Work with me and change the world it has some need of leaven
I see its sorrows not its joys so turn it back to heaven
Play your part and bide your time for truth is on the way
Don't fear death it's just a price that some will have to pay
Live life strong and lead the way never ever follow
Define ambition for the Greater Good don't ever let things wallow
Peace of mind a collective feeling will soon come to the fore
Soon there'll be just average with no such thing as poor
Heed my words and work with me for your eternal grace
Look to light with understanding and you will see my face
For I am is love, it's everywhere, you'll see me by my work
So be like me and show my path responsibility don't shirk

Hob

So who are you, oh wondrous book let the secret out
For you seem to speak with eloquence and carry so much clout
What marvelled words, what deeds so pure, what's your definition
You comfort me time and again with no thought of attrition

The Book

I am your Maker plain to see you look at you you look at me
I'm here to guide you on your path and try to protect you from every gaffe
To come in dreams is my choice for that dimension holds my voice
So listen to me and all goes well but turn against me and I'll give you hell

Hob

I well believe you have the power to steer me through my darkest hour
And now I truly know my place I'll walk with love for that's your face
So if you are my Maker who am I, apart from the fellow that has to die
For I seem at least to sense that much though I don't think death is death as such

The Book

Very good you're learning quick you want to know what makes you tick
Sometimes you might have moody bouts now that tells you, you are your doubts

With that the awful fellow died but not in the sense that was implied.

6. Morgan's Treasure.

Curling swirling mist of form, darkened hearkened for a storm
Crowded clouded sky of woe, lightning strike and wind doth blow
Twisted tortured clouds of wrath hurling water in its path
Bringing fear to all around, echoed through each thunderous sound
Lightning bolts ignite the night adding to Bob Morgan's fright
As he sits there shaking in his barge paranoia now at large
Years of loneliness take their toll, madness now his only goal
Shaking trembling like a child, imagination running wild
Flashing lights bring shadows life only adding to Bob's strife
Huddled up in hedgehog's ball waiting for the storm to fall
Vowing solemnly he's repent if the storm would just relent
And ruing the day he found the verse for with it came a little curse
Memories come to haunt his mind, to remind him of that hidden find
A hidden cave, a desert storm, he needed shelter, it took that form
Once inside he found a crypt its broken seal meant it was stripped
He entered in a tomb vacated, it already had been desecrated
Broken fragments all around, a broken body on the ground
Gold and silver long since taken treasure gone and no mistaking
But in a corner he saw a scroll neatly packaged in a roll
Opening it out he saw a verse though ornate it was rather terse
Isis come to me for I want to taste your power
Isis come to me and open up my flower
Isis come to me for your love I've pined
Isis come to me and drive me out my mind
Bob kept the verse and so was fated, he left the cave the storm abated
Time past by, the fighting done he went back home the war was won
Bad luck sought him everywhere though at first he was unaware
Little things that came to pass, the first thing was he lost his lass
His wife she left him for another and Bob went back home to his mother
Bob lost heart he lacked direction, he took to solitude for correction
Tortured thoughts in a twisted mind his life was cruel not ever kind
Plagued at night by tortured scenes his Spirit got him in his dreams
Pyramids lay all around but to Bob no death was found
Chased by demons through the night Bob was far too weak to fight
Egyptian gods to some it's true but to Bob he had no clue
He just saw man-beasts in his mind; sleepless nights went with this find
Life on Earth was not much better for the verse was now his fetter
Constant debt and financial loss life down here had lost its gloss
Things got worse as is the case, the mark of death would show its face
His mother killed by a hit and run Bob now toyed with a loaded gun
Suicide became a thought though not too strong as it never caught
Nervous breakdown in the air but the council did not care

He lost his house though not to blame; it was in his mother's name
He found a barge, became nomadic, Egyptian dreams were still sporadic
And now the storm became his woe, he prayed to God that it might go
But rain still cannoned on the roof, was his God a God aloof
A fleeting shadow stopped his prayer, he looked for shape but none was there
He heard a voice, his reason lost, could hit sanity foot the cost.

Isis come to me for I want to taste your power

Isis come to me and open up my flower

Isis come to me for your love I've pined

Isis come to me and drive me out my mind

Fear now strangled all his senses he sat there shaking with no defences
He said nothing his head just hung, has that Bastet caught his tongue
He just looked at the wooden floor and out his glands the fear did pour
'Have good cheer' the Egyptian, 'Just keep Ammon in your head'
With that Bob found his strength though tiredness took him any length
He fell to sleep in his bed with tranquil thoughts inside his head
Though later on whilst in a daze he saw something strange in the haze
A succumbus came and took Bob's face; he felt dead weight on chest and face
He fought for breath, to free a hand; he felt his death was in demand
He said Ammon and found his faith and knocked the demon on its face
He fell to sleep the battle done but the night was not yet done

Isis come to me for I want to taste your power

A black cat's tail without a head, the apparition was on his bed

Isis come to me and open up my flower

Another weight, not like the other for this one did not want to smother

Isis come to me for your love I've pined

He rolled around in an erotic dream, he had the cat, he had the cream

Isis come to me and drive me out my mind

Bob awoke after he had came and from then on he was not the same.

7. The Trial of Eva O' Pen

Darkness turned over a land already bleak. The winter cold cut through the dormant trees and left its mark on the frozen vegetation a land of desolation to some but a welcome break to Martin Shivers. He was a cold calculating man who thrived in these conditions, a giant of a man at six feet four and weighing in at 18 stone without an ounce of fat or remorse. He lived his life as only a hermit could and shunned the company of his fellow man.

He lived deep in the woods and had become a legend blown out of all proportion by unknown neighbours too scared to see if it was true. He ate children or so the story went and sold his Soul to the devil. Times of ignorance abounded and the peasant population clung to the Church for divine guidance and a place in an afterlife called Heaven. Martin had turned his back on all that as the injustices perpetrated in the name of God did not add up in his rational mind. He had seen his mother hung as a witch when he was barely old enough to walk on the vague accusation that she could make spells. She was a herbalist it was true and had a good grounding in the knowledge that Martin had found later in his life but she had never turned anyone into a toad nor did the broom stick do any more than sweep the floor.

He had turned his back on village life as soon as he was able and became an outlaw for he could not see himself living in the law. The high taxes levied on the village to finance knights to go on expeditions of rape and pillage in the name of justice rankled him because once thing that could be said for Martin was that he was not ignorant. He was blessed with the grace of God and though not conscious of where it came from he knew that he had it. If the truth be known although illiterate he was a genius. It was just after Christmas and he was out checking his snares so see it he would be eating that day when a rustle in the bushes behind him distracted his attention. He held his trusty quarter staff and swung around bellowing, "Whose there? Come on out or lose your life."

A young peasant girl of beauty well above her station came out and said, "Please sir I am lost." She had the softest Irish brogue and the deepest blue eyes and held no fear of him.

"Indeed you are lass," he said looking at her with a wanton smile.

"I have strayed of the path and am now in fear as there is talk of a monster that lives around here."

"There is?" Martin said as he had never heard that before although he had lived in the woods for the best part of his life.

"Yes, a Godless giant that eats children. They say at the village that he is in league with the devil and that his mother was hung as a witch."

At this it sank in and Martin felt his temper rising but her soothing smile and cooling eyes helped him to control it. "Then we had better be careful. Tell me lass, why do you talk so strange?"

"We all talk like this. It is not strange."

Martin laughed at her childish innocence and said, "Then you are not from around here."

"No sir I have crossed the Great Sea for I was taken by my master to be his wife's maid."

"Sorry?"

"Master John sir," She said as if he should know him.

"And where is home?"

"Across the sea, well it was until he made me come to this land of devils."

"You do not like this land. Mind you I can not blame you lass. What are you called by the way as lass is no name for such beauty."

The girl blushed and said, "Eva, Eva of the Pen."

“Eva of the Pen I am honoured to make your acquaintance. I am Martin he that shivers and I would like to know how you came to be called by such an unusual name.”

“Eva, it is not unusual. Why in our village there were at least five.”

“Five you say,” he said with a playful smile, “I was talking about your other name.”

“Of the Pen. My father was a monk though it was not mentioned freely and he taught me to write.”

“You can write? You understand letters?”

“I do sir. I even know what they mean.”

“You do. Then perhaps you can do me a favour?”

“A favour sir, and what would that be?”

“I have a book that was left to me by my mother and I would dearly like to know what it is about as she is no longer with us.”

“Mine neither so I will gladly help you.”

“I don't live far so you will soon be on your way.”

“I have nowhere to go for I am an outlaw. Master John's wife was cruel and so I escaped. She used to beat me for no reason.”

“My poor child I too am an outlaw. Why not stay with me a while.”

“Could I sir? I will cook and clean.”

“If you like. Perhaps you might teach me to read.”

“Yes sir, I could do that.”

“Then we have a deal. First things first let me see if you have anything to cook.”

Martin checked the snares and as luck would have it caught a small wild boar. He skinned and gutted it and buried the offal. They went back to his small dwelling which was situated at the foot of a large hill secluded until you were almost upon it. It was around ten feet square and furnished simply with the natural resources he had found around him and though smoky with the fire going it was still reasonably comfortable to live in. As Eva cooked he went to see if the forest would turn up something as an accompaniment but came back empty handed as winter had culled most of the vegetation.

“So,” he said on his return, “Eva of the Pen how fare you with the fare?”

“Sorry?”

“How are you getting on with the meal?”

“Soon, nearly done.”

“Good, so tell me about across the water. What sort of place is it?”

“It's a fine country sir, if it was not for the Norman's.”

“They have a lot to answer for,” Martin agreed, “They build great churches with the blood and sweat of the down trodden.”

“They do it for God for He is the Lord.”

“They do it for a place in Heaven for that is what they believe will happen.”

“That's a bad thing to say. Be careful you do not end in Hell.”

“I thought that I had left it,” Martin said with a smile, “That is why I left the village for we were treated no better than animals.”

“Surely it is for God's service for that is our purpose in life.”

“To make another man fat by our sweat, I don't think so. That's not God's service that is stupidity.”

“That is not so for if we do His work we go to Heaven. My father told me and he was a monk so he must know.”

“We are not doing His work we are just making some Lord of the Manor rich. Surely a good God would not want that?”

“The meal is ready,” She said blanking him, “Let's have no more talk about it.”

She served up the boar and they both ate heartily. The subject went back to home once more, “My master used to look after me until she came along then things really changed. I used to live in the house but then I had to sleep in the barn underneath. It was so cold at times that I thought I would

freeze to death. She was a nasty woman. She made him move here for this is where her family had land and so I ran away as soon as I could.”

“How did you survive alone in a strange country?”

“I had God and He fed me when I was hungry.”

“He did?”

“He told me there to find food and I just helped myself.”

“Sorry, what do you mean?”

“I saw it in a dream. It was a big stone castle and they were feasting. You've never seen so much food in all your life. There were mountains of it. I went in when they had all finished and fell to sleep.”

“You mean you stole it whilst they slept?”

“No I didn't steal if for if I did I would have to go to Hell. God told me where it was and so He must have wanted me to have it.”

“And you saw Him in a dream, you actually saw Him?”

“No not Him I saw one of His angels dressed as a guard and He told me that I could go in when they slept.”

“Oh, so where was this castle?”

“Not far, about a day's walk.”

Martin laughed loudly at that and said, “Old Rufus, you stole for old Rufus.”

“I did not steal it. Don't say that I don't want to go to Hell.”

“No, you did not steal it as it was already stolen.”

“What, already stolen by who?”

“From most of the surrounding villages they have to give him their labour so it was not his sweat that toiled the land. It was not even his sweat that cooked it. In fact the only time he sweated was when he actually ate it.”

“So God was right to let me have it,” she said as if Martin had confirmed it.

“Well I guess you could say that for after all it was His to give.”

“Then I will not go to Hell,” she said with a beaming smile that told him that she had had doubts before.

“No and by the sound of it you have just left it.”

“So I am safe,” she said ignoring his last comment, “I will not go to Hell.”

Martin marvelled at how well they had her in fear but she had also set another thought in motion.

He had been having strange dreams recently that had begun to haunt him somewhat. He was in a bleak forest with colours of drab green and brown. He had seen a red rose in front of him and tried to pick it up but every time he got near it, it seemed to get further away. He did not actually want to tell her about the dream so he skirted around it, “Do you see God often in your dreams?”

“I have never actually seen him only His angels.”

“What with wings and harps?”

“No I see them like I saw that guard.”

“Oh, you mean like ordinary people.”

“Yes, they are always there to help me. Well except the devils that it.”

“The devils. You have seen devils?”

“Yes, I have seen them.”

“And do they look like ordinary people?”

“No they are horrible ugly things.”

“What do they look like,” his interest growing.

“Like people but with funny heads, long chins and horns, ugly.”

“Who told you that they were angels and devils?”

“My father used to tell me when I was a child. Sometimes I used to wake up crying after I had horrible dreams and he would tell me they were the devils at work.”

"But what about angels did he tell you that too?"

"No, but if they were not devils they must be angels," she said as if the point did not need saying.

"Oh," Martin said seeing her logic but not agreeing with it, "So what other things have you seen in dreams?"

"All sorts. Some times they warn me of things like the one I had telling me I was to be beaten."

"What. You saw yourself being beaten?"

"No it does not work like that all the time. Sometimes they show me something and I have to guess it."

"Really so what was the dream?"

"I was in a storm hiding in the barn with the door slamming open and shut. Every time it shut I felt pain and then I woke up."

"And then were you beaten?"

"The very next day," and showed him her heavily marked back.

"When was this? These marks look recent."

"Three days ago. After that I escaped. I ate nothing on the first day but had the dream with the castle the first night and ate the next day."

"You must know quite a lot about dreams then?"

"A little, only what God told me."

Martin decided to leave the conversation to a later date as he found her pre occupation with God slightly unnerving. Instead he said, "Any way how would you like to do a little reading?"

She agreed so he fetched out a dusty loose leaved book that had not been opened in years. She looked at the cover and read the title slowly. "**The Path of Light-those who fear the truth need not open.**" She looked at Martin for some strange reason and said, "Was this your mother's book?"

He nodded and she looked a little scared, "My father has mentioned this book to me before. He said that this was a book that witches had."

"My mother was hung as a witch," Martin answered and Eva went cold.

Chapter 2

"You are not going to eat me are you?" she said trembling.

"No I've just been fed," he said smiling. He went to try and comfort her but had misunderstood the depth of her fear for she screamed, "No, leave me be."

"I am not a monster," he said trying to reassure her, "Do I look like some one who eats children?"

She looked at him unsure and said, "But you are in league with the devil."

"No, I don't even know what he looks like. I have never seen him."

She went quiet for a while not really knowing what to say for she had seen him and that meant that maybe she was in league with him.

"Do you fear the truth," he said going back to the book.

"I don't want to be a witch; my father said that if I ever read that book I would turn into a witch."

"Did your father fear the truth, is that why he told you that?"

"My father feared nothing only God," she said coming to his defence, "And they said that you were a Godless giant."

"You won't turn into a witch," Martin said. He did not want to pursue the Godless giany bit for although he might be perceived as a giant he was certainly Godless, "My mother wasn't a witch."

"But they hung her," she said bringing up old memories, "She must have been one."

"You were beaten for no other reason that to satisfy you mistresses blood lust, were you bad?"

"No," she said and could see his point but her fear still held her firmly, "Let me sleep on it first and see what God tells me."

"Very well," Martin said not wanting to push her but desperate to find out what was in the book,

"You will find it comfortable here," and made a place for her close to the fire.

Martin slept well and had the dream about the rose again. Although he still never caught it he was

getting closer. He never mentioned his dream though as he was more interested in what Eva had seen.

“Sleep well,” he said as he watched her stir.

“Very well and luck is on your side.”

“Sorry? Do you mean that you will read the book?”

“I'm not sure about the book for the dream did not mention it.”

“Oh,” he said with disappointment, “What did you see?”

“I saw you out in the forest and you found a chest full of treasure. You dragged it back to here and it turned into the finest meat I ever tasted.”

“I don't understand, how can you eat treasure?”

“Time will tell,” she said and he noticed that she had started to lose a little of her childishness as he got to know her.

“Well,” he said getting up, “I usually go out for a walk first thing to clear my head. Would you care to join me?”

“Yes,” she said and looked out to see that it had snowed during the night, “Though I fear I might get cold.”

“Have this,” Martin said giving her his large coat, “It will keep you warm.”

“But what are you to wear for you will catch your death.”

“I rarely feel the cold. I'm quite used to it now.”

They went into the cold and Martin checked his snares but there was no sign of death so he was beginning to have his doubts about Eva's dream “Looks like we might not be eating today,” he said with a shrug of his shoulders.

“What's that?” Eva said pointing to some blood on the snow.

“Deer tracks, it looks like it has been wounded.” They followed the tracks and before long came across a large stag that looked as if it had died during the night. It had been wounded by an arrow but had managed to lose the hunters and limp out of their reach. It took both their strength to pull it back and Martin made Eva a coat with the pelt he had skinned.

They ate heartily that day and one or two more besides and Martin thought that maybe there was something to be said about dreams. He thought that Eva was a good luck charm and liked to have her around. His thoughts drifted back to before he had met her and how the boredom of being alone sometimes got to him. He remembered the hate he once had and hoped it would never return. As the day wore on his thoughts returned to the book. “So,” he said after the meal, “What about the book?” “I'm not sure for it was not mentioned.” He noticed that she had lost a little of the fear though so it gave him an idea.

“God must have wanted you to read it for He gave us food to eat.”

She thought about what he had said and could see the logic though her engrained fear made her reluctant at first. Eventually she said, “You must be right and my father wrong.”

She read the cover again and built up her courage to open the book. She read, “**All men are equal in the eyes of the Lord, no man is greater except he be more humbler,**” she stopped at that and said, “Maybe you are right but why would my father say it was a book of witchcraft?”

“I don't know your father,” Martin said being diplomatic, “So I can not make that judgement but I do know that they hung my mother for having this book so knowledge must be a dangerous thing.” Eva read on, “**Hell is an invention to keep the ignorant in their place though Heaven exists and is attainable through divine understanding.**” She stopped there and said, “I don't believe that for there is a Hell. My father has mentioned it often enough.”

“He also said that this is a book of witchcraft, I don't see any spells.”

“But there must be a Hell otherwise there can't be a Heaven.” She had used her angel and devil logic but this time Martin did not let it drop, “It does not have to work like that. You don't have to have one without the other.”

“Then where do all the bad men go, they must go somewhere.”

"I don't know, maybe it will be revealed in the book?"

Eva read on, "**The Path of Light is obtainable by all yet very few attain it for ignorance breeds ignorance and contempt of God's children grows while divine knowledge is used without its understanding.**" She put the book down and said, "I don't understand what that means."

"Is it to do with knowledge, is that what light is?"

"Maybe, because my father mentioned that people must be kept in the dark as they would not understand."

"I bet he did," Martin thought to himself though said nothing except, "That would be ignorance then, darkness. So it must be saying that people are left in the dark by others in the dark for though they know His words they don't understand them."

Eva looked at Martin and said, "This is a dangerous book but it has nothing to do with witchcraft."

"Some say that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing," Martin said thinking of the consequences of the book. It could have destroyed the Church if it was true but he did not want to get involved in such a dangerous task. He was quite content to live his life and let others get on in ignorance.

"What are we going to do with it," Eva said, "We can't just leave people ignorant."

"Why not, no one will believe you. You will suffer the same fate as my mother, hung as a witch on a false charge."

"But we can't just leave it. Look at all the suffering."

"No one will believe you," he repeated, "It will just be a waste of time."

Eva let the matter drop for a while and carried on reading, "**True redemption can be attained by divine knowledge and works of love for that is the will of the divine.** But that is His will surely, to be worshipped."

"No, surely not His will would be that His children did not suffer. He wants everyone to be equal."

"I thought that you did not believe in God," she said in surprise.

"I never said that I did but I'm only going on what the book says and to me works of love would not involve the suffering that goes into financing those great churches."

"So what would works of love be if not works of art?"

"Charity would be a work of love I suppose something to help the betterment of Man."

"That's not what my father would have said. He said that the beauty of art separates Man from the beast and gives us favour in the eyes of the Lord."

"It sounds to me that he would have thought I was a beast."

"He was not a bad man. Maybe he too was kept in ignorance."

"Or he just did not understand," Martin said trying to reassure her for he could see what the effect of her father's destruction was having on her. She brought out a sort of protective side of him, one that he had not known before and so this left him slightly confused. He had never felt that way about anyone else before as he had always let hate guide his path. She was different though. Maybe her beauty had quelled the beast in him; he was not sure though he knew he liked to have her around.

She read a little more as his thought train drifted off on a tangent. "**The divine nature of Man sets him apart from the other beasts that share God's world and gives him the chance of spiritual attainment through humility and mental growth.**" She stopped at that and said, "What is mental growth?"

"Sorry?" Martin said as he had not heard her read.

"What is mental growth," she repeated, "It said that spiritual attainment can be got through mental growth."

"I don't know, light maybe."

"Knowledge, it must be saying that if you are humble and clever you get to Heaven."

"Isn't that a contradiction in terms? What is spiritual attainment anyway?"

"Getting to Heaven I suppose."

"Read it again," and she did.

“The divine nature of Man, doesn't that mean that we all have God inside us?”

“That's blasphemy, an insult to God.”

“It says that we are all God's children that must mean that there is a little bit of God in us all.”

“No,” she protested for that was her last barrier and she was going to defend it, “It doesn't mean that. He only had one son and he died on the cross to save us, to say that it an insult to his memory.”

“Look I'll be honest with you. I don't know anything of this I'm only going on what the book says. It's getting late now why not sleep on it and see what God says.”

“You're wrong or this book is full of lies but you are right I am getting tired.”

“Then we will see what morning has to offer,” Martin said and they settled down and went quickly to sleep.

Martin found himself in a room full of peacocks though he did not know them as such as he had never seen one before. All he saw was brightly coloured birds with many eyes on their feathers talking to each other. He could hear what they were saying and listened in. The first one said, “Lest we forget for all is dark leave this book it holds the mark.” and pushed forward a book. Martin recognised it and went to grab it but was held firmly in his tracks. “The wisdom held is surpassed by none; its understanding must be won.”

Another said, “Martin he that shivers who gave you this book?”

“It was left by my mother.”

“To what purpose did she leave this book, you can not read.”

“I am learning soon and then I'll know the purpose.”

“Was it to be hidden away whilst your fellow man suffered?”

“How will that book help my fellow man's suffering? It cost my mother her life, is that not suffering enough?”

Another peacock made its way forward and said, “Martin when my life finished my suffering went with it.”

He vaguely recognised the voice but it had been a long time since he had heard his mother so he was unsure. “Who are you?” he said looking for confirmation.

“I am the woman who brought you into this world. Don't you know me little knight?”

Martin went cold for that was what his mother used to call him. Eventually he composed himself and said, “Why did you leave the book for that is a question only you can answer.”

“To grow little knight and find that God is love.”

“Not from my side for He is cruel and unforgiving.”

“Man is cruel and unforgiving so naturally they think that God is also. Learn to read and finish the book and then you will truly know His nature.”

“But what about other people's suffering, am I to shoulder the blame?”

“No little knight the time is not right yet. Never lose the book and pass it down till the time is right. Read it and understand it and bid your children do the same.”

“My children am I to start a family? I am stuck here in the woods.”

“You have found your woman now and she will bring you fine and handsome sons as many as the stars at night. Be careful that you never lose her.”

Martin smiled and said, “That will never happen.”

“It is others taking her away that you must fear,” his mother said and with that Martin awoke to a cold morning.

Chapter 3

Martin found that much to his relief Eva was still there asleep. He had an uneasy feeling that she would not be there yet did not know why. He had not been conscious of most his dream only of the fact he should learn to read and keep the book safe. He got up and went outside into the cold air to gather wood for the fire. He was gone about 30 minutes and on his return saw that Eva was just waking.

“Sweet dreams?” he said by way of greeting.

She smiled and said, “I think that maybe you are right.”

“You do, so what made you change your mind?”

“A dog told me,” she said mysteriously.

“What, a talking animal, that's new.”

“He said that He was the God inside me and wanted to know why I did not know this.”

“I don't understand. What has a dog got to do with God?”

“He is faithful and true and he spells God backwards. He said that we live in His reflected light.”

“Oh,” Martin said not really understanding but glad that she changed her mind, “Then we shall do some reading.”

“Later. I thought we might go out for a walk first as my head feels a little funny.”

“Alright I will show you the Pool of Plenty if you like.”

“What's that?”

“It's a magic pool,” He said teasing, “It is always full of fish and is very relaxing to sit by.”

“Very well,” She said putting her coat on, “Is it far?”

“Follow me and find out for yourself.”

They walked into the morning and much to Martin's surprise the chill had gone from the air. As they strolled Eva grabbed his hand and held it firmly. She must have got over thinking he was a monster he thought to himself as they made their way to a dark cave. No one had found it in many years as it was well hidden, far off the beaten track. Martin himself had only found it quite recently and would come to it in times of danger. The inside was larger than the house he built and would have made a better dwelling though Martin had never got around to actually moving. They went inside and Martin said, “Just through there is another entrance but be careful though as it's dark.”

They kept close to the walls and Eva saw the light up ahead. They made their way to it and outside saw a large pool of water surrounded by over hanging trees. It was an idyllic place so they sat in the clearing and watched life in its essence.

“You ought to see it in the summer,” Martin said, “All the colour and the birds singing. If this was Heaven I would be happy.”

“Surely this place would be a better place to stay,” Eva said wondering why he had never moved in,

“Is there something matter with it?”

“No, it's nice and dry and a lot bigger than the house.”

“Why not move in then?” Eva said as she quite liked the idea of living in a cave.

“I never got around to it; I just use it in times of danger.” He thought a while and said, “Maybe you are right, it is time to move.”

They sat a while longer and then Martin lit a fire and made a torch. They went back into the cave to have a look around. The main room was much larger than he thought for he had never really looked at it properly in the light. Much to his surprise it branched off and they followed it into another room where paintings lined the walls. Eva was amazed and said, “Someone must have lived here before, what sort of animals are they?”

Martin looked but he did not know either as he had never seen the like of them before. He just admired them for their beauty awhile before he said, “This should make a good room to sleep in, when shall we move?”

“Why not now. Your place isn't too far so it shouldn't take long.”

They got to work and as Eva started to clear the debris Martin started to empty the furniture from the house and carry it back. He lit a fire at the front to warm the place out and as the day drew to a close the cave was finally ready. He had tied torches around to light the place and in the room set aside for sleep the animals danced in the flickering flame. Martin was tired though he still wanted to know about the contents of the book so he said, “Are you up to some reading?”

“Yes why not,” Eva said with a smile and taking the book put it on the table. She opened it and took up where she had left off, “**Mental growth can be accelerated by surrendering your will to the**

divine and making the conscious choice that what you do should be done for the Greater Good. To surrender your will is the ultimate prayer and helps you climb the Tree of Life with knowledge of the divine and balancing of the elements achieves evolution of your Soul through self development.”

“I don't understand that,” Martin said after she had finished, “What is the Tree of Life for a start?”
“I've heard of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden but the Tree of Life is unfamiliar. It's certainly a mystery.”

“I don't think we'll make much progress without a Bible, we'll leave it for today.”

They went to bed and fell into each others arms without a word being spoken and made love in front of the flickering animals. From that time on Eva was Martin's woman as Martin's mother said she would be and Martin was her man. Martin dreamt of the rose in the barren forest but this time he grabbed it and held it firmly. As he did the forest sprang up with flora with colour sprouting from everywhere and the trees turned to new spring growth. He felt strangely lifted and woke up the next morning bright and early to find to his horror that Eva was not there. She must have left him he thought angrily to himself at first for his trust was still shaky. Anger carried him as he picked up his staff and made to find her. He could not understand why she had left him and self pity merged with his temper bringing hatred to the fore. He marched towards the village first to see if that was where she had headed. He was full of mixed emotions as his rational started to kick in. She had nowhere to go for she was an outlaw and as he calmed down it slowly started to sink in. She must have had a dream and had gone to fetch a Bible to help him with his book. It made sense the more he thought about it and so he was going in the wrong direction. He turned around and went towards the chapel on the outskirts of the castle that Rufus ruled from. He walked for hours seeing no one until he was nearly upon it when he chanced upon a travelling merchant out on his own which was quite dangerous around those parts. As Martin approached the merchant went for his sword but Martin stopped him, lifting up his staff and saying, “Take that out any further and I will crush your skull.”
“I have no money you are just wasting your time.”

“I'm not after you money,” Martin said trying to reassure him for he wanted the truth, “I am after some information.”

With that the man's demeanour changed and he said, “Well if I can help I will,” he looked at Martin's appearance and said, “Are you looking for your woman?”

“Yes,” Martin said guardedly, “How did you know?”

“They found a woman trying to steal a Bible and she was dressed in a similar manner to you.”

“What. Where are they keeping her?”

“I'm not sure I only saw them take her away. They say that she is to stand trial for witchcraft though that is all I can really tell you.”

“Thanks, you've been a great help.”

“I'm sorry,” the man said as an afterthought, “She does not look like she has much hope. “ He left Martin after he had wished him well.

Meanwhile the trial was already in progress. Lord Rufus himself had taken charge of the proceedings as he had quite an eye for the destruction of beauty. There had been a lively debate on who should actually try her as it was reasoned that the deer skin she wore must have come from the forest and as such was the property of the lord. The priest had objected as he saw it as an ecclesiastical matter as she had stolen a Bible and so in the end they both attended. Her sharpness of mind led to a closed court with only three guards, the priest, the lord and two others as they saw her as dangerous.

It was the lord who spoke first, “Eva O' Pen you stand accused of theft namely a stag from my land. This is a hanging offence what do you have to say for yourself.”

“My lord it was already dead when I found it so I don't see it as theft. Besides it had no mark on it so how was I to know that it was yours?”

“It is irrelevant on whether it was dead or not for theft is theft and as for the fact it had no mark it

did not need it for all the wildlife in the forest belong to me.”

“I thought that it belong to God for He told me to take it.”

“What,” the priest erupted, “You will burn in Hell for that.”

“There's no Hell,” Eva countered without fear for she found the fat blustering man funny.

“She has convicted herself with her own words,” the priest said in a triumphant manner, “She is to hang by the neck.”

The old power struggle erupted as the lord was not to be outdone, “She is standing trial for the theft of a stag and will hang for that.”

“She has broken the law of the Church with her heresy, would you go against that?”

“She is on my land and will be trialled by my law.”

“I will protest to the king,” the priest said though as it was a time of mild anarchy Rufus was not that impressed.

“You can protest to God Himself but this is my land and what I say goes.”

“Careful sir or you too will burn in Hell.”

“Threats of retribution in the after life don't work with me for while I live I hold the sword.”

“Are you threatening me sir for I don't take kindly to that. I am not without powerful friends who would not like me to suffer.”

Eva sat back and watched the process in action. She found it amusing as she felt somewhat aloof from it all that did not last long though as the tempers subsided and a compromise was sought. It came from one of the other men who was somewhat of a lawyer.

“Gentlemen it is the woman who is on trial here. Her punishment is assured it's just the charge that is in dispute.”

The lord calmed down and said, “It is true she is guilty whether theft or heresy she must still lose her life.”

Eva interrupted at that and said, “I have no fear of death for I walk with the real Lord.”

The priest turned a bright shade of purple at this and said, “Her place in Hell is now assured so her death is immaterial.”

The lord picked up on this and said, “So you do not fear death. Maybe you are a witch after all. I say that you must take trial by ordeal.”

The priest was happy with this and they came to mutual agreement.

Meanwhile Martin was making progress. He had sneaked into the castle undetected and searched for where she might be. He had got into conversation with one of the serfs and heard that she was being held in one of Rufus' private chambers. He had also been told that she was caught wearing the skin of one of his deer and that was a hanging offence. Martin was somewhat confused at this as the merchant had said it was for stealing a Bible. He made his way to the chamber regardless and saw a guard was blocking his path.

“Stand aside for you have my woman and I am here to take her back.”

“The witch you mean,” the guard said unafraid. He was a large man himself about the same height as Martin although a little lighter, “She is to die as any witch should.”

“She is no witch and that will cost you your life.”

“I have no fear of you for you might eat children but I have long since grown up.”

It came to Martin's attention that the guard knew who he was so he thought that he would play on it, “Then you know who I am you must know what I'm capable of. Stand aside and disappear and you won't get hurt.”

“Like I said earlier I have long since grown up” He went to draw his sword but Martin hit him full bore on the chest sending him reeling back into the wall. The noise of metal hitting the stone made an awful din and shook the guard slightly. He managed to draw his sword and came forward like a mad man.

“Too slow,” Martin said jabbing him in the chest, “Much too slow.”

The guard fell back slightly and caught his breath. He swung low but Martin stepped back just in

time and it crashed against the wall making another loud noise. The noise attracted another guard's attention who came to the first one's aid. Time was running out so Martin had to work fast. He jabbed the first one full in his face with his staff breaking his nose and loosening the front teeth. The guard fell to his knees and Martin hit him full on the crown breaking his skull. The other guard saw this and backed off slightly but Martin had his battle frenzy with him and swung low hitting him on the shins. Although protected by the armour the impact made the man fall back slightly. The force was not enough to hurt him though so he came forward swinging and narrowly missing Martin's chest.

"Your time has come," the guard said as he swung again, "I have no fear of you no matter what they say."

Martin was surprised at how well known he actually was though his main concern was to try and finish the man off before he attracted any more attention. This was to prove quite difficult as the man was fairly quick on his feet and avoided a blow to the chest by side stepping.

"You have no chance," the guard said taking another swing, "Give up and I will spare your miserable life."

"Not me," Martin said hitting the man on the shoulders knocking him back slightly. The man swung again and Martin stepped back and watched the sword hit the wall. He hit the man on the arm and he dropped the sword. He followed through with a blow to the shoulder breaking it and sending pain down the arm. The man held onto his shoulder in pain and Martin saw his chance. He hit the man on his left side temple and the man fell to his knees. Martin picked up the sword and plunged it down the mouth ending up somewhere near the kidneys. The man was no more so Martin pulled out the sword and headed for the door.

Chapter 4

"Eva O 'Pen," the priest said getting into his stride and blissfully unaware of the commotion outside, "I am giving you the opportunity to recant and repent your ways. You still have a chance of not burning in Hell."

"I have done nothing that I am ashamed of, I have nothing to recant."

"Then you will surely burn," but he was interrupted at that by the door bursting open.

"Over my dead body," Martin said and plunged the sword into the guard by the door. He had not been expecting it and fell quickly to the ground without time to retaliate. The other two looked away on seeing this as they were not made of stern stuff but the priest said without fear, "How dare you enter a court of law in this manner."

Martin was surprised at this for he had just killed a man in front of his eyes and that would not be the usual action. He moved forward and looked at the man recognising him almost immediately, "You," he said his temper rising, "It was you who murdered my mother."

The priest was somewhat taken aback by this as he did not know who Martin was. His somewhat insular life had made him immune from gossip and he had no notion of the monster in the forest.

"What, I know nothing of what you are talking about."

"You had her killed as a witch," Martin said seething that he should not know who she was after sanctioning her death.

The priest thought for a while and said, "If she was hung as a witch then she must have been one and the fact that you know this other witch only confirms this."

"I am not here to bandy words with you. I am here for my woman, that book in your hand and retribution for the deed you have perpetrated."

"Retribution from a priest," he sneered, "How dare you. Ignorant man you will burn in Hell for that." Martin did no more than hit the man across the crown of his head sending him sprawling across floor and to where ever his Maker saw fit to send him. From that moment Martin he that shivers became known as Martin burn in Hell and the name passed down the family line.

Martin next turned to Rufus and said, "You hold my woman and I have come for her."

“She is a thief,” Rufus said, unsure of himself but knowing that he could not lose face, “She stole my stag.”

“Your stag, who said it was your stag?”

“The Law of the Land says that all the wildlife in the forest belong to me.”

“And who wrote the law for it was not written by God?”

“It is the law and it must be upheld otherwise we would have anarchy.”

“Who wrote this law,” he repeated not wanting to be browbeaten, “Have you no answer?”

“I drafted it,” the man who had been the diplomat earlier sheepishly said, “For it was given under Charter.”

“Not by me,” Martin said with contempt, “My ancestors might have been soft enough to let themselves be walked over but I demand the right of combat.”

“Then I shall need a Champion,” Rufus said looking at the two guards that were left who were looking down at the floor and shuffling their feet.

“If they are your animals then you should fight for them. Don't ask anyone to do a job that you won't do yourself.”

Rufus did not like the idea so Martin picked up the Bible and with Eva joining him left the room.

