



The Hitch-Hiker's Guide To Astral Traveling

Peter the Celt

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Part 1

The Land of Creative Formation

Through darkened nights she comes to me

In restless flights of fantasy.

To dim lit caves she beckons me

With thoughts of mirth and ecstasy.

Chapter 1.

Dave Jessel looked down the long rectangular piece of land with as much apprehension as Hercules must have had before he was about to embark on one of his labours. However had he managed to get conned into it, that Blister had a lot to answer for and no doubt Dave would have a lot of his namesakes by the time he had finished.

"It's a lot easier than it looks," Blister said on seeing his demeanour, "I would have done it myself but as I said in the pub last night."

"Something else came up," Dave said interrupting him in a disbelieving tone.

"Dave," Blister said adapting a different manner, "I'm hurt. I put myself out to put a bit of money in your pocket and this is the thanks that I get. You know I would have been here next to you under normal circumstances." He stopped and looked at his watch before continuing, "Speaking of which I'm running late, she'll be away for three weeks so that should give you plenty of time. If you need anything just see the old dear next door," pointed to the house to Dave's left before leaving him to his sorrow.

Dave looked down the garden once again and cursed the day he had ever got involved with Adam James as known as Blister. Time after time he had fallen to his cunning and although he did profit from it, it was not much and not worth the hard work that it often entailed. Adam James contrary to his nickname lived off his wits and other people's sweat. He had actually got the name from the fact that he only ever turned up after the hard work was over.

"Looks like you've got your work cut out," a voice said knocking him of his thought train.

Dave turned around to see that an elderly lady had appeared from the entry. "I'm Ethel," she said, "The old dear from next door."

"Oh," Dave said realising that she had overheard his earlier conversation.

"Never mind," she said laughing, "I've been called a lot worse in my time. Do you want a cup of tea?"

"Yes sure," Dave said, "Thanks," she unlocked the back door and Dave followed her in. They were soon drinking tea and discussing the garden and how it came to be in such a state.

"Yes it used to be such a pleasant garden," Ethel said and took a drunk before continuing, "It all went wrong when she split up with her husband Charlie," and started laughing. Oh seeing the bemused look on Dave's face she went on to elaborate. "He moved in next door and so she put all those conifers up to try and block him out."

"That must have been some time ago judging by the size of them."

"More years than I care to remember, her son in law cut them down to about eight feet after Charlie died but that was as far as any of the family got with the garden. Well except for draining the pond that is."

"The pond, I didn't realise that there was one."

"It's quite well hidden by the trees. It used to attract frogs by the hundreds it made for a terrible racket I can tell you. Now, did your friend tell you what wants doing?"

"He just said a bit of cleaning up."

"The master of understatement he must be," Ethel said with a laugh, "I reckon there must be about twenty trees that want digging up and that's before you've started."

"What?" Dave said in shock, "He never said anything about digging up trees. He led me to believe it was just a bit of weeding and that was all."

"I'm afraid it seems he's led you down the garden path," Ethel said with a laugh.

Dave finished his tea stood up and said, "Not this time. I'm sorry but she'll have to find someone else. It's nothing personal against her, you understand," and left before Ethel could answer him. As he walked the short distance back to his flat his thoughts were squarely on Adam James and purely negative and bitter tasting. Revenge was on his mind and as he thought about the numerous times he had been conned by him his hatred grew accordingly. Every incident added substance to his flare and by the time he arrived back he was well aflame. He took a can of super strength lager

from the fridge and drank a hearty draught before sitting down on his thread bare sofa. “Digging up trees for £25 a day, he must think I’m an idiot,” he said aloud and took another drink, “I wouldn’t mind but I bet he’s charging more and keeping it for himself.” Another drink saw the can empty and then Dave fetching another one from the fridge. Three trips to the fridge later and Dave succumbed to a drunken sleep and an enchanting dream.

He found himself in a dense thicket devoid of sunlight held firmly in place as if mesmerised by the soft dulcet tones of soft music. The music stopped and a voice came to the fore, “David Jessel,” it said, “You must help me. Release me from my bondage.”

“I am the one who is trapped,” Dave said with more than a hint of confusion.

“Help me,” the voice said once more.

“How?” Dave said and found himself back on the sofa in the reality of time. He looked at the time and saw that it was 11 O’clock at night.

He had slept for 10 hours and yet still he was tired. He could not understand it and as he was too tired to try and rationalise it he just went to bed.

Dave found himself in a vibrant forest in the throes of spring. He took in an array of aromas unaware that it was just a dream and heard the noise of panpipes in the distance. He headed off in their perceived direction and soon came across a small figure sitting down with his back leaned against a large oak tree. He hid a while and listened to him play. He was a strange looking figure, although a man he was barely the size of a child, who sported a large, wide brimmed hat with a thick green band that held a peacock’s feather in place. Around his feet a robin danced and chirped in accompaniment with the music and to his right a squirrel sat and gazed intently at the thin mist that seemed to emerge from the end of the pipes and dance in the breeze before turning first to hazy figures and then to butterflies.

The figure stopped playing and put the pipes down on the floor and the robin hopped onto his knee. They both looked in the direction of where Dave was hiding and the figure said, “Step forth mortal man, you need not hide from us.”

Dave came out from his concealment and said, “I mean you no harm, I was just er. What were you actually doing?”

“Breathing new life into the forest,” the figure said, “That is my purpose. I am Elan and you are David Jessel and in need of a purpose.”

Dave went cold at that, he composed himself before saying, “How did you know my name?”

“It is written,” Elan said but did not elaborate.

“Written?” Dave repeated as a question.

“By the creative pen but that is not important. You are here because I have summoned you. I am in need of your help and you are in need of a purpose. A mutual union beneficial to both so what do you say?”

“Slow down I haven’t a clue as to what you are talking about. What do you mean you summoned me for a start?”

“Ah, you mortals ask too many questions, a needless waste of time but I am a patient Zarg.”

“Zarg?” Dave said interrupting him.

“There you go again do you never stop? It is like second nature to you.”

“But if I don’t ask I will never learn,” Dave protested “It stands to reason.”

“Nothing stands to reason if you reason it enough. You are in the wrong dimension for it.”

“The wrong dimension,” Dave said forgetting all his previous questions, “What are you talking about?”

“What time is it?”

Dave looked at his watch and saw that it had no hands. “What is this?” he said in disbelief and talking the watch off his wrist shook it hard before looking at it again.

“And what good will that do?” Elan said and seeing Dave’s despair thought it prudent to enlighten him, “You are not in the land of time so it does not exist. This is the Land of Creative Formation,

Kambula we call it. It is a parallel world and yet your world lies within it although on a lower level of consciousness so you can only see it when you have a high state of awareness. You have entered the world of the super natural, quite an achievement for a mortal man I can tell you.”

“And you mentioned a purpose?” Dave said uncomfortable with talk of the super natural.

“We are in need of your service. Our Queen lies trapped in the dark side of our world and only a mortal can save her. She is held in bondage by the Creeping Death and I fear her time is running out.”

“The Creeping Death?” Dave repeated “That sounds dangerous what is it?”

“It is the balance of Creative Formation, destruction.”

“Destruction,” Dave said in horror, “How can you defeat destruction?”

“You will know what to do,” and disappeared.

Dave woke up in a restless frame of mind. He checked the time and saw that it was eight o’clock. He quickly got dressed and as he made himself a cup of tea he debated on what he was going to do that day. His actions from the previous day had meant that not only was he at a loose end he was also in financial dire straits for his personal circumstances meant that he could not be too discerning about the work he undertook. He cursed himself for his foolishness but the door knocking stopped him from going too deeply into self pity. It was Adam James and he was not a happy man. “What is this?” he demanded angrily, “You were suppose to be at Mrs. Lewisham’s today. I sort you out a decent job and you can’t be bothered to get off your backside in the morning.”

“£25.00 a day for digging up trees, you must think me a mug,” Dave said his temper igniting,

“You’ve pulled some low tricks on me in your time but this, you’re disgusting.”

“I’ve put money in your pocket, good money,” Adam said calming down slightly, “And all you do is throw it in my face, without me you would have fell on your face long ago. Don’t forget who sorted this flat out for you. I’ve been good to you and if you let me down now, that’s it.”

“You’ve made more money out of my sweat than I have so don’t come the martyr with me. I don’t know what you are charging this woman but I’m willing to bet it’s a lot more than you are giving to me.”

“Then you’ll be wrong. I’m not making any money out of this because she has no money her family have grabbed it all.”

“Another one of your stories, it wears thin after a while.”

“Alright,” Adam relented, “I might have stretched the truth in my time but this is genuine. Her memory lapsed for a while and her daughter got an enduring power of attorney. She used to be quite wealthy with rent money from her properties and pensions but now, well she’ll be good company for a church mouse.”

“If that’s the case how is she going to pay me? Your story quickly falls.”

“She’s got a little hidden. Not much but enough to get you started, when it runs out well you can only do so much.”

“And enough to go on holiday for three weeks.”

“A holiday,” Adam said with a laugh, “She’s stopping at her daughters, believe me that is no holiday she’s a nutty bitch.”

“And how much money has she got put aside?” Dave said coming around slightly.

“£500 but there’s materials to come out of that. Look let’s be honest you’ve nothing better to do and it is money at the end of the day. I can’t help you with the garden but I can fetch in the materials and get rid of the waste.”

“What’s your interest in this anyway? I mean not being funny, it’s not like you to do anyone a favour.”

“Well I do have some standards. I would never treat an old woman the way her family has, well not all of them, she has one good daughter.”

“Alright,” Dave relented, “I’ll give it a start but I reckon that money won’t hold out too long as Ethel said there were twenty trees wanted digging up. I wouldn’t even like to guess how many days

that would take.”

“Ethel?” Adam said as a question.

“The old dear from next door,” Dave said with a laugh.

“Sorry?” Adams said more than a little confused.

“She overheard you yesterday. If I get my tools together could you drop them off for us?”

“Sure,” Adam said and they were quickly loaded up. The journey was quick and as no time at all they were standing in Mrs. Lewisham’s garden.

“Quite a mess,” Adam said, “It must have taken years of neglect to get into this state.”

“A job and a half so what’s the plan?”

Adam took out a piece of paper and said, “Ideally this,” and Dave studied it hard and said, “You want all this done in three weeks, I can’t see it myself.”

“Just do what you can, I don’t think she’s got enough money to cover it all anyway. If I were you I would clear the trees marked and paint the wall first. There’s some masonry paint and brushes in the greenhouse, if you can get all that done it will make a lot of difference.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and Adam left him to it saying he would be back later to see how he got on. Dave looked at the paper once more and shook his head in despair.

“Oh you came back then,” Ethel’s voice said from next door, “A glutton for punishment.”

“Looks like it,” Dave said, “A fool to myself.”

“Well you’ll get your reward in heaven,” Ethel said with a laugh, “And at least it will keep you in shape.”

“True,” Dave said and with a heavy heart started digging around the first tree. Now while Dave’s making a start it might be a good idea to give you a brief description of the garden and the actual work that needed to be done to bring it up to scratch. (It is quite a lot so you will have to bare with me). The garden was long, thin and rectangular in shape, down one side was 15 conifers that hid a patterned concrete block wall covered from head to toe in ivy. The trees went down about $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the garden with the last quarter just heavily overgrown weeds. On the other side of the garden was a wooden fence in front of which there were another six trees that wanted taking down. The first half of the garden was lawned after a fashion and then you came to large raised structure that had once been a filled pond. Behind the pond was a trough shaped reservoir that had been used to keep the pond full but now had only about 6 inches of water although it was still inhabited by forty or so frogs. Behind the trough was a large raised bed that was square shaped and encased by slabs which just seemed to be growing ivy, the gardens most prolific plant. The whole area around the structure was a mass of ivy that was so thick it had partially strangled a pear tree that had had the misfortune to have grown next to it and finally behind it was the greenhouse. Quite a task although much to Dave’s surprise the soil was pretty easy to dig. He quickly dug a hole around the base of the first tree and shook it hard to see how loose the tree actually was. The tree moved quite easily which told Dave it was not too well rooted. He cleared the now loosened soil away exposing the roots more and did the same thing pulling the loose roots out of the soil and cleaning any loose soil away. In much the same way as a child would pull a loose milk tooth he wrested the tree from the ground and then laid it on the lawn. The whole process took only 40 minutes and this spurred him on with fortitude to the next.

He was on the fourth tree when Ethel came out to check his progress. “You’ll soon be through them,” she said in admiration, “Would you like me to make you a cup of tea?”

“That sounds good,” Dave said and put his spade down, “It’s pretty heavy work this.”

“I’m sure,” She said and went back into her kitchen. She returned after a few minutes and gave him a mug, “So what changed your mind?”

“Guess I’m a sucker for a sob story,” Dave said taking the mug off her, “And Adam can certainly tell them.” He took a drink before saying, “The trouble is I can’t really be sure if he’s lying.”

“One of those sorts of people is he?” she said with a knowing look before changing the subject “I’m surprised her daughter released her the money for this. She’d rather waste it on restaurants than

spend it on anything worthwhile.”

“So her daughter has got her money then. I thought it was just one of Adam’s stories.”

“Oh yes. It’s a disgrace, I can tell you. Mind you she is putting it to good purpose now I suppose.”

“Well I’m not sure about that, Adam told me that the money for this has come from what she had stashed away.”

“That might explain it. I couldn’t really see her daughter spending it on anything useful.”

“So it must be true,” Dave said and went deep into thought before saying, “There’s a strange world that we live in. How could anyone do that to their own mother?”

“Money,” Ethel said, “One person’s need falls to another one’s greed I’m afraid to say.”

“True I suppose,” Dave said and finished his drink, “Thanks for that, I guess I had better crack on as there is still a lot to go at.”

“Sure. I’ll bring you another one out in a couple of hours if you like.”

“I wouldn’t argue with that,” Dave said and passed her back his mug. She went back inside and Dave continued with this work, his mind filled with thoughts of injustice and how greedy people in general seemed to be getting. As the fourth tree came out he had reached the conclusion that they were not worth thinking about although his anger still carried him through the fifth and sixth tree and it must have been a good spur because they came up very quickly. He stopped for a rest before starting the seventh and surveyed the gap where once the trees had been.

The soil around where the trees had been was covered with ivy so there was not really much of a gap to actually survey. It was quite an area never the less so he was pretty much pleased with his progress.

“Well you’ve certainly put a hole in it,” a female voice aroused him from his thoughts. Dave turned to see a young woman with two small dogs had come into the yard. He had been that engrossed in his thoughts that he had not heard her approach. “I’m Jane,” she said explaining herself, “Mrs. Lewisham’s daughter.”

“Oh,” Dave said guardedly, “Is she back already?”

“Oh no,” she said with a laugh, “She’ll be at my sisters for quite a while. Would you like a drink?”

“Sure,” Dave said thinking that she must be the good one and so warming to her, “A coffee please with two sugars.”

She went into the house and the two dogs came over to greet him. He was stroking them when she came back. “Nice dogs,” he said, “Are they yours?”

“No,” she said with a laugh, “I’m just looking after them for my mother,” and passed him his mug. Dave took a drink and said, “Thanks, I needed that. So how come the garden got like this?”

“Neglect, I try my best but it’s a little too much for me. I could give you a hand to clear that lot if you want,” and pointed at the ivy.

“If you don’t mind, I don’t quite know where you’re going to put it though.”

“I’ll burn it next door. It used to be my dad’s house but it’s empty now.”

“Fair enough and if I’m very lucky I might see you with a paint brush in your hands.”

“We’ll see,” she said laughing before going to get a spade from the greenhouse. Dave had finished his coffee by the time Jane came back so he started to dig around the seventh tree. Jane went straight to work digging up the roots of the ivy that straddled the wall and soon she had quite a pile stacked up in next doors garden. By 3.30 she had stopped though for she had to pick up her daughter from school. Dave had dug up a total of 12 trees by then so when Adam came around not long after he was happy to call it a day.

“You’ve made your mark on this haven’t you,” Adam said with more than a hint of admiration.

“Well I had a little help,” Dave said modestly, “Her daughter came around.” Much to Dave’s surprise Adam said, “Jane?”

“You know her?” Dave said as a question.

“She’s a nurse,” Adam said by way of an explanation, “She was very good to my mother in her last few days.”

“Oh,” Dave said in surprise, “So you do have a heart.”

“We all have mothers. Yes quite a girl Jane, good worker, heart of gold, purity itself. She’s the only one worth anything out of the whole family I can tell you.”

“Well she certainly can work, she cleared all that ivy,” and pointed to the pile left in next doors garden.

“Right,” Adam said changing the subject, “Are you going to give us a hand then?”

“What?”

“I borrowed a van to get rid of the trees,” Adam said enlightening him. “Mind you I did not expect to see so many down. They should all fit in though, I just need a hand to carry them and that’s all.”

“Yes sure. Er have you got anywhere to put them.”

“Steve by the river. He likes to have outdoor parties with big fires, he’ll quick burn them up.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and they started carrying them out. The flat bed van was quickly loaded up so Adam tied them safely and told Dave he would see him the same time tomorrow. Dave went back and got rid of the last remaining ivy. As he was putting the last piece on the pile Ethel came out with a cup of coffee and said, “You’ve done all that, amazing.”

“Well her daughter Jane helped me,” Dave said humbly.

“Yes but even so. And look you can even see the soil.”

“There was quite a lot of ivy covering it,” Dave admitted, “It made for quite a pile.”

“I can see,” she said looking over the wall, “It will be good to see the garden back in shape once more. Yes it used to be quite a place I can tell you.”

“Have you lived next door for long then?”

“Forty years, I can even remember when she planted those trees.”

“So you watched them grow then.”

“Yes it was soul destroying. Ah well it doesn’t do to dwell. You’ve done well today; you should be pleased with yourself.”

“Not until I’ve broke the back of it. I’m guessing that will be quite a few days yet.”

“Not that many, not if today is anything to go by. You can keep your tools in my shed if you like, it should be safe and it will save you carting them backwards and forwards each day.”

“Thanks, I was not looking forward to having to carry them home actually. I don’t live too far but it’s far enough to be quite a journey with that much weight.”

“No problem. Just give me a knock when you come round tomorrow or better still I’ll leave the key out for you.”

She went back in to fetch the key and Dave got all his tools together.

By the time she came back he was waiting by the shed for her. She opened the door and Dave loaded them in. “I’ll put the key under that brick,” Ethel said after she had locked the door and Dave thanked her once again.

“I’ll see you tomorrow then,” Ethel said.

“Yes bright but not too early,” Dave said with a laugh and made the short journey home. On arrival he made himself something to eat and settled down before going to bed strangely tired at 9.30.

Dave found himself beside a mountain lake with the sound of music echoing in his ears. It was a different type of music to the panpipes he had heard earlier for much to his surprise he remembered meeting Elan as if it was the previous day. The music was different though, it was more raucous and made with different instruments, an accordion and a violin and he even vaguely knew the tune. He saw a figure fishing in the distance and went over to get a closer look. Although only small in height about the size of Elan he was large in a Santa Claus sort of way and his long white beard and red pointed hat went to emphasis the claim.

“Are you a Zarg?” Dave said not really knowing what else to say.

“We hate the Zargs,” the figure said and spat in the lake.

“What?” Dave said somewhat taken aback by the answer.

“Just joking,” the figure said laughing, “I am Kaylie, a gnome. You must be the one they call

David Jessel.”

“Er that’s right,” David said not knowing how he should know that.

“You are expected,” Kaylie said and cast the fishing rod into the lake.

“I’m expected,” Dave said in surprise, “Expected by who?”

“By the king of the fishermen Tarquin the Great White Otter. First though,” the float bobbed at that and Kaylie started to reel it in. It was quite a struggle for the fish fought hard but eventually it was landed. Dave looked at it in surprise for it was gold, pure gold and Dave was even more surprised when it spoke. “So you have found me again Kaylie, is there no where safe from you?”

“There is nowhere to hide,” Kaylie said, “Reveal yourself to me.”

With that the fish changed into a young maiden, the fairest women that Dave had ever seen.

“What is it that you want from me?” she said.

“It is not for me that I call you,” Kaylie said, “It is for Nomi Queen of the Zargs. It is time for her release tell me where she is hidden for one has come to save her.”

The woman looked at Dave and said to Kaylie, “Well he is mortal but is he proven?”

“As yet no but his heart is willing and his arms are strong.”

“Then perhaps you are a little premature in calling me. First he must prove himself otherwise I am wasting my time,” and with that she disappeared.

“She’s done it again,” Kaylie said and threw his rod to the ground, “Oh she is a slippery creature.”

He looked at Dave and said, “So you are to prove yourself, this should be interesting,” and Thought awhile before saying, “Zinbar yes why not.”

“Zinbar?”

“Yes, yes. He guards the Golden Bucket, it will take great courage to get past him and that is what you need to rescue Nomi.”

“And what is this Zinbar, some sort of monster?”

Kaylie laughed at that before saying, “No he is a gnome like me. You’ll be in no danger.” “Well not much anyway,” he said quietly under his breath.

“Very well,” Dave said not hearing the last sentence, “I’ll do it, lead the way.”

Dave followed Kaylie up into the mountains and the music got louder for they seemed to be heading to its source.

“Who is that playing?” Dave said.

“That would be Valentine and Clary.”

“And are they creating life?” Dave said remembering back to the last time he had heard music.

“No,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “Just having a good time.”

“So what do you actually do then? I mean not being funny, but this seems a fairly laid back type of lifestyle. Fishing and dancing and that.”

“Well we don’t want to make hard work out of life. We only do what we need to and that’s not really a lot. We just keep the Golden Bucket full of diamonds that’s all.”

“So what is this bucket actually for? And why does it need to be kept full of diamonds?”

“The bucket holds our life force, without it we would not exist. We do not hunger like you mortals do. No, we’ve got our sustenance from the bucket, well the diamonds inside to be more precise.”

“You eat the diamonds?” Dave said in surprise.

“Not at all,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “We just regenerate ourselves through them. While the bucket is full we are strong but with each diamond spent we get a little weaker.”

“And how long does a diamond last?”

“A moon cycle so as you can see we do not need to struggle we already have stores for many sun cycles. No, it is not hard work being a gnome.”

“So it seems,” Dave said more than a little impressed, “Though I couldn’t really see me as a gnome for I think I would soon get bored”

“Not at all, sure there is a world of adventure out there. No to us work is boredom, a necessary evil

but boredom nevertheless. We only do what we have to do to sustain ourselves, anything after that well it's a bonus." "Kaylie," a voice called interrupting them, "Who is that, that walks besides you?"

With that a goose appeared followed by another gnome slightly smaller than Kaylie and dressed less brightly.

"It is alright Dixie," Kaylie said, "He is a friend," and introduced them to each other.

"So what brings him to the camp?" Dixie said, "Mortal man has no place here it is not designated."

"He is to be tested," Kaylie said.

"Zinbar?" Dixie said.

"That's right."

"Then go in peace," Dixie said and let them through a narrow pass for the terrain had turned a lot more mountainous and the distant lake was now well out of sight. The music was now almost deafening although when the pass turned into a large opening it stopped. Dave looked around the opening and was surprised at the size of it. It was the highest quarry that he had ever seen. Dave saw entrances dotted around the sheer cliff faces that made for the quarry walls and rope ladders hung from the higher openings to make them accessible.

"You live here?" Dave said as surprise.

"Since before the beginning of time," Kaylie said, "Once there were many of us but now a mere handful. Yes it used to be quite a place."

"So what happened then?"

"Like you mortal man we had our great wars. We were not always peaceful you see, we too had greed and let our desires dictate our needs. Yes they were bad times. When our desires got too strong we could neither control them nor keep up with them and so took to enslavement to try and pacify them. Where once we were brothers we fought with each other, they were truly dark times."

"So what happened?"

"We wised up. We made a pact with the Mother of all Things and from it got eternal life."

"You were once mortal then," Dave said in surprise, "I never knew that."

"We were once like you. It was only when we made peace, well the few that were left that is."

With that Dave saw a figure emerge from one of the ground level caves pushing a wheel barrow. He came over to where they were standing and said to Kaylie, "Is this the one?"

"He is David Jessel," Kaylie said.

"I am Ben," the gnome said and emptied the contents of the wheel barrow on the floor, "I am to accompany you to see the Great White Otter."

"He has not proved himself yet," Kaylie said.

"Zinbar?" Ben said and Kaylie nodded. Ben turned to Dave and said, "Then I will wait," before taking a diamond out of his pocket and giving it to Dave, "You must put this in the Golden Bucket once you have got past him."

"And is this significant?" Dave said.

"No it just saves me climbing the rope ladder that's all," Ben said with a laugh, "I was just on the way there myself," and carried on his journey with the now empty wheel barrow.

"So what does he actually do then?" Dave said.

"He gets rid of the waste that Doug shovels."

"Doug?"

"The diamond hunter. You'll meet them all soon enough. First Zinbar," and pointed at a cave opening twenty feet about the ground. "He should be asleep so if you are quiet you will be alright."

"That's quite a way up. Are you sure this is safe?"

"Just take your time," Kaylie said and gingerly Dave started to climb the ladder. At the top he peered in and saw a gnome asleep near the entrance. He quietly edged past him and strolled into a large cavern with a stone table situated at the far end. On the table was a bucket made out of gold

filled to the brim with diamonds. He quietly tip toed to the bucket and gently placed the diamond he had been given on top of the pile. Much to his horror the bucket said in a loud voice, "Thank you," and then all hell broke loose. Zinbar now awake rushed into the cavern; put his two hands up to try and catch Dave and started to flatulate. Above the noise Zinbar said, "Who are you and what do you want here?" but the smell was that bad that Dave could not wait around to answer him. He dodged past him and quickly made his way down the rope ladder to fresh air and a laughing Kaylie. "Whatever has he been eating?" Dave said once he got his breath back, "I've never smelt anything like it."

"Just a defence mechanism," Kaylie said once he had stopped laughing, "So you have proved yourself, good I am pleased."

"So what next?"

"The White Otter but that will keep, first the test."

"It was easy. I'm not being funny but it was not much of a test. I would not really say that I've proved myself doing it."

"Ah but all is not what it seems, let that be your first lesson in life."

"Sorry, what do you mean?"

"You were right. The test was not about stealth it was about purity of thought. You could just as easily grabbed a handful of diamonds and in your mind no-one would have been wiser."

"Well the bucket would I guess."

"You did not know that at the time. No to you the bucket was an inanimate object and with Zinbar asleep there would have been no-one to see the crime."

"If you put it like that I suppose. I never thought about it to tell you the truth. So er these diamonds then."

"You can have as many as you like in our world they are common, it is only in your world that you place a value on them, now what does that tell?"

"We're stupid," Dave said not really knowing what to say.

"Probably but that's not the answer I'm looking for. No, value and worth are just perceptions one man's meat is another man's poison kind of thing. Understand that and you'll be in a lot stronger position when it comes to rescuing the Queen."

"Right," Dave and with that the music started playing once again.

"Playtime," Kaylie said, "Do you want to come and have a look?"

"Sure," Dave said and followed him to the ground floor cave from where the music was coming from. Inside the cave David recognised Ben and Dixie who were dancing a jig and in a world of their own and saw two strangers who he guessed to be Valentine and Clary. One was playing a violin and the other an accordion and neither of them saw Dave and Kaylie enter. There was another stranger there though and he came over to greet them.

"Doug," Kaylie said, "This is David, David, Doug."

"Zinbar tells me that you have proved yourself," Doug said to David, "Good. We leave with Ben soon if he's not too tired," and looked at him dancing before laughing. After he left them Dave said to Kaylie, "What does he want me for anyway?"

"He is to explain our world to you," Kaylie said, "This will give you a better understanding of us and of what is expected of you. You will need this before you go off on your quest."

"Oh I see and this quest, will I be going alone?"

"No, well unless you want to be, I wouldn't really advise that, for you will need a guide."

"Will that be you?"

"We were all planning on going actually as I said earlier we like adventure."

"But what about the Golden Bucket doesn't it need to be guarded?"

"Not at all," Kaylie said with a laugh, "We'll just hide it away when the time comes."

"Oh, didn't you say that it was your life force, I'm confused."

"The diamonds inside are but as I said before they are very common so we can energise pretty much

anywhere.”

“Well,” Dave said picking up, “It should make for quite an adventure then.”

The music had stopped by then so Kaylie introduced Dave to Clary and Valentine. He had met all the gnomes now and found them all easy going and good humoured a good sign for he had started to get a little worried about the journey ahead. As they sat outside the cave the conversation drifted back to Queen Nomi and Dave asked about the Creeping Death.

“Oh,” Doug said, “You have heard of it.”

“Elan mentioned it,” Dave said, “Although he never told me what it actually was.”

“Maybe it is best to leave that to the White Otter,” Clary said, “It is far too complicated for us to give it the justice of a good explanation.”

“Couldn’t you just tell me what you know? If I don’t truly understand it then the White Otter could elaborate on anything that you have missed.”

The gnomes talked amongst themselves for a short while and then Kaylie said, “Fair enough, I will try my best. Do you remember I said that long ago before we made a pact with the Mother of all Things, our desires dictated our needs.”

“Yes that was the time of the great wars wasn’t it?”

“That’s right, now these desires that controlled us did not come from us they worked through us, can you see the difference?”

“Yes. Well I think so. Are you actually talking about an external force of some sort?”

“You’ve got it well the gist of it for it goes a lot deeper than that.”

“And that is the Creeping Death an external force that controls your desires?”

“Not strictly true,” Kaylie said and thought awhile before saying, “They actually are your desires, that is the external force itself, can you see the difference?”

“Yes, well sort of, and these desires, are they actually manifestations or just thought patterns?”

“Depends on what dimension you are in. In your world they would be thought patterns but you are now in the Land of Creative Formation and so they will be manifestations.”

“I don’t suppose that you would know what they manifest themselves as?” Dave said not liking the way the conversation was going.

“Could be anything I know little of the dark side of this world I’m afraid. The White Otter will be better to talk with on that.”

“So that fish you caught,” Dave said remembering back, “She could change shape was she with the dark side?”

“Not at all,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “She is Moat, the creative force.”

“The Mother of all Things?” Dave said as a guess.

“No. She was created by the Mother of all Things as everything else was. She is her daughter in fact, her sister is Narda of the dark side it is her and her seven hand maidens that collectively are the Creeping Death.”

“The destructive force,” Dave said remembering back, “Yes I think that I can see that, and you, well judging by the fact that you are also seven, do you serve Moat?”

“In a roundabout way, our pact is actually with the Mother of all Things. She is the medium to the mother. Anyway King Tarquin will explain it a lot more thoroughly than I ever could.”

“And is he far?”

“No, well not too far Ben and Doug will go with you so you will be in good company.”

“Good,” Dave said getting up, “No time like the present I guess, well if that’s alright with you.”

“Sure,” Ben said as both he and Doug got up.

As they walked back towards the lake David said, “So what actually is a Zarg then?”

“It’s a higher being created solely for a purpose,” Ben said, “Without its purpose it would not exist.”

“Oh” Dave said “Elan was making butterflies, was that his purpose?”

“Ah,” Doug said, “This is the Land of Creative Formation, it’s not like your world for it is a world of symbols. Butterflies are symbolic of life forces, you would call them souls.”

“Right,” Dave said and remembered back, “He also had a robin and a squirrel with him, were these also symbolic?”

“The robin is rebirth,” Ben said, “Life is eternal so he was actually reincarnating and the squirrel was there to bury the memories of the previous carnation.”

“So life is eternal I never knew that. So how is it that I am mortal?”

“You’re not you just think that you are, the squirrel was at work. No, the peacock feather that Elan wears, that is symbolic of immortality. You see Elan is life itself.”

“I never knew. So how many Zargs are there?”

“Seven,” Doug said, “You see numbers are also symbols.”

“I was going to say, and these other Zargs, will I get to meet them?”

“You are on the way to meeting one now,” Ben said, “The White Otter is wisdom incarnate.”

“Oh,” Dave said, “So they don’t follow set form.”

“Sorry?” Ben said.

“They don’t all look like Elan,” Dave said elaborating.

“They can manifest as anything,” Ben said, “They are the hand maidens of Moat not us.”

“I understand,” Dave said as they came out besides the lake.

“Not far now,” Ben said and they started around the lake until they saw a large cave, “King Tarquin” Doug shouted, “Are you at home?”

“One moment,” a voice shouted back and a large white otter emerged.

“You must be David Jessel,” the otter said, “And I see that you have passed the test.”

“Er yes, however did you know that?”

“You would not be here otherwise,” the otter said with a laugh, “Soon your journey can begin. Are you nervous?”

“I’m not sure. I don’t really know what’s expected from me.”

“All in good time, would you like to come in?” and led them into the large cave. Surprisingly it looked quite homely and even more surprisingly there were chairs to sit on.

“Take a seat,” the otter said, “And then we will begin.”

They all made themselves comfortable and the otter said to Ben, “So, what have you actually told him?”

“Barely nothing,” Ben said, “We’ve glanced on symbolism, numbers and the Creeping Death itself. Oh and talked a little about the Zargs.”

“Good so he’s had a bit of a grounding that should make things a little easier.” He turned to Dave and said, “Before we start is there anything that’s confusing you?”

“Do you want the list?” Dave said with a laugh before going into thought and then saying, “The dark side, what actually is it?”

“It’s a parallel world it’s the same as this one only it’s night. The creatures of this world are the creatures of what you’d call day while the creatures of the dark side are the creatures of the night.”

“Oh right so when I am there I’ll see badgers and bats and things like that.”

“Yes that’s right anything nocturnal in your world.”

“And er what about monsters and demons?”

“Ah, sort of.”

“Sort of,” Dave repeated, “How do you mean?”

“It’s a world of symbols, you might see a monster but it will be symbolic of something else.”

“Oh right so they can’t actually do any harm.”

“Oh yes they are still creatures just the same, their fangs and claws could still cut you to ribbons. These monsters will be manifestations of the Creeping Death; their form alters so I could not define them for you. The creatures of the night in general will not harm you but be careful that these are not also manifestations of the Creeping Death for what they tell you will lead you to harm. Finally for the dark side you have the goblins. These are the gnomes that would not make a pact with the Mother of all Things and so were driven into the dark side. There are seven of them and if you

want to know what they look like you have two of them here.”

“What?” Dave said in surprise.

“Well except they have pointed ears and claws,” the otter said with a laugh.

“So it is just like this world them and I don’t suppose they have the same name as well.”

“Close Ben and Doug’s counterparts are called Neb and Guod.”

“Oh in reverse”

“Good, remember that well for knowing their name brings them into the light and this destroys them for they cannot live in the light.”

“I’ll bare that in mind, er, anything else I need to know about.”

“Just the gateway between the two worlds it is guarded by a lioness called Stelth. To get past her you have to answer three questions.”

“And these questions, do you know them?”

“Afraid not it’s not in my jurisdiction as it does not fall into my realm.”

“What happens if I cannot answer them, there isn’t some sort of forfeit is there?”

“She sates her appetite with your life,” the otter said and Dave looked very uncomfortable at that so the otter said, “I have heard it said that Silva knows the first question if that’s any help.”

“Silva?”

“King of the forest,” Ben said, “He is the Great White Stag, one of the Zargs, insight incarnate.”

“Well fair enough, knowing one is better than nothing”

“Sorry about that. I’m afraid that is all I can tell you about the dark side.”

“It’s been a great help, anything else I need to know that might prove useful.”

“Temptation, keep your mind on the big picture, your purpose, and you will do well. Fall to temptation and you are lost”

“And Queen Nomi, do you know where she is being held?”

“I can’t help you there either, the dark side is an alien place to me. More than likely it will be the Palace of Narda but I would not say for certain.”

“Moat will tell us for sure,” Ben said, “Well when Kaylie catches her again that is.”

“That would be your best bet. I wouldn’t like to think that I would be sending you to a trap.”

“Well I guess we will have to find the White Stag now,” Dave said getting up, “Thank you for your help.”

“I’m just sorry that it could not be more,” the otter said as he watched them leave the cave.

“The White Stag lives not far from here,” Doug said as they headed off back in the direction of the mountains, “One question though, that’s leaving a lot to chance.”

“He might know more,” Ben said, “Or he might know someone who knows them, we’ll have to wait and see.”

They carried on their way passing the turning to the gnomes’ camp and skirting the Great Lake until they came to the forest. It was a large forest but the trees were well spaced so it was quite easy to walk through. Ben saw a rabbit and called it over. “Have you seen King Silva on your travels?”

“Not today I am afraid,” the rabbit said, “But I haven’t traveled far. I could call a bird for you if you like.”

“No thanks,” Ben said, “I can do that myself,” and the rabbit hopped off. After he had left Dave said, “I didn’t know that the animals could talk in your world.”

“Well you’ve just spoke to an otter,” Doug said.

“But he was a Zarg,” Dave protested, “I mean the normal animals of the world.”

“Symbols,” Doug said, “The rabbit is symbolic of fertility so the more rabbits in the forest the more fertile it is.”

“Oh right so seeing a rabbit is a good sign then.”

“Well not to us,” Ben said with a laugh, “He didn’t know where the Great White Stag was.”

“True,” Dave said, “But he did offer to ask a bird.”

“Chirrup,” Doug shouted out within ten seconds twenty birds were around them, “Easy as that,” he

said afterwards.

“Have any of you seen King Silva?” Ben asked after they had all settled.

“I have,” one of them said, “He is not far. Do you want me to fetch him for you?”

“Please,” Ben said and the bird quickly flew off. While they were watching the birds started to pump Dave with questions.

“You are a big gnome,” one said, “What’s your name?”

“Dave,” Dave said, “But I am not a gnome.”

“No, then what are you, a Zarg?”

“No I am not from your world, I am a Man.”

“A man. what is a man?”

“Er me,” Dave answered, not really knowing what else to say.

“But what is your purpose,” another bird said, “Why did you come to be?”

“I don’t know,” Dave said more than a little confused, “I came to be because I did that’s all.”

“That’s no answer, what sort of answer is that?”