“Call out the guard,” he heard Rufus bellow so thought a little run was in order. As they got to the courtyard they moved quickly and just made the draw bridge before it was raised. They made straight for the dense undergrowth and watched the guards come out searching for them. They made back for the cave but nightfall caught them half way there. On hearing the noise of the search they climbed a large tree concealing themselves while watching the proceedings below. Rufus ordered the guards to circle the area from his horse and took the chase like he was hunting a deer.

“It might be an idea to move out of the area,” Eva said, “He looks like a man who doesn't forget.”

“We shall be safe here till morning and they will never find the cave.”

They had a restless night as shouts echoed all around them but come day break the guards had moved further afield so it was reasonably safe to continue their journey. Martin knew that by now he must have a price on his head but that did not concern him as he rarely saw anyone on his travels. They got back and saw a fire in the distance and assumed that the guards had found his old house. Martin heard voices and they saw a troop of guards led by Rufus returning from the blaze. “He has no home now,” Rufus said as if honour had been satisfied, “He even did me a favour by ridding me of that priest.”

The man who had been in the courtroom earlier said, “He'll burn in Hell for that,” and Martin wondered about their obsession with eternal damnation. It was like they gave you hell all your life and not content they condemned you to it in an afterlife. It was a strange society and Martin felt glad that he was aloof from it. They waited around long after the guards had gone and then made their way back to the cave.

It was late afternoon when they got back and tiredness made them fall quickly to sleep.

Martin found himself back with the peacocks and they had taken it upon themselves to start his education. It was his mother who started the ball rolling.

“Little knight,” She said, “Are you aware that you have a Soul?”

“I suppose so.”

“Then you know what you are,” on seeing he did not said, “An evolving Soul on the Path of Light.”

“The Path of Light that is the title of the book you left me.”

“That's right our Soul transcends lifetimes for it can never die. You are here to evolve and develop your Self so it might be pure enough to merge and become like your Spirit, immortal.”

Martin remembered the passage so he said, “Balancing the elements, what are they?”

“They are what make you you, the Fire of your Imagination, the Water of the Intellect, the Air of your Spirit and the Earth of your Soul. Put them together and you get yourself.”

“But how do I balance them I don't even really understand what they are?”

“By purity of thought and deed and by working for the Greater Good, the good of mankind.”

“Not by building great churches though?”

“The rich have their heaven so all that's left for them is death.”

“Is there a Hell?” Martin said forgetting the earlier passage.

“Only for some in this life, the ones that pass judgement go on to the Collective and the ones that fail go back to be reformed. The Soul might live on but the Self will die.”

“What about prayer where does that fit in?”

“Depends on what you pray for. Materialistic things will never be answered for it does not work on that level but guidance is freely given.”

“It mentioned the ultimate prayer what was that all about?”

“When you surrender your will you make the conscious decision to work for God. You let a little love in every time you say it and this gives you strength to evolve by purification of the Soul.”

“But what must I say?”

“I will tell you but when you wake up you will not remember it, well consciously anyway.”

“Alright,” for he was curious even though he knew it was pointless.

“You must say ' I surrender my Will to the greater will the will of the divine, I will, to will thy will' Seven times twice a day. In time you will find this out but not in this lifetime.”

“You mean that I am not to make it this time?”

“Not this time though you will have a long and happy life. I'm afraid that time has moved on for morning is here.”

Martin woke up to find Eva still in his arms. She clutched the Bible as she slept and Martin did not want to disturb her. He watched her a while and took in her beauty. Her dark black hair made her look like a goddess and to Martin that was what she was. She stirred slightly to find a more comfortable position and he gently loosed her and left her to sleep in her angelic little way. Martin got up and went to have a look around as he had an uneasy feeling that the cave was being watched. He looked around using his staff as a prod for the bushes but found nothing. He searched for 10 minutes but to no avail and on his return to the cave found Eva awake by the entrance.

“I thought that they had got you,” She said mysteriously.

“Who? Is there someone around as I felt I was being watched?”

“I saw you in a dream and it worried me.”

“What happened?”

“You were being pecked at by two jackdaws and though you managed to trap them they left you covered in blood.”

“Two little birds I don't think they could do me much damage. Don't worry Eva I can look after myself and you too now you've let me.”

“Just be careful for it means two enemies and they might not be that small.”

“You'll be safe but if you are worried we could always move on.”

A rustling bush stopped him at that and he turned around to see a giant of a man, standing seven feet tall and with the appearance more akin to a mountain man than anything else. Beside him stood a slight man no taller than a dwarf and he seemed to revel in chatter, “Begging your pardon sir,” he said with a mock bow, “But Brutus and I were wondering when you would be vacating this cave as we are in need of some shelter.”

The large man who was of few words looked at Eva and said, “Woman.”

Eva backed off timidly and said, “Be careful Martin he looks dangerous.”

The dwarf looked at Martin and said, “Be you Martin he that shivers?”

“As was but now I am called Martin burn in Hell.”

“Then accept my apologies for my poor misguided friend for he has no cause to insult your good lady and tell me how long you will need to vacate the cave.”

“I'm not going anywhere,” Martin said surprised at his cheek, “And if you had any sense you would best be on your way.”

“Ah but I am somewhat lacking that way so I guess that Brutus would have to evict you.”

"He is welcome to try but fate is against you."

"I believe that a man creates his own destiny. Why not but three years ago I was alone and friendless at the Court of good King Fritten and now I am cock of the walk."

Martin took his stance with his staff at the ready and said, "You talk too much let me see your man of action."

The dwarf looked at the giant and nodded his head. The giant took position with his staff and they squared up to each other much to Eva's concern. The towering giant held the height advantage and made good use of it hitting Martin again and again. He blocked most of them but he started to collect bruises on his legs and arms. Martin saw his chance though as the flurry died down and caught the giant on the side of his shoulder though it just seemed to bounce without making an impact.

"He can't be hurt," the dwarf said, "For where there is no sense there is no feeling."

The dwarf went to pull out a dagger but Eva saw this and quickly wrestled him to the ground like she was wrestling a child. Putting his dagger to his throat she said, "Stop or I'll kill him."

The giant swung around and said, "My friend, no." and Martin took his distraction to hit him across the head knocking him to his knees.

"Alright," the dwarf said, "You win, only don't hurt him." Martin noticed his flamboyant manner had disappeared and said, "If you would have asked I would have helped you to rebuild my old house as it is not far from here."

"No one has ever helped me," the dwarf said sadly, "Except Brutus that is."

"Sometimes you have to ask, you can't just take it," Martin said and then felt foolish remembering the little incident with the stag.

"They talk of you around the village. They say that your woman is a witch," he looked at Eva and said "My apologies young lady for you do not have the bearings of a witch."

"You know witches?" Eva said in surprise as it had caught her interest with all the recent goings on.

"I have seen many things on my travels and I have travelled more than John Manderville himself."

"Bid them stay for a meal," She said looking at Martin, "For he sounds like an interesting man."

"You are welcome to stop and eat with us for we still have venison and it makes for a fine meal."

"Ah," the dwarf said, "The meat of kings." He looked at the giant who had only just got up and said, "We will gladly stay."

Chapter 5

As the venison cooked they sat around the fire and listened intently to what the dwarf had got to say, "Sure I could never stay around in one place long enough to put down roots. Stumpy they call me by the way. I joined a travelling band of players and was well known in the courts around this land and others beside."

"You said that you have seen a witch," Eva said, "Where was that?"

"I have seen many but they are not witches in the sense that you mean."

"Oh, so what are they like then?"

"They are just people that follow the old ways. It is only the Christians that call them witches either out of fear or ignorance."

"So they don't cast spells then." Eva said slightly disappointed.

"Some do though it would take on more the form of a curse, the spells are more for medical purposes."

"My mother used to do that," Martin said, "And she hung her as a witch."

"So they said in the village. I'm afraid we live in very dark times. People have lost the light."

"The light," Martin repeated as he had not expected him to use that term.

"Hidden knowledge," Stumpy said not knowing that Martin understood, "Some call it knowledge of the divine."

"I know what light is. I'm just surprised that you do as well."

“As I said I am well travelled and have seen many things and listened to many beliefs. Have you by any chance heard of Gnosticism?”

“No, what is it?”

“It was a movement that believed in the divine rite of Man,” but was interrupted by Eva saying,

“That was mentioned in the book that you've got Martin.”

“You have a book with that sort of wisdom,” Stumpy said, “May I see it?”

“Sure,” Martin said and Eva fetched it for them.

Stumpy read the book title and said, “The Path of Light, where did you get this book?”

“My mother left it to me. Are you familiar with it?”

“I have heard of it though I have never seen it. This is a special book you should look after it well.”

“I intend to,” Martin said wondering where he had heard that before, “So what is it all about?”

“You don't know,” Stumpy said in surprise, “It is a handbook to immortality. I have heard wondrous things about this book. You are a lucky man to have this. A lot of people will try and steal it so be very careful.”

“So you know about the Tree of Life then,” Eva said, “For that was mentioned in the book.”

“The Tree of Life, yes I know of it. It was in the Garden of Eden near the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil. It is also known in Norse mythology. It is the path that you have to climb for the evolution of your Soul.”

“I thought that was the Path of Light,” Martin said.

“Another name for it, you evolve on two levels, Spirit and Soul or wisdom and understanding. That should help you in your quest.”

“My quest?”

“For immortality. That's what life's about isn't it.”

“I don't know. I just wanted to learn to read to see what the book was about for that is the only reminder of my mother I have.”

“We are here for evolution of the Soul and expansion of the spiritual consciousness,” Stumpy said but was stopped there as the meal was ready. Eva served it up and they took to it heartily. Martin was surprised at how much Stumpy could actually put away and between him and Brutus the meat soon dwindled. As Eva looked on Stumpy said by way of explanation for his speed of eating, “I'm from a large family if you weren't quick you didn't get fed.”

The meal was quickly finished and Martin said, “Do you want to look at the old house and see if it can be made good?”

“Made good?”

“Yes, it got burned down.”

“Alright then,” Stumpy said but he did not hold out much hope as wood and fire did not mix very well. Martin took them to the house and they looked around taking stock. “The sites a good location and some of the timber is still sound but it will take some doing.”

“We've got a lot of time and I've got the tools. Will it suit?”

“It will be a Palace for to a beggar it is Heaven.”

Martin fetched the tools and the frame was quickly repaired. Brutus strength with the axe and stamina with the hammer and wedges split the wood into planks and in no time the sides were filled. The roof was completed and by night fall they had a shell and a fire lit to warm the place. They returned to the cave and talked some more about the book as Stumpy thought himself privileged to be reading it. He read the words and got as far as Eva and Martin had.

“That's the bit we got stuck on,” Martin said after he had finished.

“I think it's talking about a mantra that will help you with spiritual growth but also with purification of the Soul.”

“A mantra?” Eva said as a question.

“You repeat something often enough to your self and it will sink in. Have you any idea of what the mantra is?”

“No,” Martin said shrugging his shoulders, “But it must have something to do with surrendering your Will.”

“Mmm,” Stumpy said deep in thought, “Perhaps you are right. Balancing the elements, that would be balancing the mind I suppose. This book certainly holds a lot of wisdom. With knowledge of the divine they say that the more you know the more you become.”

“What,” Eva said for that sounded far too sacrilegious, “Are you saying what I think you're saying?”

“That would depend on what you think I'm saying,” Stumpy said with a smile, “Would you agree that the more you know about hunting the more you become a hunter?”

“Yes though that is a big difference to the more you know about God the more you become Him.”

“A God but you are half right for it is all well and good knowing about hunting but if you don't actually go out and do it you never become one, wisdom without the understanding.”

“So how do you go about working miracles are we talking casting spells and curses?”

“I was thinking more along the lines of doing His work. It is only by that that you achieve your immortality.”

“You get to Heaven,” Eva said suddenly only half understanding what he meant. Stumpy meant more but said nothing and let the matter drop.

“May I read on,” he said, “For this book has certainly captured my imagination.”

“Sure go ahead,” Martin said for he was hooked too.

“Self development is achieved by rectifying character flaws to rid the mind of its matter for the purpose of purification. These character flaws are known by many as demons or negative emotions and in the Church of Christ the seven deadly sins. These can be conquered by a positive state of mind and knowledge of what your purpose in life is and that is evolution of the Soul and expansion of your divinity for spiritual growth.”

“That's what you said earlier,” Eva said, “You must be well versed.”

“Well travelled. I've been around but I'm afraid that I grow tired. I thank you for my meal as does Brutus and we will both see you in the morning.” They both got up and left Eva and Martin alone in good company.” That dream must have been wrong,” she said, “For I would not say they were enemies.”

“No I thought they were good company and I would like them as neighbours.”

“You want to be careful,” she said teasing him, “Otherwise this place will turn into a village.”

“To be packed out with our children. Yes I could live with that.”

“I bet,” she said and they went to bed to try and get their plans rolling. Martin fell to sleep not long afterwards and found himself talking to the peacocks once more.

“I am afraid that you have been fooled,” one of them said, “For you have in your nest a viper a small one but a viper just the same.”

“I don't understand. What are you trying to say?”

“Never judge a book by its cover little knight,” his mother said, “For in the search for light friendliness is sometimes not what it seems.”

“Are we talking about Stumpy? Is there something I should know?”

“He has designs on your book and when you wake up in the morning they will have both disappeared.”

“No I don't believe it. They spent all day building his house. Why would he do that and then leave, it does not make sense.”

“A day wasted is nothing if you have immortality and that book is more priceless than gold. You are lucky though for as he does not know the mantra it is no use to him except financially.”

“How stupid of me and he seemed so helpful. How could I have been fooled so easily?”

“An open heart is easily hurt though rest assured he won't profit from it. His head will be severed by bandits and his friend hacked to death while he sleeps.”

“How do you know this, do you know the future?”

“All that has been has yet to come just as all that's to be has already happened. He will try and sell it to Rufus and treachery will be repaid by treachery. Rufus will reason that it will be easier just to take it and hire some men on the quiet to fulfil his task.”

“I thought that he would have just bought it as he's not short of money. Why would he trust outlaws anyway?”

“Secrecy for the book is banned as heretical and though he might hate the Church he would not push it too far. He knows the books value and the strength of mind it can bring though he does not understand it.”

“What a fool I've been, how stupid of me, have I lost your trust?”

“No for it was destined to happen as the time is not right yet. Grow in the love of God and Eva and you shall bide your time away quite happily. I will see you in your dreams and your Spirit shall grow accordingly though you will not be conscious of this.”

“Then what's the point. It will do no good.”

“Time will tell but you must wake up and forget about this.”

With that Martin found himself back in the cave with Eva beside him still asleep. He gazed at her for some time as she seemed to look radiant in the morning. She awoke not long after smiling and said, “I had a strange dream and it had those two jackdaws in again.”

“Really, so they must not have been Stumpy and Brutus.”

“No, you must be right. I don't usually get things wrong.”

“So what happened?”

“It was strange, they were flying in the air and one of them had a rose in its beak.”

“A rose,” Martin said, his interest aroused, “What colour was it?”

“Red,” and looking at Martin said, “Is there anything the matter?”

“No,” Martin said shrugging it off, “Shall we go over and see how our new neighbours are settling in?”

“Yes, what a good idea,” and they both walked the short distance hand in hand laughing and joking. When they got there much to their surprise there was no one around and so assuming they were out exploring went back to the cave. Martin sensed something although he was not sure what and hurried back. He looked to where the book had once been and much to his horror it had disappeared.

8. The Life and Death of a Bad Man

James Easton was not a bad man, no he was evil, pure evil. To truly understand him you will have to know a little about his life so before I start this tale I will do just that. He was born at the turn of the 19th century into an unstable, turbulent semi affluent household in the north of England. His father was a womanising drunkard who cared little for his wife and four children of which James was the youngest. He also beat his wife regularly when the mood, well alcohol, took him leaving her cold and timid towards both him and her children. James knew nothing of love or affection for never having seen any he had nothing to equate it with. Death though he saw a plenty. His eldest brother David fell to small pox when James was seven followed the following year by Stephen. His last brother Andrew lost his life in the service of the realm in the last days of the Napoleonic War so by the time James had turned 15 he was effectively an only child. By the time he had turned 15 though he was no longer living at home. He had struck out to make his fortune and he was not too bothered about how it was done. Pickpocket, footpad, highwayman he quickly rose through the ranks for his cold blooded, level headed approach to his vocation was much admired by his fellow journeymen. His prowess with the fists was also held in high regard so he could have made quite a name for himself though destiny in her infinite wisdom had chosen another path. He met with a wealthy factory owner called Charles Davies who needed a tough, no nonsense manager to keep his workers in their place. At first it was just hired muscle but when Davies found out how sharp James was he quickly became his right hand man.

The tale actually starts with James in a clandestine meeting with one of the workers, Jack Johnson who he used to spy on the other workers looking for potential trouble makers.

“So,” James said, “How did the idea about working an extra hour unpaid on Monday go down?”

“A few murmurs nothing more, I don't think they like it though.”

“I didn't think that they would I just want to know if they plan to do anything about it.”

“What can they do?”

(The actual idea was to work an extra hour on Monday to compensate for not working Sunday. The excuse behind it was that as they had had a day off work they would not work as hard the next day for it would take them a little time to get back into the swing of things. It might sound far fetched but that did not really matter for what Jack Johnson said was true, what could they actually do about it)

“Keep your eye on the situation anyway I've got a few more ideas up for implementing.”

“Fair enough,” Johnson said and put his hand out for payment.

“You'll get paid when you tell me something worth paying for. Now get back to work you've already lost a quarter of an hour.”

After Johnson had left James' thoughts dwelt on the people that worked under him. To say he had a hatred for them would be an understatement, he totally despised them. He saw them as idle whingers who had to be stood over to make sure that they actually worked. If he saw them standing around talking it was an instant fine, they would lose an hours pay. He did not even see them as people just soulless zombies, devoid of feeling. Ironic really for James had no feelings, well only ones motivated by greed and hate. The opening of the office door brought his thoughts to an end. It was Charles Davies and he was in a good mood.

“Ah James, good news, excellent news in fact, I have just had a visit from an old army friend of mine Major Thomas More.”

"I did not realise that you were in the army," James said in surprise.

"I wasn't. I just have many contacts in many places. Anyway he's put a bit of business our way. Cost me money but it will be worth in the end," and gave him a list of items of clothing.

James looked at the list and said, "There's enough here for an army."

"A regiment actually. He's in a bit of a hurry though for the company that was supposed to have done it have let him down."

"How much of a hurry?"

"A week tomorrow."

"What? I'm not sure if it can be done."

"You can manage I'm relying on you. You won't be sorry as it will be well worth your while."

"It's not the money it's the time," James said and thought awhile as he studied the list, "Well a lot of this could be done by adapting old stock. Er. How concerned is he about the quality?"

"Believe me he just wants to get it done so forget the quality it's the quantity."

"Well that will cut a lot of the time I suppose. I might have to put the existing jobs on hold. Would that be a problem?"

"No, not at all. Get this order out in time and he'll throw that much work our way we won't have time for anything else."

"Then leave it with me and I'll see what I can do. Oh that extra hour Monday has been accepted do you want me to start implementing any of my other ideas?"

"No, not at the moment. Get this army contract sorted first, that's the main thing."

"Fair enough," James said and Charles left the room. The rest of the day was taken up checking the old stock where much to his surprise he found that most were border-line passable. Charles indifference to the quality meant that it went out as it was. James was not too bothered about whether they were the right size or not it was just the numbers he was concerned about. No, he managed to get a lot more out than he thought he would and by hi jacking garments from other jobs he could actually cover it straight away. He did not tell Charles that though for he knew it would dramatically reduce his bonus.

Night time saw him back in his cottage with just a bottle for company and an urge to get drunk. He dreaded the night for off late he had been plagued by nightmare. It had got to the stage that he could not get to sleep without the solace of the bottle, though when he did he always regretted it. He found himself in a darkened cavern and although he had had the same dream on countless occasions to him it was always like the first time.

"James Easton," a voice echoed around the darkness, "Why do you hurt me so?"

"Who are you? Show yourself."

"I am here. I am all around you. I am the darkness that you see. I am the cavern that you stand in. I am everything yet I am no thing."

"Talk sense. What do you want from me?"

"I want you to stop hurting me."

"Come on out and let me see you. Tell me what's going on."

"I have told you. I have told you many times yet you chose to forget. My patience is running out with you and once its run out then your time will also run out. Heed these words well for your life depends on it."

"Look I'm getting tired of your silly games. Show yourself now. Come out of the darkness and reveal yourself to me. We can soon resolve this little problem that you perceive you have with me."

"Little problem," the voice thundered, "Why you arrogant mortal piece of slime."

"Now there's no need to be like that."

"You have deprived part of me of the right to my evolution. You have brought misery and upset the balance. You have committed countless acts of injustice. You have broken laws that you did not even know existed. Yet you in your ignorance perceive yourself to be a superior being. You dare to be condescending towards me yet you have the time and free will to change."

“Change, why would I want to change? I am happy as I am. To my knowledge I have broken no laws, maybe when I was younger but now it is different.”

“Happy are you? You need a drink to help you sleep at night. The only companionship you have you have to pay for. If you think that you are happy then you are deluding yourself.”

“I get by.”

“Well that's your life and you'll be judged accordingly. Here's someone that you need to talk to,” and with that a child came forward out of the darkness.

“I know you,” James said vaguely recognising her.

“You should do,” She said, “You buried me.”

“Oh yes,” James said with full recognition, “You're that orphan child aren't you.”

“You don't even know my name,” she said in disgust.

“There are many people that work for me,” he said in contempt, “Am I expected to remember all their names.”

“Mary Connelly, not that it matters now as it has served its purpose. My time as her has gone and its time to move on.”

“Fair enough, so what's stopping you?”

“You are you conceited pig. You deprived me of a true burial and condemned me to walk that hell hole of a factory for eternity. Release my chains of bondage, set me free.”

“I can't do that.”

“Then at least tell me where I am buried so that I can guide others to it.”

“No that would create too much trouble. It will open us up to too many questions.”

“What, are you trying to say that I am condemned for eternity because you don't want to answer some awkward questions?”

“Yes that's about right. I mean I am not being funny but you are dead and gone. I still have to live. I am the one that has to put up with the consequences.”

“The consequences of your actions.”

“You said that as if it was important.”

“Why you callous,” Mary said but stopped there, kept her temper and said, “I see that there is no reasoning with you, well I've tried,” and disappeared.

“So you can treat others plight with such indifference,” the voice echoed, “And to make your situation even more despicable you actually caused it. As I said earlier you are ignorant of Spiritual Laws. One might interest you. What you sow so shall you reap.”

“Shouldn't think so.”

“No, you have condemned her and because of that you too will be condemned. Whilst her body lies hidden you will never be at peace.”

“I can live you that and besides that won't be for a long time, this judgement thing.”

“Think so?”

“I'm in good health there is no reason why I shouldn't live for many years.”

“Circumstances conspire against you. I strongly suggest that you atone for your actions before it is too late.”

“You lie. This is some sort of trick to get me to reveal her whereabouts. It won't work. As I said earlier it will bring up some awkward questions.”

“You have been warned,” the voice said and with that James woke up.

Chapter 2

The next few days unlike the nights were pretty uneventful and the tale picks up with James next meeting with Jack Johnson. “So,” he said without greeting him, “Has there been any new developments?”

“Pretty quiet really. They kick up after the drinks been flowing but that's just the drink talking. A couple of strangers have started using the pub but apart from that nothing's happened.”

“A couple of strangers?”

“I think they are navvies, they keep themselves to themselves so I'm only guessing.”

“I don't pay you to guess. They could be agitators for all you know.”

“I doubt it, they don't mix with anyone.”

As the conversation continued another conversation was taking place. “You know he does seem to spend a lot of time in that office,” Michael Murry said, “There might be something in what them two Irishmen said.”

“I'm not so sure,” Andrew Digbeth said, “Nobody could spot an informer just by looking at them.”

“I don't know about that but he does seem to be treated a lot better than the rest of us.”

“Oh don't get me wrong I wouldn't trust Johnson as far as I could throw him. I don't trust them Irishmen either. I mean let's be honest we don't know anything about them. They could be Chartists for all we know.”

“And what would be wrong with that? We could do with some organising we are treated worse than the lowest of the low.”

“They agitate and then disappear. We're the ones left with trouble.”

“Well we'll agree to differ on that one. Johnson though I will be very careful about what I say to him in future.”

“Oh don't get me wrong I won't be saying anything to him either.”

Meanwhile back at the office the meeting was coming to an end, “Keep your eye on them,” James said as Johnson let himself out.

James shuffled some papers around but soon got bored so went out to walk the factory. He looked around for a while but the noise of the machinery mixed with a heavy hangover drove him to find a quieter place, Charles Davies office.

“See that,” Michael said, “He has a meeting with Johnson and goes straight around to tell Davies about it.”

“Yes I can't deny that. We ought to have a word with those fellahs and see what's to be done about it.”

“Well they'll be in tonight. Mind you they are in every night. Do you think they are Chartists then?”

“I'm not sure. I do know they are rough looking men though.”

“With that I won't argue, quick look busy he's coming out.”

With that James came out and said, “You two come here I've got a little job for you.”

“Oh God what now,” Michael said under his breath as they walked over.

“Right follow me,” James said and took them to the underground floor where the stock was kept, “Anything with a cross on I want taking upstairs and put in the holding area. I don't want to see you standing around either,” and left them to it.

“Looks like we've fell on our feet here,” Michael said after he had gone, “It's about time they got rid of all this as it's nothing but rags.”

“I know what you mean,” Andrew said with a laugh, “Some of this stuff has been here longer than I have.”

“Right then,” Michael said picking up the first bale, “I reckon we've got a couple of days work here.”

“And out of his way too,” Andrew said doing the same. They climbed the stairs and stacked the two bales in the bay and went back to get some more.

“So where were we,” Michael said, “Yes I reckon they are navvies or ex army.”

“Well I wouldn't argue with them. I would bet either one of them would be more than a match for Easton.”

“I don't know about that he's a pretty handy man. I've seen him put quite a few people on their backs, hard men too.”

“Would be worth watching if it happened I'd even pay to see it.”

“We couldn't afford it not on what they give us. The bastards have even got us working for

nothing.”

“Yes, but what can we do?”

“I ought to get a job building them railways they say that it pays good money.”

“It's hard work, dangerous too. Mind you you're a single man with no commitments. Yes why not.” They continued a while and the holding bay was filling up nicely when they were interrupted by a large military looking gentleman, “You there,” he bellowed, “I am looking for Charles Davies, is he about?”

“Er yes sir,” Michael said, “Shall I take you to him.”

“No, I'll wait here. Tell him I am here. My name is Major Thomas More and be quick about it as time is pressing.”

“Yes sir,” Michael said and rushed off to fetch him. In no time at all they were back.

“Thomas,” Charles said and shook his hand; “I wasn't expecting you yet.”

“We need to take a walk. Is that my job by the way?”

“Yes that's right. It's coming on well I've got them working flat out.”

“Good, it looks like you are well on top of it. Yes it could be the start of quite a lucrative venture for us both.”

“I didn't say that you could stop working,” Charles barked at Michael and Andrew, “Move it there's work to be done.”

They both rushed off to get some more bales and Charles and Thomas started their walk.

“So,” Charles said, “What's on your mind?”

“I think that your past might be coming back to haunt you. I have come to you the bearer of bad news.”

“Really?”

“John MacBride and Patrick Meehan do those names mean anything to you?”

“Sure a couple of low lives I once had the fortune to send to their deaths.”

“Oh you wouldn't have known. That's right you were back in England before the trial. You wouldn't have heard.”

“Heard, heard what?”

“They got life imprisonment, transported to a Penal Colony.”

“Well what ever, they are well out the way that's what matters.”

“Ah, I'm afraid that they escaped and the last I heard they were in England. That was two days ago so be careful.”

“Don't worry about it I've got protection.”

“Good. I've got men out looking for them. Shoot to kill with them bastards but in the meantime watch your back.”

“I will. I've got a good man in James Easton. No class but he knows his job.”

“That's the main thing. Mean it's hardly likely that you are going to socialise with him.”

“Good lord no. I would have to hide the silver,” and started laughing, “So how did they manage to escape then?”

“Killed two guards and stowed away. Well the Captain said that he didn't know they were there anyway. I can't see it myself. I reckon they paid him off.”

“I was going to say. It's a long way from Botany Bay to hide on a ship.”

“Oh no we think that they disembarked long before that. The ship had many ports of call before it got to London.”

“And the Captain, what happened to him?”

“Nothing, we could not prove that they were on the ship. To the authorities they escaped into the countryside and took up with the natives.”

“So er how do you know that they are in England, I mean not being funny they might have escaped into the country side.”

“One of my men seen them, it was a definite sighting.”

“Oh, and you think that it is me they are after, not just heading for Ireland.”

“They might be heading home to rejoin the rebels; you know what these fanatics are like. I would keep your head down until it’s all sorted though.”

“Er,” Charles said sheepishly, “I’ve got a little confession to make. I know that I can rely on you to keep it to yourself can’t I?”

“Well you’ve pulled me out of trouble so yes I’m in your debt.”

“I don’t think they were rebels. No in fact I’m certain they were not.”

“What?”

“They were criminals, bad men through and through.”

“Well whatever they were doesn’t matter now. No your secret is safe with me.”

“Thanks, I won’t forget this.”

“Hang them all for me and let the Good Lord do the judging. No, if they were bad they don’t deserve to live.”

They started to walk back and Charles said, “So when will we hear about the other contracts?”

“Get this one out the way. The rest will go out to tender.”

“Oh,” Charles said in surprise, “So it’s not all cut and dried then?”

“It is. I picked the companies. I don’t want it seen that I am showing favouritism though so I’ll have to be discreet.”

“Right.”

“No don’t worry about it. I will give you all the competition’s prices. You just undercut them that’s all.”

“Will there be profit in this? I mean I’m not being funny but I bet there will be a lot of competition.”

“Don’t worry it’s a corrupt system. The quotes come in well above the odds. Anyway we are here now. I will send some carriages when you are ready for them.” he left Charles who went straight to his office and summoned James.

Chapter 3

“Ah James,” Charles said on his entrance, “Tell me a little about those two strangers in the pub.”

“Not a lot to say really, Johnson thinks that they might be navvies but that’s only his guess.”

“Really, and what makes him say that?”

“Well they were Irish I suppose. Er. What’s all this about?”

“I’ve just had a visitor. He told me that there are two Chartists in the area. Irishmen called MacBride and Meehan. It seems that Johnson has been holding out on you.”

“I don’t know what to say. He’s always been forthcoming before.”

“Has he, or is this just the first time we have caught him out?”

“Well I don’t know. What do you want me to do about it?”

Charles opened his desk drawer and pulled out two duelling pistols and put them on the desk.

“Kill them,” James said in surprise as he looked at the weapons, “That’s a bit drastic isn’t it?”

“You think so? What else would you suggest then or haven’t you the stomach for it.”

“Oh I’ve the stomach it just seems a little heavy handed. Why not I give them both a good hiding and send them on their way?”

“Can we afford to take that gamble? Can you afford to take that gamble?”

“Me?”

“Yes you. You are looking at a lot more money then you could ever dream of. I was told that these military contracts are ours in all but name. Are you going to let a couple of Chartists destroy that through agitating our workers? Think about it, a couple of lives for a new life. An opulent life far excessive than anything you can imagine possible.”

“But if I’m caught I’ll hang.”

“Then don’t get caught. Look, I look at you as my right hand man. Someone I can rely on. Someone I can trust with my life. Are you saying that my trust has been misplaced?”

“No, I'll do it.”

“Good,” Charles said and passed him the guns, “When the deed is done bring the guns back so I know it so.”

James took the guns and hid them under his coat before going back to his office to dwell on his predicament. He had never killed before but was not too bothered about killing. No it was the fact that Johnson had let him down and made him look foolish in front of Davies. He liked to think he was a professional and hated incompetence in others. From that paranoia came in. Johnson must have known it all along. They were Chartists there to agitate. They would not be introverted they would be out spurting their venom. He must have heard them and kept it to himself. That was not incompetence Johnson must have an agenda of his own. Maybe he was after his job for James noticed that he had ambitions and was not too choosy about how he made his money. If he would inform on his fellow workers for a pittance what was he prepared to do for real money? He had tried to set James up and so now James would do the same. Johnson wanted the power, let him do the deed and after it was done; well James would do the same.

“Yes,” James said aloud, “I'll see him tonight after work.”

The day wore on and night time soon fell. James went to see Johnson and whilst this was happening Michael and Andrew met up with Mac Bride and Meehan.

“You were right about Johnson,” Michael said, “He never seems to be out that office.”

“What did I tell you,” Mac Bride said, “I can spot an informer a mile away.”

“How is that then?” Andrew said, “Well if you don't mind me asking?”

“Never speak but always listening plus they have a certain smell about them. It's hard to define the smell of treachery.”

“Anyway,” Michael said, “I won't be too long at that place. I'm thinking of working on the railways. They say that it's good money.”

“So I heard,” Mac Bride said.

“Oh my mistake I thought that was what you did.”

“Me, no I would expect my money to be got for a lot less hassle than that.”

“So what do you do then?” Andrew said.

“I suppose you could call us free lancers,” Mac Bride said with a laugh, “We just travel around, do a bit here, do a bit there. Since we got out the army, well we couldn't settle anywhere.”

“Oh an army man came around today,” Michael said, “A big fellah he was, Major Thomas More.”

“What?” Mac Bride said.

“Oh do you know him?”

“No,” Mac Bride said quickly, “So anyway who's in the chair now?” and Andrew got the next round in. Meanwhile James had left Johnson semi battered and dwelling on his predicament. He did not have the stomach for killing and as he looked at the two pistols he shuddered. It was them or him, pure and simple. He could not leave the area as he had nowhere to go. He was stranded and in great danger, alone and on edge. He took a drink to try and calm himself but it had no effect. He took another and then another but still the restlessness continued.

Back in the pub the conversation along with the drink was flowing freely. “You know I envy your life,” Michael said as the drink made its play, “I'm stuck here making some other bastard rich and you're out and about enjoying life.”

“Well you're young,” Mac Bride said, “You've got plenty of time. Go on the road, seriously you'll never look back.”

“But I wouldn't know what to do. All I know is my job. What chance have I got?”

“Same chance as us all, you have to start from somewhere.”

“How would I live?”

“You'll do what you have to do. If you have the stomach for it you'll do well.”

“Could I come with you? It sounds like you know how to make things work.”

“No you wouldn't like our lifestyle. Why not join the army or failing that the underworld.”

"I'm not sure of that. Both of them seem to have a good chance of death."

"That's a chance you have to take," Meehan said.

"Oh," Michael said down hearted, "I don't think that that's a chance I'm prepared to take."

"Until you do I'm afraid you're stuck here. We don't mind helping a man back on his feet but we won't carry him. You want our lifestyle then I'm afraid you'll need a strong stomach. Sometimes you have to do things; well I think you know what I'm talking about. It's a dangerous lawless world out there make no mistake about it."

"Well I could still get a job on the railways I suppose. Maybe, make my fortune that way."

"Maybe."

"So what do you think we should do about Johnson anyway?" Andrew said changing the subject.

"Johnson?"

"The informer."

"Personally I would kill him and move on," Mac Bride said, "But we play by different rules."

"I have a wife and children," Andrew said.

"As I said we play by different rules. Either ignore him or feed him the wrong information to discredit him. If they think he is no good as a spy they will quickly stop using him."

"That might work."

"It won't really get rid of the problem though," Meehan said, "They'll just get someone else."

"Well true," Mac Bride agreed, "I suppose you could give him a good hiding and frighten him off though that could be dangerous as it might come back on you."

"Yes he knows us," Michael said, "It would have to be a real good hiding to frighten him."

"Or done by a stranger perhaps," Mac Bride said.

"Now Mac we don't want to complicate things," Meehan said, "We have other fish to fry."

"He's an informer. I detest them."

"And with good reason but don't let it get in the way."

"Fair enough," Mac Bride said but Meehan knew that the matter was not ended so he said, "We'll say no more about it then."

"I've got to get back now anyway," Andrew said, "Are you in here tomorrow?"

"More than likely," Mac Bride said and Andrew left them to it. After he had gone Michael said, "My round I think," and left the table.

"You're not going to let it lie," Meehan said, "I can see it in your face."

"I can't. Not after what we've been through I wouldn't be able to live with myself."

"Well we're going to have to change our plans anyway. That Thomas More showing up has put pay to the idea of getting money out of Davies."

"I know, we'll just have to kill him and take what he's carrying that's all."

"It will be easier that way. We'll talk later, he's coming back."

Michael came back with the drinks and said, "I'm afraid that I'll be going after this one," and put them on the table.

"You're a gentleman," Meehan said, "And I mean that in the true sense of the word."

"Er thanks," Michael said sitting down, "So do you think that I could cope with the army?"

"I would say so," Meehan said, "And if you do, when you come out look us up."

"Really. Yes I'll do that thanks."