“Well what were you created for? If you say that I have a purpose then so must you.”

“That’s easy,” another bird said, “We were created by the Mother of all Things to symbolise spiritual consciousness. Everybody knows that, are you a bit simple?”

“What?” Dave said somewhat taken aback being rebuked by a bird.

“It’s a different world,” Ben said with a laugh, “Here you are nothing if you haven’t a purpose for that is what defines you.”

“Oh,” Dave said then turning to the other birds said, “My purpose is to free Queen Nomi from the Creeping Death.

“Oh,” the bird said impressed, “So you must be a mortal then, What’s it like?”

“What?” Dave said “Being a mortal?”

“Well dying.”

“I don’t know,” Dave said shocked at the question, “I’ve never died.”

“But you are mortal,” another of the birds said, “All mortals die otherwise they would not be mortal.”

“Well I haven’t died yet so I could not tell you,” Dave said not really liking the conversation.

“In time then will you be in our world for long?”

“I don’t know,” Dave admitted, “Why do you ask?”

“I’m curious about your world, do you have birds there?”

“Yes,” Dave said, “Many except that they do not talk.”

“Maybe they do but you don’t listen,” Ben said mysteriously.

“No,” Dave said dismissing the idea, “I would have heard them.”

“We didn’t at first,” Ben said, “It was only after we made our pact with the Mother of all Things that we could.”

“Oh. This pact that you keep mentioning could I make one myself?”

“I’m not sure,” Ben said, “I don’t really know if it works in your world.”

“Ah well,” Dave said slightly downhearted.

“It might do,” Ben said seeing this, “Your will have to ask the Mother of all Things to be sure.”

“And how would I find her?”

“She will seek you out when the time is right.”

With that the Great White Stag made its approach. “Ben, Doug,” it said, “And you must be David Jessel. I am Silva and it is an honour to meet you.”

“Really,” Dave said in surprise, “Er you too.”

“So now that we are acquainted how can I be of service to you?”

“King Tarquin sent us. He said that you might know one of the questions of Stelth the Lioness.”

“That I do, it nearly cost me my life to find it out.”

“Really what happened?”

“It’s a story in itself but if you have the time I will gladly tell it.”

Dave looked at Ben and Doug who were both agreeable so he said, "Yes, I would like to hear it for it might be of use to me."

"Good, well it was a long, long time ago so I hope my memory can do it justice but here goes. It goes back to the time I was just a buck, naive to the world for my powers were still formulating."

"Oh," Dave said interrupting him, "I thought that Zargs were created for a purpose with their powers intact."

"Sorry?"

"I thought that you would already have been formulated," Dave said elaborating, "You know built for the job."

"Oh no we were created with the seed but like everything else it has to grow. We have to evolve to our purpose we are not born to it ready made."

"I never knew that, sorry for interrupting you please continue."

"I don't mind, it is good to dispel ignorance that will be your best weapon in the dark side. Anyway it was not just me that was formulating the whole dimension was. All the animals were young and the gnomes well they had not been created yet so that will tell you actually how long ago that was. It was a time of the arrogance of youth, when each one of us thought they were the best, the stronger, the fastest, that kind of thing. I was the fastest, fleet of foot, no-one could touch me, but I was not the strongest. No, that honour fell on the black bull Conneta. Now both being arrogant the conversation got around to which was better, being stronger or being faster and the animals who were divided in their opinions took to taking sides and two separate factors came to be."

"That sounds like quite a dilemma. I mean how could you actually decide which was better?"

"You couldn't. Well not really for they were both separate attributes with positive advantages to each so it made for quite an argument I can tell you. We debated long and hard on the matter, our pride leading the way until it was decided on a quest. We were both to travel to the dark side to see which one of us could bring back the Looking Glass of Narda. Yes we were strong and fast but neither of us was clever."

"The Looking Glass of Narda, was that pride or vanity?"

"Oh it was more than just a mirror with the looking glass you could see into the future so it would have been quite a prize I can tell you. So anyway with the exuberance of youth we set off that same day. I got there first being more fleet of foot and came face to face with Stelth the Lioness. A huge beast she was she looked terrifying. "Stop," she said halting me in my tracks. None may pass unless they prove themselves."

"How," I answered for I did not know that you had to actually answer any questions I was that naive."

"You must answer me three questions but I must warn you that if you fail you will forfeit your life. Do you still crave entrance into the dark side?"

"Yes" I said resigning to my fate for my pride would not let me go back. "Very well," she said

"What is the power of love?"

"I don't know," I admitted and seeing her ready to spring I got on my heels and ran off as quickly as I could. She chased me and it was only by the skin of my teeth that I got away. I still have the scars to remind me of my ordeal," and showed them the marks of a claw attack on his back.

"Amazing," Dave said, "And what about the black bull?"

"Well he got in when the Lioness was chasing me. I doubt if he ever realised that he had to answer any questions."

"And did he get the looking glass?" Ben said.

"We never saw him again so I guess not."

"And the power of love?" Dave said, "Did you ever find out what it was?"

"Evolution of the Soul and expansion of the spiritual consciousness that was a lot later down the path of life though."

"Well there's one question anyway. I er don't suppose that you know anyone who might know

another?"

"Dia might, he too came to me with the intention of going to the dark side. I knew the answer to the first question by then so I told him."

"And who is Dia?"

"King of the scrublands he too is a Zarg. He takes the shape of a white bear and is understanding incarnate."

"He is not far," Ben said to Dave, "If you want we can go straight to him."

"Yes that sounds good," Dave said and thanked the stag for his help.

As they walked off on their way Dave said, "I wonder what ever happened to that bull?"

"Who knows?" Ben said, "I did not realise that you could see into the future though."

"I don't know about that," Doug said, "I mean how can you see what hasn't happened yet, it defies logic."

"There are people in my world that say that they can," Dave said, "Though I too have my doubts."

"I could not see any use for it," Doug said, "Well only for personal gain and I don't think that would be allowed."

"You could see situations before they arise and so be better prepared to deal with them," Ben said, "It does not have to be material again it could be for inner well being."

"Well yes I suppose," Dave relented, "But I can't see that working in my world, I fear it would just be for material gain"

"Whatever it does its not in our jurisdiction," Doug said, "And if we go for it then I fear we'll end up like the black bull."

"Oh don't worry about that," Dave said, "I intend to be in and out as quick as possible. The dark side does not sound like a place I want to be hanging around in."

"My thoughts exactly," Doug said.

"But if we were to get the chance," Ben said, "In our travels I mean. It wouldn't hurt would it?"

"I don't know about that," Doug said, "I'm willing to bet that Narda would not be too pleased."

"Well she's not going to be too happy if we rescue Queen Nomi," Ben said, "Best hung for a sheep as a lamb I say."

"We don't really want to be adding to our woes," Dave said, "No, best leave it where it is. I mean it is stealing at the end of the day."

"She stole Queen Nomi," Ben said, "She set the precedence."

"Ah but two wrongs don't make a right," Dave said.

"They do in our world actually," Doug said, "Everything has to balance for that is the Mother's Laws."

"Oh," Dave said upon revelation, "So that is why you have a dark side to balance with the light."

"That's right," Doug said, "And that's why both Moat and Narda have seven hand maidens."

"Right," Dave said, "And seven gnomes and seven goblins."

"Well not strictly true there were actually eight of us," Ben said, "Each to our allocated jobs."

"I did not realise you have allocated jobs," Dave said, "Mind you, thinking about it Doug hunts the Diamonds and you get rid of the waste, Zinbar guards the Golden Bucket. What about the rest though?"

"Well Dixie guards the entrance, well him and the goose," Ben said, "Kaylie is our link to Moat, it is he that gives us direction and Clary and Valentine keep us amused for our life is not always work."

"And the eighth one," Dave said, "What did he use to do?"

"Now did you notice all the mounds of earth around the place," Ben said, "They were the waste from the dig."

"Yes," Dave said, "Quite a few of them I remember."

"Well Busta's job was to rake them level," Ben said.

"Oh right," Dave said, "I should have guessed really. So what happened to him then?"

"Nobody knows," Ben said, "He just went out one time and never came back. Quite a mystery I

can tell you.”

“And you never looked for him?” Dave said.

“Hunted high and low,” Doug said, “But it was to no good purpose, we never found him.”

The forest had started to turn to Shrub land by then so Ben said, “We will soon be there. Chirp,” and with a few seconds half a dozen birds had appeared.

“We are looking for King Dia,” he said, “Has any of you seen him on your travels?”

“I have,” one of the other birds said, “He is not far, do you want me to fetch him.”

“Please,” Ben said and it flew off. News of Dave’s arrival must have spread for one of the other birds said, “Are you the mortal?”

“Er yes,” Dave said not really liking being called it and after his last conversation with the birds quite guarded.

“Is it true that you are going to rescue Queen Nomi?” the same bird said.

“Well try,” Dave said correcting it.

“I have heard tell that she is guarded by a great black cat. They say that if a mortal ever sets eyes on it, it would die of fright.”

“Something to look forward to I suppose,” Dave said nonchalantly.

“Do you not fear death? I thought that all mortals feared death. Isn’t that what makes them mortal?”

“What?” Dave said in surprise, “No, no it can’t be can it?”

“Well that’s what I have heard but I am not mortal so I would not really know.”

“Well that’s true I suppose.”

“But you are a mortal, so you must know. So tell us then why are you mortal?”

“I don’t know,” Dave admitted, “We are all mortal in our world that is how it is.”

“That’s a strange world that you live in whoever would want to live in a world like that?”

“I don’t really get any choice in the matter. I was born into a mortal world and I will die there.”

“Rather you than me, it sounds stupid dying.”

“Maybe it is because you haven’t a purpose,” another bird said

“But I have a purpose,” Dave protested, “I am to rescue Queen Nomi.”

“That’s not a real purpose that’s just an adventure. No I’m talking about a real purpose.”

“So what’s so special about having a purpose then?” Dave said slightly angrily as his patience was wearing thin.

“Well it’s an ego thing isn’t it?”

“What are you talking about?”

“Well it is isn’t it? If you have a purpose you haven’t got an ego, you can’t have both. Maybe it’s having an ego that makes you mortal then.”

“There might be something in that,” Ben said, “It was only when we lost our ego that we gained immortality.”

“I don’t know about that,” Dave said, “I mean a lot of the animals in our world are not evolved enough to have ego’s and yet they still die.”

“Everything’s got an ego,” Doug said correcting him, “It’s a basic survival mechanism, self preservation.”

“I never know,” Dave said genuinely surprised.

“It appears that there is a lot that you don’t know,” One of the birds said, “Maybe you are a mortal because you are ignorant then?”

“What?” Dave said, “Now hold on a minute.”

“There might be some truth in that,” Ben said laughing, “Remember the squirrel?”

“Oh hang on,” Dave said to the bird, “I am not a mortal; I only think that I am.”

“So you are ignorant,” the bird said in a triumphant manner.

“No,” Dave said, “I never said that.”

“You are ignorant to the fact that you are immortal. You must be because you just said that you thought you were mortal.”

“Well alright,” Dave relented, “So I am not a mortal then, are you happy?”

“So you don’t die then?”

“Er well I do actually.”

“Look,” the bird said getting frustrated, “Are you mortal or are you immortal it’s not a hard question.”

“I am immortal but I die.”

“No, no, no, that cannot be. If you were immortal then you would not die.”

“But he does,” Doug said coming to his aid, “He reincarnates and comes back with a different persona. It is only his ego that dies.”

“Right,” the bird said, “Now we are getting somewhere.”

“Good,” Dave said thinking it was all over.

“So why does your ego die then?” the bird said.

“Oh no, please no,” Dave said just wanting it to go away.

“Perhaps it is because he hasn’t evolved to his purpose,” another bird said, “Maybe it is because when he becomes his purpose he becomes a symbol and a symbol never dies.”

“You know you might be right,” the first bird said ignoring Dave for the time being, “That would make sense.”

“Well not to me,” another bird said joining in the conversation, “What do you mean he becomes a symbol?”

“He becomes representative of his purpose,” another bird said, “So he loses his identity and becomes spiritually reborn as his purpose. He as an entity, cannot die for he no longer exists.”

“Oh right,” the skeptical bird said, “Yes I can see it when you put it like that,” and then turned to Dave and seeing him looking perplexed said to the others, “He must not understand the language of the birds.” All the birds started laughing at that and Dave just stood there not really knowing what to say.

“Now, now, leave him be,” Ben said coming to his rescue, “You know it is not good manners to ridicule a guest. He knows not of our ways so you have the advantage of him.”

“I do apologise,” the former skeptical bird said, “You will have to forgive us for we have never met a man before. You are from a strange world and we are genuinely curious about it.”

“Well fair enough,” Dave said calming down a little, “What do you actually want to know?”

“Well everything really,” one of the birds said, “But I guess the most important one is, who is the cleverest animal in your world?”

“Man,” Dave said, “By a long way.”

“No seriously who?”

“Man,” Dave said once more.

“Behave,” the bird said, “Or perhaps you are trying to get your own back on us.”

“No seriously,” Dave said, “We control our own environment. What animal can say that?”

“So what’s so clever about that?” another bird said putting a dampener on it.

“We are immune from the seasons, we have conquered Mother Nature.”

“That’s not clever that is foolish, you are supposed to live with nature in balance otherwise you will upset the eco system. You talk of the Earth Mother like she is an enemy, what madness has befallen you?”

“Alright then,” Dave said, “We can travel the world quickly now for distance is no object to us.”

“Only time,” the same bird said, “Maybe that is why you are mortal. An exercise in damage limitation for you has gone against the balance of things.”

“No we look after the world we do not abuse it. We take care of the animals, they are well looked after before we eat them.”

“You what, you eat animals. What sort of savage are you?”

“We have to, to survive that is how it is in our world.”

“And birds,” another bird said, “Do you eat them too?”

“Well only the large ones, there is no meat in the ones that are your size.”

“Is that how you see animals then, as meat, food for your stomach.”

“No not at all,” Dave said trying to justify himself, “Some we have as pets”

“Pets,” another bird said, “What are pets?”

“Animals that we look after. Feed and stuff like that”

“To what purpose?” another bird said.

“So that they may serve us,” Dave said and instantly regretted it.

“Slaves you mean.”

“No,” Dave quickly answered, “Not slaves but pets”

“Can they come and go as they please,” another bird said.

“Well no,” Dave said sheepishly, “They would not really survive without us, well maybe the cats”

“Don’t be too hard on him,” Ben said, “As I said he is from a different world and besides Dixie has a pet and he treats him well”

“Yes but eating other animals,” the same bird said “It makes me sick just thinking about it”

“Their world is different,” Ben said, “In their world other animals eat as well, they all do in fact”

“What a barbarous place,” the same bird said, “I’m glad that I don’t live there that’s all”

“Here’s Dia,” Doug said as a large white bear emerged from the scrubs.

“Doug, Ben,” he said by way of greeting and turning to Dave, “You must be David Jessel. I am honoured to be in your presence.”

“Careful he doesn’t eat you,” one of the birds said mockingly.

“I know of man,” the bear said rebuking him, “And I also know that if he was a bad man with ignoble intent he would never have been allowed to enter into our world.”

“I apologise,” the bird said and they all flew off.

“Sorry about that,” the bear said to Dave, “A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing sometimes.”

“Oh no,” Dave said, “I think man’s actions in our world are appalling.”

“They should know better, one of our sayings is don’t judge me by my kind, judge me by my kindness.”

“Oh right, yes I like that.”

“Anyway how may I help you for I guess that is why you have sought me out?”

“King Silva sent me he said you might be able to help us get over to the dark-side.”

“Well I’m not sure about that. I tried it once myself but failed miserably.”

“Oh,” Dave said with a heavy air of disappointment, “I was hoping that you might have found out what the questions were.”

“Well I knew the first one before I set out but I guess if Silva sent you then so must you.”

“The power of Love yes we know it.”

“I managed to get the second one out of the lioness but at the time I did not know the answer.”

“But you do now?”

“Yes I found out a long time later.”

“So not being funny,” Ben said, “What did you want to go over to the dark-side for? Were you after Narda’s looking glass as well?”

“Oh no, nothing as reckless as the bravado of youth I was trying to get over to the dark-side to see if I could find Busta.”

“Busta,” Ben said, “I never knew that”

“It came to nothing so it was not really worth relating. We did not want to build your hopes up before we went so it was kept secret and as I said it came to nothing.”

“Well thanks for trying anyway,” Ben said, “I think you were right in that case for ignorance was truly bliss.”

“Yes a little knowledge is a dangerous thing so anyway the second question. Remember it well for it nearly cost me my life,” and shoved them the claw marks near his throat.

“She looks quite a beast,” Dave said, “Judging by the size of the claws.”

“She was huge. I have never seen anything as terrifying. So the second question she asked me was “What is the direction of love?”

“And you said that you found the answer?”

“Yes a long time later. The direction of love is a self loving purpose. I had better explain that one to you I guess.”

“Yes if you would, what actually is love for a start for what with that and the first question it does not sound like the love I understand?”

“It is the creative force within you. It purifies you through a thing called selflessness.”

“Sorry?” Dave said wanting some elaboration.

“It helps you to lose all your selfishness, your ego if you like and so you become your purpose.”

“Oh right so that is its direction then to help you to become a self loving purpose.”

“That’s right but that is only on one level.”

“Expansion of the spiritual consciousness?” Dave said guessing.

“Good, this is done through a thing called light or knowledge of purpose. This is what creates love for love is a by-product of it. This is also what the Self is made of so basically you are what you know.”

“I think I understand that.”

“In time you will fully understand it for it takes a little contemplation but if it’s any help think of light as the cause, love as the effect and purpose as the outcome.”

“So you have knowledge of purpose,” Dave said trying to define it, “And this makes you more loving the outcome of which is you becoming your purpose.”

“Yes that’s right you’ve grasped it.”

“Then what actually is my purpose?”

“To become more loving.”

“Is that all?” Dave said in surprise.

“When you become more loving the creative force grows inside you. Through our actions the creative force comes to life. You see life it not that difficult.”

“So it seems, thank you, you have been a great help. One final thing before I go.”

“The third question?”

“Yes however did you know?”

“I sensed it you want to know if there is anyone who might know what it is.”

“Well it was a long shot,” Dave said about to go.

“Try Hamish,” the bear said to Dave’s surprise, “He came to me looking to go over to the dark side.”

“Hamish?”

“King Hamish of the waterfall, he is a Zarg, a White Heron and knowing incarnate”

“He is not far,” Ben said, “He lives on the Great Lake so we just have to back track a little”

“Thanks once again for your help,” Dave said.

“Good luck,” the bear said and bid them fair well.

“As they made their way back through the forest Dave said, “So I will have met five Zargs after I have seen Hamish.”

“Six,” Ben said correcting him.

“I only counted five,” Dave said, “Elan, Tarquin, Silva, Dia and finally Hamish.”

“Moat,” Ben said.

“Is she a Zarg then?” Dave said confused, “I’m sure you said it was Moat and her seven handmaidens.”

“She also serves herself,” Ben said, “The same as Narda.”

“Sorry?” Dave said, “How did that come to be?”

“The Mother of all Things created both Moat and Narda,” Ben said, “And from this first creation recreated them into seven aspects so from love you get life and from life you get wisdom which gives you insight then understanding from which you get knowing and finally purpose”

“Right,” Dave said, “And Narda?”

“I’m afraid I don’t know anything about the dark-side,” Ben said, “It’s a different world to me.”

“Well it doesn’t really matter,” Dave said, “I was just wondering that’s all.”

“Oh no, it could have come in handy,” Doug said, “The more you know about them the greater your chances of defeating them.”

“Do you mean that I am going to have to go up against them?” Dave said as surprise.

“How else do you think we are going to rescue Queen Naomi,” Doug said, “They’re not going to just stand back and let us take her.”

“I thought we were just going to sneak in. I didn’t think that you were planning a mass confrontation.”

“We’re not,” Doug said, “We try and take them head on and they will rip us apart, we’re not daft. Chances are that we are going to come across some of them though, if not at the rescue they will pursue us home afterwards.”

“True,” Dave said, “And it seems that we are walking into a right hornets’ nest, monsters, goblins and great black cats.”

“The goblins should be easy,” Bens said, “Whoever they look like say their name backwards, monsters though.”

“Maybe Hamish might know something,” Doug said, “After all he is knowing incarnate.”

“Hopefully,” Dave said picking up a little, “I mean I would like to know what we’re going up against,” after a moment’s thought he said, “I hope that he’s not like the rest of the birds I’ve met so far in your world.”

“No,” Ben said with a laugh, “He is a Zarg.”

They had left the forest by then and as they skirted the Great Lake Ben saw the White Heron in the distance. He called to him and Hamish flew over.

“Ben, Doug,” the heron said greeting them, “And you must be David. I’m pleased to meet you, no matter what my feather friends say.”

“Oh,” Dave said surprised at how quickly news traveled in that world.

“Anyway joking apart,” the heron said and seeing Dave’s discomfort, “How can I help you?”

“Dia sent us,” Dave said, “He said that you might know what Stelth the Lioness’ third question was.”

“Yes I do as a matter of fact though the answer still eludes me.”

“Oh,” Dave said with more than a hint of disappointment, “May I hear it anyway? I doubt if I will be up to answering it.”

“Sure, the question was “What is love’s essence?””

“Love’s essence?” Dave said and thought back to the conversation with the white bear, “Is it light?”

“You got it.”

“Do you mean to tell me that you knew the answer?” Dave said in surprise.

“Yes, it was sort of a memory test. I was actually sent ahead to try and clear your path. You have been expected for quite some time. They sent me because being able to fly I had a better chance of escaping.”

“Well that’s nice to know, I don’t suppose that you know how I could defeat Narda and her hand maidens?”

“Recognition is their downfall, knowing that will be your strength.”

“I don’t know what I actually have to recognise. I mean what actually are they?”

“Negative aspects of the self, just think of things that hamper your progress and you won’t be far wrong.”

“Er could you give me an example so I can see where you are coming from.”

“Well envy would be one. Sloth would be another. Anything that disrupts your peace of mind will hamper for it is only through balance that you progress.”

“And these hand maidens, do they have names?”

“Er yes”

“And like the goblins, if I know their names will that be their downfall?”

“No you have to know what they are in essence to defeat them.”

“Right I’ll bare that in mind. You have been a great help, one last thing though. One of the birds mentioned something about a great black cat that guarded Queen Nomi. Is there any truth in that?”

“Probably a manifestation of one of Narda’s hand maidens, find out its essence and it will no longer be.”

“Right and I won’t die of fright if I see it then?”

“That would depend on the strength of your heart,” the heron said with a laugh.

“So it was just exaggerating then, I was going to say.”

“No, the only thing that can really harm you is your fear. Keep that in mind and you should be alright.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said, “Thanks again,” they said goodbye and left.

As they walked the short distance back to the camp Dave said, “Now all we have to do is find out where they are keeping her and we will be ready to go.”

“Kaylie will soon find Moat,” Ben said, “He always finds her at the right time. I think it’s a case of her finding him really.”

“Yes she has took some strange shapes to find him,” Doug said in agreement, “Fish, Birds, Pebbles and even once as a grain of sand.”

“Really,” Dave said, “Amazing, a grain of sand. No, I think you are right. However would you find a grain of sand unless it wanted to be found?”

As they made their way into the mountains they were greeted by Dixie, “So the wanderers return. Any luck?”

“We have all three of the questions,” Ben said, “We just need to find out where they have her imprisoned.”

“Kaylie has already been told,” Dixie said, “He caught Moat disguised as a leaf”

They walked back to the camp and were greeted by music.

“Good to see you back again,” Kaylie said, “We will rest a while for we have a long journey ahead of us.”

“I won’t argue with that,” Dave said and felt strangely tired.

Chapter 2.

Dave woke up and checked the time. It was 8 O’clock and he felt strangely elated. He did not remember the dream only that he had work to do and he was looking forward to it. He got up and quickly dressed before making himself a cup of coffee and two slices of toast. He had decided that he would have a go at the trees on the other side of the garden first as they were a lot taller and looked better rooted. He quickly left and was outside Ethel’s shed at 8-30.

She came out as he was unlocking it and said, “So you came back for more. Would you like a drink before you start?”

“No thanks,” Dave said, “But if you ask again in a couple of hours the answer will be different”

“Sure.”

“I thought I would do the trees on your side first. That should let some more light in.”

“Good,” Ethel said, “I won’t argue with that,” and went back inside.

Dave got to work on the biggest tree and with the aid of a chainsaw, a ladder and some rope it was quickly brought down to size. Digging it up was a different story for it took a good hour to do and by the time it was finished Dave’s arms were tired. The next tree was slightly smaller but still needed to be taken down in sections though the chainsaw made short work of that. He was about to start digging around it when Ethel came out with a cup of coffee for him. “You look like you need this,” she said as she passed it over to him.

“Thanks,” Dave said as he took it of her, “They’re a lot harder work than the other side I can tell

you.”

“Well it’s certainly let a bit more light into my garden already. You’re doing a grand job.”

“A job and a half.”

“She’ll be well pleased when she gets back. She likes sitting in the garden in summer. Anyway I don’t want to stand in your way,” as Dave had finished his drink she took the cup off him and went back inside. The second tree did not take as long as the first to uproot then Dave decided to do the two smallest ones next to spread the work load. As he finished the second of the two he was interrupted by Jane bringing him out a cup of tea. “You look like you need this,” she said giving him a mild case of Deja-vu.

“Shouldn’t be too long with this side now,” Dave said taking the mug of her, “Were you working last night?”

“Yes, that’s right. How did you know that I work nights?”

“Adam told me you were a nurse. I guessed you work nights as you would not be here in the day, well unless you are on holiday,” he said the last sentence as an afterthought.

“I only work part time. Three nights a week but yesterday was one of them.”

“Must be quite a struggle I feel a little guilty about asking your help yesterday now.”

“Oh no, I did not mind, in fact I quite enjoyed it. I’m just glad that someone has been able to do something with the garden that’s all.”

“And are you working tonight?”

“No, not until Sunday now but if you are after a hand today I’m afraid you are out of luck. I’ve got to take the dogs for a haircut; it’s getting a bit too long for them.”

“Oh, I did not realise that dogs had to have haircuts.”

“These do. Most other dog’s just malt I guess. Anyway it was only a quick call; I’ll probably see you tomorrow,” and took his empty cup off him.

After she had left Dave spent the rest of the day digging up trees and had Ethel’s side and another one from the other side down before Adam came.

“Coming on well,” he said, “You must have started early.”

“About 8.30. It’s definitely starting to let a lot more light in now.”

“Oh yes I would say that you will have all the trees done by tomorrow.”

“There’s only a couple left, I thought that I would try and clear the garden of the weeds and ivy before I paint the wall though.”

“Yes sure I’ll leave it with you; you know what you are doing.”

“Just making it a little easier, I can have them all burnt before I paint.”

“Yes good idea. If you give us a hand to load up I will give you a lift back then.”

“Sounds good,” Dave said and put his tools away. They quickly loaded up and Dave was soon home. He had something to eat and settled down tired but happy and went to bed at 9.30.

Dave woke up to find Kaylie waiting. “You slept well,” he said, “That is good for you will need your strength.”

“I must have been tired. Did you sleep well yourself?”

“We don’t sleep. Our body clocks have stopped.”

“But don’t you ever get tired?” Dave said in surprise.

“No. We just recharge ourselves.”

“With the diamonds. Right.”

“Anyway we have quite a trek ahead of us. Moat said that Queen Nomi is hidden in a cave near to Narda’s palace but to even get to the entrance of the dark-side will be a long journey.”

“Right and is everything packed and ready.”

“We will be going as we are.”

“What about weapons?”

“The sword of your mind and the lance of your imagination your purity will be your protection.”

“I don’t like the sound of that and what about food?”

“You do not hunger in this world. It is not like your world.”
 “Yes, I noticed that, “Dave said upon realisation, “Why is that then?”
 “It is a world of mind not matter. It is a spiritual dimension not a physical.”
 “But you are physical beings.”
 “No, we’re spiritual we just look physical.”
 “You’re solid though, you are not spirits.”
 “In your world we would be but in our world we are not. We were when we were mortal but that was a long time ago.”
 “Right, well I think so anyway.”
 “It must be confusing. In time it will all become clear. Maybe when you’ve been through the Caves of Fear and Self Doubt?”
 “Sorry? What are they?”
 “It’s sort of a rite of passage. You have to purify yourself before you can enter the dark-side. It is only a temporary measure but you will never get in until you do.”
 “And this initiation, what does it actually involve?”
 “Nothing much well not really you just have to walk through them and purify yourself.”
 “Purify myself,” Dave repeated, “From what?”
 “Your fear of death that is what taints your?”
 “Oh right. And have you been through this yourself?”
 “A very long time ago.”
 “The perhaps you can enlighten me? Let me know what to expect.”
 “What you go through changes with perception. Everyone that goes through it will go through something different but have no fear for it cannot bring your physical harm.”
 “What about mental? It’s not going to drive me mad is it?”
 “It will probably make you perceive reality differently,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “But believe me that is not a bad thing.”
 “Well it must be done I suppose,” Dave said accepting his fate, “And is there anything else I have to go through?”
 “Not to my knowledge but if there is it will be revealed to us nearer the time,” with that Dixie came over and said, “Everything’s ready. I will leave the goose to keep an eye on the Golden Bucket and all the implements and instruments are well hidden.”
 “Good,” Kaylie said, “The time of adventure is upon us again, we are indeed lucky.”
 All the other gnomes had gathered by then and each one gave a loud cheer. “They’re keen,” Dave said, “Have they no fear?”
 “No,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “They have all been through the Cave of Fear. They are almost invincible.”
 “Almost?” Dave said as a question.
 “There is only one way to kill a gnome,” Kaylie said, “And the chances of it happening are very slim.”
 “The diamonds running out?”
 “Well the chances of that are impossible. Not even worth mentioning so, no it’s not that.”
 “Oh. So what is it then well, if you don’t mind me asking that is?”
 “I wouldn’t want to tempt the situation but I guess it wouldn’t really do any harm. The only way you can kill a gnome is to submerge it in a vat of molten lava and the chances of that, well they are almost negligible.”
 “I was going to say. So I guess you haven’t really much to worry about.”
 “Only enslavement but it does not do to dwell in the negative especially as we are going into the negative. Remember that well, always try to think positive.”
 “I’ll bare that in mind. Well I suppose we will have to start.”
 They all set off down the mountain pass with a song in their heart and a purpose in their mind. It

was a bright day which was not unusual as they all were. They talked of things in general and nothing too specific until they reached the Great Lake and King Tarquin, the Great White Otter made his presence know.

"Travelers," he said in a sombre tone, "I have grave news to tell you. I am afraid that news of your impending journey has leaked out to Narda and so she will be expecting you."

"That's it then," Dixie said, "However did she find out?"

"It appears that she saw it in her looking glass," the otter said, "It is the talk of the dark-side now so I would advise you to be most careful."

"However did you find this out?" Kaylie said.

"Della the Earth Worm told me," the otter said, "He overheard the badgers talking about it when he was collecting leaves."

"Is he reliable?"

"Yes," the otter said, "He also heard the badgers say that they would give you shelter should you seek it though I'm guessing you won't get that far for the entrance will be well guarded on their side."

"So what happens now then?" Ben said, "I mean I don't mind adventure but this sounds like certain defeat."

Kaylie thought a while before he said, "I will seek out Moat and see what she has to say for I haven't got a clue." With that he looked around and saw a twig that looked out of place and said, "Moat reveal yourself to me."

The twig changed in shape and grew into Moat who said, "I have heard of your predicament and it sounds like quite a dilemma," and turning to Dave she said, "Do you still want to take on the quest?"

"If it must be done," Dave said, "Though if you have anything to help us I would be eternally grateful."

"Then the quest is still on," Moat said mysteriously.

"Do you know of an answer?" Kaylie said.

"There was never a question," Moat said laughing.

"What?" Dave said confused.

"It was just a test," the otter said elaborating, "A test of courage but not a test of recklessness."

"Sorry?" Dave said.

"You thought that you would be walking into near certain death," the otter said. "You did not take to it with reckless bravado but with steadfast courage and an acceptance of the inevitable."

"I don't understand," Dave said, "How did you work all that lot out?"

"You said if it must be done," the otter said, "And also you were humble enough to accept help from others. Believe me humility will go a long way over in the dark-side. Yes, I would say that you have a very good chance."

"And I do know of something that might help you," Moat said, "For although they don't know of your quest you can guarantee that they soon will."

"I won't argue with that," Dave said, "All tips gratefully accepted."

"You must stop off at the fairy dell," Moat said, "See Nema Queen of the fairies and ask her for the spell of invisibility. I must warn you though, you can only use it once and it will only last a small amount of time. It might prove useful."

"Yes," Dave said, "I could see where that might come in handy. I don't suppose that you have any other tricks I could use to my advantage?"

"I can't think of anything of hand," Moat said, "But if I were you I would ask Queen Nema for that would be more her jurisdiction. If I do think of anything myself before you cross over though I will reveal myself to you."

"Thanks," Dave said and she disappeared. After she had gone the otter said, "Sorry about that but as you might have gathered being tested will be a big part of your ordeal."

“Hamish told me that,” Dave said, “Though I must admit I did not realise it would be to this extent. This is the third time and I haven’t even got there yet.”

“Purity of thought, knowledge retention and courage,” the otter said, “Don’t worry for that was the last test on this side.”

“The caves, I thought that they were also tests.”

“No just formalities as you only have three tests to undertake.”

“And three questions. Is the number three significant?”

“Symbolic of balance, don’t forget that this is a world of symbols.”

“Yes I am starting to see that a little now.”

“Good then you are adapting yourself to our world. Anyway I wish you all well and good hunting,” he said his goodbyes and left.

As they skirted the lake heading towards the woods Clary said, “Well the fairy dell is not too far at least.”

“I’m glad that was just a test,” Dixie said “Imagine if it had been for real.”

“Well she does have her looking glass,” Ben said, “So how do we know that she doesn’t know we are coming.”

“That’s very true,” Dave said, “From what I can see there is no real way of knowing what goes on over in the dark-side.” He went deep into thought before saying, “Maybe we ought to use that gift of invisibility as soon as we get past the lioness just in case.”

“Is it a gift for all of us then,” Dixie said, “I thought it was a gift just for you.”

“I am guessing all,” Dave said, “We are all in it together, besides it would be futile just me being invisible for they would still be able to see you.”

“That’s true,” Kaylie said, “But I would like to make a suggestion if I may.”

“Sure,” Dave said, “I respect your judgement.”

“I can see us using the gift to better purpose,” Kaylie said, “Maybe we could sneak in to where they are holding Queen Nomi.”

“Yes but if they see us coming over to the dark-side we will never get that far,” Dixie said, “The gift would be wasted for we will not have had a chance to use it.”

“Well assuming that we get the gift individually,” Kaylie said, “My plan was that three of us use it on entrance to give the area a good scout.”

“My apologies,” Dixie said, “That sounds like a very good idea.”

“Yes,” Dave said, “I can see that working.”

“Good,” Kaylie said, “One less thing to worry about then.”

“Ben’s raised an interesting point though,” Dixie said, “This looking glass that she’s got, she could see us anytime we are not invisible.”

“Quite a problem,” Kaylie said, “Maybe Queen Nema might be able to help us there though all she would have to do is make us invisible to it.”

“Hopefully,” Dixie said as they entered the forest, “Anyway it does not do to dwell on doubt,” and turning to Dave, “Tell us of your world David, are all men like you?”

“Some I guess,” Dave said, “Others though, no there is a lot of greed and selfishness.”

“Their dark-side prevails,” Kaylie said, “It was the same with us at one time. And wars, do you still have them?”

“Oh yes,” Dave said, “We still live in violent times though as the world gets smaller they are diminishing slightly.”

“Gets smaller,” Kaylie said, “Do you mean it’s shrinking?”

“No,” Dave said with a laugh, “The distances are still the same it is just that we can travel them a lot quicker.”

“And how does that help?”

“People can mix more freely and so they get to understand each other better.”

“Lack of understanding, yes I can see that as a spur to war. Ignorance is always a danger to peace

of mind.”

“True especially when some men play on this ignorance to get others to fight their wars for them.”

“Do they do that in your world?” Kaylie said in surprise.

“I’m afraid so. They glorify war and make it out as one big adventure when the real truth is; well, its hell.”

“To what purpose why would anyone want to do that?”

“Oh they have their own agendas though they will not tell you what they are for they like to keep you in ignorance generally speaking though it falls down to land or politics.”

“It wasn’t really that much different with us then I guess. Well except for the fact that our leaders fought alongside us. That was why we called them leaders, they led us into battle.”

“I think that in our world if they had to do the same, there would be a lot less wars,” Dave said with a laugh.

“It sounds a strange world. What about your common sense of purpose?”

“Common sense of purpose,” Dave repeated, “I haven’t heard that before what is it?”

“It is your driving force, well should be. Once you have evolved past basic survival you are supposed to get a common sense of purpose. It is a drive for the betterment of your kind as opposed to yourself.”

“Oh. Yes I see, well I suppose we have nationalism, but I don’t really see it as an improvement.”

“Nationalism,” Kaylie repeated, “What is that?”

“Love of your country I suppose. That gives people a common sense of purpose but that can be quite detrimental to other countries. In fact it has been quite a spur to war in the past.”

“Ah that would explain it. I was talking about Man as a whole not the small groups he decided to divide himself into. No, with your system I can see one group thinking themselves superior than another. Yes, you seem to have evolved into a group ego.”

“I suppose it is really I never really thought about it in that sense before” The sound of music stopped Dave in his tracks. “What is that?” he said, “I’ve heard nothing like it before, it’s enchanting.”

“We are close now,” Kaylie said, “That is fairy music.”

The music grew louder as they made their way down into a wooded hollow and soon Dave saw his first fairy. She was not small like he was led to believe from the stories he had read as a child but tall in stature and perfection incarnate. She had wings but they looked fragile in their transparentness though by the fact she was hovering above the level of the ground they were well up for their purpose.