"Good. There's a world of opportunity out there you don't have to stay here and get conned."

"True. Anyway I guess I had better be getting off myself as I've an early start," and left them.

"So," Meehan said, "We don't really need to wait around then."

"Well if More's here it means he's on to us. That means there will be a few people heading our way. We don't really want to be waiting around."

"True. We'll take care of Johnson, get him out of the way and hide the body then straight to Davies and hit the road."

"Sounds good but do we really need to hide the body. We could be wasting valuable time."

“That's in case we can't get to Davies tonight. If they find Johnson there'll be a hell of a stink. If they can't see a body they'll probably think he's just gone missing.”

“Oh right. Good idea.”

“We won't be that long with Johnson anyway. Just get in, take him to the forest and leave him there.”

“True, he's not worth that much effort.”

“Right then, now is a good a time as any.” and they both finished their drinks and left the bar.

Chapter 4

Jack Johnson took another large drink and let its warming glow attempt to pacify him. He had consumed more than enough for any man yet it was not having the desired effect. Sure his thoughts were erratic but with so much on his mind they would have been still the same if he was sober. He could not kill and not just through fear of getting caught it was not in his heart. Yet if he did not, well he could not even bring himself to contemplate it. He rued the day that he had ever got involved with James Easton, the low despicable heartless bastard. He rarely paid him for his services and proved himself on many occasions to be a treacherous dog. He thought back to how he had let himself fall into his evil clutches and cursed himself for his greed and stupidity.

“You have something about you unlike the rest of these low life wasters. You could go far in this company.” He remembered how flattered he was that someone of Easton's reputation had taken the time to acquaint himself with him. “Yes I've had my eye on you for a long time. You stand out from the rest. They're just whinging troublemakers. Anyway leave them to it that's what I say. Now although I know you to be our sort of man you will still have to prove yourself to us. This is a cut throat business, not the place for weak mindedness or moral scruples. I want you to keep me aware of what's going on, on the factory floor. Any sign of malcontent or potential trouble I want to know about it before it has a chance to fester. Don't worry about it you will be handsomely rewarded for your services.” and with that he was caught.

He gave a few names and basically signed his own death warrant. He had crossed the line and could never go back. James Easton had seen to that. His threat to reveal Johnson clandestine activity if he stopped meant he had no choice but to continue. “Hook, line and sinker.” he said aloud and took another drink.

His thoughts turned back to the present day. How was he going to get out of his predicament? He knew that if he did not do anything his days were numbered. Easton would see to that. If they did not already know that he was a spy Easton would make sure that they did, and then, well it was only a matter of time. He looked at the loaded pistols and toyed with the idea of suicide but it was not a strong thought as he did not even have the stomach for that. What about flight? Where would he go as he had no one to go to? The thought of going on the road held too much fear for him too. It was too dangerous a place. Not for the likes of him, a snivelling coward. No, he was stuck here alone and friendless and though he did not have the heart to do it he knew he had no choice. He looked once more at the loaded pistols and gave a shudder.

Meanwhile Mac Bride and Meehan were making their way towards him. “Right,” Mac Bride said, “We'll try and quietly entice him out of the house first so as not to disturb the neighbours.”

“Sure,” Meehan said with a laugh, “It will save us struggling carrying him to the forest as well.”

“True, no point struggling. So what do you think then?”

“Got it,” Meehan said as if inspired, “He's actually spying for Easton isn't he?”

“Well I'm not sure about that it might be directly for Davies.”

“No these people don't work like that its Easton's office he goes to. I'm willing to wager that Davies either does not know or if he does doesn't want to know seeing it beneath him.”

“Probably but I can't see what you're getting at.”

“I would also wager judging by Easton's reputation that he forced him into doing it. That Johnson doesn't sound to have much of a backbone to me.”

“Well maybe though I'm still none the wiser.”

“According to the boys Easton's had a very chequered past. Tell Johnson that we are here to apprehend him, I don't know, a murder charge or something and I would gladly say he'll help us just to get Easton off his back.”

“It could work. That would get us into the place but how would we entice him out?”

Meehan thought some more and said, “He has to come with us to witness the arrest. Say it's a legal requirement he won't know any better. Besides as I said he'll be grateful just to get Easton off his back. And if he doesn't fall for that story, well it looks like we are carrying him.”

By then they had arrived at where Johnson lived so Meehan gently tapped on the door. It was a shocked Johnson that opened it.

“Jack Johnson,” Mac Bride said, “We would like a quiet word, may we come in?”

“Er sure,” Johnson said shaking slightly which did not go unnoticed by the pair.

They followed him in and Mac Bride said, “We apologise for the lateness of the hour but discretion is part of our trade.”

“Er right,” Johnson said still shaking and nervously glancing over to where he had put the pistols.

“I am Captain Morgan and this is Major O'Shea of the King's Hussars.”

“What?” Johnson said with a mixture of surprise and relief, “So you are not Chartists?”

“Chartists, Good Lord no, where did you get that idea from?”

“It was my boss, James Easton.”

“James Easton,” Mac Bride said thinking on his feet, “So he must know that we are on to him.”

“On to him?”

“He has quite an interesting past your friend Easton deserting from the army and killing an officer in the process.”

“He's no friend of mine,” Johnson said glad to get it off his chest, “You know that he actually wanted me to kill you,” and pointed over at the two pistols, “He said that you were Chartists out to kill me for being a spy.”

“What,” Mac Bride said for it was now his turn to be surprised.

“He also said that he would let it be known that I was a spy if I didn't but I am not a spy. Well look may I be honest with you, I have been carrying this around for too long and I need to unburden myself of it.”

“Go on.”

“I have spied for him. He tricked me into it and to my shame; my greed and stupidity fell for it. I never gave him anything of value though. No believe me on that I despise the bastard.”

“Well we're not here to judge,” Mac Bride said looking at Meehan to let him know that Johnson was now safe, “Beside we have bigger fish to fry.”

“Easton, you want me to testify against him, that I will gladly do.”

“No, no we don't actually work like that.”

“Sorry, I don't understand.”

“Let me explain myself. Behind the law is a force outside the law. It works for the law but not necessarily through the law. Do you understand what I'm saying?”

“Yes sort of a legal vigilante kind of thing.”

“Yes that's as good a name as any. Now this force is accountable not to the law but to a higher authority than the law.”

“Right and this higher authority?”

“We could tell you but then we would have to kill you.”

“Oh,” Johnson said visibly shaking.

“Something's are best left unsaid eh. Now Easton had besmirched the name of the regiment and for that he must pay. Sure we could have gone to a court of law but that's not good enough. No, hanging's too good for him. Besides with the corruption of the law and the ineptitude of our politicians in their creation he might even get off. Now you wouldn't want that would you?”

“No he would come back.”

"That's right and knowing his paranoia the blame would quickly fall on you. He would see you as failing him and believe me that man holds a grudge."

"I can well imagine. So if you haven't come here to get me to testify against him what are you actually here for?"

"We want your help. We want you to lure him out into the open and leave the rest to us."

"I'm not sure if I could. Besides wouldn't that be dangerous?"

"Not for you we'll be with you all the way. Discreetly of course."

"How would I do it?" Johnson said after a while.

"Tell him you have done the deed. We lie in the factory along with the weapons. He won't want us to be found there as it will pose too many questions. Play it right and he'll believe you."

"Play it right?"

"Pretend to be frightened and agitated. Tell him you are too scared to go back and direct him to the holding bay then run off. We'll do the rest. Then forget that we ever had this conversation."

"And that's all you want from me, just lure him there."

"That's right, we'll be waiting" and both he and Meehan left the room.

As they walked to the factory Meehan said, "So why the change of heart?"

"Johnson is no informer that's Easton. No leave him be he'll keep quiet."

"Why don't we just go to Davies it will save a lot of hassle?"

"Easton is his right hand man. It will be easier with him out the way besides as I said I don't like informers."

"Fair enough, we'd better make it look like an accident though. We wouldn't want to scare Davies off."

"My thoughts exactly."

"Good story by the way."

"Well we have to think on our feet," Mac Bride said and took out the pistols, "I recognised these straight away they belong to Davies. He must have sent Easton to do the job but it doesn't make sense. Just looking at Johnson you would see that it's not in him. No I reckon that he gave the job to Easton that makes it personal."

"You think that Easton gave the job away? That doesn't sound like what we've heard about him."

"No he doesn't seem to have much respect for us putting it in the hands of Johnson. That will soon change though."

"True. The only thing that I can come up with was that he must actually think we are just Chartists."

"What Davies lied to him? Well it does make sense and sound about right. Well what ever he thinks we are doesn't matter. He won't be thinking for much longer," and laughed.

"True," Meehan said and they got to the factory.

"We'll keep quiet now. Hopefully if Johnson plays his part we won't be waiting for too long."

Chapter 5

Johnson knocked loudly on James Easton's door. He was not as nervous as he thought he would be. Maybe it was because of the drink or maybe it was because he thought he was being watched he was not sure. He just knew that soon Easton would not be his problem and he took strength from it.

A drunken James opened it sharply, "What do you want at this time of night," he said half asleep.

"It is done," Johnson said and pretending to look nervously around, "I have done what you asked of me. They lie in the holding bay."

"What, are you stupid? What's going to happen when the bodies are discovered? Go back and get them moved now."

"I'm not going back there. No I have done what you have asked of me."

"Very well I'll do it," Easton said relenting, "And the guns, where are they?"

"They lie by the bodies. I've got to go. It's too dangerous for me to be found here," and ran off.

James was in a foul mood as he made the short journey to the factory, "Half a job always half a job

with these people. No wonder they don't get anywhere in life," he muttered angrily to himself, "Well Davies owes me big for this. No I reckon he's going to need a partner in his business. With all the work coming in he can afford it. As for Johnson, he'll keep for another time." He arrived at the empty factory and went straight to the holding bay. "There's nothing here," he said aloud, "What's go...." but before he could continue he was hit on the head and bundled into a small room next to the holding bay.

Meanwhile Johnson had not gone straight home but had followed James at a distance to make sure that he had got there. He saw him in the holding bay and being knocked out. With that he went home finally at peace.

James though was in anything but peace tied to a chair with a knife to his throat and a large burly man at the other end of it. "He got his money through sending people like me to their deaths. Ironic really as he has sent you to your death. Guess you can't break the habit of a lifetime."

"You mean to kill me," James said and then his dreams came back to haunt him, "No, no," he shook.

This surprised both Mac Bride and Meehan for they thought him made of sterner stuff. "Look I'll tell you anything. He has money, loads of it. I'll take you to it if you'll let me go."

"You're going nowhere," Mac Bride said, "Tell us where it is. One of us will fetch it and if it enough. Well wait and see."

"No I can't trust you. What's to stop you taking the money and just killing me?"

"What's to stop us just killing you now? We came to take your life anyway, not for money. But as I said if there's enough," and left the sentence at that.

"Alright," James said seeing reason, "Go to the main building and you'll see some stairs. At the top you'll see Davies portrait. The safe lies behind it. 62, 24, 36."

And with that Meehan left the room. After he had gone Mac Bride said, "So it appears that Davies has been lying to you. Mind you he always was a treacherous dog. No, you have to be careful who you work for used to work for him a bit myself at one time."

"What?" James said in surprise.

"Yes that's right. I feel sorry for you in a way really. You were just like me I guess. Thought you were clever. Thought you knew it all. But no, come to the likes of Davies, well the man has no honour. That's our problem you see. We expect a certain honour amongst thieves. Now if he'd had told you the truth, well put it this way, you would have never sent Johnson. No you would either have took to your heels or tried to do it yourself."

"And what is the truth, now that I know you're not Chartists?"

"I could soon tell you," Mac Bride said but with that Meehan came back with two large bags, "You wouldn't believe it, full to the brim it was. I've never seen so much money in all my life."

"The proceeds of misery are often the most lucrative," Mac Bride said, "They must have trimmed the workers wages to the bone to get this."

"But we're keeping it aren't we. I mean you're not planning on doing anything stupid are you?"

"Oh we're keeping it. Do you think that it's enough?"

"Well I'm happy with it. To tell you the truth I wasn't expecting this much."

"No, I meant to save him."

"That's up to you. You suffered a lot more than me, your decision."

"Well," Mac Bride said and looked at James, "So tell me. If you were in my position, what would you do?"

"Probably the right thing."

"You understand then."

"Yes, one thing though. You said that you used to work for Davies?"

"Davies, his neighbours, everyone in fact, but most of all God. A Catholic priest in a Protestant Ireland and another name on Davies list of subversives. Harboured fugitives they said. Tortured to near death yet still I would not admit to their lies. Bugged and broken but still I would not relent.

Tell me, how many have you killed?"

"Er none."

"It will stay that way," Mac Bride said and plunged in the knife. James's body was taken into the factory and it was made to look like he had impaled himself on one of the machine's many sharp points. He was found the next morning and the verdict was accidental death.

Charles Davies was shot the same morning on his way to work by his own duelling pistols. After the deed was done they were laid out at his feet in the shape of a cross.

9. Saratu's Curse

Chapter 1

Once upon a time, a long time ago when I still had artistic credibility there lived a young foster child called Jason. His adopted parents surname was Williams though he seldom used it always believing that one day he would find and be reunited with his kin. The tale actually starts on his 16th birthday with him and his foster father Ian talking about Jason's future.

"Now Jason you are nearly a man, no longer a child. It is time to decide your destiny. You know that you are more than welcome to enter into my trade and carry it on after I have gone, that goes without saying, but you do know there's another option."

"I do?"

"You have over the years expressed an interest in finding out your true parents. Now up until today I have pleaded ignorance about your heritage and though it hurt me to do this I was honour bound."

"So you do know about my family"

"Yes but in was honour bound not to tell you anything until today when I was to give you a letter that would explain everything," and took out a letter from the bureau next to him. He gave it to Jason who read it

"Son, and though I have been no father to you I use that term as my genes lie within you. Oh those accursed genes and the madness they bring with them. That's right madness. I am afraid that you too will soon fall to it. You, like me and others before me are a victim to a curse passed down generation to generation. No male member of our line lives past the age of 17, unless, well that will be revealed in the first stage of the madness so I will not dwell on it. I will just say that I am sorry to have brought you into the world and left you in this predicament. My life will soon be over, in fact all that is left to wish you fare well and have better luck than I did.

Joshua Elam"

"I don't know about explaining everything all I know is that I am to die before I am 17, what sort of legacy is that?"

"Not one I would want, I freely admit."

"And to bring me into this world knowing it, what sort of person would do that?"

"He was a good man, he was just misguided in his madness that's all."

"Did you actually know him?"

"He was like a brother to me."

"And my mother?"

"I'm afraid she died, there were complications to your birth."

"So I have found my parents only to find out they are lost and I too am going that way."

"You'll need a little time to come to terms with this. Perhaps if I leave you for a while it might help."

"Time I have not got. Tell me about my father anything that might help me with this plight." "Well he was a pretty laid back and happy person until he turned 16 and then the dreams started."

"The dreams?"

"He would not tell me much about them. He just became restless and withdrawn. He was looking for something though he would not say what. He just started wasting away. I thought in my ignorance, that the company of a good woman would pull him out of depression. It did for a while but not that long. No, it wasn't until he gave me that letter on his death bed and told me about the

curse that I realised my mistake. I thought it was a depression, how wrong I was."

"And this curse, what did he tell you about it?"

"I am afraid that in his delirium he was very hazy, drifting in and out of consciousness. The best I could get out of him was it happened a long time ago. Oh and he kept shouting 'understanding it the key if you want to taste divinity' over and over again."

"Not a lot to go on then."

"Sorry, though I guess the dreams will tell you everything."

"Ah the dreams, the start of my demise."

"I'm so sorry." and Jason was left alone for a while to ponder on his fate.

It was that very night that the first dream came. Jason found himself on a small island devoid of flora just sand and rocks. He was waiting for something but he did not know what. The sand in front of him started vibrating and out of it sand started to take the form of a human figure. Once the process was complete Jason saw the figure of a Temple Priest with a white robe adorned with strange symbols." Elam incarnate and the last of the line soon you too, will be just a grain of sand."

"What is this all about?"

"How many times must I answer that question," then relenting, "Well it will be the last time I suppose. You are cursed to die before you reach the age of 17. It seems that one of your ancestors was a naughty boy who did not realise that some things are best left alone."

"And how does that effect me? I mean not being funny surely the curse should finish with Elam. Why should I die because of his actions?"

"I only administer it. I'm afraid the curses power is beyond my control. No, you are destined to die. My presence signifies the start that's all."

"But there is a way of defeating it, the letter said as much."

"Well yes, though I fear death would be an easier option. First though I must tell you how the curse came to be. I am afraid that you are not from very good stock. Elam was, like me, a Priest in the Temple of Saratu, the Goddess of Wisdom. A devious man who fooled us for a very long time he was keeping our resources for his personal gain and getting very rich in the process. He got away with it for many years; in fact it was only by chance he was caught. Well not actually caught as he was warned and fled. Not only that though, he did not flee empty handed. No, he took the Book of Saratu with him."

"The Book of Saratu?"

"Divine knowledge left by the goddess herself. Only the return of this will lift the curse so I guess with you gone it will be lost forever."

"I wouldn't know where to begin to look and I only get a year. That doesn't help."

"It had to be I'm afraid, that's the curse again. I didn't create it that was Janut, the High Priest. I was only killed to administer it, a sacrifice you could say."

"So you were actually killed because of this curse?"

"A sacrifice was needed, besides you are the last so soon my job is done."

"And then?"

"Go back on the Cosmic Wheel I guess. Anyway I don't see what help that will do you."

"And are you actually here to help me? What would happen if I succeed I mean?"

"If you succeed then the curse is lifted. My job is done so the outcome is the same. Now to your first question, help, hinder, depends on how I feel."

"And the people that you work for, I thought they wanted it back."

"Long dead and their memories long forgotten. Many Gods and Goddess' have come and gone since then. No the curse remains and I must warn you that it is still as strong as ever. As for the book, if you do actually find it you can keep it."

"And will you help me, I wouldn't have a chance without you."

"It depends how I feel, I mean as I said it makes no difference."

"I would find it a lot quicker and what would happen if I had a son in the meantime. That's another

generation to wait."

"Well fair enough, better than being bored I guess, so what do you want to know?"

"Where is it?"

"Haven't a clue. All I can really do is tell you about the book and warn you as to what to expect as the curse works its venom through you. Understanding the book is like an antidote to it."

"Understanding is the key if you want to taste divinity. Those were my father's dying words."

"What, that is the front page of the book. I thought it was lost with Elam, this makes a difference."

The madness will be starting soon so I haven't much time. You'll start to endure frightening dreams to test your resolve. This will sap your will to enjoy life and you will get a little withdrawn. I will try and get back to you afterwards and see if anything has come up. Try and find out anything about your father in the meantime. You will not remember this dream only wake up with a strong urge to know more about your father."

With that Jason found himself on a burning ladder trying to escape something but he was not sure what. He felt searing pain as the fire burned his fingers and soon his arms were alight. He had never felt such pain before and it left him breathless trying to contain it. On and on upwards he went the fear of his pursuer driving him through the pain barrier. There was a light up above and he knew that if he got there he would be safe. The fire now had spread to his torso and he felt his inner organs start to fry. Then something even stranger happened. He felt himself leave his body and step away, floating in mid air. He watched with horror as he saw his body burn before him. It was around about then that he woke up in a cold sweat.

Tiredness quickly took him back to her bed and he found himself in mid air falling rapidly to his death. He felt his stomach actually drop with the force of the fall. Closer and closer he got until it looked like his death was imminent. Then it happened again, he left his body and watched it fall to his demise. The shock of this caused him to wake up once more and as it was morning he got up.

"So" Ian said on seeing him "How do you feel?"

"Confused and a little frightened, I had a couple of bad dreams."

"Oh it's started, it's to be expected I suppose. You will want to understand them then."

Jason told him about the dreams and after he had finished Ian said, "I'm not sure but they sound similar, I remember him going on about a burning ladder definitely."

"So what happens next, you said that he started to get withdrawn."

"Not at first, his mind got restless trying to work out the dream I guess. That falling dream is quite common though generally you wake up."

"Well he couldn't work it out what chance have I got. Besides I don't think that it will do any good."

"Your choice what about the curse then, have you heard any more?"

"No, I'm none the wiser."

"Maybe in another dream then?"

"Maybe, so what was he like then, I know nothing about him."

"He was a lot like you really. I think that Elam was his actual surname."

"Was there anything he said, some sort of clue?"

"Not to my knowledge, all he left was the letter."

"Ah the letter," Jason said taking it out of his pocket, "Not much here, wait a moment, what's this, it looks like he's drew a picture."

"I know that place, we used to play there as kids. It's the old Methodist church. Why ever would he draw that?"

"Maybe he's hidden something there, it could be a clue."

"We could take a look I suppose, it isn't too far away," then they spent 2 fruitless hours picking their way through debris and cobwebs. The rest of the day passed quickly and Jason was soon in dream time. He was on a cold rectangular stone slab surrounded by temple priests. He was conscious though he could not move so to all intents and purpose he was at their mercy. A large well built man that Jason took to be High Priest was speaking, "Great Saratu, beauty beyond mortal grasp, wisdom

beyond our understanding, grant to us, mere wretched servants, the chance to truly know the unknown, see the unseen. Let the blood of our gift to you show to thee our devotion to your grace," and much to his horror he pulled a curved knife out from under his tunic. "Let this life symbolise that we too give our lives to you." He plunged the knife into Jason's chest and much to his surprise he felt no pain. He felt it go in and move round in a circular path. He felt his heart being ripped out and much to his horror it was still beating. "Let this heart symbolise that we too give our hearts to you" and held it aloft, "We give our hearts to you for you are our life."

Next Jason found himself in a prison cell, face to face with a woman of astounding beauty. She looked at him with disdain and said "You dare to steal my gift, for that you will pay and pay dearly. Your time is running out and then the torment can truly begin."

"This is nothing to do with me; I've never stolen in my life."

"A thief and now a liar, my Elam you have certainly grown in understanding. Your time is running out, your destiny has already been scored."

"Elam, that was my father's surname, this is about the curse isn't it?"

"Don't play dumb, it will be all the more painful for you after."

"I'm not playing dumb. I do know I've been cursed but I don't know why. I also know it can be lifted but I don't know how."

"You stole my gift to mankind, that's why you have been cursed. It will only be lifted when you bring it back."

"I don't even know what it is, what chance have I got?"

"Understanding is the key if you want to taste divinity."

With that Jason woke up in a cold sweat and an interest in understanding dreams. He told Ian about the dreams who then said

"So he was cursed for stealing something but we don't know what. It must have been pretty important, a gift to mankind she said. You have no idea who she was?"

"None, well they did mention someone called Saratu who had great beauty, that would fit."

"Saratu, they worshipped her so I'm guessing that she must have been a Goddess. I've never heard of her but that's no yardstick as I'm very ignorant in that field."

"That's us finished then."

"Not necessarily, I might know someone, Dave Lathan. He was quite keen on ancient history, I think he wrote a couple of books but none were published, I'll give him a ring," and did, after he had finished he said "He sounded very interested, he will be straight over."

Within 10 minutes a middle aged man laden with book was knocking on the door. After a few minutes chit-chat they got down to business. Dave opened the book and said, "Saratu, Goddess of Wisdom for the Ishans, a small semi nomadic tribe from the near east. Legends say that she left a book, a gift to mankind. Apparently it was stolen, they say that if it was ever found it would bring about the end of time."

"A book, you mean to tell me that all this came about through a book," and told him about the curse.

"Well I never, it must have actually existed."

"And I have to find it to lift the curse and if I do I invoke another."

"Damned if you do, damned if you don't. How would you find it anyway, this was a couple of thousand years ago."

"I don't know. The only thing she said was understanding was the key, my father said the same thing on his death bed."

"Really, do you think that that was the name of the book?"

"Maybe" Jason said "though I don't really know how it will help us."

"That's the best I can do, you might find the answer in a dream."

"Well there's been nothing so far, only death," and told him of the first two dreams.

"I don't like the sound of that, it sounds like you are losing your mind."

"What, however did you come up with that?"

"I think those deaths were death of aspects, Air and Fire."

"Sorry?"

"They are mental attributes, Air the ability to see the big picture and Fire, the imagination, your ability to create a mental image."

"And I've lost them?"

"Starting to, these things take time to evolve."

"What happens then?"

"Without seeing the big picture you'll go in on yourself. You will also get restless, mentally speaking I mean. Your mind will not stay too long on the same subject for it will not be able to hold it."

"So what happens then, I mean are there other aspects I could lose?"

"Well Water your power to reason and Earth, your understanding, basically your memory."

"Something to look forward to then."

"Well if you get any more dreams let me know. If I come up with anything I'll do the same." and left them to it. Nothing much happened the rest of the day and soon Jason found himself in dream time face to face with the Temple Priest who said "So the process has begun. Any further forward in the pursuit of the book?"

"None whatsoever, and if I do find it, it sounds like I will invoke another curse."

"Sorry?"

"There's a legend that goes with it, if the book is ever found it will bring about the end of time."

"Yes, that's right but I wouldn't see it as a curse it is actually a blessing?"

"A blessing how can the end of time be a blessing?"

"It only finishes because you don't need it any more. Surely that's a good thing."

"It will mean my death, how can that be a good thing?"

"It's only a mental death; do you know what time actually is?"

"Well no, I don't suppose that I do. I thought it was just seconds and minute."

"Units of equal length to try and define it you'll have to go a lot deeper than that."

"I've never really give it much thought, er, the span that you live on Earth?"

"Closer but think of it more as the evolution of life."

"Er, right."

"We'll start at the beginning then. The Cosmic Wheel, have you ever heard of it?"

"I've heard it mentioned, I don't know what it is though."

"We'll get that out of the way first then. The Cosmic Wheel is like a continual motion toy. It doesn't generate time as such that's just Man's way of defining its passage. First you have the great Zodiacal Year. This takes roughly 26,000 years before it repeats the process ad infinitum. Then you get the lesser Zodiac Year, the time it takes for the Earth to go around the Sun. The first one is long term evolution the second short. Whilst you live in the material realms you are tied to the Cosmic Wheel, its essence is birth, death and rebirth."

"Oh right, like the flower coming back every year."

"That's right, now the flower is only one example, think of it as evolution in one year, a year being its lifetime. Animals on the other hand may take many years to grow and many lifetimes to evolve. The giraffe would be a good example; it could take countless generations to evolve such a long neck. Nature has to evolve you see. You are physically evolved already so now it is mental evolution. Once that evolution is complete you transcend the Cosmic Wheel. That is the end of time because you are no longer controlled by birth, death and rebirth."

"What, do you mean to say that I will never die?"

"You'll never fall to old age, you could still be killed."

"I never knew that, so why do we fall to old age then?"

"Another time I'm afraid. I'm also afraid that when you awaken the second stage will begin. Things are going to get a little hectic now so be warned your fire has gone out."

With that Jason awoke and the madness began.

Chapter 2

So what is madness? Do we know enough about the human psyche to be able to define it for a start? I mean let's be honest for all our endeavours in that field our understanding is pretty shallow. Our ignorance is only surpassed by the arrogance we gained from the little that we do know. A lot of what we define as madness is actually brought about by a heightened state of awareness in the patient. Take Jason as an example when he lost the ability to create an image in his mind his imagination became mentally blind and so by way of compensation his mental hearing got more acute. He could hear things beyond the range of the physical which as you can imagine is quite a frightening thing. Jason awoke to footsteps running across the room.

"What have I told you about running in the house," an unfamiliar female voice shouted from downstairs.

"Sorry," a voice shouted to the left of him. Jason looked to its direction but there was nobody there. Confusion ruled his thoughts but fear had a strong foothold.

"Maybe I just imagined it," he said aloud before going downstairs.

"Sleep well" Ian said on seeing him.

"Not bad," Jason said reluctant to tell him about the voices another voice changed his mind "Come on John," a man's voice said "Get a move on, there's work to be done."

"Did you hear that?" Jason said.

"Sorry?"

"That voice,"

"Hurry up," the man's voice said "I won't tell you again."

"There it goes again, it's a man's voice though I heard a woman's earlier, is this house haunted?"

"No well not to my knowledge anyway."

"Do you think this is part of the madness then? I mean it's only me who seems to hear them."

"These voices, do you think they are out to do you harm?"

"No, well I don't get the impression anyway. The first was a woman telling a child not to run in the house and the second some man trying to rouse another to work."

"That's unusual I'll give Dave a bell he might be a little wiser," after he did he said, "He'll be around in a while, it seems he was about to call us with some news."

"Oh right,"

"Well you never know, he's pretty learned." Another voice came to the fore "Harry Jones, you'll be the death of me."

"Harry Jones," Jason said, "Some woman just mentioned his name; she said he'd be the death of her."

"That's the man I bought the house of. You seem to be picking up conversations from times gone by."

"Well why should that be?"

"I haven't a clue, I've heard nothing like this before. It's like you are picking up memories from somewhere," With that the door knocked "That will be Dave," and got up to answer it. He was soon brought up to date about the voices. "It seems you are picking up the house's memories," he said afterwards.

"I did not realise they had any," Jason said in surprise.

"Oh yes," Dave said, took off his watch and gave it to Ian "Close your eyes and tell me what you see."

"I can see a railway station, there's a sign, Margate I think. I'm not sure as it went by quickly."

"It was my father's watch; he used to be a train driver."

"So the watch has a memory," Jason said, "I never knew."

"Not a personal one, it's part of a collective memory."

"Sorry?"

"It does not have a memory of its own personal experience, like how it was made but it absorbs the things going on around it."

"Oh right, and the house is the same?"

"Well sort of as it's actually the bricks, mortar and plaster that hold the memories as it's the metal of the watch."

"Has everything got a memory of some sort then?"

"Everything comprised of matter has a mind that is what holds the memory."

"And how is it I can hear it, is it part of the madness?"

"I'm not sure to either, some would call it a blessing, and it's a heightened state of awareness."

"Well I don't know about that, you mentioned some news?"

"Oh yes, it seems that Elam turned up 500 years later at a place called Antioch claiming to be an immortal being. I doubt if it was the same one but it got me thinking. There's a school of thought that says that the end of time means you will never fall to age, your life is no longer controlled by time."

"Really, that would explain living for 500 years if it was true."

"I doubt if it was the same man but you never know."

"What happened to him?"

"He incurred the wrath of the Temple Priests and had to flee for his life. His followers were not so lucky; they were massacred by the hundred."

"He must have made for quite an impression, did they ever find him?"

"Not to my knowledge, oh well time flies when you are having fun if I dig up anything I will let you know" and left. Jason and Ian talked some more until evening made its play. Jason found himself back on the island face to face with a different Temple Priest, "Elam?"

"Incarnate, well in spirit."

"Why have you cursed me to die?"

"Nothing personal besides it was not me well not directly."

"How is it you weren't cursed, you look a lot older than 17."

"I was when the curse was placed, I'm afraid that it wasn't worded right."

"Was that you at Antioch?"

"That was me, I was trying to make amends by enlightening others but I guess they weren't ready at the time."

"So you actually found immortality?"

"Well for all the good it did me. It didn't stop me being put to the sword."

"I thought that you escaped at Antioch."

"There I did, no this was a lot later, about 400 years ago at the court of a Slavish prince called Rupert. He was after the knowledge but was not prepared to make the sacrifice. He wanted it for selfish reason so there was no way he could understand it. He blamed me and had me put to death as a charlatan."

"And the book, does it still exist?"

"Oh yes, your father actually found it but ran out of time before he could truly understand it. It is hidden in the church."

"I couldn't find it."

"You didn't know where to look, there's a secret panel in the wall opposite the entrance you'll find the book there." Jason woke up and could actually remember the dream. He went straight to the church and found an old scroll along with a translation. On his return he saw Ian who has just got up.

"I've got it."

"Got what?"

"The book."

"What, however?"

"It was in the church hidden behind a wall. I saw Elam in a dream and he told me," and passed him the scroll.

"It certainly looks old."

"It's even got a translation" and passed it over to him. Ian read it and said, "It's beyond me some of it makes sense. Dave will be the man to see, I'll give him a bell," and did that. When he came back he said, "Sounded keen, he's coming straight round."

"Oh right, you know I thought there would have been a lot more. I don't know about book, it's more like a page."

"It is a bit brief, I'm not sure about immortality, mind you I'm not really one to judge."

"Well it seems to be in two sections," the door knocked at that and soon Dave had entered and in an excited state said "So you have actually got it. I would never have thought it possible, may I?" and Ian passed him the original scroll. "Amazing and look at the lettering, I've seen nothing like it before. And look at the condition, it must be priceless. You said there was a translation with it?"

"Yes," Jason said and Ian passed it him. Dave read out the first section "The pursuit of wealth clouds your inner self with avarice and stops your spiritual growth by diverting its source to the ego, or shadow self and from this you get self consciousness."

"I think I'll have to travel a long road to understand that," Jason said "Self consciousness for a start, it doesn't seem to be what I thought it was."

"What did you think it was?"

"Sort of being worried about your image or embarrassment maybe."

"Well that's true to a degree; it's actually awareness of Self."

"And how does that fit in with the passage, I'm still none the wiser."

"The self consciousness you were referring to comes from the ego or shadow self. This is also called the small self as opposed to the true or inner self which is basically you without an ego."

"You know I think I understand that though I am a little confused as to the difference between the two."

"Well the ego is self interest and the True Self is geared up to the greater good."

"Sort of good of the community or country?"

"Sort of, it's more of a spiritual thing though. Those examples you gave could quite easily become ego centred."

"Really, how would that work?"

"It's a power thing. In your examples the higher up the ladder the more opportunity you have for generating personal wealth."

"Oh right, so that's why it was talking about the pursuit of personal wealth. You know it's starting to make sense. How would this actually generate self consciousness though?"

"The higher up the ladder the more aware of your image."

"Image consciousness right. It mentioned diverting the source and stopping your spiritual growth."

"Now that I'm not sure about, maybe it's saying you have your reward now instead of in heaven."

"How would that fit in with immortality?"

"I don't think it would. Well unless heaven is a state of mind."

With that a shiver went down Jason's back which unnerved him more than slightly, "I felt like someone has just walked over my grave."

"Sorry?"

"A shiver went up my spine."

"Really, maybe we are on the right track then, it sounds like you have activated the Kundalini."

"Sorry?"

"It means serpent energy hang on a minute, that would make sense."

"It would?"

"Its conscious energy is supposed to lie dormant near the Root Chakra. It gets its power from the

source, which is the Universe. That is, well must be according to that your inner self."

"I can understand that. So this universal energy must be your spiritual growth."

"It's consciousness. That means if it gets diverted to your ego it becomes self consciousness."

"And this could make you immortal?"

"I suppose so after all the Universe is. If you were full of its energy you'll be just like it."

"Sorry to put a dampener on it," Ian said "But surely these are from two completely different schools of thought. The Kundalini is an Eastern thing, what has that got to do with heaven?"

"Look deeper into it and you'll see that they all say similar things. The acetic Christians had light and darkness to the East's yin and yang."

"Masculine and feminine?"

"Sunlit and shaded," and then to Jason, "So how is your understanding?"

"It's saying that avarice diverts the universal energy to the ego for it makes you self centred. This universal energy is consciousness to your True Self so be diverting it you deprive your True Self of its potential for growth. Does that mean that you inner self is actually universal energy?"

"That's right" Dave said and with that Jason's ability to see the big picture returned. The activation of this faculty came with quite a jolt and left him a little frightened at first. To actually equate it you will have to think of a four cylinder motorcycle firing on three (2 in Jason's case) then suddenly reverting back to four giving a power surge.

"Are you alright?"

"Er, yes, I felt something jolt inside me."

"Oh, are you up to continuing?"

"I'm not sure; it shook me quite a bit."

"We'll leave it at that if you like. I've got to get off soon anyway. May I take a copy to study it?"

"Yes sure," Jason said and Dave wrote it out and left. Tiredness quickly came over Jason so he went to bed and soon found himself face to face with the first Temple Priest, "Good you understood it."

"What, so what was that jolt I had?"

"A reactivation of the air element you're making good progress in fighting the curse."

"Oh, I thought it was the curse in action."

"No, just the last passage and you'll be free; I will even help you if you like."

"Really, ah, I'm afraid I haven't read it."

"No matter, I wasn't actually going to explain it to you. I was just going to give you a few pointers to help you understand it."

"Well any help will be gratefully accepted."

"The shadow self, do you actually know what it is?"

"The ego, well that's what it said in the first passage."

"It is but you'll have to go deeper to understand the second passage. If it's any help some Native Americans tribes believe that when you die you wrestle with it and it pulls you under -ground."

"You mean that it's actually an entity?"

"Well yes, didn't you know?"

"I never gave it much thought to tell you the truth."

"Bad mistake. You remember the earlier conversation regarding time and age, well the shadow self is the part of you that falls to time. But like a drowning man it could take you with it if you are not strong enough."