“You have strayed into our world,” she said in a voice that could only be described as mesmerising,

“I trust that you have come here with a purpose.”

“We have been sent here by Moat,” Kaylie said, “She said that you might be able to help us.”

“You may enter into our camp,” she said, “Follow me.”

They followed her through the trees until they came to a clearway.

“Here we are,” they fairy said.

“But there is no-one here,” Dave said, “Well I can’t see anyone.”

“They are all around you,” the fairy said and with that shadows emerged from the trees and they were surrounded by 20 woodland Nymphs.

“You bring strangers into our camp Estelle,” one said, “Have they a purpose?”

“They have been sent by Moat,” Estelle said, “They seek your help Great Queen Nema.”

“State your purpose and tell me how you think that I may be able to help you,” Nema said.

“I am on an errand to rescue Queen Nomi,” David said, “And Moat told me that I should ask you for the spell of invisibility.”

“I could give you that but in accordance with the law of balance you must give me something in return.”

“That sounds fair, though I doubt if there is anything I have that would be of interest to you.”

“You are not a gnome I see. Are you a Zarg?”

“No. I am a man.”

“A man,” Queen Nema said in surprise, “Do you mean to tell me that you are a mortal man?”

“Err. That’s right.”

“Then you are not from our world,” Queen Nema said and went into thought before saying, “You may be of service to me but not in my world.”

“I may,” Dave said in surprise “How?”

“One of my kind lies trapped in your world. You must release her.”

“Sure. But how will I find her?”

“It will be revealed to you,” Queen Nema said mysteriously, “Do you accept?”

“Yes. Gladly.”

“Then once she is released you will have the powers. I will give you the words but until the deed is done they will be ineffectual.”

“Fair enough. There was one other thing.”

“Another, my you mortals are presumptuous, what else do you require of me?”

“I was wondering if you could shield us from the Looking Glass of Narda,” Dave said sheepishly.

“That’s beyond my power. For that you will have to see the Old Man of the Woods.”

“Does he exist?” Ben said, “I thought that he was just a legend.”

“He exists,” Queen Nema said, “Though you will never find him unless he wants to reveal himself to you.”

“Then we will never find him,” Dave said, “For he has no reason to reveal himself to us.”

“If your purpose is just and your intent is pure,” Queen Nema said, “Now the words that your need to remember are, “From all this turmoil shelter me, make it that no-one can see.” You may only use it once but each one of you may use it.”

“We will remember that,” Dave said.

“Then good luck and don’t forget your task,” Queen Nema said and with that all the fairies disappeared back into the trees. After they had gone Dave said, “However am I going to uphold my side of the deal?”

“Don’t worry,” Kaylie said, “She said that it would be revealed to you.”

“But when?” David said, “We are going to need the spell as soon as we get to the dark-side. I have to get to my reality before then.”

“You will. You will need to rest before we get there.”

“Sorry?” David said confused.

“That’s when you go back to your reality. When you sleep.”

“Oh, I don’t remember when I go back.”

“Neither do you remember this world when you are back in your reality. You will do soon though.”

“So I won’t know that I have to rescue one of her kind when I get back then.”

“It will be revealed to you,” Kaylie said once again, “Don’t worry. Anyway we have a long trek ahead of us,” and they left the dell and walked on through the forest.

“So he actually exists then,” Ben said, “Who’d have thought it.”

“Who actually is he?” Dave said.

“No-one can really say for sure,” Kaylie said, “I mean up until now we just thought he was a legend.”

“And what do your legends say about him?”

“He is a man. You see you were not the first man to enter our world.”

“I did not think that I was. I am sure that many men have entered your world.”

“Well no. You are the second.”

“Really,” Dave said in surprise, “I never knew. Please continue.”

“Our legends say that he came from a previous time. A time before your history began. They say that he has the powers and wisdom of the ancients and knows things that no-one else does.”

“And how did he come to live in your world?”

“They say that with all his knowledge and clarity of thought he despised your world and could not live in it. He sought sanctuary in ours and vowed never to leave it.”

“Oh. So why doesn't he actually live in your world then?”

“Well he does,” Kaylie said not understanding.

“Why doesn't he make himself known to the rest of you I mean? I mean he must lead a very solitary life by the sound of it.”

“I see what you mean. No, I don't know about that.”

“Then perhaps I might be able to enlighten you,” a voice said and they turned to see a tall man who could hardly be described as elderly.

“You're not old,” Kaylie said in surprise.

“Only in the fact that I have been around for a long time,” the man said, “I am timeless in my complexion.”

“And how old are you actually?” Dave said.

“Well time has no real meaning to me so I am not too precise about it but I would say at a rough guess I must be about 25,000 years old.”

“25,000 years,” Dave repeated in surprise, “Are you serious?”

“Roughly. Give or take a hundred years or so, as I said I am not too precise.”

“That's amazing. You must have seen many things in your time.”

“Many. Good things and bad. So to business then, you want me to shield you from the Mirror of Narda.”

“That's right. Well if that be to your taste that is.”

“Yes, I see no problem with that. You have heard about the law of balance I suppose.”

“Oh.”

“Well don't worry I have managed to tie it in with Queen Nema so when you have fulfilled her task you will have done mine.”

“Thanks. That will save me a lot of trouble. I am a bit worried I might forget all about it to tell you the truth.”

“If it is destined to be then it will happen and it is destined so you need not worry.”

“That's a weight off my mind. Do you fancy walking with us for a while as I have many questions I would like to ask you?”

“Why not it has been a long time since I have talked with another man, they call me Odo by the way.”

“Dave,” Dave answered, “So why is it that you hide yourself away if you don't mind me asking?”

“Many reasons,” Odo said, “I wouldn't really know where to begin,” and thought a while before he said, “I guess living in the world of Man left its stigma on me. I saw their ways and despised them for it and to tell you the truth it put me off seeking the company of others.”

“I can see that but not being funny you are living in a different world now.”

“I know but the memories still haunt me.”

“They must have been bad times.”

“Yes I have been too many worlds and at many different times but my allotted time in your world was by far the worst.”

“Many worlds, do you mean to say that you have traveled the universe?”

“All over the material universe but also the spiritual realms.”

“However did you manage that? I mean it is only recently that we have set foot on the moon.”

“I can do it with my mind. I believe that the current term you would use would be astral traveling.”

“I have heard of it. Although I did not really believe that it could be done.”

“How do you think that you got here?”

“I don't know,” Dave admitted, “I never really gave it much thought to tell you the truth.” He thought a while to let it sink in before he said, “So I can astral travel then.”

“We all can. It’s just that the more evolved you are the more you can do it consciously.”

“The more evolved?” Dave repeated as a question.

“The closer to your purpose.”

“And the more you can do it consciously?” Dave asked.

“The more control you have over where you want to go and when you want to get there. I have been to your world in your time and though it is a bad place ours was a lot worse.”

“In what sense?”

“Human life was a lot cheaper for a start. We were gods in a mortal world but we did not truly know what being a god was all about.”

“Gods? According to our history you were cavemen.”

“I wouldn’t hold much trust in your history. Water has wiped clean thousands of years of evolution.”

“Water that must have been one hell of a flood.”

“It was recorded in most of the modern mythologies. I believe that it was even mentioned in Genesis.”

“So what actually caused it?”

“A shift in the Earth’s axis and quite jolt it was. It was caused by melting ice.”

“Melting ice?”

“It was at the back end of the Age of Ice when the weight of ice had lessened enough for the Earth to be able to spin freely and without restriction. The weight of the ice up until then had made the Earth spin on a different axis.”

“And when did this actually happen?”

“About 14½ thousand years ago but as I said I am not too accurate when it comes to time.”

“And you said gods? Does that mean that you achieved immortality?”

“That and much more, Astral travel, read minds, harness the Earth’s magnetic energies.”

“Harness the Earth’s magnetic energies to what purpose?”

“Travel the world, lift great objects, grow more nutritious food, you’ll be surprised”

“So you did not need an industrial revolution.”

“No,” Odo said with a laugh, “We evolved in a different way. I will say one thing though; although we were treating our fellow man a lot worse than you we treated the world a lot better. I am afraid that, that industrial revolution of yours may lead to the death of your planet.”

“My thoughts have also traveled that direction I must admit,” Dave said agreeing with him, “But tell me more about your world. You mention that there were mortals there.”

“Slaves would be our word for them. Old age was also their captor but they lived twice as long as you do today for the food was a lot more nutritious.”

“Because of you harnessing the Earth’s energies?” Dave asked.

“One of the reasons but the soil played its part.”

“Sorry?”

“It was a lot richer before the flood. The flood swept it all away.”

“Oh. So how did all this inequality come to be?”

“Sloth and maybe a lot of pride, we weren’t always proud, no we would never have achieved immortality if we were.”

“So how did you get to be proud?”

“I don’t know,” Odo admitted, “I never did, I guess that’s why I despised the world. Maybe they got bored with their lot for the Earth Mother does not ask a lot from you. As long as her energies are in balance she’s happy. No, the first I noticed it was when they stopped educating the people and kept them in ignorance.”

“Sorry?”

“The achievement of immortality is done through knowledge. A special kind of knowledge called light. With holding this knowledge meant that some men could not evolve to their purpose on one

level but it also meant that they were mentally inferior and easily manipulated. Fear was also our weapon and we did not use it sparingly. It was around that time that I left the world although I came back occasionally to check on progress in the vain hope that they would return to their senses.”

“And did they?”

“No, they got worse,” Odo said with a laugh, “When I first left they had them doing farm work for our food but by the time I came back they were erecting great monuments just to occupy the surplus of labour.”

“Surplus of labour?” Dave repeated.

“You have probably noticed yourself that Man is a prolific breeder.”

“Well the world is over populated now you come to mention it. They say that soon we won’t have the resources to feed him.”

“I have heard. The population in our time never got that large for the ice restricted growth but it was large enough to be a concern to the dwindling gods.”

“Dwindling? I thought that you could never die.”

“Never grow old,” Odo said correcting him, “We could fall to another man’s spear or be crushed by a falling rock. We dared not renew the numbers for fear of the secrets getting out so they were destined to fall; it was only a matter of time. It was reasoned that idle hands made for restless minds so they needed something to occupy the slaves and came up with the idea of erecting great pointless monuments amongst other things.”

“Other things?”

“Games of armed combat, hunting expeditions for the ones that had escaped, anything to try and keep some sort of rein on the growing numbers. A futile exercise for it only prolonged our demise.”

“And the ones that escaped were there many?”

“Not at first but over time they grew through breeding and new blood. They also tried to hunt the renegade man god who felt like me so escaped their society and went to live in the wilderness.”

“Sounds like bad times.”

“Worse to come I’m afraid. No matter how many they killed Man still grew in numbers so they came up with the policy of the cull.”

“Culling? Now that is barbaric.”

“First it was anyone unfit for work, then it grew to a 10 year slaughter of the children under the age of two.”

“What. Every 10 years they went around and killed the babies.”

“Yes. They excelled in brutality.”

“They say that the Romans were bad but that, well there’s no comparison.”

“I have seen the Romans. They had a pretty similar outlook but not to that degree.”

“And what happened in the end?”

“War. They fought each other they fought the freed slaves. Their numbers got less and eventually they were over ran and slaughtered. Some of the freed slaves found the remnants of the knowledge and so it started again but to a lesser degree. Great civilisation grew and they fought each other until the floods came and wiped everything away.”

“And it all started again. Whatever happened to the renegade man gods though?”

“They all died eventually. Well I’m guessing because I don’t know for sure. I have heard say that they encoded the knowledge in stories and they became your mythologies.”

“Amazing. You mentioned other dimensions, does that mean that there is more than these two?”

“Yes, there are nine worlds of creation altogether, well that not strictly true for there is an overlap.”

“Sorry” Dave said wanting elaboration.

“Well take this place” Odo said duly obliging “This is the Land of Creative Formation. It composes of the world of the fertility spirits or the fairies and the world of gnomes. Two separate worlds in one land that go to make the Earth element, its fertility and its bountiful treasure.”

“Right. Well I think so anyway, and the dark-side?”

“It’s just this land at night. Now you also have the Earth itself or the material world not to be confused with the Earth elemental world for they are two separate places although they are linked in the fact that they occupy this same space.”

“I think that I heard something about that but I did not understand it to tell you the truth.”

“It’s all to do with awareness. The closer to your purpose you are the more the worlds reveal themselves to you.” Dave looked confused so Odo thought it prudent to elaborate a little, “Imagine a cup of tea with sugar. That is the world but within it lies the world of water, the world of sweet water, the world of tea and the world of tea with milk. Some people will drink it and just taste water, others will taste sweetened water yet others sugar tea and finally sugar tea with milk.”

“I can understand that. So it all about awareness of the world around you.”

“That’s right. Now when man started to make his own environment he becomes aloof from the world around him and so lost all that. I mean when was the last time that anyone saw a fairy?”

“True,” Dave agreed, “So what about the other lands, do they exist in form like this one does?”

“Oh yes there are another three lands besides this one; each one encloses two worlds of creation. I often visit them as a matter of fact, another reason I don’t mix is that I am rarely here.”

“And these worlds could you explain them to me?”

“When the time is right I am afraid your drink of tea just tastes like water at present.”

“Oh” David said with more than a slight hint of disappointment.

“Rescue Queen Nomi first,” Odo said by way of consolation, “One step at a time or you will soon trip up. It will all be revealed to you as you are ready to hear it.”

“Fair enough. Yes I can live with that.”

“Good. Now is there anything else that I can reveal to you?”

Dave thought a while and said, “Many things I’m sure but with all you have told me already I doubt if they will sink in.”

Odo laughed at that and said, “Well I will see you again, if not in this world then in others,” and turning to Kaylie said, “I was wondering if I might come and visit you in your world from time to time. I think that Dave is right I have been a bit aloof?”

“You are more than welcome,” Kaylie said, “Well that’s if we get back alright?”

“Thank you,” Odo said, “Queen Nema and her clan are fine people but I do crave manly companionship sometimes.”

“As I say,” Kaylie said, “You are more than welcome,” with that Odo disappeared and David said, “What a story that man could tell.”

“Much more than any of our legends,” Ben said equally impressed, “He has certainly seen some things.”

“True,” Kaylie said and turning to Dave, “We will be at the caves soon, how are you feeling?”

“It’s got to be done,” Dave said, “Though I must admit I will be glad when it’s over.”

“It won’t be that bad,” Kaylie said and they talked some more until they left the forest. They came across a track of land that was fairly flat and walked further until they saw it come to a sudden halt. They were on top of a cliff, the walls of which were sheer and it was a long way to the bottom. Zinbar, Ben, Doug and Dixie stepped off it much to Dave’s horror but to his surprise they floated to the bottom. Clary and Valentine then followed leaving Dave alone with Kaylie.

“I’m not expected to do that am I?” Dave said.

“No,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “You must go through the Cave of Fear instead”

Dave looked down once again and said, “I don’t know if it would be less frightening just to jump.”

“It won’t be that bad,” Kaylie said laughing, “Follow me,” and he took Dave to a large hole with steps leading down it. “I will see you at the bottom,” he said as he left him. Dave looked down the hole for a while and then with more than just a little trepidation started his descent. The steps were well lit so he quickly got to the bottom where much to his horror he saw the start of a great passageway that descended into total darkness. He knew that he had to go through it so he set off

on his way. Soon he was in total darkness, the light behind him having disappeared and then it started. The cave seemed to shake with the echoes of manic laughter and he had strong thoughts of turning back. He fought them though and continued until the laughter subsided only to be replaced by a dark, menacing voice.

**“Oh mortal man enchained by sleep
Little knowing of the abyss deep,
That lurks beyond just out of gaze
Where the darkest shadows merge with haze.”**

The sound of the voice echoed and shook the cave but still Dave continued. Fear had reached new heights within him but still he continued fighting hard against it. The returning laughter came back to haunt him but still he continued in the back of his mind expecting something to appear yet not knowing what it could be. The laughter subsided and the voice returned once more.

**“Oh mortal man held by your fear
Contempered by the darkest sneer,
Whose essence is something you sense
Though it takes your soul in recompense.”**

The voice finished and the laughter resumed. “Not long now,” he said to himself quickly by way of comfort but he was not sure so took no solace from it. “Not long,” he said again but it was to no avail. The expectation of something to appear came back but much stronger and he turned to see if anything was behind but saw nothing though with the intensity of the darkness he could not be sure. Again and again he turned back but nothing made itself known to him and as he continued he regretted that he had ever been so foolish as to enter into the cave in the first place. He wished that he had stepped off the cliff for in his madness he reasoned that if the gnomes could do it he as a man could certainly do it. He felt that he was being followed but turned again only to see a solid wall of darkness. The laughter intensified and a strange feeling of loneliness came upon him. He felt trapped, he felt that he would never get out of the cave and so was destined to become its prisoner. The laughter subsided again and the voice returned with vengeance.

**“Oh mortal man you are alone
No one to help, you’re on your own,
With a heavy darkness as your foe
What will you do, where will you go.”**

The laughter did not return, just silence, a deadly, cold silence that seemed to freeze him from the inside. He heard his heartbeat, loud and fast but that was all he could hear. On and on he went in darkness and in silence until he saw a dot of light in the distance. It grew larger the closer he got to it and soon he was outside with more than a trace of relief.

“So you made it then,” Kaylie said by way of greeting, “How did you get on, what was it like?”
“Strange,” Dave said, “Very strange. I heard laughter and that voice; you should have heard that voice. I still shudder when I think about it.”

“I can imagine. Well that one was the worst the others are not so bad.”

“Others? I thought there was only one. The Cave of Self Doubt you told me.”

“Oh they are the bad ones. Then you go through the Cave of Rebirth.”

“Oh. That does not sound too hard. I should have guessed it really.”

“You should?” Kaylie said in surprise.

“Yes everything seems to come in three’s.”

“Well there is that. Shall we continue?”

“Sure” Dave said and they crossed another flat piece of land saying little because Dave’s thoughts were still on the Cave of Fear. It had left him more than a little shaken if the truth be known; his confidence was well and truly sapped. He reasoned to himself that if he was like that in the cave what good would he be over in the dark-side. He had been scared of a few voices, that could do him no harm, what would he be like when he came face to face with one of the manifestations. It

did not bare thinking about, but think about it Dave did, it was paramount on his mind in fact.

“Dave we’re here,” Kaylie said interrupting his thought flow, “Good luck, we will see you on the other side.”

Dave saw a similar looking hole and then watched the gnomes make their way to another cliff edge. One by one they stepped off and soon he was on his own. He looked down the hole once again with more fear than he had the last one for now he half knew what to expect and to Dave that was worse than stepping into the unknown. He knew he must do it though so with great fear he started his descent. At the bottom he saw a darkened passageway once more and taking a firm grip on himself started his journey. Much to his surprise he heard no laughter just silence but the silence was to prove an ardent foe for it gave him time, time to dwell. Thoughts of the last cave came back to haunt him, childhood memories come forward to menace him and reinforce his self doubt and then the voice.

“Death walks within me as I travel through time

Just waiting within me as if by design,

I sense it sometimes and I see it at work

One day it will take me at the end of its lurk.”