"I never realised."

"Not many do as it likes to work in ignorance but if it's any help think of it as the physical will as opposed to your True Self which is spiritual."

"I'll bare that in mind."

"Now although the physical will is self conscious it is not actually self consciousness, confused?"

"Well a little, so what actually is self consciousness?"

"It's the mind ability to relate things to its self; it's a tool for the growth of your understanding."

"Really, how does that work?"

"You can only truly understand things by relating them to yourself. Your personal experience if you like."

"You know I understand that, it seems to leave a lot deeper impact."

"Ah personal experience the best teacher. It's actually an evolution of Man's basic instinct which is a set of laws that keep it on the Cosmic Wheel so think of it as the Earth's gravitational pull. We call these the Natural Laws," and related them, "These mould the Self in its early stages of development but as the Self's awareness gets stronger it grows in awareness until it is strong enough to break free from the Natural Laws though they still have an influence over it from your old or shadow self.

The stronger the Self the less the hold the shadow self has until it is completely purged and spiritually reborn to a oneness with the universe. Basically that's the evolution of Self." With that another cylinder fired up and the shock brought Jason back to reality. **Understanding is the key if you want to taste divinity**

The pursuit of wealth clouds your inner self with avarice and stops its spiritual growth by diverting its source to the ego or shadow self and from this you get self consciousness. Self consciousness is the Self's fundamental tool for growth and is actually an evolution of Man's basic survival instinct. As the self's awareness gets stronger it grows in awareness. Where once it was aware only of survival it now is aware of its well being. Now from this point the mind can actually think for itself for it is strong enough to free itself from the Natural Laws or Earth's gravitational pull on it although it will still have a hold through the old self. The stronger the Self or more understanding the lesser the pull until it is completely purged and with the old self's death it becomes spiritually reborn to a oneness with the Universe.

10. Epitaph

The Parish Priest was giving it the hell and brimstone routine to play on the fear of the ignorant and massage his ego. "All of you in this Parish are going to die," he yelled out in Puritanical style and much to his surprise he heard a little boy laughing in the front row. Unperturbed he carried on, "I don't know where nor do I know when but every one in this Parish is going to die." The laughter continued and he found it most off putting. He could ignore it no longer and so turning to the boy said, "What's so funny?"

"I'm not from this Parish."

Well I guess you could call this the sermon on account. On account that my writing is done and it is time to move on. Will Kavanagh is no more though I'll leave you some thoughts that might help. It you mould a generation by verbal penetration it will end in degeneration for your mind goes on vacation. You don't have to die to meet God only have an open mind for He is all around you. A closed mind is worse than an ignorant one for as it knows and still can't see it is mentally blind. Rest in Peace should be changed to relocation in paradise and any religion that aims for paradise in an after life has got its priorities wrong.

I'll still be around though as I am going back into the building game for I have a yearning to put my spurs back on. So God luck and above all God bless.

Folk Tales

V

(Say goodbye to ignorance)

Peredur McCluskey

Life-The Fifth Element

Contents

1. The 2,000 year stutter
2. The Jesus Christ scam
3. The Tree of Life
4. In Defence of Society
5. The Phoenix has Risen
6. The Calmer Sutra
7. The Ironic Law
8. The Awakening.
9. Chapter 1
10. God- The Universal Mind

1. The 2,000 Year Stutter.

"Is there a Heaven Granddad?" Little Nell said as she played around his feet. Bill Preston scratched his beard and thought about her words.

"Of course there is. Why do you ask?"

"Because daddy says that there is no God. So if there isn't a God then there can't be a Heaven."

"Did he indeed," Bill said keeping his temper, "Well when you speak to God tonight ask Him to have a word with daddy."

"But I don't speak to Him no more. Daddy said it was just a waste of time."

"You speak to him," Bill said finding it difficult to control his temper, "It's not a waste of time He still thinks of you as His little girl."

"Does He?" She said with a smile of relief, "I thought that He would be cross because I did not pray."

"No" Bill said, his temper subsiding, "He'll never be cross with you."

"What even if I do something bad?"

"He'll be upset. Why, are you thinking of doing something bad?"

"Oh no, I wouldn't want to upset Him."

With that Bill's son Mark and his wife Andrea came back from the theatre.

"Has she been good?" Andréa said as she ran towards her.

"Good as gold. Had a good night?"

"Yes not bad," and then to Nell, "Now say goodnight to Granddad it's time to go to bed."

Nell said, "Bye Granddad" and kissed him on the cheek, "Will you tell me a story?" she said to her mother as she took her upstairs.

After she had left Bill turned to Mark and said, "What are you playing at?"

"What?"

"Why are you telling that child that there is no such thing as God?" in an angry tone.

"Who are you to tell me how to bring up my child; you were not much of an example yourself."

"That's as maybe, but I was like you then."

"Oh yes and then you found God so every thing's alright now."

"It is for me. It could be for you but that's your choice."

"That's right, it's my business."

"Yes your business not Nell's. I don't want you poisoning her mind."

"How dare you. You presume to tell me how to bring up my child."

"Your child, she's God's child, you are only bringing her up for Him."

"What, what are you talking about?"

"Yes I thought that would surprise you. It may be your choice to turn your back on God but it's not to turn Nell's."

"There is no God. She's my child and that's it. I don't see your God feeding and clothing her and I never will because He doesn't exist."

"You think that He doesn't exist but you are just walking around in ignorance. How will that reflect on your child?"

"I know that He doesn't exist there is no think about it."

"What do you mean know? So you can prove to me that He does not exist, is that right?"

"No," But then thought a while, "Yes I can."

"Go on then I would like to hear this."

"He's just a superstition, a glorified Santa Claus. Any rational man knows that."

"Really, I'm pretty rational and I don't know it. Mind you my mind is not clouded by emotions like yours is."

“What's that supposed to mean?”

“A rational mind should be an open mind. For a mind to grow it must be susceptible to new ideas. While you close your mind to the possibility of their being a God you stunt your spiritual growth.”

“What are you talking about? It seems to me that an open mind quickly gets filled with rubbish.”

“A rational man has the power of discernment. He can sort the wheat from the chaff. Now it may sound like rubbish to you but you are walking around in divine ignorance so you are very much in the dark. Now is that the best you can do?”

“Darwin tells us that we evolved from the apes, scientists have proved that we have been on this Earth a lot longer than Genesis would have us believe. The whole basis of creation in Genesis is a myth.”

“That does not prove there is no God it just proves we don't understand Genesis that's all.”

“Well explain it to me.”

“Later, you haven't proved that God doesn't exist.”

“Well until you have explained it there's no point in going any further.”

“Is that the total basis of your argument then because you perceive Genesis to be wrong there is no such thing as God?”

“No, but until you have dealt with that point any more conversation would be pointless.”

“Very well so it looks like I have to prove that there is a God then because you can't prove there isn't.”

“Oh no, that's not fair. These are valid points.”

“Only to a pedant. Have you a Bible in the house?”

“No, well I don't think so anyway.”

With that Andrea came down and Mark asked her. She thought for a while and said, “I'm afraid not. Why-ever do you want a Bible?”

“Because dad's going to prove to me that there is a God.” Mark said in a condescending manner.

“I'm going to explain Genesis to him,” Bill said, “He seems to be a little ignorant in that department.”

“You two aren't still at it are you,” Andréa said, “You are always at it. If it's not one thing it's something else. You are worse than children.”

“Well dad thinks that we are all God's children,” Mark said in a mocking tone.

“And he's probably right,” She said much to Mark's surprise.

“What? I did not know that you believed in God.”

“I keep an open mind about things like that. They say that there are more things going on in Heaven and Earth. So what has brought all this on?”

“Mark's been telling Nell that God does not exist.”

“What,” she said and looking at Mark angrily, “What do you want to go and do something like that for?”

“It just came out in conversation. It's no big deal besides I don't believe that there is one.”

“What do you mean its no big deal? I want my child to be brought up to make her own decisions in things like that.”

“It's no big deal. Why are you making such a big thing about it?”

“Well,” Bill said getting up, “If you're content to wallow in your own ignorance that's up to you. I've got to get off now, I'll see you later.”

“Thanks for looking after her,” Andréa said.

“That's alright I'll see you both soon.”

He left with a smile on his face as he could guess what was going to happen next.

“So what are you playing at,” Andréa said, “Filling that poor child with stuff like that?”

“I didn't realise that you had views on it. You really surprise me sometimes.”

“My views are irrelevant but if that child's happy to believe in God let her. It's the same as Santa Claus or the tooth fairy.”

“What? So what was all that about being brought up to make her own decisions?”

“Oh there is that as well but more importantly I want her to have some imagination. What is it with you and Bill anyway. You never get on you're always bickering at one another.”

“It's him not me. I think he lives in a world of his own. You know what he even said today. We are only looking after her for God, can you imagine that?”

Andrea laughed and said, “Maybe he's getting a little old now. He's never really been the same since your mother died.”

“You think he's losing it. Perhaps that's why he's so keen on God.”

“Well if he gets comfort from it there's no harm.”

“I don't know if he should be talking to Nell about it though, it could unnerve her.”

“No, she loves him. Besides there's nothing wrong with believing in God I do myself.”

“You know I never knew that. I never thought of you as the superstitious type.”

“I like to think that there is someone looking down at me from above it gives me a lot of peace of mind sometimes. I don't understand why you are so much against the idea of there being one though.”

“I see the world today and all the wars committed in the name of religion and it doesn't make sense.”

“I wouldn't judge God by the actions of Man. Besides I'm willing to bet that a lot of those wars were done more out of greed and empire building than anything else.”

“Oh yes to some extent though the same can't be said about the Spanish Inquisition. Torturing people considered heretics and burning so called witches at the stake.”

“Man's misguided perceptions of God plus there was a little power struggle there as well I bet.”

“What about today then?”

“Sorry?”

“People are more tolerant and yet Church attendance is falling.”

“I don't understand.”

“God as a moral figurehead has long lost His appeal. We don't need Him anymore we've grown up.”

Andrea laughed at that and said, “I think you've been watching too much television.”

“It's true we have laws to protect us against discrimination. We can make our own moral judgements, we don't need God anymore.”

“Society is falling into decadence how can you say that? A vast number of children are hooked on various drugs and drug related crime. A lot of them have no direction and take comfort in stuff like heroin and crack cocaine. Once their on it it's a hell of a job to get them off it again.”

“Oh certain elements of society maybe but in the old days it would have been alcohol, it's just par for the course.”

“Sorry. For a start there is a lot of difference between the two and I think you'll find nowadays that a lot of these high society parties have a line of cocaine and numerous designer drugs. Drugs are the biggest threat to society at the moment and people are ignoring it.”

“Oh I don't know about that I think that you might be exaggerating it a little. I would have seen it more on tele if that was the case.”

“Are you serious? If I were you I would look around the real world a little. What's going to happen when Nell starts school? I tell you this I'm not looking forward to bringing her up in this world today. They're selling drugs at primary schools. Girls are getting pregnant at 13 or 14. I would say that they need God, as a father figure if nothing else.”

“Back to fathers again. Is that how you perceive God then?”

“Yes I suppose so. With mine dying when I was only 7 I used to talk to God as a child.”

“And did He ever answer?” Mark said in a flippant manner.

“Oh yes but not in the sense that you mean. You want to count yourself lucky that you still have one.”

“Yes right,” Mark said though by his tone he was not in agreement.

“Give him a chance he's changed a lot since your mother's death. Why not give him a bell tomorrow and ask him to explain Genesis? You might even find it interesting.”

“I doubt that but I've got nothing planned tomorrow. Anyway it's about time we hit the sack.”

Chapter 2

Mid morning the next day saw Mark knocking on Bill's door. “Kettle's on,” Bill said as he opened it, “You want a cup of tea?”

“Yes go on then,” Mark said as he entered. He walked through to the living room whilst Bill went back to the kitchen. He sat down on the settee and noticing a Bible on the coffee table picked it up and started to browse through it. Bill came back with the tea and said, “See it won't burn.”

“You were going to explain Genesis to me,” Mark said in a doubtful tone.

“Yes I've been thinking a little about that.”

“Oh, changed your mind then?”

“No, but to understand Genesis you have to have faith.”

“Is that another way of getting out of it?”

“Define faith?”

“Belief I suppose, so that leaves us with a problem.”

“Belief without proof. That's where an open mind comes in. It's not just a religious thing it works on many levels.”

“Go on.” Mark said not really interested because he thought he was just being flannelled.

“Now if someone told you something and you did not know it yourself would you believe them?”

“Well I suppose that would depend who told me and if what they said sounded rational.”

“Good, so if the Prime Minister said that unemployment was going down and showed you the statistics to prove it would you believe him?”

“Probably, though statistics can be manipulated to prove any point I suppose.”

“Well that's as maybe but you trust him and so have faith in him and you have faith that he would not manipulate the figures.”

“Yes although I don't see the relevance.”

“Bear with me. So you have faith based on knowledge and also on perceptions can you see the logic?”

“Yes, if I perceive him to be a good man then I'll take his knowledge to be correct.”

“Well that's the first form of faith. It's called blind faith.”

“Okay I'll accept that but I don't see where it's leading.”

“Time will tell. Now you have blind faith in the man and you are happy to believe in what he says because it sounds logical. Right, now say more people are working in your town than there were earlier you would use it as a yardstick to measure the whole country so what he said seems rational. Well this is the next step on the ladder of faith. Faith with a limited amount of information to back it up, you agree?”

“Yes I can accept that.”

“Well think of this information as the wisdom and faith would be your understanding of this wisdom.”

“I hope this is worth the wait.” Mark said getting impatient.

“It will be. Now take for example that you go round every Job Centre and get the statistics for the number of people who signed on for the last two months and subtracted one from the other. You would know for sure that the Prime Minister was telling the truth.”

“Yes.”

“Well that's total faith. You have found the answer for yourself.”

“Well that's proof, that wouldn't be faith.”

“I thought that total faith was proof. Would you accept that point?”

“Alright, for the sake of argument I'll go with that.”

“Well in between blind faith and total faith there are various degrees of faith.”

“Sorry, I was up with you till then.”

“If you went to two or three Job Centres and they all had a down ward trend you faith would be stronger.”

“Oh right, yes I see what you mean.”

“And with every extra Job Centre visited the stronger your faith gets. So now you understand faith?”

“Perceptions gained through knowledge. But what if that knowledge is false?”

“Good point, that's where a deeper understanding comes to play, Experience.”

“Sorry?”

“Now if you went around all these Jobs Centres and they lied to you do you think that you would be any the wiser?”

“I don't suppose I would really.”

“Really. So if you went to your local Job Centre and they told you there was no unemployment in the town yet most of your friends did not have a job would you not be suspicious?”

“Yes, but they would not actually say that.”

“Only an example.”

“Fair enough.”

“Well imagine that you knew everybody in the town that you lived. You would know exactly who was and was not working so you would know for sure if the figures given were correct.”

“Yes I can see what you are saying.”

“And so the more people you know the more understanding you have. Can you see the logic in that?”

“Yes but I fail to see where God fits in.”

“Think of God as the knowledge.”

“Knowledge I thought you were going to say the Prime Minister for a moment.”

“No that would be your spiritual leader, Jesus, Buddha but that's getting us of the point. So your belief in God would depend on what you were told about Him if you followed blind faith and what you know about Him as your faith gets stronger.”

“So you are going to try and prove Him through faith. That's never gong to be total proof though is it.”

“Total faith you mean. We'll have to get back to that one later. First of all do you believe that you have a Soul?”

“I've never really thought about it before.”

“A part of you that lives on after your death.”

“No I believe that when you die that's it.”

“That makes if difficult then as it will be a bit like trying to explain that $2+2=4$ to some one who has not the concept of numbers but bear with me and we'll see.”

“Alright, this should be good.”

“Have you ever heard the expression we are all made in God's image?”

“Yes though I can't see myself as every one is different so that knocks that on the head.”

“No, in fact it strengthens it if anything as it tells us that we are more than just our shells. That is the Soul.”

“But how do you know it doesn't die?”

“One step at a time. Now scientists say that we only use 12% or so of our brain bear that in mind as that is our level of consciousness. You know about the subconscious and super conscious?”

“Yes.”

“So there are more things going on in our mind than we are conscious of you would accept that?”

“I guess I can't argue.”

“You accept that so you open up the possibility of things beyond your reason.”

“What, I'm not sure about that, it's a big jump.”

“I don't see it as so. Reflex action is beyond reason you don't think about it you just do it.”

“That's a different thing entirely for I've reasoned that it's a reflex action.”

“You reasoned what it was but you haven't reasoned where it came from nor have you reasoned why you did it.”

“I don't understand that.”

“We'll go through it again then. A piano falls out the window above you. Do you stand there and say there's a piano heading towards me and I'm in danger of getting hurt. I think I will move out the way.”

“No, that would be stupid.”

“So you don't reason why you should move you just move. Now that has been reasoned somewhere else. Would you agree?”

“I'm not sure.”

“We're rational animals. We don't do anything without reasoning it first whether we are conscious of it or not.”

“Alright I can go with that though I have my doubts.”

“Well before we go any further we'll try and dispel them. So what are they?”

Mark thought a while and said, “I can't think of them but it doesn't sound right.”

“Ah that is where your emotions come in.”

“Sorry?”

“They affect your rational mind. You see the logic in my words but you put up mental barriers and this makes your mind irrational.”

“I don't know about that it just doesn't sound right that's all.”

“You are not conscious of it because it comes from below your conscious level. You can't give me a rational answer though you still deny it that makes it an emotional answer.”

“I don't see it myself you'll have to elaborate a little.”

“Alright then your hatred towards me is putting up these barriers. That is the cause and that comes from memories of what I was.”

“Hatred is a bit strong are you sure you are not getting a little paranoid?”

“It's not a conscious hatred it's buried deep but by the time it surfaces it comes across as something else.”

“You'll have to explain that for that is beyond reason.”

“You have a memory of me as a father and to be honest it is totally justified as I was a bit of a bastard to you and you would not believe how sorry I am. Well the father figure is also the authoritative figure, the God head if you like. And so by rejecting God subconsciously you reject me.”

“That sounds a bit like Freud to me.”

“Each of us are individuals. It could have been a father, it could have been an over zealous nun. Does that make sense to you?”

“Yes I guess. I didn't realise that you knew how much you hurt me though.”

“I've carried that a long time. Left it to fester but you've got to believe that I am not the same man that I was.”

“I think I can see that now, you wouldn't have said anything like that to be before. You want a cup of tea? I'll make it.”

“Yes good idea and I'll try and remember where we were.”

“It's important to you isn't it?”

“Sorry?”

“Me believing in God.”

“It's your free will but I would like you to get that inner peace that I have and He's the only one I know giving it out.”

"We'll see. I don't think I can bring myself to believe though it's not rational."

"I've only just started. Give it time and see. Besides you've made a start by recognising that your emotions are getting in the way."

"I have?"

"Yes, you have brought it closer to your conscious level. Next time you'll feel irrational you might have a clue as to why you're being like that."

"Probably, though I don't really see how it will help me."

"When the clouds are lifted you can see the shadows. When you recognise why you perceive things in certain ways you can deal with your perception."

"I'll make the tea," Mark said getting up, "That sounds a bit too deep to me."

Chapter 3

Mark came back with the tea and they carried on.

"So where were we," Bill said, "So you accept that everything has to be rationalised?"

"Yes, I can see that."

"So if you are not conscious of rationalising it something else must be."

"Well er. Go on."

"This is probably the hard part. I don't want you thinking that you are schizophrenic. Now that something else comes through the Imagination."

"Oh yes," Mark said with a sigh of relief, "I can accept that."

"Good. Now think of yourself as thought and Imagination as memory. You imagine things from your memory. Does that sound logical?"

"Yes I guess so but doesn't memory mean that it has been rationalised already so that would negate your argument."

"Reflex memory yes but the memory I'm talking about comes from the Soul."

"Ah, this is where it gets tricky."

"Do you dream?"

"Yes, I thought we all did."

"Do your dreams ever tell you anything? Well that you are conscious of anyway."

"Actually they do I used to have a recurring dream that did not go away until I found out what it was."

"Well some of these dreams have had to be rationalised would you agree with that?"

"Oh yes there's a lot of symbolism there."

"Well they are rationalised by a different aspect of yourself."

"Your memory?"

"In a way but memory doesn't rationalise so it must be more your Imagination but I had better elaborate a little on Imagination first."

"That sounds good it's starting to get a little confusing."

"Well think of your Imagination as your ability to create an image does that sound fair?"

"Yes pretty fair."

"But your Imagination has to come from somewhere and that is because it is only the ability to create an image. It has to be rationalised by something else."

"Fair point. So I can accept that I have a Soul but that does not prove that it is immortal."

"One step at a time I've only just got you to recognise it."

"Sorry," Mark said laughing, "Go ahead."

"So the next step would be to try and prove that the Soul lives on. This gets tricky but I'll try this tact first. Looks like its back to knowledge. Heaven and Hell, reincarnation, any views?"

"Well I'm only coming to terms with the fact that I've got a Soul. It's a bit of an eye opener."

"Well these beliefs must have come from somewhere plus you have past life regression. I would say that most of the world's population believe in life after death in one form or another."

“Point taken but for sake of argument it’s never been proved.”

“Ah sometimes you can only accept without proof. I mean let's be honest how much of our history is based on conjecture?”

“Sorry?”

“Dinosaurs. How can you put a date on their extinction if you weren't there to see it?”

“Dating the rocks around them.”

“You could never be totally sure. You can only go on the information given you unless you were actually there it is only conjecture.”

“I don't know about that some of the equipment is pretty advanced.”

“It doesn't matter. It has to be conjecture as it is not first hand knowledge. Let's look at it logically. If you were there and saw it that's first hand knowledge.”

“Yes, go on.”

“Failing that if you weren't there but someone else who you trusted was there and they saw it that would be second hand knowledge.”

“Right.”

“Well anything else is just conjecture and that works on your faith in other people's words surely.”

“Yes I suppose you could say that it's logical.”

“Well going on from that any talk about what happens after death is pretty much conjecture and that's where faith comes in. I could give you a myriad of examples to illustrate the point that something lives on but that would just be faith in the end.”

“I see the point you are making but I would be interested in some of your points.”

“Well I've mentioned past live regression under hypnosis or memory reactivation that's quite well known. Seances or clairvoyant circles, ghosts but these all really fall down to our experience.”

“Sorry, I was up with you till then.”

“They have to be experienced first hand to be truly believed. On from that though if Andrea said she had seen her father and spoke with him you would probably believe her more than a total stranger. You have faith in her as a person so it would come down to second hand knowledge and be a lot stronger than conjecture. You see what I mean?”

“Yes,” and then with a laugh, “Well unless of course she's had a few drinks.”

“Fair enough,” Bill said laughing, “So the next step would be the written record.”

“The Bible?”

“Amongst others, Mythologies and other scriptures it has been quite well documented.”

“Isn't that a conflict of interests? The Bible on one hand and and Mythologies the other?”

“Imagine the man with numbers, you've just told him that $2+2=4$ and he sort of understands it and then you tell him $3+1=4$ how do you think he'd feel?”

“Like me I suppose. So you were talking about the written record?”

“Yes now that's where discernment comes in. You have to sort the wheat from the chaff. Your best bet is to cross reference information and build your faith up that way.”

“What like going to the different Job Centres you mean?”

“That's right. They all have a belief that there is life after death in one form or another so they must have based this belief on something.”

“Well true I suppose though the only thing I think it could be would come from the supernatural.”

“Beyond your perceived reality yes it would have to. Now that comes over on two levels.”

“Sorry, two levels?”

“Oh sorry I missed that one. Think of your Soul as the understanding and your Spirit the wisdom. That's why you're not schizophrenic you're actually a trinity but anyway I digress. Your wisdom comes over by divine inspiration and your understanding comes over through experiences in life. Andrea seeing her father kind of thing.”

“So they based their beliefs on experience and divine guidance. I suppose so it's logical in an illogical way.”

“Well it is conjecture, you'll have to read through it and cross-check it but you are looking for total faith for that I'd use a different tact.”

“Any tea on the go I think I could do with a break.”

“Sure,” Bill said laughing as he got up.

Chapter 4

Bill came back with the tea and giving Mark his he said, “There are only two ways you can prove the immortality of the Soul.”

“What do you mean conclusively prove it?”

“Yes, the first and most obvious way is death.”

“I don't know about that. I'm not interested enough to take it that far, and the next?”

“To leave your body.”

“Well that sounds just as bad and a bit far fetched.”

“No not at all in fact I've done it myself.”

“You have? I did not know that.”

“Yes, I left my body when I was in a dream.”

“How can you be sure that you just weren't dreaming?”

“Oh believe me, if it happens to you you'll know it.”

“So what happened then?” Mark said with a marked rise in interest.

“I felt myself lift from my solar plexus. My whole essence rose and spread. I felt myself thinning out, it was amazing.”

“Really I bet it must have been a little frightening too.”

“Oh yes at the time I suppose but after it was over it was like a great weight had been lifted off me.”

“So what happened then I mean it didn't just happen now did it?”

“No it took a lot of hard work to get to that stage. Purity of thought and deed.”

“What, how does that help?”

“Let me explain. Can you imagine that you Soul is covered in veils? Clouded by emotions if you like.”

“Yes I suppose so though I don't really know what one looks like.”

“Well each of these veils are negative emotions, envy, pride, avarice and that. Well these effect your perceptions of reality and hamper you progress.”

“How do they hamper your progress?”

“They taint the purity of your Soul. When you get rid of them your Soul is pure and can merge with your Spirit leaving one emotion left. Love. When they merge you leave your body and become at one with everything. I'm afraid though it's a case of actions speak louder than words.”

“I have enough faith in you to believe what you are saying so yes I guess it must be immortal.”

“That's only second hand knowledge. You really want to find out for yourself.”

“I wouldn't know how.”

“Just lift the veils. Take a good look at yourself and find out your strengths and weaknesses, be a little more charitable in day to day living. Read a lot more and build up your mind and perhaps say a prayer.”

“Pray. I'm not sure about that.”

“Well it's up to you but I find them useful.”

“I wouldn't really know what to say.”

“I say seven times night and day I surrender my Will to the greater will the will of the divine. I will to will thy will.”

“And that's it. That's more of a mantra. So where were we?”

“Immortality of the Soul as I said that's something you'll have to find out for yourself. For the sake of argument do you accept if as true?”

“Well for the sake of argument.”

“So if it is immortal it has to go somewhere when the shell has died would you say that was

logical?"

"Yes, it must do."

"So that question is another one based on conjecture."

"Yes re-incarnation or Heaven and Hell. They seem poles apart."

"At first sight but there is a bit of similarity there. The people who follow re-incarnation believe that when you make the grade you go into the Collective Conscious which is another name for Heaven."

"So what about Hell then that nulls the chance of re-incarnation?"

"It would do if it existed. Personally I don't believe that it exists, this is conjecture though."

"That just leaves God then."

"Ah the big fellah. Are you talking about the Lord God or the God within?"

"Sorry, I though there was only one."

"Didn't you know that we are all God's children made in His image?"

"So you must mean the Soul?"

"I was talking about the Spirit. Your Maker. The Lord God is your Creator."

"I never knew that."

Bill laughed and said, "So you didn't actually know what you didn't believe in."

"Well you still haven't proved it to me."

"When you find out that you are immortal in your dream a couple of days later you meet your Maker in reality."

"Sorry?"

"You see your Self, your pure Self that is, which is Spirit something else to look forward to."

"Right, and the Lord God?"

"I don't think that you'll see Him I mean let's be honest can you see love?"

"Is that what God is then?"

"The Creative Force you'll see His actions and you might sense Him."

"Sense Him, how?"

"Would you believe by saying a prayer? I'm afraid with God you are going to have to find Him for yourself."

"Right," Mark said going deep into thought.

"So what about Genesis then?"

"Oh no you've give me enough to think about already. And you think this will work then, this prayer I mean?"

"Well it works for me your turn with the kettle?"

2. The Jesus Christ Scam.

A peaceful morning in the spring saw David Jesse leave his cave and take the morning air. Years had taken their toll though he took strength from his large staff that had become his third leg of late. An elderly man with a long white beard that could have fitted the role of Father Time which was ironic really because that was one thing he was short of

He slowly made his way up the rocky path stopping to admire the new growth now and again and revelling in the pretty colours and ornate structure that Nature called its own. He was on his way to the mountain spring to drink of its cool fresh water that was almost a meal in itself. He found that he was rarely hungry now as his mind had long since quelled that pang and could live very fruitfully on berries and roots. The years of isolation had given him time to ponder on the great mysteries of life such as why is the world round, why is water wet and all this contemplation had given him a sense of inner peace one which he was loath to share. He hobbled up to the spring and got down on his knees to take his fill but was stopped by a blip to his reality.

“Are you Jesus?” a small voice said to his left and this shocked him for he had not heard a voice in many a year. He look over to its direction and saw a young boy of around 12 looking at him with a picture of incredulity.

“No,” David answered abruptly, angry that his peace had been disturbed, “What are you doing here?” and then after a seconds thought, “Are you alone?” as he had thoughts of being inundated.

“I've left home to find Jesus.”

“You'll not find him here, now get off back to your mother she'll be worried sick.”

“She's dead,” the boy said sadly though David took no pity as he said, “That's no concern of mine. I'm not who you are looking for so be on you way.”

“I haven't eaten for days, have you anything?”

David was about to chase him off but had a change of heart, “Come with me, but once you have eaten you must go.”

The boy picked up his stick and bundle and followed David back to the cave. He ate heartedly of the broth David had made but when he had finished he was reluctant to go, “Can't I stay here. I've nowhere to go.”

“That's not my problem. I've given you something to eat now you must go. Look,” he said softly, trying another tact, “This is no life for you. Go back to your own kind you'll be a lot happier.”

The boy got up and with a heavy heart left the cave. As David watched him go he felt a strange twinge of sadness but he quickly put that behind him. The rest of the morning was uneventful and nothing of any note happened until he took his afternoon nap.

David found himself with another aspect of himself disguised as his old teacher for effect.

“What a waste,” the teacher said, “What was it all for?”

“What?” David said confused and unaware that his teacher had been dead for a long time.

“All that knowledge that you could impart and you went and blew it I hope that you are proud of yourself.”

“What do you mean blew it? It is my knowledge and what I do with it is my concern and my concern only.”

“How little you know. Knowledge is made for sharing; I mean how else is it going to grow? You must know that your time is running out so soon it will all be wasted. Tell me David is that all you want to be known as, a waste of time.”

“I don't see it like that. I earned my wisdom the hard way are you trying to say that I should impart it freely?”

“Yes knowledge is for all but why do you say freely? Don't you know that what you sow so shall you reap or you have to give in order to receive?”

“It does not work like that. That only works on the material level.”

“As above then so below have you come across that expression before?”

“No, what does it mean?”

“Am I to impart that freely?” and David woke up before he had a chance to answer.

David felt strange on awakening. He could not get the phrase out of his head and it perturbed him no end. As the day started to turn to dusk it started to rain and he thought of the poor child and how wet it must be getting. He vowed that he would find him if he had not gone too far and bring him back to shelter the night. The rain had turned to a deluge by the time he had left the cave and he called out to him to see if he was still in earshot. David could barely see in front of him as he searched and called and after half an hour he gave up on his quest. He made his way back and much to his surprise found the boy waiting for him. “Please don't send me away I have nowhere to go and the night is wet.”

“You can stay here tonight and we'll see what tomorrow brings. What do the call you?”

“Paul, Paul Samuals.”

“Are you hungry,” David said and that was answered with a nod so David carried on, “There is some more broth left help yourself.”

The boy tucked in and ate away to his heart's content. As David watched his supply dwindle he was amazed at Paul's appetite as he fully expected the broth to last a few more days. After he had finished David said, “Lessons in life.”

“Sorry?”

“That's what we are all here for. And the first lesson is temperance. If you live this lifestyle you will have to control your hunger. Tell me Paul is it better to gorge yourself and starve for four days or eat a little each day and just be hungry?”

Paul thought awhile and then felt guilty about eating too much, “I'm sorry but I was hungry.”

“Oh I don't mind you eating like that, that's not my point. I can easily make another pot tomorrow.”

Paul thought some more and said, “I suppose it's better to be hungry than to starve.”

“Good, remember that well and it will help you to survive the trials of life. Don't take more than you need or someone will have to go out.”

“Are you Jesus, I've heard that he was a teacher?”

“No, my name is David Jesse. So tell me. Why do you want to have a lifestyle like this? You are just a young lad. You have your whole life in front of you. You don't want to be wasting your life out here miles from anywhere.”

“I was told to go out into the wilderness. Is that what this is?”

“I suppose you could call it that but who told you to go out into the wilderness? I can't see anyone saying that.”

“Not people it was in a dream.”

“A dream?” David said his interest rising as he remembered his dream earlier in the day.

“Yes I saw an old man and he said that I must go out in the wilderness to find Jesus for when I've found him I've found myself.”

“What, he said that?”

“Yes, he said that when I've found myself everything would be alright.”

David did not quite know what to say so he let the matter drop, “You must sleep now and we'll see what tomorrow brings.”

The boy must have been tired for he fell quickly to sleep.

David pondered on his words and could not really dismiss it as just a dream for all his years of isolation had enforced their relevance to him. He reasoned that he had been in the wilderness for many years and nothing like that had happened to him so by the time he had succumbed to sleep he was content to put it down to childish imagination. His teacher in the other dimension had a

different view of course.

“Oh you Philistine standing there smug in your ignorance, a child's imagination indeed don't you know that we are all God's children?”

“Yes, but we all have to grow up.”

The teacher laughed at that and said, “In the intelligence stakes we are all but children in His eyes. You could learn a lot from that child for his innocence and faith are a lot more developed than yours.”

“Don't be silly he's just a boy. What could he teach me that I don't already know?”

“Oh ye of little faith that's what caused that gaffe. He is just a boy, a tactless remark if ever I heard one. Do you know what he really is?”

“What, what do you mean really is?”

“He's an emotion a mental agitation. He's a baby that's devoid of love and that in a nutshell is as above so below. He is looking for Jesus for Jesus is love on a spiritual level so when he finds love he finds his Self.”

“Sorry, you lost me.”

“What happens on a mental level also happens on a material level, as above so below. You need him although you are not conscious of it yet. He is the little child with in you, your imagination if you like. As you impart your knowledge to him he will get mentally stronger and you will feel younger. Fair trade wouldn't you say?”

“So he was sent to help me and I didn't know, how foolish of me.”

“No harm done. In fact you have already started to help him.”

“I have?”

“Yes, with your lessons in life you brought me to life for a little while.”

“What?”

“I am the teacher, a different aspect of yourself I am the part that makes you feel younger. I am your wisdom and wisdom never dies.”

With that David woke up and felt strangely lifted. Paul was nowhere to be seen and at first he thought that he had left him. David went out and started to look for him but was distracted by the appearance of an old friend. It was a wild mountain goat but as they were so far from civilisation it had little fear of David and over the years had let him into the balance of things. David stroked his nose and said, “John (that's what he called it though the goat never answered to it) good to see you again. It's been a hard winter and no mistake.”

The goat bolted much to David's surprise and he turned around to see Paul returning from his travels laden with wood for the fire.

“You were speaking to the goat,” he said, “Why did it run off?”

“A little fear of the unknown he's wary of strangers.”

“Yet he came to you?”

“That took a lot of time and trust but I had plenty of time.”

“But how did you get its trust you must have been a stranger to it once.”

“Think of trust as love on a mental level. To get its trust I had to make the first move which I did by feeding it. You see Paul that is another lesson in life. You have to give in order to receive.”

“Do you think he will ever come to me?”

“Yes, in fact it should not take that long as he has already dropped his barrier with me.”

“Dropped his barrier?”

“Let me into his life. We all put up barriers, sort of protection I suppose to stop us getting hurt.”

“Are you sure you aren't Jesus, he could talk to the animals.”

“Yes maybe but so could Dr. Do-little. I thought you had gone.”

“I went to get some wood for the fire. Can't I stay another day I quite like it here? Besides I would like to talk to the animals too.”

“You can stop here another day but you do know that you will have to go back eventually, this is no

life for a child.”

“I know but I have nothing to go back for not until I find Jesus then things will be alright.”

“As you say, well as you are here I had better start your education.”

“My education I don't want to go to school.”

“This is your school, the world around you. Some plants are poisonous and should be kept well away from. If you are to survive out here then you have to know what you can eat.”

“Then I can stay then,” Paul said picking up.

“I can't stop you living in the wilderness. Beside I will not be here forever if I do let you stay.”

“Are you planning on going back?”

“Yes,” David said with a wry smile, “One day but hopefully it will not be just yet. Oh well this will not put food on the table. Follow me and we'll start your education properly.”