It did not seem as menacing as before but to Dave locked in his childhood it was menacing enough. On he went in total silence, he yearned to shout out just to hear a noise but he was trapped, trapped in his own mind. He relived situations from long ago, in his mind as fresh as they were yesterday. On he went remembering the fights that he had lost though somehow forgetting the ones that he had won. It was indeed a mixed blessing when the voice came back once more.

“Death walks besides me as I travel through space

I see it in others as I study each face,

Body decay although the matters still living

Time is our captor and it’s unforgiving.”

On he went and with the return of the silence came the return of the memories. Situations returned but from childhood not as long ago. They sapped into his will and took strength from his being. They seemed to get stronger instead of diminishing. He did not know how long he could tolerate it for it seemed that it was never ending. On and on he went, his memories fought with the hopelessness of the situation for his attention. He tried to gain strength thinking that there would only be one more verse as it all seemed to come in threes but he was not sure so there was no strength forthcoming. The voice came back again.

“Death’s all around me it’s all that I see

Darkness and gloom is my misery,

Fear is my captor and its hold is with iron

My strength feels diminished, no more the great lion.”

Silence returned and along with it the memories of early adulthood. His struggle to become a man and the constant setbacks he had to face in the process. He thought that it would be over and yet still it continued. On he went struggling to see if he could see a light in the distance but his vigilance was to no avail as he never saw one. He could not go on, he was finished and then the voice.

”Death has become me it’s all I have left

My time is now over, my life now bereft,

My fear has now gone too, so it’s not that bad

And I worried about it, I must have been mad.”

Dave seemed to gather a little strength from this and with it he continued his journey. It was not long before he saw the light and watched it grow into a doorway. Outside Kaylie said, “Not long now Dave, save your strength for you will need it,” and they walked across another track of flat even land. Dave said nothing as he made the journey for he had nothing to say. He felt empty inside. It was not a bad feeling, it was not a good feeling, it was just an empty one. The flat terrain

soon crossed he was introduced to the Cave of Rebirth.

“You’ll feel a lot better after this,” Kaylie said as he left him staring almost lifeless into the hole. Dave watched them disappear over the edge before he made the descent. It was a strange darkness he found at the bottom. It did not have its usual menace but it was soothing almost therapeutic. As he started his journey he felt a glimmer of life returning, a trace at first but it was enough to invigorate him slightly. On he went, all doubt gone, it was time for renewal and he took to it with relish. No laughter, no self doubt just peace of mind. It was an inner peace that he had never felt before, tingling energies around his forehead and a heightened state of awareness. On he went getting stronger as he did and then the voice, soft and melodic it said.

**“Spring is here to start the year
New beginnings, an end to fear,
For new life brings to us fresh hope
It gives us strength in which to cope,
We’ve come through winter with its dearth
So now we’re going through rebirth,
Yes, spring you see it has to be
So we can grow eternally.”**

The melodic tone lifted Dave’s spirit and he felt stronger and yearned for more. On he went senses tingling, happy to be there and without a care. The darkness held no menace for him now and he took power from his solitude as he traveled along. The voice came back to reinforce this.

**“Summer’s next, it’s when we grow
Experience from the seeds we sew,
New learning that will feed the will
So it develops new shoots to fill,
A time of mental restlessness
But its outcome is a plus,
Yes, summer see it has to be
So we can grow eternally.”**

Dave’s spirit lifted higher and he could feel his confidence return. All his memories were just that, memories. He was a different person now, a lot wiser and more confident. Positive memories come into reinforce this and he grew even more in self confidence. As he walked downwards the voice returned.

**“Autumn next, we’ve hit the fall
The ripened fruit is quite a haul,
Our mental growth has hit fruition
Through contemplation and contrition,
A time of constant meditation
So from experience comes elation,
Yes autumn see, it has to be
So we can grow eternally.”**

Dave was almost ecstatic now. Still onwards he went taking in the new life. He was strong, self confident and yet there was still more to come.

**“Winters next, the circles done
A time of rest, the work is won,
But don’t be thinking of salutation
For you need re-evaluation,
Spring comes soon, a new beginning
Old perceptions, you’ll end up binning,
Yes, winter see it has to be
So you can grow eternally,”**

Dave was finished now though in his mind he could have stayed there much longer. To his disappointment he saw the light ahead and watched it quickly turn into a door. At the other side Kaylie and the rest of the gnomes were waiting and much to his surprise the land had changed into a forest.

“Feeling better?” Kaylie said.

“On top of the world,” Dave said and meant it, “Ready to take on anything and everything.”

“We have a vast forest to cross and it will take one of your days to do it. We have traveled far this day so it might be a good idea to rest here for a while.”

“Rest, I don’t know about that I feel well energised.”

“That won’t take long to sink in then you will be tired.”

“Really, so it’s not for good then.”

“No it’s only a temporary high. It will take a full day to cross the forest and then we will be at the boundary of the dark-side. It would be wise to rest again then so you can enter it refreshed.”

“Yes I can see the logic and how far into the dark-side is the Palace of Narda?”

“About a day and a half so if we time it right we should do well.”

“Sorry?” Dave said not understanding.

“Straight in on the second day rescue her and be half a day away before you have to re-energise. This should be enough to take us out of the way from any immediate danger.”

“Yes I can see that. So timing is important then.”

“Crucial. We don’t want to be in there for too long as the longer we are the more chance there is of getting caught.”

“True. Looks like we are resting here then,” and sat down.

All the gnomes sat down and Ben said, “I guess that means that there is no time to hunt for the looking glass.”

“Hunt for it,” Doug said, “If we are not careful it will be hunting for us.”

“True,” Ben said and went deep into thought before saying, “Do you think that Busta is over there?”

“I wouldn’t have a clue,” Doug said and turning to Kaylie, “Would Moat know?”

“I dare say that she would,” Kaylie said, “But I doubt if we have the time to rescue him.”

“That’s a great shame,” Ben said, “I miss Busta; he was a good old sort.”

“That he was,” Doug said agreeing, “We made for quite a team.”

“Maybe they are keeping him with Queen Nomi,” Valentine said, “We could rescue them both together if they were.”

“We don’t even know if he is over there,” Zinbar said putting a dampener on it.

“Well Moat would,” Doug said and turning to Kaylie, “Could you ask her for us?”

“If I can find her,” Kaylie said, “But I wouldn’t think she would be too interested in us saving him if it gets in the way of the rescue of Queen Nomi.”

“Maybe,” Doug said disappointed and thought a while before he said, “Unless it was used as some sort of diversion tactic, we could do it then I suppose.”

“I don’t know about that,” Zinbar said, “We would have to split our forces to do that.”

“That might be a good thing,” Doug said, “We could move more quickly in smaller numbers and besides we would stand out a lot less.”

“I can see a lot of truth in what you say,” Kaylie said, “And not only that we do need to make a plan of some sort.”

“Yes I agree,” Doug said, “It does not really make good sense to go in blind.”

“Fair enough,” Kaylie said and looked around until his eyes set upon an acorn on the tree. He walked over and plucked it off before putting on the floor and saying, “Moat reveal yourself to me.” The acorn turned into Moat, who said, “It is good that you go in with some sort of plan.”

“And Busta?” Doug said.

“He is held captive in the Palace of Narda,” Moat said, “He is guarded by two goblins, if it was a diversion you seek then that would be a good one.”

“And the looking glass?” Ben said, “What are the chances of us finding it.”

“It is easily found,” Moat said, “And it would also make a good diversion plan for Narda is very much attached to it. You will find it in Narda’s castle as well. Busta is in the dungeon and the looking glass in the ante room to the left of the great hall.”

“As a matter of interest,” David said “Is the black bull there?”

“Yes,” Moat said, “It is well chained up in the castle yard and could prove itself a good friend to you.”

“So many different diversions but which one to take?” Kaylie said and went deep into thought.

“Need it be one?” Ben said.

“Sorry?” Kaylie said.

“I would have thought in a case like this it would be the more the merrier,” Ben said, “Hit them from every direction and they won’t know which way to turn.”

“I can see your logic,” Kaylie said, “But I don’t think that we have enough gnomes to pull it off.”

“How many will we need?” Ben said reluctant to let the matter drop. Kaylie said to Moat, “You won’t happen to know how many are guarding Queen Nomi?”

“Just one,” Moat said, “One of Narda’s hand maidens but I do not know which one as they tend to alternate.”

“And Busta?” Kaylie said.

“Two goblins,” Moat said.

“Oh sorry,” Kaylie said, “You have mention that before. Do you know which?”

“Neb and Goud usually,” Moat said, “But the goblins should be easily recognised and dealt with.”

“Under the spell of invisibility I could lose the bull and tell him to rampage a little before heading for home,” Ben said, “During the distraction I could sneak in and grab the mirror.”

“If you are still invisible,” Kaylie said putting a dampener on it, “We don’t know how long the spell will last.”

“I could test that tomorrow,” Doug said, “We will have to test to see if we have got it anyway.”

“True,” Kaylie said and to Ben, “If it’s long enough you may give it ago.”

“Thanks,” Ben said and settled back happily for he now had a purpose.

“While Ben is doing that I could try and rescue Busta,” Clary said not wanting to be left out.

“I could come with you,” Dixie said, “It sounds like it could be a job for two.”

“Fair enough,” Clary said and turning to Kaylie, “Well if that’s alright.”

“Sure” Kaylie said, “That leaves Queen Nomi.”

“I was wondering about that,” Dave said, “You said that she could only be rescued by a mortal why is that?”

“Only a mortal’s kiss can arouse her from the sleep she is in,” Moat said, “When the spell was cast it was assumed that a mortal could never enter the Land of Creative Formation.”

“Oh,” Dave said, “So I guess that is my job.”

“I will come with you,” Kaylie said.

“And what about Zinbar and me?” Valentine said “Everyone else seems to have a purpose.”

“You two will scout the area before we can enter,” Kaylie said, “After that I am afraid you will be like Doug visible so I thought I would keep you away from the main action”

“So we’ll just be hanging around,” Doug said, “I don’t like the sound of that.”

“Hopefully it will only before a short while,” Kaylie said, “Now as we will be in three groups I suggest that we leave separately and make out own way back. Each group will come back to base where Zinbar, Doug and Valentine will be waiting. Ben, when you get back you and Zinbar will head for home. Clary and Dixie you will go back with Doug and Dave and I will go back with Valentine. That way we will know that we all have made it back to base at least.”

“That’s a good idea,” Doug said.

“Sounds like you have a noble plan,” Moat said, “I am afraid that I could not think of anything else that might help you in the dark side but I wish you farewell and good luck,” and with that she

disappeared.

Dave felt a strange tiredness come over him and he started to lose consciousness.

Dave woke up and checked the time, it was nearly 8 O'clock. He quickly got dressed and breakfasted for he was looking forward to his day. He did not remember his dream only that there was two trees left to uproot and he was looking forward to see the back of them. 8.20 saw him taking the tools from the shed and a surprised Ethel. "You're getting earlier," she said, "You must like the job."

"I've got a taste for it now."

"Thank you for clearing those trees anyway my garden looks a whole lot lighter now."

"All part of the job."

"At least let me make you a drink before you start."

"I won't argue with that," Dave said and she went back inside. After a few minutes she returned and gave him his mug.

"Have you made plans to do any washing today?" Dave said as he took the mug of her.

"Err no," she said.

"I was thinking of burning all that ivy."

"That's fine by me. It will save the job of carting it off."

"That's what I thought. So do you get on well with Mrs. Lewisham?"

"Reasonably. She can be quite cantankerous at times but on the whole yes alright."

"And her family?"

"Only Jane. I don't have a lot to do with the rest of them. Mind you they don't come around much since her husband died so I don't really see them."

"Strange things families."

"You married yourself?"

"No, I never found the right one."

"There's plenty of time for that. You're still young."

"True," Dave said and took a drink.

"Jane's not with anyone," she said trying to match make.

"Oh," Dave said in surprised, "I thought that she had a daughter."

"She has. Jane was married for a time but they got divorced."

"Didn't work out then a lot of them don't nowadays?"

"No, not like in my day you were married for life and that was it."

"So I have heard. Were they happier times?"

"Not really," she said with a laugh, "I was pretty happy with Arthur but I did see a lot of unhappiness in others."

"Arthur. Was that your husband's name?"

"Yes. Married for forty years we were."

"Were?"

"He died 15 years ago."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"Don't be. We had a good life together that's what mattered in the end. Anyway it does not do to dwell. If you are planning to have a fire I was wondering if you would burn a few things for me."

"It will be a pleasure. Just tell me where they are and I will put them on the pile."

"That's very good of you. It's just some broken furniture and bits and bobs but it will save me the job of getting rid of them."

Dave finished the drink and gave Ethel the mug back. She showed him what wanted burning and he put it all on the pile. Next he made a start on the last of the trees. The ivy was a lot thicker around these trees in fact it had almost strangled them so he had to clear it from around the first of the trees before he could ever begin to dig it up. This was quickly done and it was not too long before the first tree was laid out on the lawn. The last tree was that thick with ivy that you could

not see it, in fact he was only guessing that it was a tree because it looked more like an ivy pole. As he started to clear the ivy something strange happened. A shadow left the tree and darted off into nothingness. This stunned Dave for a while as he had never seen anything like it before. He tried to reason to himself what it might be but it proved futile so he carried on with the job at hand. The last tree was duly laid to rest so Dave cleared all the ivy that had been around it and put it into the pile next door and then lit it. The fire was slow in starting up because of the dampness of the fresh ivy but when it did it took off with gusto. Dave kept it fed with the ivy he cleared from the back of the garden along with thistles and brambles and weeds in general and soon the garden was totally clear. Much to his surprise he found that the garden has ornaments and though faded with age and some in disrepair he kept them and put them by the greenhouse. There was a large stone otter and 8 garden gnomes. As he was putting the last of the gnomes by the greenhouse he heard a voice

“Where ever did you find that?”

He turned around and saw that it was Jane.

“By the reservoir trough,” Dave said, “It was hidden under the ivy.”

“Zinbar. It is a long time since I saw him.”

“You gave him a name?” Dave said in surprise.

“My mother did. She gave them all names.”

“Really, so what about the others?”

“See the plastic one with the rod, that’s Kaylie, Dixie is the one with the Goose, Doug’s got the shovel, Ben the wheel barrow and Busta the rake. Clary’s on accordion and Valentine the violin.”

“Amazing,” Dave said with a laugh.

“That’s not all,” Jane said with a laugh, “See the one that you are holding.”

“Zinbar.”

“Yes, put batteries in it and it breaks wind if you go near it.”

“A farting gnome well I never, what about the otter?”

“He has no name,” Jane said with a laugh, “He is just an otter.”

“Oh right,” Dave said not really knowing how to take it.

“She’ll be pleased that you have found them,” Jane said and looked around the garden, “And with what you have done here it looks a lot better already.”

“Yes it’s definably coming on.”

“What are you planning to do next?”

“I was going to paint the wall but now I’ve cleared the garden I think that I might dismantle that raised structure. What is it anyway?”

“I’m not sure it was put up by the previous owner as a feature of some kind.”

“And she definitely wants it out?”

“I would say so. It’s not much use and it definitely isn’t an ornament.”

“I thought that. I was thinking of turning the pond into a raised patio if that was alright.”

“Well you seem to know what you are doing so I’ll leave it in your hands. Anything that will stop the frogs coming back.”

“Fair enough I can use the soil and hard core from the structure to fill the pond so that should save money. The slabs that make the walls of the structure, hopefully I can use them to cover the filled pond.”

“Well I’m all for saving money. How are the finances holding up by the way?”

“Hardly touched them yet,” Dave said and took the plan from his back pocket, “Although we haven’t started getting any materials in.”

“What sort of materials are you going to need?”

Dave looked at the plans and said, “Well it looks like Adam has planned for a virtually maintenance free garden.”

“That’s what I asked him for,” Jane said, “It’s a little too much for me to look after the garden.”

“Oh, so you know the plan already.”

“No I just left him to it. I told him how much my mother had to spend and he said he would try and do it at that price.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and showed her the plan, “He wanted all the area around the structure stoned to stop the weeds coming back, the pond turned into a raised patio and reservoir behind the pond filled with soil. He also wanted the wall painted and where the conifers were 12 rose bushes put in and chipped bark to go around it.”

“Quite a bit to do I don’t think that my mother’s money will cover it.”

“It will be touch and go but as I said if we dismantle that thing we might get enough material to fill the pond.”

“Maybe and if you are putting bark down around the roses you could use some of the excess top soil to fill the reservoir.”

“Good idea. Anything extra can go in the pond if it is needed.”

“Yes I could get the roses from Pound World as well, that will save a little.”

“Fair enough. So it’s just the stones and plastic sheeting, oh, and perhaps a few bulbs for the reservoir.”

“Will you be sorting that part as well?” Jane said and pointed at the garden bed that was on the same side as where the conifers had been.

“I was planning to. I was just going to leave the pampas grass, sage plant and that other plant and stone around them.”

“We can get the bulbs from there then.”

“Not being funny but why have you got a Belfast sink buried in there?”

“I don’t know. I think it was some mad ideas of my sisters.”

“I could put it at the back and bulb it if you like.”

“Sure. You know I think that we’ve got some plastic bags in the greenhouse would they be alright to put the stones on?”

“Black bin liners.”

“No. The ones you get from the builders when you buy sand.”

“Yes they should do. If they were bin liners they would be too thin.”

“I thought that. Do you want a coffee?”

“Please,” David said and she made her way back to the house. Dave looked at the structure once more and debated how he was doing to dismantle it. It was a strange looking thing. Rocks formed the base of the structure, in place to stop the vertical slabs from being pushing out. The slabs were four foot by two foot in size and had tongue and groove edges to give them a tight fit. The structure was two slabs wide and a slab deep and filled with hardcore and soil to solidify it and to provide an area to plant in. He was still debating when Jane came back with his drink.

“Yes, quite a structure,” Dave said taking it off her, “I’m guessing I will have to empty it before I can take it apart.”

“It looks like it,” Jane said in agreement.

“I don’t suppose that you would happen to have a wheelbarrow? It would make it a lot easier.”

“We have but I’m afraid it’s no good. One of the handles has about rotted off and the wheel isn’t up to much.”

“I could give it a try. I’ll just take it easy.”

“Fair enough,” Jane said and brought it to him, “This is it I’m afraid.”

Dave looked at it and saw that she was right in her assessment. Even as it was he reasoned that it would be a lot better than the other alternative. He had seen a large plastic bin that would make a good soil container but it would mean he would have to carry it himself. “It might serve its purpose,” Dave said, “Or at least save me a few journeys with the bin.”

“We’ll have to see about that,” Jane said with a laugh, “I think that you have a lot more faith in it than me.”

“Desperate times call for desperate means,” Dave said with a laugh before taking a drink, “So

where are the dogs today then?"

"They're inside. I did not want them to get in your way."

"No they're no trouble."

"They could do with stretching their legs."

"Sure," Dave said and laughed before saying, "It's lucky that they have short legs then."

"Right," Jane said not really knowing what else to say. She went back and let the dogs out who seemed a little unsure of the changed environments.

"So what do you think of the new haircuts?" Jane said after she had come back, "They do a good job at Debonair Dogs."

"Debonair Dogs," Dave said with a laugh.

"That's what they call themselves."

"I think I've walked into an alien environment, Debonair Dogs, gnomes with names, whatever next?"

"Talking Dogs."

"What?"

"Watch this," Jane said and picked up one of the dogs. Her voice raised in pitch as she said, "What have they been doing to you," and the dog growled softly.

"Have they been treating you bad?" and dog growled louder.

"Yes, yes, I know," Jane said her voice rising even more in pitch and the dog started to howl as if talking to her. She put the dog down and said, "I bet you haven't seen anything like that before?"

"No, I must admit and these gnomes, do they talk to you as well?"

"No, that's being silly. Anyway while I am here, is there anything I can help you with?"

"Well not really. Not unless you want to dig some bulbs up."

"Yes I can do that. How many do you think you will need?"

"I wouldn't like to say," Dave said and thought for a while before he said, "I tell you what, why don't you dig out that Belfast Sink, put it in the back of the garden, fill it with soil and bulb it."

"Sure," Jane said and started to dig it out.

Dave, in the meantime put a plank of wood from the pond to the ground to use as a ramp and started to empty the soil from the structure. He found it hard to actually dig the soil out because of the height of the structure but it did not take too long to fill his first barrow. With trepidation he took the wheel barrow up the ramp and tipped it into the pond. It hardly made an impression so he guessed he would need to make quite a few journeys to actually fill it. Another three journey's confirmed this and much to Dave's horror he found it even harder to get to the soil. As the afternoon progressed he emptied enough soil out to be able to remove some of the slabs which he stacked by the pond to use at a later time.

"I've finished," Jane said after she had dug out the sink, "But it doesn't look too good."

"We'll put some of these rocks around it."

"Yes. That should finish it off. Anything else you want me to do while I'm here?"

"Start hunting for bulbs if you like. Mind you I guess you'll have to go soon."

"I've got half an hour yet," Jane said and carried on.

Dave carried on with dismantling the structure and soon it was finished. The pond had filled up more but it was not quite enough to finish it.

"That's me done I'm afraid. I've left the bulbs in the green house and I will probably see you tomorrow," she took the dogs and left Dave to carry on. He looked around the garden and gathered up bricks and bits of broken slabs and any rubble and debris he could find and put them in the pond. He stamped it all down and leveled it the best he could and found to his great satisfaction that the pond was nearly full.

"Good," he said aloud to himself as he surveyed the work he had done.

"Now that's saved a lot of money," Adam's voice said from behind him, "And you took down that slabbed monstrosity as well."

“I wasn’t sure if she wanted it doing. I had a word with Jane though and she said it would be alright.”

“Oh she did want it doing but I didn’t think she had the money for it to tell you the truth.”

“Speaking of which Jane said that you can get the roses from Pound World.”

“Fair enough when do you think you will be ready for them? They will have to soak in water for a couple of days.”

“What about the day after tomorrow?”

“That soon, you’ll be ready for the stones soon as well looking at it.”

“Tomorrow if you could we’ve got some builder’s bags we can use to save on the plastic.”

“Sound, excellent in fact if you run short you can use the bags the stones came in.”

“Good.”

“How many do you think we’ll need?”

“About thirty should cover it looking round.”

“I could bring them over at noon if you like. I take it that you are not painting yet then.”

“I thought I would leave it until everything is done. Well just before I plant the roses and put the bark down.”

“Fair enough now there were a couple of other things that she wanted doing but I didn’t mention it as I did not think you would get through it this quickly.”

“Really. What are they?”

“The fence that separates the yard from the garden could do with a lick of paint and that large conifer by the Magnolia Tree by the fence could do with cutting down for its blocking off a lot of the light.”

(My apologies – in the description of the garden at the start of the tale I neglected to mention that before the lawn started there was a square of land with three trees and three shrubs.)

“That looks pretty difficult to get to. It’s surrounded.”

“I wouldn’t worry about it then. You would have done enough by the time you have finished.”

“We’ll see. I’m not promising. It looks a job and a half to dig it out.”

“You don’t need to dig it out just cut it down to about four foot off the ground and I will screw an ornament on it.”

“What,” Dave said in surprise, “That sounds daft.”

“No, no. It will look alright. I’ve got just the one in mind in fact.”

“You have?”

“Yes I’ve got a squirrel at home that will be ideal for the job. It’s serving no useful purpose at mine.”

“Well alright, I’m not promising though.”

“Fair enough I understand. If you want to put your tools away, I’ll load these trees.”

Dave looked at his watch and said, “We may as well do it now.”

“If you want I thought you have done quite enough for one day.”

“It won’t take long with the chainsaw and a rope and besides it will save you an extra journey.”

“Well there is that,” Adam said and so the conifer was brought down to size.

Adam loaded up the van whilst Dave put the tools away and then dropped him back home. Dave had something to eat before settling down and going to bed at 10 O’clock.

Chapter 3.

Dave awoke to an eager Kaylie, “Up and at them Dave, the quest is on.”

“Sorry?” Dave said not yet accustomed to the reality he was in.

“The quest,” Kaylie repeated, “To rescue Queen Nomi.”

“Oh,” Dave said fully entered, “My mind was on digging up trees for some reason.”

Not knowing what Dave was talking about Kaylie said, “That’s probably because we have a long walk through the forest ahead of us.”

“True, so anything happen whilst I was asleep?”

“Moat came back. She told me to give you a few insights into life; she said it might prove useful.”

“I won’t argue with that I could do with some help in that direction.”

“And it will take the boredom away from the journey slightly. So Dave tell me what do you know about life?”

Dave thought awhile before he said, “It’s there to help you to evolve to your purpose.”

“Good. So let’s walk and talk and hopefully the miles will soon flyby.”

“Sounds good to me,” Dave said getting on his feet, “Lead the way.”

As they set of Kaylie said, “First things first though we will have to see if you have fulfilled your bargain with Queens Nema.”

“I’m not sure. I don’t remember.”

“It’s easily found out,” Kaylie said, “Doug would you like to do the honours?”

Doug stepped forward and in a loud voice said, “From all this turmoil shelter me, make me that no-one can see,” and disappeared before their eyes. “Did it work?” he said.

“Yes,” Kaylie said, “I can’t see you.”

“Really,” Doug said and gave Ben a shove.

“Watch it,” Ben said, “I nearly fell over then.”

“I had to check,” Doug said, “I had to make sure.”

“We’ll see how long it lasts,” Kaylie said, “Then we’ll be sure about the plan.”

“Fair enough,” Doug said.

“So how does it feel?” Ben said.

“No different really,” Doug said, “I can see you alright and if I look at my hands I can see them, that’s why I thought it hadn’t worked.”

“Well don’t stray too far,” Kaylie said, “We want to be around when the spell wears off.”

“Right,” Doug said, “It’s just a shame that I can’t have any fun with it though.”

“You’ll get plenty of fun over in the dark side,” Kaylie said.

“True, and who knows it might not have worn off by then.”

“We’ll see,” Kaylie said and turning to Dave, “Right where were we, life. So you are here to evolve to your purpose which is to love but also to grow in light or expand your spiritual consciousness to put it in a nutshell. I know you have grasped that already through earlier conversations I was just putting it down in form for a better understanding.”

“Right,” Dave said, “Well I think so anyway.”

“I’ll elaborate,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “It is good to get things clear from the start.”

“I won’t argue with that.”

“Well to put it simply, you know in your mind that if you put your hand in a fire it will get burnt.”

“Yes.”

“But it’s not until you actually put your hand in the fire and experience the burn that you truly understand it or know it in your heart. Can you see the difference?”

“Not really.”

“It’s a deeper level of understanding, one that has been got through experience. The first was just a concept, an abstract thought the second is reality for it has been defined as such. You went through the pain to define it. You now have no doubt in your mind that if you put your hand in fire it will get burnt.”

“Right, I can understand about fire but I don’t really see how that fits in with putting it down in form.”

“Maybe I over simplified it,” Kaylie said with a laugh before thinking a while and saying, “Right we’ll start again then.”

“Please.”

“Back to fire. Now the first level of understanding is when you are told that it burns, it is an abstract thought as I said and so leads a lot of room for doubt.”

“Yes, I understand.”

“Now the second level goes a little deeper. It is when you put your hand close to the fire and feel its heat. It takes away most of the doubt because you reason to yourself that the painful sensation could be a warning of things to come. It gives you some understanding but only in your mind as it has not fully been experienced. So the first level you know in your mind, the second you know and understand in your mind and the third through experience you know in your heart. Taking all that back to life the first level was when you knew from the conversation but it was ill defined and all over the place.”

“Sorry?”

“You learnt it from different sources and only in parts. I put it all together in definitive form to give you a better understanding and finally the third level when you went through the caves and experienced it for yourself.”

“What?” Dave said in surprise, “I did not realise.”

“So you put your hand in the fire and did not realise,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “No wonder you could not understand it. I’m sorry. I thought that you knew.”

“No, no. I did not realise.”

“Well I’d better explain it then,” Kaylie said still laughing.

“If you wouldn’t mind I would hate to think that I went through all that for nothing.”

“When you took away your fear of death and your self-doubt you purified your ego. By doing this you evolved to your purpose and so could be spiritually reborn in the Cave of Rebirth.”

“And what was that tingling that I felt inside my head?” Dave said, “I’ve felt nothing like it before.”

“That was the spirit expanding your spiritual consciousness. You were being given light.”

“Oh right, you know it felt like I was being energised.”

“That’s because you were. Light is mental energy of a spiritual kind, through this you Soul grows in understanding of purpose.”

“I understand that, yes it makes sense and is that why the number three is significant?”

“Pretty much so it also works like this. Knowing that fire burns we’ll call the wisdom that information goes to the left hand or your rational side of the brain.”

“Right so feeling the heat goes to the other side.”

“Yes but only feeling the heat though.”

“Sorry?”

“The second level of understanding touches both the left and the right or emotional side of the brain in balance that’s why I said a deeper level of understanding. When you went through the caves you did not know what you were going through so it only touched the right hand side of the brain. If you knew what you were going through it would have touched both sides and so activated the limbic system. Now when I say that I mean after I would have defined it for you.”

“Right so if I knew that fire burnt it would go to the left hand side of the brain. If I felt the heat but did not know it was fire it would go to the right hand side of the brain. If I felt the heat and knew that it was fire and it would burn me it would go to both sides of the brain and if I put my hand in it knowing that it would burn me it would go to the limbic system.”

“Good you’ve grasped it.”

“Well except for one thing, the limbic system?”

“The back of your brain, it can only be truly activated when both sides are in balance. You’ll still get burnt it’s just that you won’t grow from it.”

“I don’t know about that. I don’t think that you would put your hand in it again.”

“Fire no but I was thinking more of the caves. If you had never found and what you had been through you would have been none the wiser and if anything might actually have been haunted by the memories of the event.”

“Yes I can understand that now and does it equate with the three tests?”

“I’ll come back to that later we still have a road to travel.”

“Oh sorry, Elan said that I asked too many questions.”

“That’s alright just have a little patience for it will all come to light.”

“I apologise, please continue.”

“Now,” Kaylie said trying to find his thread so he could get into his flow, “I have mentioned the three levels of understanding and the three aspects of the mind, the wisdom, the understanding and the knowing, knowing in the deeper sense as in when you get your fingers burnt so finally we have the three parts of the brain. These are the survival brain, the emotional brain the superior brain. Now each part goes to make the whole yet is independent in its own right. I will explain that after I have given you the alternate names for the parts.”

“Thanks,” Dave said a little reluctant to speak.

“The survival brain is also called the reptilian brain. It is the brain stem, our instinctive drive for self and species presentation. Basically it is a set of laws that have been enshrined in our being. Would you like to hear them?”

“Er yes please.”

“You don’t have to be so reticent,” Kaylie said with a laugh before saying, “It is written by the Creative Pen that within all life forms that each organism is to be adapted to the best of its ability to survive in the habitat around it, to survive in the climatic environment around it, to survive in the social climate around it, to find its niche in the balance of the eco system. To defend itself from a prey’s point of view and hunt from a predators, to find itself a mate for the perpetration of its species, to given the next generation the best chance of survival that it can and finally to evolve to its purpose. These laws mould life and give it its drive.”

“And that’s the reptilian brain,” Dave said surprise, “A set of laws?”

“That’s right. It’s what guides the mind as opposed to being the mind itself. Next, the emotional or old mammalian brain, this also guides the mind through pleasure and pain and finally the new mammalian brain or superior brain. This stage of development is when the mind has evolved free will and does not need the guidance although it is still within it.”

“Right.”

“Now to explain how the parts work and going back to that cup of tea, the water is the basis of its life, the survival brain, this sugar the taste of life, the emotional brain and the tea the colour of life, the superior brain with milk as the ego. Each component goes to make the whole yet is independent in its own right. The water you can drink on its own and though tasteless it will sate your thirst. To the reptilian brain that is all that matters so it is happy. The emotional brain is slightly more refined and so tastes the sweetness, to its black and white mentality that means it is safe. The higher brain is yet more refined and sees colour and with it a deeper sense of taste or understanding. All three parts are there individually and as a whole.”

“Yes I can understand that so the more evolved you are, the more refined the brain.”

“In a way but to fully drive it home the more refined your brain is the more aware it is usually speaking that is for you have to be in balance to be truly aware.”

“Right so modern man although his brain is refined as he is out of balance with nature he is not aware.”

“Good and the three tests. The first was for purity of thought which is emotionless reason, emotion in the negative sense of the word this was to make sure your emotional brain was purged of selfish desire.”

“Yes, right.”

“The second test was about memory retention this is for your superior brain. It was to test your emotional side’s memory as opposed to your rational sides.”

“Er could you elaborate on that?”

“Sure, remembering facts like, I don’t know, the capital cities of your nations come from your rational side, the wisdom. Now the answer to the third question had not been given to you but you reasoned it from the understanding of all the related facts, the understanding of the wisdom.”

“Right so even though I reasoned it from my left hand side I reasoned it from my understanding the right hand side.”

“Not strictly true you reasoned it from your right hand side, your understanding. You actually have two separate, complete elements in your mind.”

“Sorry?”

“Fire and Water, Fire, your imagination, right and Water, your intellect, left.”

“Odo mentioned elements, he mentioned Earth though.”

“The Soul, your knowing, the limbic system. Finally you have Air, you Higher Self, or guiding star.”

“And each one has a land or did I misunderstand him?”

“No each one does have a spiritual realm behind it but that will be unveiled at a later time for it is not quite right at the moment.”

“Fair enough and steadfast courage?”

“It was more about selfless devotion to purpose, a test for your survival brain whose ultimate fear is death.”

“Right so when I asked you the question about the three tests earlier you couldn’t answer me because not knowing about the three parts of the brain I would not have been able to understand it.”

“Got it. It will all be revealed to you Dave but only when you are ready to understand it. Take the caves as an example, fear of death, survival brain, self doubt emotional brain and rebirth superior brain.

“I see. Now sorry to back track but you confused me on a couple of things.”

“Just two? That’s not bad going really.”

“Well they are probably related,” Dave said with a laugh, “The first was that you said the survival brain was not the mind itself and the second was about two separate elements.”

“Go on,” Kaylie said wanting some elaboration.

“Er what actually is the mind then? I always thought that it was manifestation of the brain but what with that and talk of reincarnation earlier I don’t know.”

“No the brain is a vehicle for the mind. The mind is an animation of the self via the ego initially. To explain it will take some doing but we have plenty of time if you are interested.”

“Well sure.”

“All matter has built in mind potential though not all matter is animated by a Self.”

“Sorry?”

“A mountain is matter but it is not animated, it does not have life, the animation of Self is what gives a mind its life.”

“And what actually is the Self. I’m essence I mean.”

“Light. Spiritual energy. At its base it is crude and unrefined but as it climbs the levels of understanding it purifies itself.”

“The levels of understanding, is that the three levels you mentioned earlier?”

“No there are 10 of them. Do you want to hear them?”

“Er yes if it won’t get us too far off track.”

“A little but we could always back track later.”

“Fair enough.”

“Well the first level is a being with the ability to recreate itself. Flora and basic fauna. The second level is when understanding starts to kick in, basically it is an animal that is controlled by its instinct. The third level sees discernment which goes in hand with level four a free will, man. You now evolve on two levels Will and Self, expansion of Will and purification of Self is level five so it is actually a journey until you come to level six a mergence of the two. Seven and eight go hand in hand, that is when you old self dies and is spiritually reborn as your purpose and you have a channel to your Higher Self so you know all things spiritually. You are now an enlightened soul but you need a purpose. Level nine the triad of purpose. You might choose either pride, anger or love.

Choose love and you move to level ten and get an even deeper understanding of the word.”

“Right so would I be right in saying that as your mind climbs the levels it purifies itself of all its Earthly desires, its basic survival instinct.”

“Good you’ve grasped it well. Once all that has gone it is free to become solely its purpose, it has entered a phase called thoughtlessness but I think I had better call it mindfulness as thoughtlessness seems to bring up negative connotations. Now as your Self climbs the levels it needs more complicated vehicles to carry it for as it becomes a lot more aware of its self it becomes a lot more aware of its surroundings so the brain has to be more evolved to accommodate it. Man, with free will has the most evolved brain and so a deeper understanding of Self and the world around him. To understand about the left and right hand side of the brain I think of two chairs, he can sit in one to do certain things and the other to do others.”

“I see and would that be his Will that does it?”

“That’s right it’s the animating factor in the mind. So a quick recap then. Think of the Self as unrefined light at its lower levels it needs direction, the survival brain with its laws. It has no awareness such, only the laws that guide it. As it purifies itself slightly it gets a deeper awareness, the emotional brain, some understanding and starts to develop a mind of its own. As it evolves further it gets more understanding and starts to develop a Will of its own and so needs the superior brain.”

“Yes I think I understand it now you’ve put it like that.”

“Good one final point and then I will give you some time to let it all sink in.”

“Fair enough I think I could do with a rest.”

“It’s not that bad,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “I mentioned two chairs but it’s a little more complicated than that.”

“I was thinking something like that. When in balance I’m guessing that you have to sit in both chairs at the same time.”

“I can see how you could come to that conclusion,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “No you are not just your Will you are also your understanding, your Self. In the cave when you were given light this is where it went to. As it grows in light it purifies itself of its negativity until it is able to merge and then you are in balance for the old self dies, two becomes one so you sit on both chairs simultaneously.”

“You mentioned being spiritually reborn now that I remember.”

“Yes. In the collective conscious the element of Air; it actually evolves into your Higher Self. You’ll find out more about that when you visit that world.”

“I can’t wait it sounds fascinating. So before it is balanced what does it do?”

“It has no understanding of purpose, it tends to dwell in self doubt and other negative thoughts. Basically it is you without a purpose.”

“Right. Yes I can see that from experience, I generally get bored when I have nothing to do.”

“Wisdom from experience, that’s the best teacher. To fully define it you are actually the purpose and it is the understanding of purpose so when in harmony you are of one.”