Paul followed David and he gave them a guided tour of the flora in the area. David was surprised at how easier it was to walk. It was still a pain but it did not seem as bad as before. He was also surprised at how easy Paul picked things up. He seemed to have a yearning for learning that took David's breath away. He had a keen memory and only had to hear things once for them to sink in. By the end of the tour they came back, Paul laden with a lot of new knowledge and both laden with things for the pot. David showed Paul how to make broth with the ingredients they found and water from the stream and they finished the evening with a meal. After dinner tiredness took its toll and they both went off to their separate dimensions.

Chapter 2

David found himself in a hot desert landscape and felt strangely different. He felt smaller and looked to his hand to find a sling and felt a bag on his shoulders that contained stones. Before he could come to terms with this discovery he found that he was confronted by two men. One held a giant shield but the other one held David's fear. He was huge. He must have been over nine feet tall, decked out in brass mail and armour and carrying a large spear.

“Am I a dog that thou comest at me with staves,” the giant bellowed and fear knocked David into another reality. He found himself back with his old teacher who seemed to take great delight in his plight. After he had finished laughing he said, “So David, where was your faith? Why did you hide it in a bag?”

“What?” David said, still shaking but now confused.

“I see you are not quite ready yet. Not to worry there's plenty of time, he'll have to go lieth elsewhere for a while,” and erupted into laughter once again much to David's confusion.

“Look, what's going on?”

“Faith that's what it's all about. David's faith in God and himself and you my friend seem to have neither.”

“Well he was a big man.”

“A bigger Philistine than you maybe for he too was ignorant of the divine.”

“It's not funny. I could have got killed out there.”

This seemed to set the teacher laughing even more. After he finished though he said, “You won't come to harm don't worry about that. So tell me David how do you defeat smug ignorance with faith?”

“I don't know.”

“Activate your imagination but first tell me what faith is in essence?”

“The ability to believe without proof?”

“That's not bad but try this one instead the activation of a loving imagination.”

“A loving imagination?”

“If you think of the imagination as the ability to create an image and loving in the spiritual sense the ability to create a perception of a loving father who will protect you if you let Him in.”

“I can sort of see that but why did you say let Him in?”

“By having faith in Him for when you have faith in Him He works through you as well as with you. You have to let Him because of a thing called free will. So let's try again, why does faith beat smug ignorance?”

“I think I understand faith but I don't see the connection with smug ignorance.”

“A bit too much of a leap of faith why not define smug ignorance and we'll take it from there.”

“I suppose you could say that smug was self satisfied and ignorance would be lack of knowledge so if you put them together you get self satisfied through lack of knowledge.”

“Or lack of imagination, you can't see past yourself.”

“So faith would destroy it by the ability to see past itself. I think I understand that but how would it work in reality?”

“Well if you find out what the giant is you will not be ignorant of it.”

“I don't see how that would make a difference for it was not what he was but his size that concerned me.”

“Early days yet,” the teacher said and with that David woke up to find Paul still asleep. As he looked at him he was reminded of his youth and he could see himself in him. This unnerved him slightly as he would not like to think that he would have to go through what David had. His mind drifted back to his childhood and he remembered its pain and its torment. He too had lost his mother at an early age and this had left him to think of the afterlife and its possibilities as he had never been sure. He never found Jesus in his youth only heartache and pain and this had led him to a certain amount of aloofness. He had tried to make it in the material world but he was playing against a loaded deck as lack of education and station in life took their toll and his enclosed attitude never made him popular. In his late thirties he decided to travel and find out if the grass was greener just living off his wits for a while. He could see Paul going down that same path and thought that if he could not stop him at least he might be able to learn by David's mistakes. Small comfort really but that was the best he had to offer him.

Paul stirred knocking David of his thought train so he said, “Did you sleep well?”

“Yes, I saw that old man again.”

“Did you. What did he say?”

“Soon and then he disappeared.”

“Was that all, he did not say much.”

“That's all I remember,” Paul said though David sensed he had more to tell. He never pursued the point though reasoning to himself that it was not really his business instead he said, “We've got a busy day today.”

“We have, more education?”

“Lessons in life there's plenty to be done. See that bag over there,” and pointed to the corner of the cave, “There's seed in that.”

“Seed, what sort of seed?”

“Wheat. Not much but enough to give us bread for a while.”

They left the cave and David took Paul to a patch of fertile land and said, “The lesson is what you sow so shall you reap.”

Paul took the seed and started sowing; about halfway through a sudden thought came to him. He looked at David and said, “I'm sure Jesus said that once.”

“He did, but so did a lot of farmers I'll wager.”

“Oh,” Paul said, not satisfied but he carried on. The sowing did not take long and as they talked David realised that Paul's childhood was even more similar than he had first imagined. He too did not fit in at school and led a solitary lifestyle. By the time they had finished David knew almost as much about Paul as he did about himself. The goat made an appearance late afternoon but for all David's beckoning it would not come over as Paul was there. Paul was disappointed but David told him to give it time and it would come round. They headed back to the cave and started talking about the important things in life. It was Paul who brought the subject up by talking about his parents.

“You must still miss them a lot,” David said.

“I still see them sometimes in my dreams but I also sense my mum if that doesn't sound too funny.”

“You sense her, in what way?”

“It's hard to explain it's like I feel that my dad is looking over me and sometimes if things get too bad I feel that my mother's around me to comfort me I suppose.”

“No, not at all they must be still around to comfort you I suppose.”

“People used to think that it was odd when I said it. I remember once my teacher said that I had a childish imagination.”

As he said that David thought back and had a slight shiver and he remembered the dream he had,

“There's a lot of people who talk out of ignorance, you don't want to listen to them.”

“But what else there, I have to listen to learn.”

“Listen to your dreams they won't steer you wrong.”

Paul went sheepish at that and said, “Do you know this morning when I said that all the man said was soon and disappeared well that was not true.”

“Really,” David said though he had already guessed as much.

“Yes,” Paul said, his head hung low, “He said something else.”

“Did he?” David said not pushing it as he thought it was not really his business.

“Do you want me to tell you,” Paul said and David saw that he was reluctant to do this so he said,

“Only if you want to.”

“I'm not sure. It sounds funny and I don't understand it.”

“Look I'll tell you what,” David said as he was getting tired, “We'll make a deal if you like. When you understand it and it doesn't feel funny anymore you can tell me. How does that sound?”

“Yes,” Paul said picking up, “I'll do that. I would tell you but I don't want you to think I'm odd as well.”

“There's nothing wrong with being odd I mean look at me. Have you ever thought that perhaps everyone else is odd? Anyway we've worked well today it's time to sleep and we'll see what tomorrow brings.”

They drifted off and David found himself back with his teacher. “So have you found out what the giant is yet?”

“Goliath, that's as far as I've got I'm afraid.”

“Now I said what not who. Let's try and work our way through it and see what happens. Do you want to start?”

“Me, I wouldn't know where.”

“Where was he from,” and on seeing David's expression guessed that he did not know so he carried on, “He was from a place called Gath.”

“Gaffe, he came from a tactless remark you mean to tell me he came from a tactless remark?”

“An unthinking one, he was a lie that came from an unthinking remark out of divine ignorance.”

“What,” David said as it seemed a little too much to take in all at once.

“He was a Philistine in essence. He had his gods but they were gods of self delusion and revolved around himself. Now from this self delusion came a gaffe which was?”

“He was greater than another?”

“Close, the gaffe was that you have to get to God via someone else.”

“Sorry?”

“The medium of a priest or such and from that gaffe you got a lie which is?”

David thought awhile and said, “You got me again.”

“The lie was the cleverer you were the better you are.”

“So how did this lie come about?”

“It came through self delusion out of ignorance of divine law by people who were more evolved intellectually. They had the wisdom but not its understanding.”

“Sorry, I was alright until the last sentence.”

“Wisdom and understanding a chapter in itself, think of wisdom as strength to your intellect and understanding as strength to your intuition. You can develop wisdom to a certain extent but without its understanding it is just knowledge.”

“Oh right,” David said not really understanding, “You mentioned divine law, what was that?”

“All men are created equal in the eyes of the divine. So now you know what you are up against. What is it in essence?”

Some of it must have sunk in because David said, “Pride.”

“Got it in one and as you've guessed the big one.”

“So how do I defeat it then I only have a few stones.”

“You have your faith. Besides it may be big but it has no substance as it is a lie. You throw a stone at a lie it should fall by the very fact that you attacked it.”

David was unsure at this so he said, “He's too big. It would just bounce off.”

“Depends where you hit it you hit it in the right place and it will fall.”

“But where?”

“Put your trust in God and He'll find that place.” the teacher said and David woke up.

Chapter 3

David woke up to an empty cave and wondered where Paul had got to. He walked to the front of the cave and saw Paul stroking the goat.

“Told you,” David said, “All he needed was a little time.”

“It was easy. I just gave him a little food and he came up to me straight away.”

“Well what goes around comes around another lesson in life in the making.”

“Sorry?”

“He came to me because I fed him and then he came to you because you fed him. That's a very good lesson and one worth remembering.”

The goat went off and Paul came over and said, “Why is that then?”

“Tell me something. Has anyone ever hurt you?”

“Hurt me, in what sense?”

“Treated you bad, it could be in any sense. Did you a bad turn for example.”

“Well there was a lad at school that used to bully me. He hurt me quite a few times.”

“And how did you feel about it?”

“Well I didn't like it. I was not the only one.”

“Did you ever feel like revenge?”

“Sometimes” and then thinking back “Yes quite often I suppose it used to take up a lot of my time at one stage.”

“It used to fester,” and on seeing Paul's expression said, “Don't feel bad it's only natural. I was in a similar situation myself.”

“You were,” Paul said in surprise.

“Yes believe it or not I was once your age myself. There was one particular boy, by the sound of him he could have been your bully's grandfather and he used to pick on me all the time.”

“Really, what did you do?”

“Well I used to think about it all the time, plotting out revenges that I knew I would never do until one day.”

“Yes?”

“One day I sat back and thought it through.”

“Sorry?”

“I thought to myself I bet he's not sitting there fretting about me. In fact I bet I'm not in his thoughts at all.”

“So?”

“I decided to stop letting him take over my life that's all. I thought to myself why should I bother

wasting my time?"

"Was that it, you mean you just left it at that? I've tried that myself but they still keep coming back."

"Oh no there's more to it than that. You see I was not the only one that he bullied. Now I had no brothers but some of the other boys did so he got it in the end. What goes around comes around. If you keep conscious of that fact it will be a great comfort in the trials of life."

"I'm not sure. What if no one has brothers?"

"Then it has to be your father."

"But he's dead."

"Think of him looking down from Heaven and taking notes. Anything that happens to you will be returned ten fold whether good or bad. Do you think that you could manage that?"

Paul smiled half unsure and said, "Yes."

"Good, be patient though because it may take time but it will happen. Are you hungry?"

"No not really."

"Shall we go for a walk then, it might work up your appetite."

"Yes that's a good idea. I won't go too fast for you."

"Cheeky scamp, we'll see who's tired by the end of the day."

As they walked up the rocky outcrop David was surprised at how easy it seemed. He could not keep up with Paul but that was to be expected but he did not feel that he was the old man he used to be. They got to the top and Paul saw an eagle swoop to his left in the pursuit of prey. It fascinated him and he watched it for a few minutes before saying, "I wish I could fly, imagine all that freedom."

"Yes there is a lot of freedom here."

"I could live here for ever. I need never go back."

"You'll have to some day."

"Why, you never?"

"I'm an old man content to live out the rest of my days but you are different. You have the rest of your life ahead of you."

"But this is my life. Shouldn't life be where you are happy?"

"In theory but happiness is a state of mind. You might be happy now but wait until winter comes and it gets bitter cold. That state of mind will quickly disappear."

"I don't mind the cold. I'm quite used to it."

"But what about companionship, it gets lonely here all by yourself?"

"You're here. I'm not by myself."

"I'll not be here forever. Besides although you are too young to appreciate what I'm saying I was talking more about female companionship."

"Girls, what do I need them for?"

David laughed to himself and thought he had better change the subject from the birds and the bees to the eagle and the rabbit, "Time will tell but let's get onto the next lesson in life. Nature, without man's interference that is, is self regulating."

"Sorry?"

"It finds its own balance," and looking at the blank expression on Paul's face thought it prudent to elaborate, "Do you know about the Garden of Eden?"

"Adam and Eve, yes we did it at school."

"Well think of that as a world without interference with everything in balance. Can you imagine it?"

"Er yes."

"That is Nature, the balance."

"I'm sorry. I think you've lost me."

"Let's sit down a while I think that is going to be a long day." They both sat down and he began again, "Think of your father in Heaven and your mother still on Earth."

"That must be it. That's why I sometimes feel her near me."

"Well your mother wants to make sure that you are all right or you could say in balance. Think of

her as Nature, so when you look after her you look after Nature.”

“Look after her. How do I do that?”

“By not taking more than you need for that upsets the balance of things. You don't want you mother to think that you are greedy do you.”

“No, but how does she find her own balance?”

“She looks after the world in the same way that she looks after you. Have you ever wondered why birds migrate at certain times of the year and how they all seem to know where to go?”

“Yes, we did that at school as well.”

“Well she tells them in the same way she tells bears to hibernate and young birds how to build nests.”

“Oh I think I understand.”

They talked some more about Nature until the warming Sun brought with it tiredness and so they went to sleep.

David found himself back with the teacher who was smiling as he said, “Great analogy, Mother Nature yes I like it.”

“Thanks, I have my moments.”

“Next it will be lunar cycles affecting the tides and the subconscious feminine force within us I suppose. You've got your work cut out there.”

“What, sorry, I haven't a clue what you are talking about?”

“Balance of predator and prey,” the teacher said in seeing David's face, “Camouflage. No it looks like you've opened a right can of worms.”

“Ah it looks like he might be staying for quite a long time then.”

“Think of Nature as the essential qualities, the Soul if you like buried below your conscious level.”

“Your instinct?”

“Yes why not or then again your intuition. That's how the birds know where to fly. Now your intuition works on the power of the Moon. Do you know why?”

David shrugged his shoulders.

“It comes from the Sun's reflected light. Like the Soul gets its knowledge through the reflected spirit. As above so below.”

“Mind and matter I'm starting to understand the last bit a little more. As for the rest it's beyond me.”

“Looks like you may be staying here for quite a while too. Think of Nature as instinct, Spirit as divine and intellect as Self, feminine, spiritual and masculine the three parts that we are made of, when you can understand that we can move on.”

“Spirit, ego and Soul?”

“Not bad,” but a noise awoke David from his slumber at that. He saw Paul already awake watching the eagle. “Look,” Paul said on watching David rouse, “He's got a rabbit or something.”

“He'll be eating better than us I suppose,” David said with a laugh.

“I like you soup. I saw that old man again by the way. He was talking about evolution but I did not really know what he meant.”

“What did he say?”

“He said that you were right but you did not mention that Nature evolves.”

“Oh, I suppose you could say another word would be develops.”

“Develops?”

“Yes, have you ever seen a giraffe?”

“Not in real life but I have seen pictures of one. It's got a big long neck on him hasn't it?”

“Yes that's right,” David said with a smile, “He did not always have a big long neck; Nature had to develop it over time.”

“Oh, and that is evolution.”

“Basically yes,” and thought awhile, “What exactly did this old man look like?”

“Well he was about your age with side burns and a moustache,” and carried on describing him.

David was stunned as the description fitted his old teacher down to a tee. He said nothing but changed the subject back to Nature, "And what else did he say about Nature?"

"No that was it. I'm getting hungry now."

"Me too, I'll race you back then."

"What really?"

"Only joking but if you want to run ahead and get the food on the go I won't argue."

"Fine," Paul said and took to his heels. David followed him back surprised that his legs were not playing up and thinking that the teacher was right for he did feel young around him. By the time he got back the broth was ready and so they sat down and ate. They talked some more and watched the day turn to night and tiredness took them off to different realities.

Chapter 4

David found himself back in the desert face to face with the irate giant.

"Am I a dog that thou comest at me with staves. By my gods you will die for this. Come to me and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field."

For some reason David did not feel afraid. Something strange had come over him. It was like he was in instinctive mode with no control. He felt himself saying, "Thou comest to me with a sword and with a spear and with a shield but I come to thee in the name of the lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel whom thou hast defied. This day will the lord deliver thee into mine hand and I will smite thee and take thine head from thee and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air and the wild beasts of the earth that all the world may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the lord saveth not with the sword and spear for the battle is the lord's and he will give you unto our hands."

With that David found himself running at the giant and felt himself put his hand in his bag and take out a stone. He slung it at the giant and hit him on the forehead felling him to the ground. David ran over and taking the sword cut of the giant's head.

The scene changed and David found himself back with the teacher who said, "See what happens when you put your trust in the Lord?"

"That was weird. It felt like was just a passenger along for the ride."

"So why the forehead?"

"I don't know it was out of my control."

"Symbolic of the Magic Eye, the all seeing eye."

"But how does that defeat pride?"

"You don't get it until you have lost your pride. You actually defeated it by facing it. Can you see the logic?"

"You mean that I could have hit it anywhere?"

"Yes, as I said it has no substance. Now to kill it was another matter. You chopped off its head with its sword. You turned it against itself if you think of the sword as its mind."

"You mean that pride has its own mind?"

"Yes, didn't you know that it has a mind of its own?"

"When you put it like that it sort of makes sense."

"So how is your pursuit of Nature getting on?" the teacher said changing the subject.

"A hard battle," and then, "I did not know that you could appear in other people's dreams by the way."

"I'm part of the Collective. It works on a different level of consciousness than you do."

"It does?"

"Yes, on your level it is mine and yours but on mine it is ours."

"So what did you tell him?"

"About evolution. Just helping him. Picking up on one or two things that you missed."

"No, I meant the other dream."

“The other dream?”

“When all he could tell me was soon.”

“Now I couldn't tell you that that would be an invasion of Paul's privacy. Don't worry though I'm sure he'll tell you in his own time.”

“No I was just interested, it was no big deal.”

“Right let's get on then. Where were we, Spirit, ego and Soul?”

“Masculine, feminine and spiritual.”

“Very good, father, mother and son.”

“Sorry, you'll have to elaborate on that one.”

“Think of your father as the Spirit, your mother as the Soul and you are the son, the product of them both.”

“Is that why they say that we are all God's children?”

“Yes you are the product of God the Father and Mother Nature.”

“So where does Jesus fit in? I thought that he was the son of God?”

“Now do you remember that I said that Jesus was love on a spiritual level?”

“Yes but I think I was still stuck on the emotional bit when you said it.”

“I was probably going a bit fast for you. Well keep that in mind and I'll carry on. He was God himself.”

“Love on a spiritual level.”

“A state of mind, now you have defeated pride you have an empty space. Why not fill it with love?”

Before David answered he woke up and saw Paul was not in the cave. He thought about what the teacher had said and in truth it astounded him, emotions having minds of their own and Jesus being God himself. Thought crowded his space and fought for supremacy. There were a lot of new things to rationalise and it would take time to sink in. After around five minutes Paul came back with some more wood and interrupted the process.

“It's a bit cold out this morning. Have you ever thought about making a big woodpile it will save a lot of trips.”

“I used to have one but it got a little too much for me.”

“Well I'm here now. I could spend today fetching some wood if you like.”

“Sure it might save time. Did you see that man in your dreams again by the way?”

“No, not last night, I saw my father and he said something strange.”

“Did he?” David said not really interested as he was more interested in what the teacher might have said.

“He told me that we were all equal in the eyes of the Lord.”

With that David felt a bolt of light hit him on the forehead. It did not hurt too much but it left him quite shocked. Thoughts came back in his mind that the teacher could not have been his real teacher as he had died. It had never sunk in before because he had never really thought about it but now that he did it left a lot of unanswered questions. Who was he and what was this Collective he had mentioned. Thoughts of Jesus came back to haunt him and add to his woe. It was like a whirlwind that threatened to take him with it. He was looking for a lifeline and it came from Paul although he was unaware of David's turmoil.

“Yes he said that we were all his children that was why he had left us with a teacher to guide us along the way though he said you sometimes call him an angel.”

“A messenger of the divine,” David found himself saying.

“That's what Jesus was,” Paul said looking at him in a funny manner.

“I am Jesus,” David found himself saying.

“I knew it. That was what the old man had said.”

“He did?” David said regaining his senses.

“He said that you were Jesus but you did not know it yet. You were evolving.”

3. The Tree of Life

The Book of Manifestation

Dave Minion looked at his watch and saw that it was two in the morning. He had gone to bed early enough but had not been able to sleep. He could not get settled as his mind had worked itself into a frenzy and yet he did not know what the matter was. His thoughts had drifted off into tangents and changed every time he turned around in his bed. He did not know the root of the problem for he did not know that it had a root. He just went with the flow and watched time pass slowly until he finally found his peace.

The Book of Intelligence

Dave Minion found himself in a Library full of old memories. Every book he picked up held a picture and usually one of woe. All his failures seemed to take pride of place and he saw none of his victories, his poor exam results and the taunts of stupidity from the rest of the class. The humiliation of having to stand in the corner with a dunce's hat on made to by some over zealous teacher much to the amusement of the other pupils. The fights that he had lost though not the ones that he won and the punishment meted out by his quick tempered father. His lonely friendless first day at school and his first encounter with the school bully. He had forgotten that he had got his revenge a couple of years later but in the state of mind he was in that was only natural.

He remembered the poverty that seemed to have moulded his very existence and bitterness came in. He longed to leave the room but still more memories came back to haunt him. Waiting in line to feel the belt across his back and the time he limped for three days afterwards, having to explain to the teacher that he was on free dinners as the rest of the class listened in. He had thought that he had left all that behind as he turned into a man but they still came back to make their presence felt once in a while. As memory followed memory bitterness turned into despair and he turned to see a door with a bright light shining behind it. He rushed towards it and opening it walked through towards his destiny.

The Book of Glory.

Dave minion found himself in a great bright light. He had lost his form and just blended in sensing its cooling heat. He felt at peace in a state that could only be described as bliss as he merged in with its healing power. Childhood memories came back as he remembered all the bad things that had happened to him. They all seemed to leave him one by one as he summoned them to face the light of truth. The constant sorrows that had haunted him all disappeared to merge in with the light that he had become and soon all that was left was emptiness. He took strength from this emptiness though which might sound unusual but he was hardly in a logical environment and grew in the lights healing rays. He could have stayed there forever but he had an urge to move on and try and find another light. It was an instinctive one that he could not fight and so the light merged into thought and he took form.

The Book of Triumph

Dave Minion found himself in a sea of thoughts surrounded by fish swimming madly in the same direction. He had taken the form of a fish and was under the impression it was a race of some sort. There seemed to be millions of them and as he looked more closely he saw that they had adopted human faces. They veered to the left and then to the right and he was compelled to follow suit. He saw a light in the far off distance and knew where they were heading. He noticed quite a few veer off to the left ahead of him and when he got to where the fork was he saw a sign that read lechery. Dave carried on and the fish that had turned off disappeared not making much impact on the horde that carried on forward. Further on he noticed the same thing occur only this time the sign said Sloth. He carried on and the fish that had left the group hardly made an impression. Next came

Gluttony and then Anger though still the shoal did not seem to thin out too much. As he got to avarice though most of the shoal diverted and he took all of his strength to free himself from their pull. The light got nearer and the fish now numbering only thousands headed in its direction. Pride and Envy decimated most of the rest of them and by the time he entered the light he was virtually on his own.

The Book of Love

Dave Minion found himself in a temple adorned with ornate statues. He looked around to see if any one was about but nothing stirred. He did not know what was expected of him or what he was doing there so he waited patiently. After a while a song came to his mind. "You can't hurry love you just have to wait."

"Love don't come easy it's a game of give and take," a woman's voice said from behind him. He turned and saw what could only be described as a vision of beauty. He found himself saying, "How can I compare you without reference to the divine?"

Your angelic smile that tells me all is fine

The love in you eyes says I'll never fail

The breath of your lips, your soft skin so pale

The gleam in your eyes, the curve of their lash

The fragrance alluring, too precious for cash

The light from that smile that lifts me so high

The strength of your heart tells me I'll never die."

"A game of give and take," the woman said unperturbed by his wooing, "First lesson in love?"

"You have to give in order to receive," Dave found himself saying.

"That's right," the woman said with a beaming smile that encapsulated her pearl white teeth, "But what is love?"

"An emotion."

"One description another would be the will of the divine, the creative force within us that operates for the mutual benefit of us all."

"Oh I just thought of it as a romantic thing."

"It comes on many levels, the love of a man and a woman, the love of a man to his children, the love of a man to his parents, the love of a man to his brother. Need I go on?"

"No I get the point but why all the statues?"

"Artistic love the love of self gratification. Tell me Dave Minion, are you vain?"

"No, why do you ask?"

"For it is time to look at the mirror," she said and with that Dave found himself in an empty room with just a mirror as company.

The Book of Judgement

"Dave Minion," a voice said from the mirror he was looking at, "What have you done for the betterment of your kind?"

"Nothing although I've never done anything to the detriment of my kind."

"Then you have wasted that part of your life. We will come back to that later though."

"What is happening?"

"You are being judged on your life up till now. What about the betterment of your Self? Are you envious of anyone? Tell the truth for I will know if you are lying."

Dave thought awhile and said, "I don't think so."

"Even tempered?"

"Pretty."

"Lecherous?"

"No, I've never looked at another woman. I daren't."

"Gluttonous?"

"I only eat when I'm hungry and drink when I'm dry."

“And if the moon shine don't kill me I'll live till I die,” the reflection said finishing the verse,

“Slothful?”

“No.”

“Except in education but that will be covered later. Avaricious?”

“I never take more than I need.”

“Fair enough. Now the big one pride?”

“Well I'm proud some of the time.”

“I was talking in the sense of arrogance.”

“No, well I wouldn't say so anyway.”

“Your records bare all that out and if the truth be known you were kept in ignorance. I will send you to a higher court.”

With that Dave found himself in a crowded courtroom amid an eerie silence.

The Book of Mercy.

“You have been judged and found wanting,” a large burly man said to Dave fixing him a steely look, “But it is the will of the divine that mercy should be given.”

“You mean that I can go?”

“You can go, but not back to your dimension. Your ignorance tells me you need some education for you might have it below but you have nothing upstairs.”

Dave was shocked at this but said nothing only, “What is to happen to me?”

“You will go back to school and if you don't succeed you will go to prison.”

“I see no mercy in that.”

“You are lucky that you still have your life though you are yet to cross the Great Abyss so I might be a little premature.”

“The Great Abyss,” Dave said but that was as far as he got.

Dave Minion found himself on a Path of Light that crossed a bottomless abyss that stretched as far as he could see.

“What are you,” a voice thundered all around him, “And who do you serve?”

“I am Dave Minion,” he said in fear of his life.

“I did not ask you who you were for your name changes with every lifetime I asked you what you were.”

“I don't know,” Dave said and shook as he felt the path get narrower. The chasm seemed to be calling up to him and he felt moments away from his demise. Fear turned to horror as he fully realised the extent of his predicament. He thought back to search for an answer and out of desperation said, “A Soul?”

“Not quite,” The voice said taking a softer tone, “You are an evolving Soul on the Path of Light.”

The path widened slightly and Dave faced a little less fear though he was still scared rigid.

“Who are you, what do you want of me?”

“I am Death, I have come to ferry you across the Great Divide.”

“The Great Divide?”

“Between mortality and immortality but you have another question to answer first?”

“I do?” he said for his fear had subdued his memory.

“Who do you serve?”

“God,” Dave answered for he thought that was what was expected.

“God is all things to all men. You are going to have to be a little more specific than that.”

Dave had never been religious but remembering a visit from some door step preacher he said, “Jehovah?”

“YHVH as known as but what is that if not symbolic of Man?”

“What?” Dave said and feared the path might once again get thinner but much to his relief it did not.

“The Hebrew alphabet is an alphabet of symbols put them together and you get an evolved man. Y

is symbolic of hand, the hand of God if you like, symbolic of His creativity. H is symbolic of a pure Soul as it will be a reflection of His image or a Spirit. V is symbolic of the merge of Spirit and Soul. YHVH is in actual fact Nirvana. When man is in balance he is at one with the Universe. So who do you serve Dave Minion?"

"The divine," With that he left his body from the solar plexus and spread out the whole length of the Abyss.

"Whatever next," he said to himself and something inside him debated on whether he should get up.

The Book of Understanding.

Dave Minion found himself sitting behind a desk in an empty class room debating on what would happen next. In front of him was a large black board devoid of markings and he could not see the purpose of being there.

"Lessons in life," a thought came from within and was written on the board, "Wisdom without understanding is just knowledge."

"Who are you?"

"I am your understanding," the thought said though this was not written on the board, "I control your perceptions of reality but it might be wise for you to answer questions instead of asking them."

"Questions?"

"Allow me to continue first," the voice said and went back to the black board, "Intellect is to wisdom as intuition is to understanding. Through light and love you get power just as through power and love you get light. What is love?"

"Understanding?"

"The jewel within us all and how do you get this understanding?"

"Talk to you?"

"It's not as easy as that you have to evolve into it."

"How?"

"By knowledge of the divine. Tell me Dave Minion do you know the purpose of life?"

Dave thought awhile and shrugged his shoulders.

"So you don't know what direction to take. I have a feeling that this is going to be a long day."

"Sorry."

"We'll come back to that so if love is understanding what is light?"

"Knowledge of the divine?"

"Correct. And the divine in essence is love. So what's left?"

"Power."

"The power of love and that power is you."

"Me, how do you mean?"

"Are you not your will? The masculine energy born of Adam?"

"Am I?"

"So that's you sorted. What about me?"

"The serpent from the Garden of Eden?"

"Eve, your feminine force, intuition if you like your understanding."

"So what was the serpent then?"

"Imagination another aspect of your Self, the ability to look deeper into a situation. Before Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge and found self consciousness they were like the other animals. They were in instinctive mode and without the power of reason. The serpent in actual fact was their spur and has been maligned for it ever since. When Adam and Eve gained reason they lost their imagination and had to go on the cycle of life to find it again for within it I hold the key."

With that the scene changed and Dave found himself in a dungeon clutching a piece of paper.

The Book of Wisdom

Dave Minion sat on the hard stone floor and studied the piece of paper that he had in his hands. He read it out.

“Life is like a book of tears and love is like the book of fears
 Life is like a pail of sorrows and love is like there are no tomorrows
 Life is like a game of chess and love is like there's no redress
 So take life as you find it and take love though don't blind it.”
 He repeated the first part of the first line again but was stopped by a voice in the darkened corner.
 “The Book of Sorrows” and he saw a little rat make itself known. It said, “Dave's my name so let's
 play a game if you are up to it son. I'll give you fresh light perhaps second sight now wouldn't that
 be fun.”
 “The book of tears,” it went on to say, “The first part of the game so now it's your turn.”
 “But why is it like a book of tears?”
 “Experience is gained by sorrow and from that you get wisdom, food for the enhancement of your
 perceptions of life. You turn now.”
 “Love is like a book of fears, er fear of rejection?”
 “The book of fears not a single fear, it's all to do with emotions, the matter of your mind so to
 speak. So why is love like the book of fears?”
 “It holds them all. It created them.”
 “Very good life is like a pail of sorrows, the heart aches that you carry around with you form your
 perceptions of life, your understanding. Over to you.”
 “Love is like there's no tomorrows, a state of mind that needs no future, physical love.”
 “Life is like a game of chess. Mental mind play or problem solving helps strengthen your mind as
 too do the other two.”
 “No redress, no compensation. That doesn't sound right.”
 “Unconditional straight from the heart.”
 Dave thought awhile and said, “The first one was your Imagination, your creative force the second
 was the Spirit and the third the Soul.”
 “So take life as you find it speaks for itself. What about the other?”
 “Take love though don't blind it, light, intellect, the things that go to make a mind.”
 With that the room got brighter and Dave said, “Will I be here long?”
 “What do I know I'm just a rat,” and scurried off.
 He walked to the door to try and open it but it was still locked. A voice behind him made him forget
 about the door. “So why does your mind create problems and your heart doubts?”
 He turned to see a silver fox sitting casually unafraid in the corner.
 “I don't know.”
 “Then that door will never open for you haven't the understanding.”
 “Life is like a pail of sorrows.” Dave said remembering the rat.
 “I see you have the knowledge though so at least that's a start. The poem is written on two levels.
 Life to denote your mind and love to denote your heart so we'll take life first. Life is like a book of
 tears. Why does life create those tears?”
 “To get experience?”
 “To what purpose. What's life all about?”
 “Evolution I suppose. Time to grow mentally.”
 “Fair enough,” the fox said and changed into a wolf, “So life is about solving problems and
 becoming stronger through it.”
 “The game of chess.”
 “And the pail of sorrows they are the problems that you have to overcome in life to evolve.”
 “The seven deadly sins,” Dave said as it started to sink in.
 “That's right the matter of your mind. They all say the same thing and that is?”
 “Life is about growing,” Dave said as it started to make sense.
 “Got it in one. Think of life as a series of growing pains, a book of tears and from it you grow in
 understanding of your purpose in life.”

“And the pains would be the pail of sorrows that hold you back from your purpose. I see the connection.”

“So life is about growing, what do you need to help it grow?”

“Love?”

“I was thinking of time though love has its place but for a different reason. Seasons through which we learn about ourselves. So life is about time. Why does the mind create problems?”

“To pass time?”

“To strengthen itself to pass time and that is what time is to us.”

“Oh, how does love fit in?”

“Because reason needs to be. Love by its nature is creative, eternal and unconditional. On a mental note it comes over as knowledge or light as some call it. By its nature it enhances confidence though can sometimes be deluding. So why does the heart create doubts?”

“Purification of the Soul?”

“And the reason?”

“To merge with the Spirit because reason needs to be.”

“And there you have the meaning of life. Purification of the Soul and spiritual growth for rebirth. Time is to us as reason needs to be.”

With that the wolf disappeared and Dave looked at the piece of paper in the light. He heard the door unlock and entered in without trepidation. He saw what looked like a computer console brightly lit with a myriad of square, coloured dials that all seemed to blend into one another. Hovering in front five feet in the air was a crystal skull. Dave found himself drifting towards it and grabbing it he held it tightly to his chest. He felt a surge of energy rush in and then he woke up.

The Book of Kether.

Faith eternal, everlasting come to me and show thy light
Hope with truth and goodness shining help me through my darkest night
Reveal to me your hidden meaning for I need your strength to bear
Help me Lord; oh love eternal so I need not fear despair
Shadows chase and memories taunt me, tear my senses to the ground
Give me strength of Wondrous Spirit so these chains they need not bound
Release me from my chains of bondage and show me your eternal grace
For when I know you bide within me then I'll truly know my place
Dark nights come and strife doth take me fills my head all full of woe
But my heart it understands it and from suffering my Soul doth grow
Emotional heartache be my burden and stress of life I understand
For purities my one attainment and with this to obey command
God eternal, God within me give me strength I need your faith
To deal with troubled situations and to know I'm truly safe
Love eternal, unconditional come to me and ease my shame
Lift my consciousness Great Spirit give me hope to ease my pain
Light within me take my darkness for in ignorance I doth walk
Let me feel your healing power, let me hear your wisdom talk
Let me walk without fear in favour for with you I stand up tall
Let me light my one desire let my sorrow quickly fall
Hear my words oh truth eternal guide me through this maze of life
Let your shoulders be my pivot let your power be my knife
Let me walk in understanding let me take the Path of Light
Give me strength oh pool of knowledge, strength to deal with any slight
For Thine's the power oh Great Wisdom and in thy glory bliss shines through
Past and present future pending but with you time had no clue

4. In Defence of Society

A terraced council house on a run down estate, a middle aged couple talking in the living room.

Sheila. I heard old Mrs. Davies was burgled last night. Just kicked through the front door they did. She was petrified. Took her tele and just pushed her to the ground. I don't know what the world's coming to I really don't, you ought to mention it at the meeting.

John. Ah fat lot of good that will do. Neighbour hood watch, I don't know why I bother. Waste of time. Now if I had my way.....

Sheila. Well speaking of time you'd better get going as you don't want to be late.

John. Yes I suppose so though I don't see the point, got to show willing though I suppose I'll see you later then.

John kissed her goodbye and started to walk the short distance to the meeting place. As he turned the corner he was nearly knocked over by two youths on a moped on the path without helmets.

John. Oi watch what you are doing, the roads the place for that.

Much to his horror the bike stopped and the two youths got off. They came menacingly towards him and John got scared for contrary to popular belief he was a bit of a coward.

1st Youth. You say something old man.

John. Er yes. You shouldn't be driving on the pavement it's dangerous.

2nd Youth. I think he's after trouble Mark. What do you reckon?

Mark. Seems it to me Steve so who made you God then?

John. Er, what?

Steve. Just lamp him one you'll get no sense out of him. Senile bastard.

Are you alright John a voice shouted from further down the road and they turned to see Joe Green, his next door neighbour heading quickly towards them. A large barrel chested ex Grenadier Guard he made for quite a sight and the two youths took off quickly.

Joe. You know them?

John. No just some mouthy kids. I was just about to send them packing when you showed up.

Joe. I was going to say. That black haired one Mark Joyce is a right troublemaker. The whole family is actually you off to the meeting?"

John. Yes, well for all the good it will do.

Joe. We need some action not words. That fellow Colin, don't get me wrong he's a civil enough bloke but he's a waste of time as a co-ordinator. He hasn't got a clue.

John. I know what you mean. He wouldn't have lasted 10 minutes in our outfit.

Joe. Were you in the army I never knew that I mean no offence but you don't look the soldier type, what were you in then?

John. Royal Engineers.

Luckily for John they arrived at Colin's house for he had never been in the army and his limited

knowledge would not have survived close scrutiny.

Joe. Ah well we are here now for what good it will do.

They knocked on the door, a well maintained semi and an elderly ex school teacher opened it

Colin. Ah Joe, John good of you to make it we're just about to start. Come in I'd like you to meet a new member. I don't know if you know him Tom Granger, he's not long in the area.

Colin introduced them to a large well built man in his early forties who definitely looked a man of action. They settled down and the meeting began.

Colin. Good of you all to make it. First of all I would like to introduce a new member, Tom, who has not long moved down from Leeds where he was co-ordinator for his local neighbourhood watch. His wisdom might come in very handy. Right then on with the meeting. I have arranged for P.C. Thompson, the local police liaison officer to give a talk on protecting the home on Friday 4th June.

He was interrupted at that by a middle aged thin man with receding hair, a school teacher called Andrew.

Andrew. Protecting the home, waste of time if they want to come in they just kick the door down. Look at Mrs. Davies.

Colin. What else do you suggest?

Andrew. I would like to hear from Tom, see what they did in Leeds.

Tom. Well it's not really my place as I've only just arrived. I would have to know a bit more about your set up. How many patrols do you have, that sort of thing.

Colin. Patrols?

Tom. Yes you know to keep an eye on the place and show a presence, it makes for a good deterrent.

Colin. We don't actually patrol, that's more of a job for the police.

Tom. The police? Er no offence Colin but they are a waste of time.

Colin. What? They do a good job with what's available to them.

Tom. You've hit the nail right on the head Colin, with what's available to them. We decided that to do the job properly we would have to take matters into our own hands. They hadn't the man power to patrol the area so we did it ourselves.

Colin. Are you advocating vigilantism, I don't know about that.

Tom. A powerful presence was enough, they soon got the message. Don't forget that most of them would run for cover if you fronted them.

Joe. That's true that is. John did that earlier on the way here I fact.

Much to John's discomfort he became the centre of attention.

John. Er it was nothing; I was just doing what anyone else would.

Tom. Very noble John but it just goes to prove my point front them and they go to ground. They are just cowards at the end of the day.

Colin. I'm not sure. I don't think I could be party to this at the end of the day it's taking the law into our own hands.

Andrew. I think that we should vote on it for it sounds a good idea to me. All those in favour raise your hands.

Colin. Wait, you can't do that. What about procedure?

Andrew. Proceed yourself. As a co-ordinator you are impotent. It's all words with you, no action. I see by the show of hands you are in a minority of one.

Colin. Then I must resign my post as I don't like the way this is heading.

Tom. I think there seems to be some misunderstanding Colin. I'm not advocating taking the law into our own hands. The presence alone should be enough to deter them. We only ever made four citizens arrests for the deterrent was that strong? In fact most of our efforts went into re developing the community spirit the patrols were just a necessary evil.

Colin. Redeveloping the community spirit, however did you manage to do that?

Tom. News sheets, work patrols just generally looking after one another. Without that as a foundation everything else was a waste of time.

Colin. Er I can't actually see that working around here Tom. People are too selfish for that.

Tom. Well they were in Leeds at the start; these things take time to evolve.

Andrew. So how did you actually get it running Tom? I mean no offence but Colin actually has a point for a change.

Tom. Well bickering amongst yourselves had to stop first as it only caused unrest. You have to be very single minded for it to work. Night patrols were easy you just divide the area into zones and keep in contact on mobile phones, six zones with three men in each. You just need a map of the area and take it from there.

Andrew. Well I can get hold of that no problem. I don't see the point of news sheets and work patrols though.

Tom. You have to try and deal with the cause, night patrols only deal with the effect. The news sheets let people know what's happening and the work patrols give people a stake in the community.

Andrew. And how would these work patrols actually work?

Tom. Pool our skills and become self reliant on a collective scale. I couldn't really tell you how they work until I know what skills you have at your disposal. I came from quite a high unemployment rate and retired population whose main enemy was boredom. We had no shortage of labour once we got out of the rut. Most of them gave three days a week and were happy to do it just to get out of the house.

Andrew. Well I can sort of see that working but what about materials and anyway it's the council's job.

Tom. Materials. You'd be surprised at what's lying around the shed and as for the council, well if they are anything like our lot you will be waiting a long time.

Colin. You know I can see that working up to a point but how did you get it up and running?

Tom. I guess you would call it a cooperative. We held meetings and drew up a list of people who were willing to participate in it and the relevant skills they had. We sent a circular with all the houses in the area with a questionnaire at the back. It was pretty easy really.

Colin. Yes but some people have no practical skills and what about those too old to participate.

Tom. You'll be surprised at what people can put their hands to when they are in a self reliant mood. They develop an eagerness to learn and soon pick things up and as for the elderly it's just a matter of being neighbourly.

Colin. Well I could draft up a news letter no problem if that's any help.

Tom. Good, as soon as that gets rolling you can really make plans. It worked for us so there is no real reason that it can't work for you. Anyway that's all I can tell you at the moment.

The meeting finished shortly afterwards and John went home and with mixed emotions told Sheila about it.

Sheila. Well if it worked there, there is no real reason it can't work here. It sounds pretty good if people enter it.

John. Ah there's the problem, I can't really see them doing it myself too much selfishness about. Besides I can't see it making any real impression on the crime rate.

Sheila. In time maybe but them night patrols should numb it a little. No it's a good idea and I can see it working. I think people have been ripped off for far too long.

John. Well I won't argue with that. Nigel was telling me he called a plumber and they wanted £65 an hour and get this if they went a minute over it would be another £65.

Sheila. Plumbing, car mechanics anything yes it's definitely time something was done about it. It seems that greed quickly escalates. I hope it picks up for something definitely needs to be done.

John. They could put me down for mechanics. It will give me something to do since I took early retirement.

Sheila. Yes and it will get you out from under my feet too. Painting you're good at, bit of gardening will keep you healthy I've noticed you've put a bit of weight on.

John. Oh thanks. So what about you then?

Sheila. I can still hang a mean roll of wall paper and I don't mind visiting people to find out what they need.

John. You know it might work at that. Anyway morning comes early.

Morning did come early and John awoke the next day with a lightening of heart. He felt different but he did not know why for hope can manifest in different ways. He felt stronger, more confident and when Colin phoned him at ten to ask him if he was up to delivering some leaflets he was more than happy to oblige. He had a spring in his step as he walked the short distance to Colin's and this was not dampened when he saw the two youths trying to get the moped started.

John. Having trouble?

Mark. None of your business old git.

John. Well actually I used to be a mechanic. Mind you mostly Bonneville's and Commandos never did much on those Honda's though.

The two youths looked at John in a new light when he said that.

Steve. Norton Commando, now that's what I call a bike.

John. Oh amazing bikes. So what's up with it?

Mark. The whole circuits dead. We've checked the fuse and that seems alright so I don't know what's up with it.

John checked the bike and quickly found the fault; it was a spliced wire underneath the seat. The bike quickly kicked up and the youths thanked him and rode off. He smiled to himself as he said, "They'll never learn," before proceeding to Colin's where 10 people had already gathered.

Colin. Good of you to come John, many hands make light work as they say. Here's a list of the streets to cover and thanks once more.

John. Only six, that shouldn't take too long,

Colin. Well Tom will give you a hand. He should not be too long now.

John. Oh right. Should be even easier then.

Just after John had spoken he saw Tom walking down the street towards them. After a quick conversation they went on their way. The streets were quickly covered and as they were going past John's house he invited him in for a cup of tea.

Sheila. John was telling me what you used to do in Leeds and it sounds like a good idea.

John. Well if enough people take it up that is.

Tom. Time will tell on that one but generally I think that they would. It's in their interests. I think a lot of people don't like the way that society has become more selfish.

John. Yes I was telling Sheila last night about a friend of ours who was charged £65 an hour by a plumber.

Tom. Well there's a lot of it about nowadays. I know a woman who got a credit card from a store and took out £300 worth of clothes. She had to pay it back £18 a month which just covered the interest so made no headway in paying it off so it was always with her.

Sheila. It doesn't pay to be in debt. My cousin Anne was a penny overdrawn at her bank and they charged her £30 plus another £30 for the letter they sent her telling her she owed them.

Tom. Oh they'll get it off you one way or another.

Sheila. Mind you I don't suppose there's a lot you can do about it apart from not get in debt but that's easier said than done.

Tom. Well hopefully these work patrols might lessen the burden financially as well.

John. So what other things did you do in Leeds?

Tom. We had a few self help classes as there was a lot of illiteracy and low self esteem on the estate.

Sheila. Really and what was the outcome?

Tom. They did alright; quite a few people took a lot of good from them, the teachers as well as the pupils.

Sheila. That might be worth trying around here.

John. It will give Colin something to do if nothing else.

Tom. I expect the news sheet will take up a lot of his time as it is. Anyway thanks for the cup of tea but I've got to get off now. I will probably see you at the next meeting.

Tom left and Sheila and John carried on their conversation

Sheila. Those classes sound good. We'll see what things they come up with and who knows maybe I'll enrol in one.

Before John could say anything he was interrupted by a knock on the door. On answering it he saw the two youths waiting nervously outside.

Steve. Er we were wondering if you could take a look at the bike? It's a bit sluggish.

John found his new vocation and became a teacher. The work patrols got set up and proved popular and life generally got a little easier. Not quite and they all lived happily ever after but it was a start.

5. The Phoenix Has Risen

(Supplement to 'the Book Formerly Known as Reality')

“So you are looking for God,” a voice said knocking Stephen Hutchinson back as it came from the mirror.

“What?” he said in shock and thinking what with all the events going on a detox might be soon on his list of future things to do.

“17,” the voice said but all he could see was his dimly lit reflection in the mirror. As soon as the voice had finished a sudden rush of energy flooded in and made him lose his balance. He fell backwards but the armchair made for a comfortable landing and also stopped his descent. He looked to the left of the mirror and saw what looked like a slab of mist descend although he could not see where it had emerged from. Surprisingly he took no fear from it in fact if anything it seemed to give him comfort.

“The Universe was built on pure numbers,” a thought came into his head and yet it seemed to emanate from the mist, “And society core blunders.”

Memories flooded in at that and his sanity left for it had no room to manoeuvre. He remembered seeing the grave stone but could not remember whose name was on it. He remembered the Library and the verses and felt himself thinking that his Spirit had returned. When this too was echoed in the mist he felt relieved too for the manifestation must have come from within.

“Another verse?” he thought and this too was echoed.

“Not this time, have this one on me. Now after light comes numbers for in the beginning was the word.”

“Sorry, what has the word got to do with numbers?”

“The word blessed is Pi, three aspects of the divine, love, light and power, its essence the spirit of love. Light, its elemental make up Earth, the Soul and spirit of knowing, Air the Spirit and spirit of life. Fire the Imagination and spirit of discernment and Water, the Intellect and spirit of wisdom. The total seven on the other level are the spirits of God, five I've just named and the other two on the list the power, masculine, purpose and feminine, understanding. Now add that lot together and you get 17.”

“Oh right, and that's the next level.”

“You don't go higher once you're in the light you go deeper so 19, three fundamental forces, spiritual, masculine and feminine. They merge at the parts of the body called Chakras, seven in all.”

“Seven times three makes 21.”

“Normally but the crown chakra is pure spirit so its three sixes plus one.”

“666, the number of the beast?”

“That's right so 23 then 19 plus 4 physical stages to climb. At seven you left your body. This is eight nine and ten have yet to come so I'm afraid you'll have to wait and see” and with that the slab of mist ascended. Stephen felt tired and quickly fell to sleep.

Next morning he awoke early and much to his surprise he found a piece of paper on the table. He had not a clue as to what it meant though thought in the fullness of time it would probably make sense so kept it.

The Grail and the meaning of life-it's as easy as A B C.

Gra-will knowing God-know thy self

A B C D E F H <> G I J K

God's self-Will transformed through the word (spiritual will blessed). Blessed with work God's

L M N O P

Purpose lives (light seeing the word)

il-blessed with God's purpose-know thy God

Q R S U<.> T V W X Y Z

Soul knows-understanding loving wisdom (love) loving insight blesses mind.

6. The Calmer Sutra (the lay of the land)

A babbling brook, a sunny daze, sees me through the warming haze

A cheeping bird to some a pain, that's not the case so think again

A playful squirrel in a tree, a wayward spirit running free

Rabbits hopping all around, Nature's always to be found

Butterflies take to the air, rapt in colour built with care

The dragon fly, the bumble bee, part of Nature part of me

A baby hedgehog in a bush, a fledgling sparrow, a fleeting thrush

A ladybird on a fragrant flower, a vibrant wind, a cooling shower

A tawny owl, a salmon's leap, a glistening lake a running deep

A rambling rose decked out in bloom, the mature peacock in full plume

Bluebells dancing in a field, the soothing odours that they yield

The artful fox, the clever dog but to Nature just a cog

From the smallest flower to the majestic tree, made in balance Nature's plea

So look to Nature feel its glow it's all around just let it grow

7. The Ironic law

Barry Starr picked up the phone and listened to the voice on the other end of it, "I'll be down in 10 minutes make sure you are ready," and then the phone went dead. A small slight man in his mid forties the signs of ageing had already captured him. Flecks of grey melted onto his side burns and mixed liberally with the black. Laughter lines sprang up all across his face though he would palm them off as character lines, which was quite funny really as he did not have much character. A Lawyer by profession he made a good living and on what he was earning he wanted for nothing. Well nothing except eternal youth that is. He had tried the Eastern mysticisms but to no avail as they only offered him re-incarnation and he reasoned that if he could not remember his last life there was no hope that he would be the same person in the next.

Barry's fatal flaw was that he wanted to take it with him or at least leave it well hidden so he could find it the next time around. He had moved on to the Kabbalah and tried self development but could not make much progress and the grey was always around to remind him of his fate. He had dabbled in Greek Mythology as a child in his elite public school and built up a lot of knowledge that way though it only strengthened his mind not his body as it too was showing signs of age. His luck changed though when he met Loi Ya an oriental sage who had told him about a book that might hold the answer. A strange terse man who said what he meant though seldom meant what he said. They had got on like a house on fire as he too was after the same thing, immortality in one lifetime. His path had followed a slightly different route though as he had read heavily into Irish Mythology and reasoned that the concept of Tir Na Nog was what his aim should be. He knew that knowledge or light as he called it was the key to break the genetic curse so he was quite adept in the field except for one slight thing. He did not understand.

Barry waited impatiently like a boy outside a sweet shop with great expectations. He poured himself a quick drink and drank it even quicker. Loi had lined up a meeting with a failed aristocrat who had had the book in his household for generations though the true value of it had long since lost its significance to him. Loi needed money though as his quest for life eternal had proved very expensive to him. He was virtually down to nothing and he had needed a partner. Barry remembered his first meeting with him at a physic fair and had found him short of words and even shorter of temper. He lived in awe of him though as his giant stature invoked a strong aura and his occult knowledge was unbounded. A car horn brought him back to reality and he looked out of the window of his plush Des. Res. apartment to see Loi's luxury car waiting outside. He rushed out with baited breath as he felt that he was getting nearer and his search would soon be over.

"What kept you?" Loi said as he got in, "Time waits for no man until you are eternal."

"Soon. Do you know much about him?"

"He's just a smack-head let me do the talking and we'll get it for next to nothing."

They drove out of their reality of wealth into a dingy part of town. Old terraced houses lined the street billowing out smoke into the cold winter's night. It was dark but the street lighting was good and they soon pulled outside a ramshackle dwelling.

"He lives here," Loi said getting out the car, "My how the mighty have fallen."

Barry followed him and Loi knocked loudly on the door. After a few seconds a small shabbily dressed man opened it and said in a cut glass accent, "Mr. Loi and Mr. Starr please come in."

They followed through to a barely furnished room and he bid them sit down on two thread bare chairs. He apologised about the cold as they could both see their breath and made some excuse about not being out for coal as he had been a little unwell with the flu.

"Mr. Redman," Loi said, "I have heard that you have something we might be interested in."

"The book," Mr. Redman answered and being proud of his heritage told them about its history, "Our

family came across it at the turn of the 12th century though I don't know from where. It was banned by the Church and most copies were burned so I would say it was quite an heirloom.”

“Then why are you selling it?” Loi said trying to break his spirit in the hope of a cheaper price.

“It’s been nothing but a curse to my family. Rufus the man who actually found it died not long afterwards and a lot of his estates were confiscated for his part in the power struggles at the time. Generation after generation has met with misfortune in one form or another but the only thing they had in common was they all died unnatural deaths. I am the last in my line. My father died in a shooting accident ten years ago and with him the rest of the estate went in death duties. I get by just by selling his old books and this is the last one. After this has gone I'm afraid I am finished.”

“You have the book here?” Loi said with no pity as he was somewhat lacking in that department. He had noted the circumstances though and had already reasoned that the man was that desperate he would get it for next to nothing.

“No, this is not a safe place. Crime is everywhere. I have it hidden not far from here. I want to set the price first.”

“I can not talk without seeing the book. I'm not in the market for a pig in a poke.”

“Very well though I would like to see the colour of your money to make sure that you are not just dreamers.”

“I can soon write a check. Money is no problem.”

“I'd prefer cash for my Bank Manager and I have had a disagreement.”

“Then cash it will be. Your circumstances tell me that you are in haste to get the deal in motion. You can see that our circumstances are different. Rest assured that we are not dreamers and we can get the deal in motion.”

“Very well it is not far from here so if you care to wait I will fetch it.”

Loi looked at Barry who nodded excitedly so said, “Very well.”

Mr. Redman left them quickly and went out into the cold.

“What do you think,” Barry said excitedly after he had gone, “They've had it all that time it must be.”

“Wait and see and try and control your emotions. I want him to think that we are doing I'm a favour by taking it off his hands.”

“He looks in dire straits I'm sure he would appreciate a favour,” and laughed. Loi not usually known for humour joined him and looking around said, “The mighty have indeed fallen. How can anyone live in a place like this?”

“He looks that far out of it he doesn't see it. In fact if you gave him too much money he might end up killing himself.”

“My thoughts exactly. Quiet now I hear him coming back.”

The door shut and Mr. Redman came in. He took a book that had been hidden under his jumper and passed it to Loi. Loi contained his excitement as he read the words, ‘**The Path of Light-those who fear the truth need not open.**’ the book itself had passed the test of time very well and was in good condition.

“It is not the one that I am looking for,” He said calling the man's bluff, “I am afraid that you have been wasting our time,” and giving the man the book started to walk out.

“Wait,” the man said with a hint of desperation, “It's over 800 years old its worth a lot of money.”

“Not to me,” and then as if doing him a favour, “How much are you looking for?”

“£250,000”he said without batting an eyelid.

Loi laughed at that and said, “Do you take me for a fool?”

“It's worth that. I could easily get it in auction.”

“I bet the Bank Manager would be happy but that's by and bye.”

“No, no, what about two hundred thousand then you'll make a handsome profit. Double your money.”

“That's not the market I'm in. It's the contents I was after.”

“A hundred thou,” The man said reluctant to let him go. “It's a bargain at that surely?”

“Well too much,” Loi said getting into his stride, “It seems we are after different things.”

“I can't go lower than fifty. It's the last thing I have in the world.”

“Then you must keep it for that book is worth nowhere near as much to me.”

“Well make me an offer then.”

“Am I supposed to be both the buyer and seller,” I answered and closing in for the kill he pretended to think, “Five hundred.”

“What,” The man said in disgust, “Are you trying to insult me?”

“A monkey for a monkey, take it or leave it.”

“It's too low,” He said shaking as he was starting to need another fix, “It's all that I have in this world.”

“That's not my problem. I'm a business man not a charity worker.”

“A thousand, it's got to be worth that to you.” Barry looked like he was about to accept but Loi shot him an evil look so he thought better off it.

“Five hundreds the best I can do,” Loi said reeling him in and getting the landing net ready, “Take it or leave it.”

Redman was broken and Loi knew it. He looked down at the floor and cursed his weakness through addiction and said, “Alright.”

“I will want a letter of sale,” Loi said and one was quickly written out. He gave Loi the book and just to rub salt in his wounds Loi pulled out a wad of fifty pound notes about the size of his fist and peeled ten of them away. The man's chin nearly hit the floor and he muttered, “Bastard,” under his breath.

“It was a pleasure doing business with you Mr. Greenman,” Loi said with a toothless grin.

“That's Redman.”

“Green to me,” Loi said and walked out with Barry at his heels. On the way to the car Barry said, “You were a bit hard on him.”

“Deserve all they get. Interbred parasites their time has long since passed. Smug git.”

“Well,” Barry said somewhat taken aback by the tirade, “There's nothing like kicking a man when he's down.”

“Best time to do it. Anyway what are you complaining about I expect you didn't think you'd be getting it that cheaply.”

“I was expecting to pay around about twenty grand,” Barry admitted.

“So you save nineteen and a half,” Loi said as they both got in the car.

“It is the right one though” Barry said still not convinced as he had got it at such a knock down price.

“This book is worth its weight in gold. I doubt if there's another one in existence.”

“So how come he did not know?”

“His mind was still on other things. You'll soon get your money back too.”

“What, how?”

“The fool does not know it but I supply his gear.” at that they both laughed and Loi said, “You make your own destiny.”

“Too right,” Barry agreed, “And soon our destiny is eternity.”

They drove back to Barry's apartment and as Barry poured out the drinks and as Loi studied the first page of the book he said, “A lot of men have lost their lives in the pursuit of this book. We should consider ourselves very lucky.”

“So what does it say?” Barry said bring the drinks back.

“The first bit we already know, about man being equal and all that crap. It goes on to say that hell does not exist and mentions the Collective Conscious. It says the more you know about God the more you come like Him,” he got as far as surrendering your will and said, “Hang on this sounds interesting.”

“What's that?”

“Mental growth can be accelerated by surrendering your will to the divine and making the conscious choice that what you do should be for the Greater Good. To surrender your Will is the ultimate prayer and helps you to climb the Tree of Life along with knowledge of the divine.”

“Surrendering your will that must be it but how do you do that?”

“Now that would be worth knowing. That must be the key.”

They thought awhile but got no further so Barry said, “I'll write it down and we'll come back to it later.”

“Good idea. It must be a prayer or a mantra of some sort. It might crop up later in the book.”

Barry wrote it down and Loi returned to the book, **“Balancing the elements achieves evolution of the Soul through self development.”**

“That sounds like the Kabbalah. Was this a Gnostic book?”

“I'm not sure it seems to cover a wide range.”

“Well we'll come back to that. We've probably covered most of it anyway.”

Loi read further, “It's about the seven deadly sins the next bit and what our purpose in life is.”

“To achieve immortality of course,” Barry said with a grin, “We've covered all that by the sound of it. We just need the mantra and it's all covered.”

“It must mention surrendering your will. I'll ask around and see if any of my associates can come up with anything.”

“Don't mention the book though?”

“Do you take me for a fool? If anyone else knew about this book I don't think our lives would be safe.”

“Sorry, wasn't thinking straight.”

“Then it's lucky for you that I do all the thinking,” Loi said in contempt, “Hide the book as if your life depended on it and I will make a few enquiries, discreetly of course.”

“What about reading the book? It might be in a later part.”

“You are welcome to search for it but I think it will be in vain.”

“What makes you say that?” Barry said surprised at his sudden change of mind.

“Redman or one of his ancestors would have come across it. They may be divvy but they aren't stupid.”

“I see,” Barry said agreeing with his logic, “Don't worry I'll hide it well.”

“Good I'll phone you tomorrow and arrange a meet. If I say how was your case? you will know that I have found something. If not we'll carry on with the book anyway to see if there is anything we do not know.”

“Fair enough,” Barry said and saw him out. On his return he picked up the note book. He read it, 'memo to me, find out about the mantra of surrendering your will', that was what he had wrote earlier but a strong sensation of fear engulfed him for there was written underneath, **'I surrender my Will to the greater will, the will of the divine. I will to will thy will x 7.'**

Chapter 2

Barry reeled back in horror at first. Was there someone else in the room? He quickly dismissed that idea as he had the place alarmed that much he could detect a fly cleaning itself... “God must have given it to me,” he said as his arrogance took over. His version of God was somewhat different to others. It involved a God that looked after the rich and let the poor look after themselves or then again that might be yours but who am I to judge?

He picked up the mantra and read it aloud seven times. Around the fifth he felt some energy around his crown and this built up with the sixth. By the seventh it had captured his whole body and he relaxed in its soothing light.

“That's it” he said aloud, “I've found the secret. Me, Barry Starr,” and jumped for joy though a

strange tiredness came over him and he fell into a deep though not restful sleep. He found himself in a room full of swirling mist in various vibrant colours and felt no fear at first.

“Barry Starr,” a voice echoed, “You have called the seven thunders. Prepare to meet your Maker.”

“No,” Barry said as his fear took over, “My time has not yet come.”

“Your time has run out. You have brought it upon your Self.”

“It can't be. I don't deserve this.”

“I'll be the judge of that for this is what it is. Your judgement.”

“But I've lived a good life. Well I've tried to anyway.”

“You will not be judged on Man's laws. You will be judged on whether you are pure enough to meet your Maker.”

“What. I don't understand.”

“No, you have not the depth. A leader of men must first descend into the lake of tears and know feebleness before his Spirit can sway them to great ends. Tell me Barry have you suffered?”

“I've been hurt. Yes I have suffered.”

“You lie, or perhaps you really believe that you have felt pain but don't worry Barry for you will feel that pain. I will haunt you every night and by day you will watch your world fall apart.”

“Why me? Surely there are worse men around. What about Loi?”

“He too will meet his Maker but that will not be by me.”

“Who are you, you are not my Maker?”

“I am your Spirit, I am your Maker,” emphasising the ‘your’. With that Barry woke up with a cold sweat and looked at the time. It was only two in the morning and he was reluctant to go back to sleep. He could not remember the dream only he had a strong feeling that if he went to sleep he would die. He smoked a cigarette to try and calm himself down but it had no real effect well except to bring him closer to his maker that is.

He checked the time again 2.15, it was late and he was tired but still he dreaded to go back to sleep. He decided to go for a walk to try and calm himself even though it was such a late hour. He rarely ventured out at night as the neighbourhood seemed to attract the derelicts then but his nerves had shaken his rational more than was healthy. He put on his coat and went out the door in his haste forgetting to lock it and rushed into the cold windy street. He walked briskly at first and reason came back slightly as he thought that he would not die in his sleep. He had probably been working too hard and getting too much stress. As he turned to walk back he heard a voice say, “Got the time on you mate.” He had not seen anyone around him but the relief of him not going to die made him too elated to think of the danger.

“Sure,” he said checking his watch, “It's three o'clock.”

“Lovely Rolex mate,” the voice said and he turned to see a large, well built man in his twenties accompanied by two unsavoury friends, “Mind if I have it I've always wanted one.”

“Well get a job then,” Barry said naïve to the situation he was in.

“Don't need to work mate. Not after I sell that watch.”

“You'd better get off or I'll call the Police.”

“The Police,” the youth said taking a more menacing position, “There's no justice just us.”

With that Barry felt a blow to the side of his head and this made him fall to the ground with a thud that belied his small stature.

“Rich bastard,” he heard another voice and felt a kick to his jaw knocking his senses into orbit.

Another kick followed but this time to his stomach. Blow after blow came and Barry found himself on the end of a severe beating. Eventually it subsided and he felt his watch being ripped off his wrist and his wallet being pulled out as he was well and truly rolled. “Not much cash,” he heard a voice say.

“These people never have,” another one said, “That's why it takes me so long at the checkout at the super market.”

With that a roar of laughter and the voices went on their way leaving Barry to his pain. He was

badly shaken by the ordeal as he had never been beaten before. He lay awhile and eventually got up and made his way back to the safety of his apartment. Well comparative that is for the door was lying wide open. He walked in with more than a good deal of trepidation to find the place empty. He had had visitors and they did not leave empty handed, his T.V., video, hi fi and many electrical items. The house had been emptied of everything of value. Well except for the book that was as it was still on the table where he had left it. He felt relieved at that for to him it was worth more than anything he had. All the possessions would be replaced by the insurance but the book was priceless. Barry went through the formality of phoning the Police and they came around to check for clues but nothing came up. They left Barry at four and he eventually managed to get back to sleep.

Barry found himself face to face with a hideous being. Heavily pock marked and body twisted and contorted. He backed off slightly but found himself stopped by a huge brick wall that stretched to the sky as far as he could see. The beast looked at Barry with contempt and said, "Barry Starr why don't you stand back and look at your Self?"

"Who are you, what do you want from me?"

"Are you deaf or just plain stupid? I am your Self and what I want from you, I want me."

"What," Barry said with a mixture of fear and confusion, "I don't understand."

"No you don't do you. So tell me Barry Starr, what makes you think that you deserve immortality?"

"The power of my mind," Barry said, his arrogance getting the better of him, "I have the knowledge and have paid dearly for it."

"Has it cost you your life?" the beast said and Barry went quiet at that, "I asked you a question. Do you want me to repeat it? Perhaps I should say it more slowly. You might understand it then."

"I am not a child," Barry said, his temper rising, "I am a very well thought of man in my profession."

"In terms of understanding you are just a child," the beast said, his temper rising to match the mood, "You have no imagination except in the negative sense. Do you understand?"

"No. I want to get out of here."

"I want to get out of here," the beast said mocking him, "And you are well though of in your profession and what might that profession be?"

"I am a Lawyer. I defend the law."

"And I am a judge your judge to be precise."

"I have not done anything wrong. Why are you persecuting me?"

"Because you are there and I am here. You have done this to me and for that you will pay dearly."

"How, I've done nothing."

"Nothing, precisely and yet you crave immortality," the beast shook his head sadly, "And that will cost you your life. How is life recently by the way?"

"What," Barry said not expecting the change of character.

"Anything strange I don't know....like say being mugged or being burgled?"

"What is this? What's going on?"

"Purification of the Soul didn't you read the book?"

"The book, is this what it's all about. I will give it back if that will stop all this."

"Too late for the Rufus line is finally finished. Died to a bad fix, not a pretty sight," and shook his head.

"Then what is to become of me, what if I let Loi keep it?"

"You treacherous dog would you so easily turn your back on a friend?"

"He is no friend of mine just a business acquaintance, in fact I hardly know him."

"Too late. Much too late so what have you got planned for later today when you are back in your own dimension?"

"What? Er go to court I suppose."

"Think again, you are going to need time to get over that tragic accident."

"Accident, what accident?"

"You will be awoken at seven o'clock by a phone call but the good news is that you will get compassionate leave."

"What, what are you trying to tell me?"

"You are now an orphan," the beast said and disappeared as Barry heard the phone ring. He woke up not conscious of the dream but with a throbbing head. He put it down to the beating though and picked up the phone half asleep, "Yes."

"Mr. Barry Starr?"

"Speaking," he said and stretched his legs.

"I am afraid that I have bad news to tell you. There has been an accident on Flight 303 to New York."

"An accident?" he said waking up slightly.

"Your parents are both missing presumed dead. I am very sorry but if you need help," Barry hung up at that too distraught to continue the conversation. An only child he had doted on his parents and they did the same. He just sat there and cried as memories flooded in of his childhood and the happy times they had together. He could not cope with the trauma but sat there all day not moving just looking at the wall. The phone rang at ten but he ignored it. Again at noon but still he was in no mood for conversation. He just sat there looking into oblivion and debated on whether to join them. Five o'clock came and the phone rang once more. This time he picked it up. Loi was on the other end, "How was the case?"

"I didn't go in today," Barry said in a world of his own.

"What," Loi snapped at the other end, "I'll be around in ten minutes."

"Fine," Barry said and put the phone down not really hearing him. His world was falling apart around him and it seemed that he could do nothing about it. His thoughts turned from self pity to blaming the book for his troubles and wanting to wash his hands of it altogether. He reasoned that Redman and his ancestors had no luck with it only trouble. He also reasoned with all his recent events he must be cursed. A loud banging on the door brought him back to reality. He got up wondering who it was and opened it to find Loi in a very irate manner, "What did you mean you did not go in today? I've found the mantra, we're on our way but all you can do is joke."

"I don't want anything to do with that book, it's cursed."

"What do you mean cursed, don't be superstitious."

"I didn't go into work today."

"So you said," Loi said angrily.

"Because my parents died in a plane crash."

"I'm very sorry," Loi said altering slightly, "But it was just an accident. Don't hold it against the book."

"I was also mugged last night, not far from home."

"Now how often have I told you to move, you know it's a high crime area. What were you doing out at night anyway. It must have been late as I left you at eleven."

"Three o'clock on my watch though I don't have it any more."

"No one walks around at that time in the morning. Not even the police."

"That's not all; I got back to find the apartment burgled."

"I thought that you were well alarmed, how did that happen?"

"I left the door open when I went out for a walk."

"Is this a joke? That's not the book then it's your fault. Alright the plane crash was an accident but the other things were down to your recklessness."

Barry thought for a while and said, "Yes, you are right. I guess I am just letting things get the better of me."

So what made you go out at that time in the morning anyway? You must want you head examined."

"I had a lot on my mind. It started when I found the mantra in the book."

"What, you found the mantra?"

“Yes,” Barry said fetching the notepad, “It's on here,” and giving it to him.

Loi read it, “Well where is it?”

“Underneath.”

“There's nothing underneath.” Loi said and passed it back. Barry read it out and went cold when he found it was true.

Chapter 3

“I don't understand,” Barry said, “I read it last night.”

Loi thought awhile and said, “Do you sleep walk?”

“I used to as a child. Why do you ask?”

“You must have dreamt it and then went out sleep walking.”

“No,” Barry said dismissively, “I haven't done that since I was a child.”

“You always lock your door. You wouldn't do if you were sleep walking.”

Barry thought a while before he said, “Maybe you are right. I don't remember seeing those muggers until it was too late. Now you mention it, it makes sense. God, that's a weight of my mind. I thought I was going mad.”

“So no more talk of curses then and we'll crack on with the book.”

“Sounds good to me so you found the mantra then?”

“I'm not sure but this one might fit the bill. An old acquaintance of mine gave it me.”

“Well how does it go?”

“Just a minute,” Loi said and took out a piece of paper. He opened it out and read the words “I surrender my Will to the greater will the will of the divine. I will to will thy will” Barry went cold but Loi did not notice as he carried on, “You are supposed to say it seven times he told me one for each Chakra.”

“That was the one that was on the note pad,” he said, his doubts returning, “How do you explain that?”

Loi looked at him and said, “You must have done it.”

“Done it, done what?”

“Tapped into the Collective Conscious that proves we are on our way.”

Barry thought a while and said, “I think you're right. It's a sign. They say that you find the answers in dreams don't they.” Thoughts of his parents had long since gone as Barry got on with the matter in hand. “Lucky they never took this book,” he said as he opened it.

“You were very lucky. You want to hide it before you go to bed at night. You never know when you might sleep walk again.”

“That sounds like a good idea,” Barry agreed, “But let's look a little more into it first.”

He found where they had left off and read, **“Purity of the Soul on completion of the expulsion of matter results in a mergence with the Spirit known as a oneness with the Universe or God's Blessing and the Self becomes the Soul and you enter a state of mind called eternal youth.”**

“That sounds like Nirvana,” Loi said stopping Barry, “And we can get this by saying the mantra.”

“I did not know that it was called God's Blessing,” Barry said and then thought awhile before saying, “Then again Isaac received it after wrestling with an angel. Could that be symbolic of the negative side, after all they were both easily matched.”

“You know something I think that maybe you are right. It sort of makes sense when you put it like that.”

“So it's just a state of mind. Yes I can see the logic. The Bible talks of people living for hundreds of years which makes more sense as we should be built to last a lot longer than seventy years.”

“Tir Na Nog. Did you ever read much Irish Mythology?”

“No, mainly Greek.”

“Never mind I could let you borrow some of my books. You'll find them interesting.”

“Sure,” Barry said and carried on reading, **“The state of mind is only held whilst the person**

maintains contact with his Spirit and forsakes the pleasure of worldly gain until the God inside him has grown sufficiently to compensate for the Spirit's departure to the Collective."

"Hang on a minute," Loi said, "I remember a story, well vaguely anyway about a bloke called Oisín I think. He went to the Land of Youth and stayed too long. They gave him a fairy horse and told him he would keep his youth as long as he stopped on the horse and never put his foot on land."

"Well they say that the horse is symbolic of the Spirit so it sort of adds up."

"That was only one of the stories. I remember a similar situation, same circumstances but I think there was more than one rider. They were given a dog and told they could not set foot on the land until the dog had first got off the horse."

"So what's the dog symbolic of?"

"Well they say that we live in God's reflected light so a dog is a reflection of God."

"So how do we get the dog to get off the horse?"

"Now that would be well worth finding out. Make a note of it and we'll come back to it later."

Barry wrote it down and was about to read some more but the phone stopped him. "Just a minute I'll soon get rid of them."

He picked up the phone and said, "Hello."

"Mr. Barry Starr?"

"Speaking."

"Detective Sergeant Wilkins here I believe you know a Mr. Loi Ya?"

Barry covered the mouth piece and whispered, "There's some policeman on the other side and he's asking if I know you."

"Tell him vaguely, you haven't seen me in ages."

"Are you still there," the voice said.

"Yes sorry. I know him, well vaguely anyway. How can I help you?"

"We are trying to trace his whereabouts. I was wondering if you had seen him recently."

"Well no not for ages officer. Would you mind telling me what this is about?"

"I'm sorry but that is confidential."

"Well I am a Lawyer," Barry said pompously, "In fact I have represented him."

"Well if that's the case you will probably find out soon enough then. We believe that he is a drug dealer and that a Mr. Adrian Redman lost his life because of some badly cut Class 'A' narcotics that was supplied through him. So if you see him I would be most obliged if you inform me."

"Yes Officer I understand. Of course I will," and put the phone down.

Loi looked on in concern and said, "What's all that about?"

"That fellow we got the book off."

"Redman," Loi interrupted, "He's not trying to tell them that we swindled him is he?"

"No it's worse than that, a lot worse. He died. O.D.'ed or something. They're looking for you as they believed you supplied him."

"That's all I need," Loi said without a hint of concern, "I'd better scarper. They must have already started checking out my haunts. God I don't need this. What am I going to do?"

"Hide the car for a start. They are sure to check it out."

"That's safe as it's not registered to me. I'll need a place to stay, just for a few days just in case. I'm probably worrying over nothing but you can't be too careful."

"You'll be safe here, for a few days anyway."

"You don't mind? You are a good fellow. They are few and far between nowadays I can tell you."

"I'm going to take some time off work, get things sorted."

"Oh your family I understand."

"No," Barry said with a sad smile, "Let the dead bury the dead. We'll get this immortality thing sorted out. I think that's the most important thing at the moment."

"Yes that transcends everything else I can think off," and laughed before saying, "If they catch me I hope I don't get life. Imagine it."

Even Barry laughed at that and said, "I'll get the spare bedroom ready. We'll call it a day now. Do you want to hide the car?"

"No it should be alright. Is it alright if I have a drink?"

"Sounds good, you may as well pour me one whilst you're there. I won't be getting up early in the morning."

The room was soon made ready and Barry came back for his drink. "God I need this it's been a strange day," and sank a large measure.

"They say that it's good for the Soul," Loi said by way of comfort.

"Then I'll have another," Barry said pouring out another, "Want one?"

"Yes go on, I'm not driving. I meant heartache by the way."

"Well I must have evolved a lot recently," Barry said and emptied the glass once more. As he poured another Loi said, "You're hitting that a bit hard aren't you?"

"No work tomorrow one of the pleasures of being an orphan." Loi sank his down and Barry filled it once more. Three quarters of the bottle finished and still they would not abate.

"You think so then," Barry said with a voice slurring slightly as if the truth be known he was not much of a drinker. He usually just kept it for visitors and the occasional glass to help him sleep at night.

"Well as you said you don't have to get up in the morning."

"No about it being good for the Soul."

"Oh yes, it's a well known fact. Why do you ask?"

"It got me thinking. Now that I have joined the Collective things might move on automatically."

"Maybe," Loi said as the drink was starting to effect his judgement as well, "I've never really thought about it. To be honest I've never met anyone in the Collective before."

"It will be you soon and then we'll have all the time in the world."

"And all the money, people will pay millions for that sort of information. We could be the richest men in the world."

"You're right. I've never really thought about it like that before." He emptied the rest of the bottle and they both raised their glasses. Loi said, "Here's to health, wealth and everything else besides."

"Cheers," Barry said and they clicked glasses, "So what do you want to do now you have time on your hands?"

"Get rid of this drugs rap. Do you know a good Lawyer by any chance?"

Barry laughed and said, "Keep your head down and it will soon blow over. He might have been aristocracy but let's be honest he was a druggie at the end of the day. They won't be too concerned about him."

"Yes you are right I'm probably fretting over nothing at the end of the day."

"Why not," Barry said with a drunken grin, "They say it's good for the Soul."

They talked some more and as the drink took its hold tiredness came in and they both got off to bed and sleep. Barry found himself by a glistening lake. It was a peaceful dream in a tranquil setting and Barry was led into a false sense of serenity. He saw a child up in front and rushed over to find out where he was. As he got closer a strange and uneasy feeling came over him. This was enhanced when the child turned around and Barry saw his face. For the child had a man's face and when he saw Barry he lifted his head in defiance and showed him a scar that stretched across his throat and swooped nearly to his ears.

"You have avenged me Barry Starr," the dwarf said, "And as I wait here in peace I thank you from the bottom of my heart."

"Are you part of the Collective?" Barry said not being able to control his excitement "Is this that Heaven that people talk about?"

The dwarf smiled an evil grin and said, "Oh ye of little understanding, you fall so quickly through your stupidity. But that is the path that you take so who am I to judge. My name is Shamus of Flynn, known to my friends as Stumpy and that scar that I carry reminds me of my folly."

“Your folly? So this is not the Collective then.”

“The Collective,” Stumpy laughed and said, “This is perdition.”

“This place,” Barry said looking around him, “It looks so tranquil.”

“Appearances are deceiving. An active mind needs things to feed on or boredom quickly sets in. You will find that out soon enough. You have avenged my death by killing the last of Rufus' kin and for that I will give you some good advice.”

“I did not kill him,” Barry said interrupting him, “He died of a drug overdose. His blood is not on my hands.”

“You gave him the money but as I said earlier I am not a judge. Now do you want my advice or shall I leave you and be on my way?”

“If it will help.”

“It may save you for this is your last chance of redemption. The book must go back to its rightful owner and if you change your ways and walk in the light you may still have a chance.”

“It is too late for that as the one it belonged to is already dead.”

“I said its rightful owner. Redman was as much a thief as I was and I was the one that actually stole it.”

“But why should I give it back,” Barry said for his memory had withheld his last couple of dreams and he was happy with Loi's explanation of his misfortune, “You are asking me to turn my back on immortality.”

“This is my immortality and believe me it's a very boring place to be. How long do you think you could put up with this? I've been here for eight hundred years and believe me it soon loses its appeal.”

“I could put up with this if it meant I could never die.”

“I await my judgement at the end of time. Then I know my death is assured. I take comfort from the fact that it will happen soon as many a time I have just sat here wanting to end it all.”

“I don't see it. It doesn't look too bad to me.”

With that the scene disappeared and Barry found himself in another reality.

Chapter 4

Barry found himself in a burning furnace. The heat felt like it was melting his skin. He looked around to see if he could get out but there was no exit.

“The fire of your imagination,” a voice said but Barry could not see where it was coming from,

“Well that's if you have one that it.”

With that the fire disappeared and Barry found himself in an empty room. “You must really hate your Self,” the voice said but still Barry saw nothing.

“Who are you?” he said trembling.

“I am you Imagination,” and laughed.

“Where are you? I don't see you.”

“I'm behind you,” the voice said and Barry swung around but there was no one there. “No over here,” and Barry turned once more, “No silly here.” the voice said. This went on for quite a while before Barry just gave up and sat down.

“Had enough,” the voice said and laughed, “What made you think that you could see me when you haven't imagined me first.”

“What. What's going on?”

“Who do you want me to be,” the voice said not answering him, “A lion?” and with that a lion appeared and Barry froze in terror, “A dragon perhaps?” as it changed to a huge dragon breathing poisonous gas that made Barry choke. “You see,” the dragon said, “Am I real or did you just imagine me?”

“Are you trying to drive me mad,” Barry said in terror, “Is this what its all about?”

“Got it in one. Do you feel up to doing a St. George? Are you man enough to slay the dragon?” and

the gas turned into flame and Barry felt his face burn.

“What do you want, are you the angel that I have to wrestle with?”

“You think that you are that evolved,” The dragon said in a mocking tone, “I’ll tear you to pieces.”

“So what do you want? Why are you haunting me?”

“Just making you aware, did you hear the one about the little boy who killed his mam and dad so he could go on the orphan’s picnic?”

“You joke about that, what sort of monster are you?”

“What sort of monster are you? They would still be alive along with 200 others but for you.”

“It was an accident. That book’s not cursed.”

“The book isn’t but you are. So what next Barry Starr? What can I think of? Mmm. Mugged, robbed and orphaned I’m running out of things to do. Ah something that would really hurt. How are your shares by the way?”

“My shares er very healthy now that you mention it, why?”

With that he woke up not conscious of the dream only conscious of the fact he had a blinding head ache. “God my mouth’s dry,” he said well and truly hung over, “It feels like the bottom of a birdcage. What time is it?”

He looked at the alarm clock on the bedside table. It read 11.30 so he got up to get himself a glass of water. An equally wrecked Loi was already up and about. When he saw Barry he said, “Never again,” and Barry nodded in agreement and drank a large glass of water to try and combat his dehydration.

“Switch the T.V. on,” Loi said, “See if there’s anything about Redman.”

Barry obliged and they sat and listened to the National News. Nothing of interest was on until the last item. The news reader read, “500 jobs are feared lost in the black country as the giant company of lock manufacturers Davidson went into liquidation today.”

“What,” Barry said, “How could they?”

“I didn’t know you had a social conscious,” Loi said in surprise.

“That’s where most of my shares are. They’ll virtually wipe me out.”

“Wouldn’t worry as you’ll make more money than you’ve ever seen in your life soon.”

“Yes you’re right. It will teach me not to put all my eggs in one basket I suppose.”

“Good idea. Learn by your mistakes or what’s the point in making them.”

“This purification process has got a lot to answer for. Though thinking of it logically there is not much more that can go wrong now.”

“Good keep your chin up it can’t be too long now.”

The television interrupted them as the local news came on. Barry saw Loi’s picture on the set,

“That’s you, quiet and we’ll see what it says.”

“A man is being hunted today by Thames Valley police on suspicion of murder it was announced today at a press conference. Loi Ya a 52 year old man of no fixed address is wanted for the killing of Adrian Redman, Lord of Gibwash and last surviving heir to the now defunct estate. Mr’ Redman, a heroin addict was found poisoned at his home in Portland Street by police earlier yesterday. They found his body slumped in an armchair when they went around to see him on another matter. Mr. Ya is believed to be dangerous and police warn the public that he should not be approached.”

Barry went quiet at that and Loi turned around to explain himself, “He was the last link. I told you it was a dangerous game. We would not have been safe.”

“I need a drink. This is going to take some reconciling,” and got up to see what he had in stock. He found a bottle of brandy and brought it back. Not pouring it out he took a healthy swallow from the bottle. He thought a while before he said, “This is different. I don’t think that it will blow over. Ever thought of doing a Lord Lucan?”

“What?”

“Leaving the country. My passport should be alright. Have you got any contacts in that field?”

“Are you going with me? I was not sure.”

“The books going to make us immortal besides you are probably right it was better he was out the way.”

“Thanks. I'll never forget this.”

“Money's going to be a problem. My finances are not what they should be. How much would a dodgy passport cost?”

“Don't worry about that I've already got two. You need them in my trade. Where shall we go?”

“South America. It's as good a place as any. Just get out of the country first and think of what we'll do later.”

“I'll never forget this,” Loi said in a tone that made Barry think that he actually meant it.

“Well you said earlier that life in prison could be a very long time,” and offering him the brandy,

“Do you want a swallow?”

Loi gratefully accepted and took a healthy gulp.

“What about the news it had your photo splashed all over it. That's going to make it difficult.”

“No I could easily disguise myself for it's not just the passports I've got. Driving licenses the lot. I've got three completely separate identities. We had better go on separate flights though just in case.”

“Sounds good I'll sort the arrangements. It might be a couple of days but you should be safe here.”

“Thanks again. I don't know what I would have done without you.”

Barry left him and went off to make the arrangements and Loi picked up the mantra he had received. He studied it hard debating on whether to try it as a certain fear lurked in the back ground. He did not know what it was he just knew it was there. He read the words in the book again to try and gather his strength and after a while made his play. He said it aloud and on the fifth time felt the energies and this built up with the following two. He felt a surge of energy around his left knee where he had once hurt following a car crash and it seemed to ease the pain. He sat awhile and felt its cooling power and drifted into a deep slumber.

He found himself by a man of similar size and stature dressed strangely and carrying a stick, “Loi Ya I believe that you have something belonging to me.”

“Really,” Loi said with out fear, “And what might that be?”

The man smiled and said, “Ah a cool one. That makes it all the more worth while.”

“I fear no man that hides behind a stick,” Loi said with a mocking sneer.

“Then you shall have one too,” and with that one appeared in Loi's hand. Not conscious of the fact that he was in a dream he thought the man must be a magician, “How did you do that? How did you know my name anyway?”

“I have not brought you here to bandy words with you,” the man said and took his stance, “Now we are equal what do you say?”

“I don't know what you want from me but I fear no man, magic or not.”

The man swung low and hit Loi on the side of his knee. He felt pain, stumbled backwards although kept his balance. The man hit him a blow to the hip with a remarkable speed that told Loi he had used it before. Again he was hit before he even had chance to recover and he fell to the ground with a loud thud.

“Not much sport today,” the man said in a contemptible tone, “You mortals are not as stern as your ancestors.”

“Mortals, who are you?”

“No relevance to you. The only thing that should concern you at this moment is whether that book is safe.”

“The book is that what this is about.” he thought about what Barry had said about Isaac and reasoned that the man being equal in size must be an angel. The man must have read his mind because he said, “I'm no angel but I can give you hell. Now the book, you have no right to possess it.”

“But I bought it fair and square. I have a bill of sale to prove it.”

“You stole it from a thief now get up and defend yourself.”

Loi got up but he was reluctant to fight as he had felt the man's adeptness with the quarter staff. “It is not mine. It was Barry Starr who bought it. I only sorted out the deal.”

“Don't lie to me for you are only lying to your Self,” and with that changed into Loi.

Loi's whole concept of reality shifted as he saw this and he backed off and said, “Who are you?”

“I am Loi Ya, who are you?” and with that a mirror appeared and Loi looked at his reflection. He saw what he imagined the devil to look like and his concept shifted even further, “That's not me this is some sort of trickery.”

Barry slamming the door on his return brought him to Earth and though he did not remember the dream he looked badly shaken.

“Are you alright?” Barry said, “You look like you've seen a ghost.”

“Must have had a bad dream though I can't remember it.”

“Maybe the process is starting then. You could be on your way.”

“Maybe you're right,” Loi said picking up straight away, “Did you have anything like that?”

“I'm not sure. Anyway it's all sorted. You are to catch a flight to Brazil from Heathrow tomorrow at seven in the evening.”

“That was quick” he said as Barry gave him the ticket, “What about you?”

“I will follow shortly. Tie up any loose ends and sort anything out that you haven't time to do. Would 4 thousand keep you going?”

“Me,” Loi said suspiciously, “How long do you think you'll be?”

“A week, sort out the funeral, transfer the finances and all that.”

“A week that's a bit long isn't it?”

“The main concern is to get you out, they're not after me. The hotels booked just be patient and things will be alright.”

“What about the book. Shall I take it with me?”

“Er no. just in case you are found out.”

“Wait a minute I smell a rat. You wouldn't be thinking of not turning up or something?”

“Loi,” Barry said slowly as he felt insulted, “I would have not have gone to all of this trouble. I would have just gone down to the Police Station now wouldn't I?”

Though Barry's logic was sound Loi's mind was not and he took the comment the wrong way. He rushed to the window and looked out to an empty street.

“What's the matter with you? You've got real paranoid.”

With that Loi changed and said, “You're right probably all that crap getting to me.”

“Maybe it's all part of the process to get rid of all the negativity?”

Loi went deep into thought and cheering up said, “Yes perhaps you are right. The book would be a lot safer with you. Besides even if I am caught I'll be out in a few years by then you would have made it but if the book is found we are both lost.”

“Now you are thinking straight. What about stuff. Do you need anything?”

“No well nothing worth going back for anyway as they must be keeping an eye on my haunts.

Tomorrow it is then,” he checked the time and saw that it was three o'clock, “Time for some more reading then.”

He said and picked up the book, “It will pass the time.” He opened it and read the words, **“When total purity is achieved the adept will receive the mark, a circular ring to show that evolution is complete.”**

The telephone rang interrupting them at that.

Chapter 5

Barry nervously picked up the phone and said, “Yes?”

“Is that Mr. Barry Starr,” a woman's voice said.

“Speaking.”

"I am calling on behalf of a Mr. Lightman. He would like to arrange a meeting with you to discuss a mutual friend of yours. A Mr. Loi Ya."

"Mr. Lightman," Barry repeated and looked at Loi.

"Yes."

"Could I get back to you on that as I am in the middle of something at the moment?"

"Sure," the woman said and left her phone number.

"It was some woman on the phone and she says he wants to meet me on a personal matter concerning you."

"He must have found out about the book. That really messes things up. What are we going to do?"

"What, what's going on?"

"We were partners after the same thing. It was him that told me about the book."

"So you think he wants cutting in?"

"No he's looking for me. I sort of double crossed him."

"What do you mean sort of?"

"He too lost everything looking for that book. He must have found Redman. Bleeding smack-head can't trust them."

"But why should he want to meet me," Barry said no further forward, "How does he know about me anyway?"

"Redman. He must have told him your name and he's got the contacts. He could easily find you. Phone him back and see what he actually wants."

Barry dialled the number and Loi listened whilst he spoke. "Hello, you phoned earlier about a Mr. Lightman. I am sorry as I was so abrupt with you but I've not long had the Police around."

"The Police," the woman said, "I hope there was nothing wrong."

"The house was burgled but anyway you mentioned a personal matter."

"It does not matter" a man's voice said on the other end and hung up.

"That was brilliant; your mind must be sharpening up."

"Sorry, what just happened?"

"He must have thought that the book was taken. Maybe you are in the clear now."

"You don't think he'll bother me again?"

"Not if he thinks the book was stolen. He probably thinks that it was me."

Barry let the matter drop as he thought he was in no immediate danger but reasoned that it might not be a good idea to wait a week before leaving the country.

"The Ring of Purity," Loi said, "I have heard of it but I did not know about the mark. Celtic Mythology again we must be getting close."

"So what is it then I've heard of the Circle of Evolution but never came across the Ring of Purity."

"Same thing just another name it was called the Circle of Gwynfyd, one of the Circles of Being."

"Circles of Being?"

"The totality of being, have you never heard of it?"

"Er no I've never read Celtic mythology."

"It transcends many schools of thought. It's all to do with levels of consciousness evolution of Will through the cycle of life."

"Oh right," Barry said not understanding.

"Well anyway it's represented by three concentric circles. The inner one Abred represents the struggles of life. The second one Gwynfyd represents the completion of those struggles with the triumph of good over evil. The third one is called Ceugant or infinity and is represented by divergent rays as opposed to a circle and is the habitation of God alone."

"Oh right," Barry said still not really understanding.

"Subconscious, conscious and super-conscious," a voice said enlightening him. They both quickly turned around to where it had come from "Or instinct, intellect and spiritual. Ice, water and steam. Call it what you like."

"Who are you?" Loi said not recognising him.

"Don't you know me Brutus and Stumpy? Haven't I seen you somewhere before or was it just a dream?"

"A dream," Barry said and vague recollections of a man called Stumpy came back to haunt him.

"Life is just a dream though to some it is a nightmare."

"How did you get in here," Loi demanded to know.

"Walls can not hold me, only angels' prayers."

"What," Loi said and went forward thinking that the figure was solid, "You talk in riddles."

"The riddle of life. It has cost many theirs."

Loi's temper rose but Barry sensed that all was not what it seemed, "Wait," he said stopping Loi in his tracks, "Who are you?"

"I am Martin, the fisher king."

"What do you want from us?" Loi said.

"Wrong," Martin said, "You have failed."

"Failed, failed what?"

"Your quest for the Grail." it was around about then that the two worlds collided.

"I've seen you in a dream," Loi said as his came first.

"Reality but you don't understand. I am from a different level of consciousness one that is far beyond your level of understanding."

"Perdition," Barry said, "That's where I saw Stumpy." He stepped back in fear as his mind was not able to take it in.

"So why did you fail?" Martin said though not as a question, "Who are you now that is a good question as it shows a curiosity for learning and a willingness to face your fears. You were half right." With that Martin's features started to take on a new facade and he said, "Who do I serve?" Loi and Barry stood motionless through fear. "That was the question you should have asked for it shows a selfless nature, the mark of true divinity. Tell me. It you would have passed what would you have done?" They both remained silent like two schoolboys being reprimanded by the head master. "Maybe I had better tell you then. Sold the secret to the highest bidder and lived happily and selfishly ever after but I'm afraid that it doesn't work like that. Ironic really for time is not for money time is for evolution."

"What is to happen to us?" Barry said trembling as memories of his nightmares came back to haunt him. He fell to his knees as all the memories loaded his now irrational mind. "I don't want to die," He screamed like a child.

"You won't die, well not yet anyway. Perdition ain't a bad place to be."

"What must I do to atone?"

"Well a little understanding would not have gone a miss but you have had your chance."

Barry's heart gave way at that. It was all too much for him and the excess stress took its toll. He slumped to the floor clutching his chest and soon he was no more. Loi looked down at him in terror and then back at the figure, "You can have the book, I don't want to live forever."

"Soon that won't be a problem for your time is nearly done."

"I don't want to die," Loi said and then quickly afterwards, "Well not yet anyway."

"We all have to it's only a matter of time." With that Loi started to age and his black hair turned grey. His skin wrinkled badly and he felt feeble. Soon he could not stand up as it proved too much of an ordeal for his ageing legs. He fell and broke his now brittle hip on the unforgiving stone floor.

"Help," he said in a pitiful wail, "Help me."

"God helps those that help themselves. Is that not one of your maxims in life?"

"I'll change," Loi said quietly as his voice had lost its power, "Just give me another chance."

"You have had a lifetime of chances but now age has poisoned your body as well as your mind."

"No," Loi said weakly and was no more.

The figure walked across the table that the book was on and picked it up. It had taken solid form

now for its wound had healed. He opened the door and walked into the street to merge into the crowd and follow the way of the knight in the quest for healing the wasteland.

8. The Awakening

Chapter 1

Tim Weston looked at his watch for the third time in as many minutes and muttered under his breath, "What's keeping them."

"Patience," a voice inside him said and with that he found himself at peace. He had only recently found his self and so was still trying to get used to the idea of its actual existence. Sure he had read about it and come across the expression to find your Self but he thought it just that, an expression no more. Yes it had come as quite a surprise to him that it actually existed in form. The biggest surprise of all was that he was not looking for it at the time. No he had stumbled across it quite by chance during his long tedious nocturnal shift as a security guard at the factory near where he lived. Quite a shock really as the place was said to be haunted and his first thoughts on the matter were one of possession. He had been on his hourly walk around the place just checking the area when he stopped to look at the portrait of the first owner.

"They say that you were quite a bastard," he said aloud as he studied the well dressed Victorian gentleman.

"Oh he made quite an impression," a voice said inside him. It was his voice, well it sounded like him but he knew it wasn't him. His first thought was to run away but that was quickly dismissed for he knew that what ever it was, was inside him.

"What is this?" he said nervously, and then trying to shut it out, "I think I must have been working too hard."

"Working too hard? You don't know what hard work is. Now if you would have been here in his day things would have been a lot different."

"Are you a ghost? They say that this place is haunted."

"Only by memories of oppression can't you feel the despair?"

"Well no. Are you a ghost?"

"No, fear not I am not here to bring you harm."

"With that Tim seemed strangely pacified, "So what actually are you?"

"I am your guide to life and its great mysteries. I am part of you yet we are not the same. I have the collective memory of all your past lives."

"Past lives I'm not sure if I believe in them."

"One of life's great mysteries what happens afterwards? Do you die or are you just shuffling off your mortal coil for a while? So tell me something then. You said that you were not sure if you believed in that sort of thing. That's a strange answer. You either do or you don't."

"Well nobody can be really sure. Not until it's happened anyway."

"But it already has, many times in fact."

"I don't remember. I mean I'm not being funny but surely I would have done if it had happened."

"Not you. Your memory is only for this life. Look around this place. Do you get the feeling that you have been here before?"

"Well I used to play here when I was a kid. I used to sneak in here many a time after dark. Yes I know this place inside out."

"You always did."

"What?"

"You used to work here in your last lifetime. Why do you think that you have always been drawn to this place?"

"I haven't, er have I?"

"Well yes. I'm afraid you have many bitter memories of this place. Ones you are finding hard to get rid off no matter how you try."

"No, no chance that doesn't make sense. You said that I have only the memory of this life time, how does that equate?"

"I'm afraid that in your last lifetime you were not a pleasant character. You accumulated quite a debt with your misdeeds and underhand behaviour. This debt you brought forward with you. This place still has quite a hold on you I'm afraid. You said that this place was haunted, do you know the story behind it?"

"No. It's just a story anyway."

"I suggest you find out and then we can continue," and with that it went quiet. Tim tried to call it back but it would not answer so he gave up after a while. Time moved on and soon it was the day shifts turn to take over. Aidy Smith was his name; an ex marine who had no fear yet was strangely reticent when Tim brought the subject up, "What's the story about this place being haunted?"

"Not a subject I like to dwell on. Why do you ask, have you seen something strange?"

"I get this strange feeling sometimes," Tim lied hoping to entice something out of him.

"What sort of like you are being watched?"

"Yes that's right," Tim said and remembering some of the ghost stories he had read, "And some times the place seems to get colder. I'll be honest I don't really believe in those sort of things but sometimes I'm not so sure."

"I know what you mean it's happened to me as well. Sometimes I even expect to see something, daft really but it's getting to the stage that I'm starting to dread working there at night."

"So what's the story behind it?"

"I don't really know the details, well not the full details. I have heard that it is supposed to be haunted by the ghost of a line manager called James Easton, a right devious piece of work from what I have gathered. They say that he used to lock the gates so the workers would be late clocking in and so lose pay. Yes if there was a scam to con them out of money he knew it. Over stringent quality control."

"Sorry?"

"If the work wasn't up to standard, their standard that it, you would have your wages docked. They used to say that he would pretend that it wasn't just to get the product made cheaper. He would still sell it at the usual price though so it can't have been that bad."

"Sound like a right place. I'm surprised that they got people to work for them at all."

"No choice. The mill was the only employer in the area. Not only that if they lost their jobs they would also lose their homes as they were owned by the factory owners. No the owners had them where they wanted them. Anyway he was supposed to have met his death in an accident and loved the place that much that he stayed. That's the story, don't make sense to me but that's the story."

"Well I'd better get off now anyway. Get some sleep and I will see you later."

The journey home was quickly made and he was soon sitting down to a cup of tea and waiting for his friend Dave to call in on his way to work. "Well another day," he said to Tim as Tim let him in, "Mine starts as yours ends."

"You expect to be busy today?" Tim said as he passed him a cup of tea.

"Today and every day, they pay you the minimum wage and expect the maximum amount of sweat for it."

"You think that you've got it bad," Tim said and went on to relate what Aidy had told him. After he had finished Dave said, "Well they still try and con you out of your wages. They do it differently that's all."

"I don't know about that. How would they get away with it for a start?"

"They are very devious about it. Take me as an example. My contracted hours are only 26 a week yet more times than not I work 40."

“And?”

“You don't see it do you. As I am only contracted to work 26 hours my holiday pay is a lot less than if I was contracted to do 40.”

“Oh right but surely you get it back on the overtime rate, swings and roundabouts, that sort of thing.”

“I don't get paid an overtime rate until I do more than 40 hours. All those extra hours I work are paid at standard rate. Not only that if I go over time and it has not been signed by a manager I don't get paid for it at all.”

“Seriously, so why would you do it then?”

“Misplaced good will I guess. If I'm due to finish at 5 o'clock and a lorry pulls in at ten to I might stay behind an extra quarter of an hour until it's done. We are that short of people there is not enough to do the job.”

“So why do you put up with it I mean not being funny I wouldn't.

“Oh it's not a permanent thing. When something better comes along I'll leave. Until then, well it's a struggle but I just about manage. Do you want to hear the funniest thing; they actually donate millions to the Labour party.”

“The Labour party. Mind you they are not like the Labour party of old. In fact to call them the Labour party is a bit of an insult. Seems to me they are just middle class liberals. So why would your firm want to donate to them anyway?”

“I think that it's all to do with the European social charter. Whilst Labour keep out of it we have a lot less rights as workers. It's in my firms interests that they stay out.”

“Yes I can see that. Sounds like a right place.”

“You don't know the half of it. If they see you as weak willed they will actually try and intimidate you.”

“What,” Tim said in surprise, “Do you mean physically?”

“Oh no, they are a lot more subtle than that. If they think that you are frightened of losing your job they will quickly capitalise on it. I remember when I first started they were trying to say that I wasn't working quickly enough and there was the veiled threat of the sack if I didn't improve.”

“But you're a quick worker. I've worked on quite a few building sites with you to know that.”

“Oh I know my worth. No, I threatened to walk out there and then and the attitude soon changed. Most of the time my work is just trying to make good other people's incompetence so as you can imagine it's not very fulfilling.”

“I can imagine.”

Dave looked at his watch and said, “Anyway I had better be going as I don't want to be late,” laughed and said, “They might close the factory gates on me,” and left.

After Dave had gone Tim made himself another cup of tea and sat and thought about what Dave had said. He had never really given much thought to workers rights before for he had never seen the point. If he was unhappy in a job he would just look for another job and put up with it until he found one. No, trade unionism had never been an interest to him. In fact he was quite anti seeing their fees as a tax on his limited wages. Collective bargaining, no he was more for the power of the individual. After he finished his cup of tea he went straight to bed and fell quickly to sleep.

Chapter 2

Tim found himself back in the factory although it was different to how he remembered it. Gone was the modern plant and smart dressed workers and in its place old fashioned looms and rag tag, threadbare line hands. Tim himself felt strangely different too. As he watched them work he felt nothing but a sneering contempt for them. Somehow he knew that they all hated him and the feeling was mutual. Yet he knew that he had a power over them. If not quite life and death it was pretty close. The noise of the place was too heavy for his ears so he left the place and found himself in an office.

“Ah just the man,” a smartly dressed man said in seeing him, “Got a bit of a push on.”

Tim recognised him straight away; it was the man in the portrait. Confusion sank in but it was as if he had no control so he just went with the flow, “The military contract?”

“That's right. Its cost me a lot to get that contract and I don't intend to lose it through others idleness.”

“I understand.”

“There will be a bit of a bonus for you if you can pull this off. Yes get this one out in time and there will be lots more where that came from.”

“I'll do my best.”

“You always do. I know I can rely on you, now one more thing.”

“Yes.”

“There seems to be quite a bit of unrest. There was rioting in Manchester and Leeds. Damn Chartists. Now you know how these things can spread. I want you to keep an eye on the situation. Anything comes up stamp on it and stamp on it hard. I won't have my workers getting ideas above themselves. No it's more than enough that I feed and house them. Go and see Johnson and tell him to keep an eye on the situation.”

“He already is. A few ramblings of discontent in the ale-house but that's just the gin talking. He's told me that a couple of strangers have started frequenting the place but they keep themselves to themselves.”

“You never can tell. Well he knows what he's doing. I would suggest getting rid of a couple of the workers to keep the others on their toes but at the moment we need all hands. No that will have to keep.”

“Very well I will go and shake them up a bit,” and left the room.

A knocking door woke Tim up at that point so he went downstairs to see who it was. He opened it up to see Steve waiting outside. “Oh sorry Tim I didn't think that you went to bed this early.”

“Usually no. Do you want a cuppa?”

“Well not if I'm disturbing you.”

“No you are alright. Come in.”

Steve followed him in and as Tim put the kettle on he said, “You were up at that tribunal yesterday weren't you?”

“Yes, quite nerve racking I can tell you.”

“How did you get on then?” Tim said bringing in two mugs of tea.

“50/50 I reckon. They are meeting again in a fortnight to decide.”

“I thought that it was an open and shut case,” Tim said in surprise. (Although Steve was a self employed joiner he had been in the company's employment for over a year in more of a master - servant role. He started and finished at set times and to all intents and purposes was employed by the company because he could not work for another company during this time. Not only that but the law says that after working 13 weeks for the same company the said company must take him on direct)

“Me too but they did nothing but lie. They were trying to define me as a sole trader.”

“I'm afraid I'm not too clued up on that sort of thing. It goes right over my head.”

“I'm the same myself. I mean personally I would define self employed as something like a tailor. You know hired to do just one job, make a suit. How he does it is up to him and the only input from the client would be at the measurement stage and the final fitting.”

“Er right.”

“In other words,” Steve said on seeing Tim's bemused expression, “I put a price on to say hang a door and get paid to do just that. Where I used to work I would go from site to site for a set wage a day.”

“Oh I see.”

“Basically they took me on as self employed to try and con me out of my holiday pay.”

“And you don't think you'll get it now?”

“Hard to say I'm not sure about the unfair dismissal either. Shame really as I had quite a few good limericks to wind him up with after.”

“Really. What, funny ones?”

“I reckon, shame to waste them.”

“Tell me if you want.”

“Yes why not. The blokes name was Andy and he was of Polish extraction and since I left him he has developed gout. Right then,

There once was a fat pollack with gout

Who thought he was clever, no doubt

But he ran out of luck

When he came unstuck

For he knew nothing of what life was about

That was just a general one to start the ball rolling.”

“Well not bad I suppose.”

“Oh they get better. The next one was about the holiday pay

The fat pollack wasn't feeling okay

For I went on holiday with his pay

He had little choice

For he had no voice

The tribunal had took it away.”

“Yes that's better. Pretty funny.”

“Well the final one was about the unfair dismissal,

Fat Andy the gout ridden pole

Dug himself into a hole

He gave me the sack

Which I thought was slack

But compensation diminished the toll.”

“You might get to use them yet. I mean as you said it would be a shame to waste them.”

“Time will tell.”

“You mentioned unfair dismissal; I thought it was just the holiday pay.”

“It was but my Union Representative thought I had a good case.”

“So what happened anyway? I don't think that you ever told me.”

“I went on holiday.”

“What is that it?”

“That was the real reason. I left a little early on the Friday that was the excuse they gave.”

“I thought that at most that would have been a verbal warning. And he sacked you for that?”

“That was just an excuse. No the paranoid divvy thought that I was trying to get one over on him that's all.”

“Sorry?”

“The holiday was a spur of the moment thing. It was going at the right price but I had to take it the following Monday. Basically he had six days notice so he wasn't too happy as they were very busy. Mind you they are always busy as he never employs enough people. Well he wanted me to come in on the Saturday which was impossible as that would be the only chance I would have to pack. I left a little early on Friday as I had a lot of other stuff to do. He thought that I did it to drop him in it.”

“Oh right.”

“Anyway thanks for the tea I best be getting off. Sorry I got you up.”

“Don't worry about it,” Tim said letting him out, “Good luck with that anyway. It sounds like you are going to need it with them gob-shites.”

“True,” Steve said as Tim shut the door behind him.

Tim went straight back to bed and fell quickly to sleep once more. He found himself in a small squalid room talking to an equally small and squalid man. "Johnson you've been holding out on me," and hit him hard on the jaw. The man fell quickly to the floor and said in a pleading voice, "No, no I've told you all I know."

"Liar," Tim said and kicked him in the face, "Those strangers that you told me about. You said that they kept themselves to themselves well that's not what I've been hearing."

"What?"

"Don't play innocent," and kicked him once more, "They've been rabble rousing, stirring trouble. Your reluctance to tell me that makes me think you have some involvement in the matter. I don't like being taken for an idiot, especially by the likes of you."

"No I swear that I would never do that. I've never seen them associate with anyone other than themselves. You have to believe me I would have told you if they did."

"That's not what I've heard. Either you are a liar or you are not up to the job. Which is it Johnson?"

"I'm not lying. If they have meetings it's when I'm not around."

"Then they must know that you are not to be trusted. It sounds to me like you have outlived your usefulness."

"No, no I could still be of service to you just give me a chance to prove myself."

"You've had plenty of chances already. What makes it different now? No if anything you are now a liability. Maybe you would be better off fending for yourself."

"They would kill me. If what you say is true and they know that I have been in your service what chance have I got?"

"I, unlike you am not a liar, what I say is true. Oh and as for your chances of survival, well at the end of the day that is not my problem."

"No, you can't leave me at their mercy. Please I'm begging you."

"Your life means nothing to me. You are just a liability at the moment," and pretended to think for a moment before saying, "Well maybe there is something that you could do."

"Anything, just you name it and I will do it."

Tim took out two duelling pistols from under his coat and said, "See these, have you ever used them before?"

"Similar."

"Two guns, two Chartists I needn't say any more."

"Are you asking me to murder them," he said in shock, "I could get hung for that."

"Well to put it bluntly if you don't then they'll do the same to you."

"You're asking too much of me. This goes beyond, well beyond."

"You'll be taken care of, of that you need not worry." with that the alarm clock woke him up.

Chapter 3

Tim woke up and saw that it was starting to get dark outside. He quickly got dressed and after making his sandwiches went straight out to work. On arrival he was greeted by Aidy, "Can't keep away eh."

"Yes I am committed, well should be anyway."

"Oh about our conversation this morning I've been asking around some of the older workers and they reckon that his death was made to look like an accident. That was the rumour anyway. The whole thing was hushed up by the sound of it."

"Well we'll never know the truth it happened too long ago."

"True. Anyway I'll leave you to it. You've got a long night ahead so I will see you in the morning. I've left the paper if it's any good to you."

"Cheers." Tim said as Aidy left him.

Tim read the paper for forty minutes before doing the first walk of the day. The night had fully evolved by then and the factory seemed to have taken on a more menacing tone. Maybe Aidy's

words had planted the seeds in his imagination he was not sure but he found himself looking behind him more than was normal. A falling tin made him turn around in terror but much to his relief he saw a rat scamper quickly off. "That pest company is useless," he said aloud more to calm himself than anything else. As he got to the portrait it seemed to be smiling at him which was unusual as he always remembered it to have a stern expression. A noise in the room next to it sent him rushing in thinking it was another rat. Much to his surprise he saw a young child with her back to him. "You can't play here," he said, "It's a dangerous place."

The figure turned and Tim froze in horror. Although it was the size and shape of an eight year old it had the face of a woman in her eighties. She pointed her finger at him and said, "You destroyed my innocence and took away my childhood from me."

Tim turned on his heels and ran as if his life depended on it. He only stopped out of breath when he had left the building.

"Why did you run," the voice said, "How are you supposed to grow in understanding if you don't face your fears?"

"What. It was a ghost, a real ghost."

"You thought I was yet you didn't run away from me."

"What was the point you are inside me."

"She can't harm you. She doesn't exist in the physical."

"I don't know about that I think that will give me a few nightmares."

"It will if you don't go back. Seriously if you leave this thing unsettled it will plague you."

"Then I don't have much choice. I'm not looking forward to this I can tell you."

"I will be with you."

Tim went into the building and slowly made his way back. He did not have to go too far as he saw the apparition on the stairs. "What do you want from me," he said nervously.

"I want my life. I want the chance to move on."

"How can I help you? I don't understand what you want from me."

"Tell me where you buried me."

"I don't know where you are buried. How would I know that?"

"You know," she said and disappeared.

"How am I supposed to know?"

"Well she thinks that you do," the voice said.

"Yes, why would she think that then?"

"I did say that you have worked here before."

"Are you trying to say that I killed her," Tim said in shock.

"Buried her. She never mentioned that you killed her."

"I don't understand."

"Think about it."

"No it's no good," Tim said after a while but the voice never answered him, "Oh it's like that is it." there was still no answer so Tim decided to carry on with his rounds. As he got to the top of the stairs he decided to check out the old records room. He seldom bothered with that room as it was rarely used but today was different. As he scanned the room with his torch his eyes lit upon an old oak bureau and he felt strangely drawn towards it. He went over and pulled out the top drawer which much to his surprise was empty. The drawer itself seemed not as deep as it should have been which led him to believe that it had a false bottom. He tapped it sharply and it sounded hollow so he turned it upside down and took the bottom of it. Inside he found some old documents which he took out to study. He went back to the security office which was much lighter and opened the first envelope. Inside was a letter written in black ink from an orphanage called St. Christopher's with a London address. It was thanking the company for employing two of its former wards and as Tim read the second name a shiver went down his spine. "Mary Connelly," the voice said, "See you do remember."

“She fell to her death,” Tim said, “It was an accident.”

“It was a dangerous job, one that she was not capable of doing, an accident waiting to happen.”

“And I buried her.”

“An orphan with no family to ask questions, not worth the cost of a funeral you condemned her to a life of stagnation without realising it.”

“It wasn't me, well it was but it wasn't.”

“And who were you?”

“James Easton. No that can't be I thought that he is the one that haunts the place.”

“He does and only he knows where the body is buried.”

“How can that be? If I am him doesn't it mean that I haunt the place?”

“The memory of your previous life not you, when you buried Mary, you deprived her of the chance for growth. What you sow so shall you reap.”

“But I don't know where she's buried. If I did I would release her. I don't want that on my conscience.”

“He does.”

“Then I must see him,” Tim said and with that had the feeling that he was being watched.

“He is nearby. He watches as we speak.”

With that an apparition appeared. It looked just like Tim except for it had a beard and was dressed in Victorian clothes, “I knew this day would come.”

“Where is she hidden,” Tim said without the formality of an introduction.

“I'll not tell you that. While her body remains hidden I have life.”

“Don't you think that you have created enough trouble? Your time is over.”

“My time is eternal. A hundred years, two hundred years means nothing to me.”

“If you don't tell me I will search the place from top to bottom. No stone will be left unturned.”

“You will never find her no matter how hard you look.”

“See these,” Tim said holding the documents, “Who would have thought I would have found them.”

“You got lucky.”

“I was guided.”

“Then be guided again,” the apparition said and disappeared.

“Waste of time that,” Tim said quietly.

“Maybe,” The voice said, “Check through the rest of those documents, you never know.”

“How is it that you don't know? I thought you had the memory of all my lifetimes?”

“All but one, he hasn't been absorbed as he still roams the realms of time and space.”

“Oh so this is as much for you as it is for me.”

“That's right.”

“Then I had better get started.” and opened up another envelope, “It's just a list of names with figures next to them.”

“That will be pay-offs.”

“Are you sure? The first one looks like he was an army man. Major Thomas More,” and all of a sudden he remembered his first dream, “The army contract.”

“Good you remembered.”

“Yes I was him James Easton I mean. What was that all about?”

“It works on awareness. That activates past life memories which then get absorbed by me. Before you did not know who was haunting the place so there was no chance of the memories getting through. The next stage was when you had the name.”

“I did not know that it was me at the time so how would that work?”

“You didn't but I did.”

“Sorry?”

“The more aware you are. I don't activate the memories as I said. I only have vague details of the life, his name and occupation. That is what I guide you to.”

“Oh right, then you could have told me his name.”
“You had to find it for yourself. Experience promotes a deeper understanding. Anyway what are the other documents about?”
“Well this one seems to be a property list, nothing here. And the last one, well it's just figures.”
“Probably just a second set of figures. They used to keep two sets of accounts.”
“Nothing here then.”
“Never mind, you've moved quite a bit forward.”
“I don't see how.”
“You will be unlocking more memories. One might be relevant.”
“Oh right.”
“And anyway, the stronger you get the weaker he becomes. The memories are actually his strength so the more you take from him the weaker he becomes.”
“You know I can see that.”
“Anyway that's about all we can do for tonight your shift is nearly finished.”
With that Aidy came in, “So did you see any ghosts or goblins?”
“No pretty quiet. Oh I came across these on my travels,” and passed him the documents. Aidy studied them and said, “Where ever did you get these from?”
“I found them in a secret drawer in the records room. Makes for interesting reading and helps pass the night away.”
“I suppose so. You know I might take a look around myself. I'm expecting a quiet day.”
“Yes makes for an interesting time. Anyway I suppose I had better makes tracks as the night time soon comes around.”
“I will see you later then,” Aidy said as Tim left the office.

Chapter 4

Tim quickly arrived back home and made himself a cup of tea as he waited Dave's arrival. It was not long before there was a knock on the door. Tim let him in and said, “Kettle's on. Got another busy day?”
“Yep,” Dave said following him in, “I think I'll start looking for another job.”
“Really, is it getting that bad?”
“I reckon they are trying to con more hours out of me. Once they start messing with my wages that's it.”
“Well what makes you think that then?”
“You know that I am contracted to do 26 hours a week.”
“Yes though sometimes you said you do 40.”
“Not recently. Anyway I got my monthly wage slip yesterday and they only paid me for 25. I went up the wall. I went to query it and they said that I clocked off 1 hour early on one of the days.”
“And did you?”
“Not to my knowledge. I always make sure I get all my hours in as I can just about manage on it. Well they showed me the print out on the clocking on machine and according to it I did, quite a mystery.”
“Well there might be some jobs going at our place. I could ask if you want.”
“Yes if you wouldn't mind,” Dave said and got up, “Anyway I'll let you get some sleep,” and left Tim to it.
Tim found himself in a darkened room face to face with two unsavoury characters.
“So you think that we are Chartists do you?” the taller one said as he held a knife to Tim's throat.
“Aren't you?” Tim said with a marked note of nervousness.
“No,” the first one said, “Seems like you were going to send a man to lose his life in vain.”
“What?”
“That's right. He won't be coming for us. He wasn't up to the job.”

"I don't know what you mean," Tim said trying to bluff it out.

"Don't play games with us you've been dealt the wrong hand. Johnson has told us everything. Davies knows who we are and he also knows why we are here."

"What do you mean," Tim said genuinely confused, "He would not lie to me."

"Got a high opinion of you has he?" the man said with a laugh, "It seems you don't know him as well as you think you do. Yes he has quite a history old Charlie. Do you know where he got his money from for a start?"

"Worked for it, well so he told me anyway. Built it up from nothing he said."

"Hardly likely is it, such an empire from nothing."

"Well I don't know then. I'm only repeating what he told me."

"Then let me enlighten you," the man said but before he could a knocking door brought Tim back to consciousness. Tim got out of the chair and answered it. It was Dave, "Got the kettle on?"

"Sure, shouldn't you be at work?"

"Jacked in."

"What just like that?" Tim said in surprise.

"I got there and just couldn't be bothered. No I'm better off away from that place I can tell you."

"But what about money, how are you going to get by?"

"I'll get another job. Hell even a paper round would pay more."

"But what about in the meantime?"

"I could get back on a building site no trouble. I didn't want to but let's be honest it's better than where I am at the moment. I only took the job on for the part time hours. No I won't be out of work for long. Anyway I picked up a bottle of whiskey if you fancy a dram."

"Er sure. It will save me putting the kettle on I suppose," and got two glasses.

Dave poured two healthy measures and said, "I've got four weeks wages, plenty of time."

"Not being funny but I would have waited until I had another job."

"I would have ended up hitting someone. You don't know what it was like. Push, push all the time. They give you two more jobs before you finish the first. No I couldn't put up with it any more."

Tim took a large drink and said, "Well good luck to you anyway."

"Cheers mate," Dave said and took a drink.

"We've had a few jobs in our time."

"True. Mind you, you like it where you are now though."

"Yes, it's not bad."

"Quite eerie though, especially at night. My Granddad used to tell me stories about that place when he worked nights."

"Really," Tim said, his interest picking up, "What like?"

"Well you do know that it is supposed to be haunted don't you?"

"I have heard," Tim said reluctant to tell him the truth.

"He saw something. Mind you I ought not to tell you really. Not with you working nights as well."

"Oh no, don't worry about me."

"Well if you're sure. I don't want to freak you out."

"I'll be alright. I've already heard that it is haunted. By a James Easton I was told."

"It wasn't a man he saw," Dave said and replenished the glasses, "I had better tell you the full story though. It was just after the war and he was working there as a night watchman. He was doing the rounds as usual and heard some machinery running. This was unusual he told me as where the noise was coming from there was no machinery. There hadn't been for years. Well he was not long back from active service so he had no fear. He marched straight there and opened the door. The place was completely empty and yet the noise was deafening. He felt a shiver down his spine and had a feeling he was being watched. He looked around and there was nobody there. Then all of a sudden a loud menacing laugh echoed all around the place. Now don't get me wrong he had been on four landing offensives dodging machine gun fire. This man had no fear, yet he ran. Ran like he had

never ran before. And I'll tell you this he never went back to that place again. Not for all the money in the world."

"I don't think that I would have done. So which part of the place was it then? I'll make sure that I avoid it."

"It was in the cellars. At the far end."

"That place has been boarded up for years."

"And did you never wonder why?"

"They told me it was dangerous. I didn't really pursue the matter though. I just thought one less place to patrol."

"Oh it's dangerous alright," Dave said and emptied the rest of the bottle, "Dangerous to your sanity. I don't think he was the only one it happened to."

"Well I will definitely keep away from it," Tim said vowing to himself that he would go there later that night, "They don't pay me danger money."

"I wouldn't blame you; it left my Granddad a nervous wreck."

"What, he never recovered?"

"Until the day he died. Mind you I wouldn't mind working there, in the daytime I mean. It would be better than the building sites."

"I'll see what I can do. Did you ever hear anything about the other haunting?"

"What that man you mentioned. No, maybe it was him laughing," and with that a shiver went down Tim's back.

Dave finished his drink and said, "Anyway I had better get going. Could you let us know one way or the other about that job it will save me ringing the agencies hopefully?"

"I'll ask tonight," Tim said as he let him out. Tim went to bed straight afterwards but did not have a dream as the alcohol blocked his channel.

Tim woke up later to a ringing alarm and a reeling head and a vow never to drink on a day before work. He quickly got dressed and arrived early hoping to see the manager before he left. He managed to catch him and found to his delight that there was indeed a vacancy. He phoned Dave who gratefully said that he would phone the next day to try and get an interview. That done he still had half an hour before he was due to start so he went and kept Aidy company for a while.

"What happened," Aidy said on seeing him, "Wet the bed?"

"No just dedicated," Tim said with a laugh, "Find out anything interesting?"

"Not really. Came across some old papers but they did not say much," and passed them to him, "Give you something to read tonight I suppose."

Tim took them off him and said, "Do you know much about why the cellar was boarded up?"

"I've heard tell that it was contaminated. They used to store toxic waste there. Why do you ask?"

Tim told him about his earlier conversation with Dave and after he had finished Aidy said, "I'm glad it's boarded up then. You seem to be taking a keen interest in ghosts. You want to be careful as you'll end up with day-mares," and started to laugh, "I tell you what. I would never work here stoned at night. Imagine the paranoia."

"True," Tim said with a laugh, "No, it just intrigues me that's all I've never give it much thought until recently. I suppose in a place like this with so much history there's bound to be something."

"Well they say that it's seen quite a few people killed and not all by accident."

"That James Easton you mean?"

"I was thinking more about his boss. There's a portrait of him at the top of the stairs."

"Oh yes I pass it many times on my walks. Charles Davies I think."

"That's right. He, well his money built this place. Quite an entrepreneur by all accounts."

"And you say that he was killed. I've never heard this story."

"Shot dead he was. Some say by Chartists though others say by people he had double crossed. Yes he was supposed to have quite a shady past."

"Double crossed?"

“He was supposed to have made his money in Ireland informing for the authorities. Quite a few hanged because of him and not all of them were guilty. Not all hanged either for some escaped.”
“Oh and they think that he was shot by one of them?”

“By his own duelling pistols. They always have had a taste for irony the Irish. Anyway I've got a home to go to. Have a good read and I'll see you tomorrow.

Chapter 5

After Aidy had gone Tim read through the old papers he had found. There was nothing of any interest to him really so he soon had them finished. The sky outside had turned dark by then so he decided to do the first walk of the day. That did not take too long and after he had finished he decided to go and have a look at the cellar. Although the entrance was boarded up it was not fixed too strong and he soon pulled it off. The place was pitch black and though he had a powerful torch it did not seem to make much of an impression on the darkness. Gingerly he made his way down the rickety wooden stairs trying to come to terms with the dank, musty smell. At the bottom the place seemed semi lit for some outside light was allowed in by a row of small windows. Rats scampered around oblivious to his presence and debris on the floor made his journey hazardous. The place was huge. As he scanned it with his torch he saw old boxes stacked around like bricks that looked like they had been there for decades. Then he heard it, a constant thudding sound at the far end of the cellar. He made his way towards it and as he got closer another noise joined it, then another. By the time he got to the door at the far end of the room the noise was deafening. He braced himself and pushed the door open and entered into an equally large room. The noise suddenly stopped and as Tim looked around he said, “James Easton I know you are here. Come on out you can not hide from me.”

With that the room got a little colder and he felt that he was being watched. “Come on out,” he said, “The shadows is the place for cowards.”

With that James Easton appeared and said, “You presume to call me a coward for that you will pay dearly. You low life scum it's beneath my dignity even to talk to you.”

“Dignity and what would you know about dignity. You daren't face the consequences of your actions. To my mind that makes you a coward.”

“I am no coward and no man has ever dared call me one.”

“Then tell me where you have buried the body of Mary Connelly. Have the courage to be at peace with yourself.”

“Never.”

“I will find her. She's in here somewhere. I'm getting close.”

“Who said that I had buried her here,” he said trying to put Tim off track, “She could be anywhere.”

“This is where you are at your strongest. This is where she lies.”

“You are guessing. You know nothing and never will.”

“I know more than you think. You were only a lackey for Charles Davies.”

“Don't mention that name to me,” he said angrily, “And get out of here. This is my world that you are in don't forget it.”

“His world not yours, you thought that you were special. You thought that you were above the rest, a God amongst men. But no, it was just one big delusion. To him you were just another worker, a means to make profit. How does it feel James Easton, in life you were not your own man.”

“You can talk. I see you at night walking around. You are nothing but a watchman, the lowest of the low yet you dare question my status. A common vagabond that's all.”

“Really and yet still I'm looking down on you. Even your transgressions were done on behalf of others. No if you perceive that as dignity then you are very much misguided.”

“It gave me a good life, what else needs to be said. Besides, why should I justify myself to a nobody like you.”

“Because I am you and incidentally you have no body, no life. You are just a memory of how things

used to be. Like any memory you are fading away as we speak. You think that you are eternal, think on. I'm willing to wager that you can actually feel yourself getting weaker." There was no sign of protest so Tim perceived that it was true, "Eventually you will be nothing."

"No, no," the spectre said and disappeared.

"I don't think that he'll ever tell me," Tim said quietly. "I think I might have over done it and scared him off."

"Give him time," the voice said, "In the meantime have a look around."

Tim looked around for half an hour with no luck and then had a feeling he was being watched once more. He turned to see that James Easton was back although this time with a different demeanour.

"You said that I have been getting weaker. This is true. How did you know?"

"I am you, well the part of you that has moved on. I am just waiting for you to catch up."

"I'm confused. How is it that I am getting weaker?"

"You are but a memory. The more I know about you the more you live in me. As you get weaker I get stronger."

"Then I can live on. Is that what you are saying?"

"You can and you are. You live through me. Think of us as a split personality if that will help."

"I'm going to need more time for this," and disappeared.

"Very good," the voice said, "You took away his fear of death now all that's left is his fear of judgement."

With that the apparition appeared once more, "But I have been a bad person, rotten to the core some used to say. What right have I to live on?"

"There is no right or wrong in the situation. Day follows night what ever you have done."

"You say that but how can you be sure?"

"By the fact that I am here today, look most of the things you did were not instigated by you. You did them on behalf of others. I am not saying that there is justification in that I am just saying that there are mitigating factors involved."

"Right," and disappeared once more.

"He's making hard work of this," Tim said quietly.

"It's his life we are talking about," the voice said.

"Is there actually a judgement of some sort? I mean I used to believe that you had to be judged to get to Heaven but re-incarnation seems to null that."

"There is but not in the sense that you mean. It's more to do with purity of nature to help the absorption."

"Oh right, well I think so anyway."

"Think of sin as the by product of impurity, the matter of your mind so to speak. It's actually the effect we deal with the cause. What motivates you to sin? That is what needs purifying. That is what you are here to actually lose."

"Oh right. Yes I think that I can understand that. If you take away the cause then there will not be an effect."

"That's right. It might sound simplistic but life was never meant to be complicated. It's only Man that makes it that way."

"Why is that, well if you don't mind me asking that is?"

"Not at all, I'm not really sure, I think that if everything was simpler you would all know where you stood. When life is complicated you don't and so through ignorance leave yourself open to exploitation."

"Yes I can see that."

"Anyway he's back."

"So," the spectre said "You think that as most of my sins weren't instigated by me that will work in my favour?"

"I would say so."

“Then the only thing that is holding me here is the buried body.”

“That's right.”

“Then I will tell you for if the truth be known this is no life for me.”

“Good, you know it makes sense.”

“See that wall behind you, it is a false wall. She lies buried behind it,” and with that he vaporised.

Tim looked around and found a pointed iron bar and got to work on the wall. It was hard going but eventually he did manage to dislodge one of the bricks. Then another followed by another. Soon he had quite a hole and he could see the skeletal remains of a child behind it. With that the child appeared and her once wizened face began to get visibly younger before his eyes. “Thank you,” she said, “Now I can finally be at peace,” and disappeared.

“I wouldn't disturb the body,” the voice said, “Go back up and phone the Police. They shouldn't be too long.”

Tim did as he was told and before long he was at the gate awaiting their arrival.

9. Chapter 1

Cotteridge, Birmingham, England,.

Jason O'Leary looked up to the sky in wonder as the Makon mother ship slowly made its pass. To say it was big was an understatement; it took up his whole range of vision. It must have been at least ten miles long and five miles wide. As he looked at its underbelly he saw countless saucers all docked yet ready to go. Panic was all around him as people left their houses to take in the spectacle. Some people prayed whilst others just stood there in disbelief dependent on their faith.

"No, no, this cannot be" a woman's voice to the left of him said "They told us that aliens did not exist, what is to become of us?"

Jason said nothing for he had nothing to say. What could you say? He could have told them that he'd seen it in a dream and knew that it meant the Earth's quarantine was over but thought it wise to keep quiet.

"People of Earth" a voice resonated around the sky "You have nothing to fear from us. We are your friends. have come to help you in your evolution."

"Liars, liars," the woman shouted "Where are our protectors, where is the air force?"

"What" the man said next to her "What chance would we have against something like that?"

"Maybe it has come in peace" another man said "It could easily destroy us. I mean look at the size of it"

"Go back to your homes" the sky echoed "We are about to broadcast" and with that the craft, big as it was, just disappeared. Jason went back to his house and switched the television on. There was a Nature programme on but that fizzled out to be replaced by a human looking face.

"My name is Cion" the figure said "I am captain of the stellar ship Titan. We are a peaceful race and mean not to harm you. I must warn you though that we are more than capable of defending ourselves should the need arise. We have been in contact with your leaders for many years now and are not strangers to them. Their promises to alert you to our presence have not come to fruition so it was felt amongst the Galactic Federation that we should by-pass them and talk to you directly. Now Universal Law states that we cannot interfere with your evolution in its fledgling years but we have the right, no duty, to defend ourselves. You are a greedy warlike people diseased by material desire and though it hurts us to see you this way up until recently it has been no concern of ours. Up until recently I say because now you have evolved enough to leave this planet and cause mayhem to the balance we call life. Now our constant monitoring of you has showed that your consciousness in general shows a shift amongst the majority of you towards peacefulness and hopefully this will continue to grow. In the meantime though any craft of war like construction that leaves your atmosphere will be destroyed. Finally I will say that up until now your planet has been in quarantine. This has partially been lifted for now we will deal with Countries not controlled by war

mongers. They will find it beneficial and with us a just reward for their actions."

With that the programme resumed although Jason had no interest in it. His thoughts were on Cion. That was the person he had spoke to in the dream. However had he managed to do it? Confusion reigned in and many moments passed without it abating .Another interruption to the programme distracted him from his thoughts.

"There now follows a broadcast from Jonathan Nichols" and the face of the Prime Minister appeared. "There is no cause for concern; I must state that from the offset. The hi-jacking of our airwaves is a serious matter and those that perpetrated it will be dealt with severely when they are caught. They will have the full force of the law thrown against them, make no mistake about it. Now because of the potential unrest caused by those perpetrators I regret to say that I have been forced to declare martial law. Do not go out after dark until further notice" and the face disappeared.

"There now follows, slightly earlier than usual, the early evening news" the first voice said and the programmes theme tune started. Jason looked on in disbelief as the first item was broadcast.

"Cities across the Country fell under a mass hallucination after a prank broadcast by a man claiming to be a being from another planet. Thousands claim to have seen a giant spaceship after the broadcast. We talk to Jeremy Brass, the eminent psychologist about how this came to be" Jason took no regard to the next few headlines as his mind dwelt on the first. What did they mean after; he had seen the craft before the broadcast. It was the craft that had alerted him to the broadcast.

"Now back once more to our lead" the voice said "It appears that this phenomenon appeared in others Countries. We have reports from America, China and India of a similar hi-jacking of the airwaves another topic, perhaps another time. Now Jeremy Brass, hallucinations, quite a common occurrence I've heard."

"Yes, David, very common indeed in fact. During the latter part of the last century and the first decade of this a lot of people thought that they may have saw angels. Before that the Virgin Mary, right back to the beginning of recorded history actually. Now of course after the fall of Christianity institutionalised I mean, what else is there but to see alien life forms," and laughed before he said "Sorry, anyway. Now this is a very serious matter. That jape for want of a better word could have caused psychological damage. Was it some sort of means of making people face their own fears because if it was, it was sadly misguided, I don't know."

"Er.. could you elaborate on that a little?"

"Sure, sometimes the fears are so strong they actually can manifest, sort of speak of the devil kind of thing"

"Oh right, yes I see"

"And to face your fears head on like that, well you've just seen what happened."

"True, very true. But I would have thought by now that the myth of life on Mars has long since vanished."

"Oh no, there is still quite a sizeable part of the population that upholds it. Yes E.T. lives on in the hearts of many. Makes you wonder on the power of telecommunications, a film over 40 years old that still leaves an impression."

"Certainly does Jeremy, as proved today as well. What sort of person would want to play a trick like that?"

"Now that would be a great case in itself .Maybe he was ignorant or was he some lunatic with plans of world domination. Yes a fantasist with an electronics degree, quite a little combination."

"And on that profound note we will have to leave it."

A noise outside sent Jeremy to the window a convoy of army vehicles were making there was down the Pershore Road towards the city centre. There must have been at least twenty of them and their sight meant trouble once more. Jason thought a quiet night by the television was in order so he made sure that the doors were both locked and bolted. "Reports just in, hundreds of thousands have lost their lives as rioting takes over China. Appeals for calm have gone unheard as students take to

the streets. The rioting believed to have been planned by Buddhist Monks in protest over an independent Tibet was well planned and China's Military forces were pushed to their limits to contain them. Elsewhere the United States has also fallen into rioting with most of its Cities now no go areas. The National Guard proved futile quickly falling to the superior fire power and militia groups have marched to try and quell the riots. President Toucan has appealed for calm and ordered an immediate recall of troops fighting in its 3 wars overseas. Disillusioned minorities and criminal warlords are believed to be behind the disturbances.

Now to India" and with that the screen went blank. "I apologise there seems to have been a technical error. All our outside lines are down" and then the man's face appeared "Looks like our prankster has been at work once again"

Jason switched the television off in disgust and eventually fell to sleep. He was greeted by Cion "So quite a show then"

"What is going on, what do you want from me?"

"Yes it must be quite confusing for you" Cion laughed "I show you my ship then tell you that your quarantine is over, it's a shame that you woke up before I had chance to continue."

"Well it was a bit of a shock" Jason said and then "Are you really from another planet?"

"I am from the planet Makon" Cion said "It is a very distant world from here, you seem surprised."

"Well yes" Jason admitted

"There are billions of planets, do you think that the universe was created just for man?"

"Well no, I er, never gave it much thought"

"Apathy is one of man's many faults. Now your first question, what is going on? We are making ourselves aware to you and what I want from you, well I'll reveal that at a later time"

"To what purpose, revealing yourselves I mean?"

"To show you that we exist. You are evolving in the technical sense though your greed and arrogance is hampering you by making you very unsocial."

"Oh, sort of a warning then?"

"Sort of, but not in the sense that you mean"

"Did you block the broadcast again, when they said that all outside lines were down?"

"No" Cion said "Your leaders were trying a damage limitation exercise. They fear a domino effect with the rioting. Daft really as the evolution of your telecommunications is too far advanced for something like that to be hidden. They must have panicked, strange really as they have had many years to plan"

"You mentioned that. I did not know that there had been contact made."

"We were taken in for many years by them."

"Taken in?"

"Over the decision to reveal ourselves to you. Well not exactly taken in as we could read their minds. We were hoping to be able to change them."

"Oh" Jason said, "I guess they must have had their reasons."

"Irrelevant now, so anyway I'm here to hopefully make you a little more sociable."

"Really" Jason said with more than a hint of confusion.

"Yes, now the only real way to do that would be to increase your understanding but that's against the law so instead I want to increase your understanding of us. By that I don't mean me personally but me as a fear."

"Sorry?"

"The unknown, I am here to make you more aware of the Universe around you. Hopefully by realising that you are not alone it might make you aware of your place in the Universe but anyway I digress. You and many more like you will be having this dream simultaneously, so," and shrugged his shoulders, "What do you want to know?"

"I wouldn't know where to start."

"All this is totally alien to you I guess" Cion said with a laugh "Fair enough then. There are billions

of live planets in the great unknown, a million in this sector alone. To put this in its true perspective there are more species than there are man as a species. Some might look different but we are all the same in essence. There is no fear out there only love. When your quarantine is over you shall see that for yourself."

"Yes you mentioned quarantine before, what was that all about?"

"A necessary precaution. The reason why, well to put it bluntly, you are diseased, mentally speaking I mean. We contain you so you do not bring any dis-ease to the Universe. Generally most globules evolve in harmony."

"Sorry, evolve in harmony?"

"Oh, physically and metaphysically, but yours, well you've come slightly off track."

"And you say that the quarantine is coming to an end."

"Drastic times I'm afraid. You are heading close to being able to colonise other species less evolved than yourselves. I suppose you could call me the cure," and laughed once more "I am afraid that your globule has been tainted too much by matter, or fear as you would call it. Until it is purified it must be contained."

"Sorry?" Jason said confused by the change in his character.

"You're in dream time, knowledge is the only way to travel." and with that the scene around him changed. Jason found himself in a cage

"What's going on?" he said shaking the bars

"They are only mental," Cion said and the cage disappeared "That's what keeps your Soul restrained, fear of the unknown. Your Self has broken down a barrier."

"I don't feel any different. Well unless you can class confusion that is."

"Your Self has outgrown its paranoia, well almost, you need one last piece of knowledge to take away the darkness."

"Darkness?"

"Paranoia is your quarantine. It is not of our making, it is Creation regulating itself on a global scale. Hopefully that will take away your paranoia so now to deal with your confusion. Mentally speaking you are leaving the Earth's atmosphere with its paranoia along with its confusion."

"There's one last piece though."

"There always is," Cion said with a laugh "Universal Laws, because of the seriousness the Federation has waived them. I could not tell you that within the Earth's gravitational pull as you were still getting used to the concept of Universal Laws, needed a little time to sink in. Now mentally speaking you have left quarantine and are part of a great Universal Mind. Anything you want to know just ask,"

"How did it all begin?"

"Begin?" Cion thought awhile and said "You still have some time and space within you. Very well the Universe has always been here, it is eternal. I am afraid that losing your belief in re-incarnation caused this. You know you are a strange race, you do not remember your past lives, all that experience lost."

"How would that equate?"

"Believe that you are eternal logically the Universe must also be. Time is just the orbit of a planet and space what it passes through."

"What, is that it?"

"No" Cion said with a laugh "There's a bit more to it than that. First you have to understand that the Universe is the physical manifestation of the Creative Spirit."

"Do you mean God?"

"In a way. But not the way you mean. God is actually the Creative Spirit's manifestation in the physical. Basically anything that has life is part of God. It is the meta physical transference to the physical in a nut shell."

"You mentioned meta physical before?"

"Knowledge of being and purpose, that is what spurs the evolution on a mental level."

"And you said we were out of balance."

"Yes, you have limited understanding which mixed with your inbuilt arrogance makes for quite a disaster. I suppose you would equate it with what you would call a teenager. You know a little and think you know it all. The levels of understanding would be a good example," and related them to him. After he had finished he said "You know they exist but the closet thing you can get to bringing it into reality is to think that the Universe has eleven dimensions."

"Oh, it hasn't?"

"No" Cion said, "Now back to time. I said that the Universe is eternal which is true but it does regenerate itself in much the same way that you do. Its cells are the Stars that you see in the sky that's all. Now because these live and die you perceive that the Universe does the same."

"But everything must have a beginning, surely, what about the Big Bang Theory?"

"And do you know what the Big Bang Theory actually is"

"Well not really it's just something they keep mentioning."

"Right, millions of years ago there was a great big explosion that sent all the material spinning outwards as a mass of atoms that is still expanding as we speak."

"And that's the Big Bang Theory so er, what actually exploded?"

"Nothing"

"No, I mean what do they say exploded."

"Nothing, they think that matter came from nothing."

"Well that don't make sense, are you sure you've got it right?"

"Oh yes, that's the essence of what they're saying, it's just been articulated up that's all. So out of the two schools of thought, which one is more likely?"

"Yours, well I suppose so anyway."

"Still a bit more to go then. When you can truly accept that the Universe is eternal then we can move to the next stage."

"How are you going to do that, I mean not being funny my mind does not seem to want to accept it?"

"Let's try it another way then. All matter has mind, it is inbuilt. As it has been in built it is conditioned to work around time. You are not your mind, you are actually your Self."

"Sorry," Jason said interrupting him "Could you elaborate on that?"

"Sure, Your Self is your understanding; it is the Creative Spirit's manifestation in the physical. The physical mind along with its body are just a vehicle for the Self so it might live in the world of matter."

"Oh right, I think I can accept that."

"Good, you wouldn't be able to dream otherwise. Now whilst the Self is still evolving it is controlled by the physical mind until it is strong enough to break off its shackles and join the Universal Mind. It still lives in the world of matter but instead of having a physical Will it has a spiritual one, once evolution is complete I mean. Your mind is finding it hard to accept it as it has been conditioned by time. To it all things must have a beginning and an end for it sees its own mortality and relates everything to itself."

"You know I think I can understand that. That leaves a little problem though for I am still my mind and whilst that's the case I can't move forward."

"Actually by understanding it you are moving forward," Cion said with a laugh.

"Oh, I did not realise."

"I'll see if I can move you forward a little more then," Cion said and thought a while before he said "Dreams, well dream time to be precise, do you know much about it?"

"Not really, I haven't given it much thought to tell you the truth."

"Seriously, your species does not seem too concerned about things outside your perceived range of reality."

"Well I don't know about the rest of my species, most of my time is occupied with the struggles of life."

"The ultimate irony. Look beyond the confines of what you call reality and see the Reality of Truth. Then you will see your reality in a completely different light."

"I'll er bare that in mind so dream time then, would that be the domain of the Self?"

"Good. Your mind and body are left in the reality of matter and with it the confines of time and space. You have left the vehicle so to speak. The part of you that's here is the part of you that's eternal. When you can truly accept that you will break a mental barrier. Alternatively you can actually get regressed back to a past life through hypnotism"

"Right, I've heard about that."

"It's not a bad idea, once you've gone through that experience you'll start to see things a lot clearer."

"I'll bare that in mind. You mentioned the levels of understanding before how does that equate?"

"That is the growth of the Self in the reality of matter. Although it is part of the Creative Spirit it has to grow in understanding of itself to truly come to fruition."

"Why is that then?"

"It's a Natural Law I'm afraid, it has to evolve to its purpose. That's one reason, also though it has to evolve in balance with the physical mind until it is strong enough to merge with it and then transcend time."

"Transcend time, do you mean live forever?"

"You already do, the only difference is that when you transcend time you can keep your physical body."

"What, seriously?"

"Beats the hell out of the Big Bang Theory doesn't it" Cion said with a laugh, "Your body will never fall to time. Evolve to that stage and you truly realise that the Universe is eternal and the trivia of time and space loses its hold. In time you will fledge and truly experience the Universe."

"Well that answers the first question."

"What I want from you. Your second question I believe. I want your friendship." and with that Jason woke up.

10. God- The Universal Mind

Oh wondrous Spirit, Great Divine, come forth and radiate
With gentle loving healing rays my troubles to sedate
With wisdom never compromised when fashions change untold
Give me that peace, you inner strength, come forth and make me bold
My Will is yours oh Great Divine, I put my trust in you
To cull the shadows from my mind and stop me feeling blue
To lift me up when I am down and raise my spirits high
To give me strength to look beyond so I'm not afraid to die.

Look out for Natural born sinners