Doug reappeared at that so Kaylie said, “You’re back Doug. Feeling alright?”

“Yes,” Doug said, “No ill effects what so ever.”

“And I reckon it lasts long enough to do what needs doing. It looks like the plan is on.”

“Good,” Ben said, “This should be fun.”

“Well not a word I would use,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “But yes it should make for a good adventure.”

“You seem to hold great sore with adventure,” Dave said remembering back to their first meeting “Why is that?”

“It’s the spice of life,” Kaylie said, “It takes away the monotony and gives you new experience.”

“Experience, yes I suppose you are right, life can get a little boring at times.”

“True but it goes deeper than that. It is only by experience that you truly grow. Yes, give me

adventure any day, it fills me with a sense of purpose and gives my life true meaning.”

“I’ll bare that in mind though I must admit that up until now my life has been pretty much adventure free.”

“That will all change believe me, once you get the taste you will never look back.”

“What brings you to my land?” a voice said interrupting them, “You are a bit too far from home to be here without purpose.”

Kaylie looked around and saw a large white dog with vivid red ears. “Stima is that you?” he said upon recognition.

“Kaylie,” Stima said in surprise, “It’s been a long time, almost an eternity. I’m sorry I did not recognise you. I thought that you were goblins”

“Goblins,” Kaylie said in surprise, “Can they come out of the dark side then?”

“Yes. They may enter the middle lands.”

“However do they get past Stelth?”

“They are immune for questioning, I thought that you knew.”

“No. Does that mean that we are?”

“Gnomes. I’m not sure about your friend though for he does not look like a gnome.”

“Oh sorry this is Dave, he is a man. Dave this is Stima.”

“Pleased to meet you,” Stima said, “You are a man then, a mortal man?”

“Er yes,” Dave said guardedly after his conversation with the birds.

“Then something big must be going on,” Stima said, “I’m afraid it is only the gnomes and goblins that are immune though.”

“That’s alright,” Dave said, “We know the answers.”

“You do, then it must be really big,” Stima said, “If you can get to the dark side may I come with you for it is a place I have long wanted to see.”

“If it’s alright with Kaylie you are more than welcome,” Dave said and looked at Kaylie.

“It’s alright with me,” Kaylie said, “But it is your adventure, your choice I am only a guide.”

“So,” Dave said to Stima, “Have you anything special that might prove useful to us?”

“I can see well in the dark and I can smell out a goblin at a distance.”

“You thought that we were goblins.”

“No offence to Kaylie but they smell the same as gnomes.”

“That’s because they are renegade gnomes,” Kaylie said enlightening him, “We are of the same essence.”

“That would explain it then,” Stima said, “There is a slight difference when you get up close but it is that long since I saw you last I had forgotten.”

“You said this is the middle land,” Dave said, “What actually is it for it seems a distinct world from the gnomes and fairies.”

“It is the land of fairies,” Stima said.

“I thought that we had already been there when we went to see Queen Nema.”

“That was only the entrance,” Kaylie said, “We could have got here by going through it.”

“So we could have saved a long walk.”

“No,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “You had to go through the caves but don’t worry we’ll take the short cut home.”

“And Queen Nema?” Dave said, “Will we be calling on her before we have to go over.”

“Well I will have to ask her permission,” Stima said, “I hope that won’t be an inconvenience to you.”

“Not to me,” Dave said and looked at Kaylie.

“No,” Kaylie said, “It’s on the way in fact.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said, “So tell me about the fairy world I am afraid that I am very ignorant when it comes to it.”

“Sure what do you want to know?”

“Well how did they come to be for a start or have they always been?”

“They were the beautiful people, enlightened souls who gave themselves to the Mother of All Things. Where once the gnomes were mortal these have always been immortal I believe if they had inhabited your world you would have called them gods.”

“And Odo? was he one of them?”

“No he came from your world. He wasn’t one at first but now he is if you see what I mean.”

“Right well I think so you mean that he evolved into one of them.”

“That’s right so you know about evolutions to your purpose then, I did not realise that you were so enlightened.”

“Well it’s only a recent event, does it make a difference?”

“Yes a lot of difference in fact, it alters my answer to your question for a start.”

“It does,” Dave said in surprise, “Why is that then?”

“You have a lot deeper understanding than I first gave you credit for. I can only give you my answer in a way that you will understand it.”

“Kaylie mentioned that before so how will your answer change?”

“Like Odo they did once inhabit your world but until like Odo they died in your world. A physical death I mean for being enlightened they were immortal. They had the choice of remaining in the Earthly realms or going up to the collective conscious and chose the former believing they would be more use here helping with the fertility of the land.”

“Yes I see so they were not always immortal then, they had to evolve into it.”

“That’s right.”

“So why did you say that the gnomes were once mortal? That does not sound right.”

“Yes,” Kaylie said looking at Stima, “Using your logic that does not make sense. Who are you, you are not the Stima that I know?”

“I am,” Stima said, “It just seems that there has been a little misunderstanding.”

“Only in the fact that you thought you could trick us,” Kaylie said, “Will you tell me who are you?”

“I am Stima.”

“You know what will happen if I have to ask you a third time.”

“No, don’t you dare,” Stima said and started to metamorphosis before him. First a shadow but quickly it started to solidify. It was a grotesque, some old woman but before it could finally take shape Kaylie said. “Who are you?” and it exploded into dust to the sound of “Envy.”

Meanwhile over on the dark side a part of Narda died and the world got a little lighter. She stumbled backwards just catching her balance by grabbing hold of Neb who happened to be standing next to her.

“Are you alright Great Queen?” Neb said in shock.

“Do I look alright, fool? See the sky outside.”

Neb looked and said, “It has got a little lighter what does that mean Great Queen?”

“Seba is dead, something is amiss. Fetch my looking glass.”

“Yes great one,” Neb said and scampered off. He was back quickly and passed it to her.

“Nothing,” she said in contempt, “Just a worthless dog. Be on guard there is something going on.”

Back in the middle land Stima said, “I don’t know what came over me, it was like I was possessed.”

“You were,” Kaylie said, “When did it happen?”

“Only recently,” Stima said, “It was when I was running to meet you it happened. It was like a force had taken over me and I lost control.”

“So all that you said wasn’t true?” Dave said.

“No most of it was,” Stima said, “That’s why I don’t understand what went on.”

“It’s very subtle,” Kaylie said, “It’s not a blatant thing. It leads you into a false sense of security first and then the venom comes in and it leads you to harm. It is lucky that you noticed it when you did for it had no time to warn Narda.”

“It was just a little suspicious,” Dave said, “I did not really like to say anything as I thought he was your friend but there was sort of a voice inside me.”

“Good,” Kaylie said, “Listen to that and you won’t go far wrong. As for friendship believe me when it comes to this be very wary of anyone for not only can they manifest they can also possess.”

“I’ll bear that in mind, so why did it explode when you asked it to identify itself for the third time?”

“Recognition is its downfall although it is much quicker to recognise what it actually is, asking it what it is three times is enough to establish that you know for sure that it’s not what it seems.”

“Right so if I’m not sure ask it three times.”

“Only works for possessions I’m afraid and only on this side of the world. That’s why I never mentioned it before.”

“So how did she get across anyway?”

“Now, that I don’t know and if she managed it, it begs the question did any others,” he looked around and pulled a leaf from the nearest tree, “Moat, reveal yourself to me,” and with that Moat appeared.

“You have done well,” she said to Dave.

“Was that another test?” David said.

“No, well not really, she crossed over when the Lioness chased Silva. I have been keeping my eye on her ever since. I would not have let her bring you to any harm but I had to test your powers of discernment.”

“And are there anymore?”

“No, she is the only one. Narda has lost her spy and has felt her pain. She does not know what’s happening only that something is, so be on your guard,” and with that disappeared.

“Well one less to worry about I suppose,” Dave said and turning to Stima with a laugh said, “So tell me about your world.”

“It feels like it has already been said,” Stima said with a laugh, “For what she said was actually the truth even in the fact that I would genuinely like to accompany you.”

“Then I guess it’s a trip to Queen Nema’s camp. She did not seem too friendly the last time.”

“Oh that was before you released her sister. You will find her a lot more amiable now.”

“Good, so why was she so aloof?”

“She has a distrust of mortals. She sees what Man has done to the world and it has clouded her judgement a little I am afraid.”

“Well I couldn’t really blame her for that. No, she is probably right.”

“She’s over looked the saying don’t judge me by my kind judge me by my kindness. Maybe now she will change though. Yes you did her a very great service and she will not forget it.”

“She might know of other things that will help on our quest,” Kaylie said, “Yes, she might prove useful.”

“I think that if she can, she will,” Stima said, “We will soon find out though,” and they entered a complex of wooden buildings that was surrounded by a wooden stockade. Estella came up and greeted them, “Queen Nema awaits, please follow me,” and she took Dave to a wooden building in the middle of the complex. As they walked Dave said, “Er, where are your wings?”

“We don’t need them in our world,” Estella said, “Here we are physical.”

“Oh right. Then I wasn’t really in your world the last time I saw you.”

“The entrance, it is actually a bolt hole but it ties the two worlds together.”

“Sort of a dimensional gateway?”

“Yes, you could say that, we have them into your world as well.”

“Really I never knew.”

“I’m afraid that mortal mans’ fall from grace has been more like a plummet. At one time it was pretty well known.”

“That might be more to do with my personal lack of education I am afraid.”

“Well maybe later I will enlighten you,” Estella said as she got to the building, “But for now Queen Nema awaits.”

Dave walked in and saw a different Queen, mentally speaking. “Welcome,” Queen Nema said, “You

have proved yourself in my eyes and now nothing will be withheld from you.”

“Thanks though I am afraid that I have no recollection of what I have done.”

“Never mind,” Queen Nema said and then louder although not a shout, “Freya,” and a similar looking women came through the door, “This is the one.”

“Yes,” she said “I can see now. I would like to thank you for saving me. You are a good man and usually speaking that is contradiction in terms.”

“Er thanks,” Dave said not really knowing how to take it.

“You may go,” Queen Nema said to her before turning to Dave, “Anything you require if it is in my power I will grant it to you.”

“I could definitely do with help,” Dave admitted, “But I don’t really know what.”

“That sounds confusing,” Queen Nema said with a laugh.

“I don’t really know what to expect or what’s actually expected of me so you see my dilemma.”

“Yes,” Queen Nema said and thought awhile before she said, “I will send Stima with you, if he’s willing that is.”

“He did express a strong interest on the way here now you come to mention it,” Dave said, “He said he was going to ask your permission first.”

“Then it is easily granted. Now he has a line to me so if you need help when you are over there talk to him and we will see what we can come up with.”

“Thank you I will.”

“That’s the best that I can do for you at present.”

“That is more than enough.”

“Then I wish you good luck and good hunting. You may stay around the camp awhile if you like. I am sure there are many questions that you want answered.”

“Thank you once again,” Dave said and left the building.

“So all done then?” Estella said on seeing him.

“Yes,” Dave said, “Stima is to come with us.”

“Good. He will prove most useful.”

“And you mentioned enlightening me?”

“Sure what would you like to know?”

“You mentioned dimensional gateways does that mean that you were once in touch with man?”

“Yes we had a pact. If he tendered the earth properly we would make sure that his food grew well.”

“And how would you do that? Well if you don’t mind me asking.”

“No, nothing is hidden, we would just divert the worlds’ natural energies and this would make the food bigger and more wholesome.”

“Odo mentioned something about that.”

“Yes that was a long time before. That was in the time that man could do it for himself.”

“Before that fall from grace that you mentioned?”

“That’s right Odo came here just before, well just as it was starting.”

“I was told that he had not died a physical death on Earth is that true?”

“That’s right he still has to go back now and again to reinvigorate it.”

“So he doesn’t actually live in this world?”

“He does in the fact he spends more time here. He very rarely has to go back.”

“Oh so how does his body get its sustenance?”

“He doesn’t need it, it mainly stays in a deeply hibernated state.”

“Amazing, and when did you stop communicating with men?”

“When they withheld their side of the bargain was the start and then when they finally stopped believing in us.”

“So they could still see you if they started believing in you once more?”

“Well you did.”

“Me, when was that then?”

“When you freed Freya.”

“I don’t remember.”

“You would have only perceived her as a shadow then. The more conscious you are of your world while you are here the more conscious you are of our world when you are there.”

“I did not realise that.”

“In time, the more often you are here the more conscious you’ll be of both the worlds.”

“Right,” Dave said understanding, “And I’ve a feeling that I will be here for some time yet.”

“Good it is a nice world here, you’ll like it.”

“I’m not sure about that I’ve not been over to the dark-side yet.”

“True,” Estella said with a laugh, “Apart from over there I mean.”

“Have you ever been over?”

“Me, no. I would have no purpose there.”

“Then it’s definitely going to be a leap into the unknown. The only things that have been have never come back.”

“You’ll do well with Stima,” Estella said in seeing his despair, “Now is there anything else I can tell you?”

“Not really but hopefully I will see you again so if I think of anything.”

“Sure I will look forward to it.” They rejoined Kaylie and the rest of the gnomes who had remained outside the camp and Estella wished them good luck before leaving them. Not long after an excited Stima ran up. “She said I can come,” he said panting.

“Good,” Kaylie said, “Then shall we continue?”

“Lead on,” Dave said, “You know the way.”

As they walked off Kaylie said to Dave, “Would you care for some more insight as we have still a way to travel?”

“Sure, why do they call it that anyway?”

“Because it is the ability to look within also knowing it gives you insight in the sense that you have the ability to look within situations.”

“Really and how will that help me?”

“It will give you a deeper understanding. Instead of taking things at face value you will be able to know what the motivational force behind them is.”

“Oh yes I could definitely use that I seem to get conned quite easily.”

“That’s because you have a good heart.”

“How would that equate?”

“Because you have a good heart you expect others to be the same. You tend to forget that other people might see things differently.”

“Yes I can see that. So onto insight then.”

“Well that was once,” Kaylie said with a laugh.

“Oh sorry,” Dave said laughing, “I did not realise.”

“Right, anyway I mentioned the Will and the Self before.”

“Yes, I remember you said that the Self fed on light.”

“That’s right, now the Self before it is enlightened is pretty much in the dark.”

“Was that a joke?”

“No,” Kaylie said laughing, “It’s true. It’s only through the actions of the Will that it grows. Now if you think of the Will as the level of consciousness the Self would be in the subconscious.”

“Right and you said that the Self was guided by the Will, how would that work?”

“The mantra is a good way by repeating it often it drives it home so it becomes part of the nature.”

“I think you’ll have to explain that one to me or perhaps you could give me an example.”

“Sure,” Kaylie said and thought a while before he said, “Yes here’s one. Lack of confidence, do you know what it is in essence.”

“No sorry.”

“Well basically it is a subconscious fear of the unknown, the greater the fear the less the confidence. Does that make sense?”

“I can see it although I did not realise that it come from the subconscious.”

“Oh yes it happens below your level of consciousness. Now if you were to say to yourself, say, seven times in the morning and seven times at night “Pretend that you’ve known them all your life you can catch the details later” you’ll be surprised at the changes it will quickly bring.”

“Really I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Seriously it will be worth your while. It also works with character flaws as well.”

“Character flaws, like what.”

“Well envy, say to yourself “I do not envy” for the same times night and day and you will quickly see the results. We call it self-development.”

“I’ll definitely give it a try.”

“Good you’ll be surprised at the outcome. Now next we will talk about conditioning of Self on a physical level.”

“Right so mantras are conditioning on a mental level.”

“That’s right, physical is slightly different. Now say that you decided to go for a walk for a mile every morning.”

“I don’t know about that to tell you the truth I was never much one for walking.”

“Then initially it would be a struggle but given time you would get into the routine and you would think nothing of it.”

“Yes I can see that, you’re not suggesting that I start doing it are you?”

“No,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “But for your health’s sake it might be a good idea. Anyway once it has become part of your nature you could probably expand it and say walk for two miles instead of one. See what I am saying, you will be that used to walking that mile that it would be nothing to you while others who haven’t will think that walking a mile would be an ordeal.”

“Oh right, yes I see. And you are sure that you don’t want me to be walking that mile?”

“No I’m just trying to explain to you about conditioning of Self. What I’m saying is that you can actually change your nature.”

“Yes I can see that so when you start doing things they become a habit and so not an ordeal.”

“You’ve got it, doing things like that will give you more control of your life for you will be able to conquer your negative flaws.”

“Walking a mile?”

“Sloth quite a major hurdle to climb for quite a lot of people.”

“Yes I look around the world today and I can see the truth in what you say.”

“Not your problem really you look in pretty good shape. No it was just an example. Don’t take it personally.”

“Right that was probably just a little self consciousness that’s all.”

“Ah self consciousness now that’s probably a good topic to look into.”

“I won’t disagree it is something that I would love to get to know about.”

“Well we’ll give it ago, what do you know about it for a start?”

“Not a lot I’m afraid. I’m very ignorant in the matter to be honest with you.”

“Well we’ll see what we can do. Now to make sense of things the mind needs a hook.”

“Sorry?”

“It needs to hook onto things generally speaking it does this by equating the knowledge with its experience.”

“You mean like putting my hand in the fire?”

“That’s right. Now we will call the actual experience Soul-consciousness. Self consciousness is when you equate the knowledge to yourself without having actually experienced it. Another expression you could use would be that you take things personally.”

“Like me and that walking the mile, I guess.”

“That’s right, now once you get rid of your ego, you don’t exist and so you can’t be self conscious.”
“Don’t exist?”
“As an entity you have become your purpose and have also realised that self consciousness comes from pride and so should have no place in your heart.”
“Why is that then? I mean I am not being funny but I thought that pride would be a good thing to have. Doesn’t it give you a sense of self worth?”
“Pride is what gives you self consciousness it is what actually gets in the way of you achieving your purpose. Now I mentioned taking things personally, you can also do that after experiencing things and this brings forward another type of self consciousness for what of a better word we will call it boasting.”
“Is that sort of a positive form of self consciousness?”
“In a very shallow sort of way for self consciousness is not really what you would call a positive attribute. It is a very hard thing to get rid off because as I said earlier the mind has to hook into things.”
“I can see that. So how would I actually go about getting rid of it?”
“Get in the habit of not talking about yourself if you have to try and talk through the third party.”
“Sorry?”
“I know a man as opposed to I. Once it is engraved in your being, self consciousness should soon disappear. You are actually destined to evolve out of it eventually, this just helps it along.”
“I’ll give it a try,” Dave said and looking ahead, “Is that a pheasant?” Kaylie looked at where Dave was looking and said, “That’s Dula. I have not seen him in a while, “and called him over.
“Kaylie,” Dula said and then to Dave, “You’re a mortal if I am not mistaken”
“Er. That’s right.”
“I have heard of your kind and to be honest I did not expect to see you in our world. Are you two on adventure?”
“Yes,” Dave said, “We are to try and rescue Queen Nomi.”
“Ah, a raid on the dark side, that’s a noble adventure, I wish you well for I don’t think that it has been tried before.”
“Thanks, er, so what actually is your purpose?”
“I am symbolic of fellowship if you see me that means that you are in good company.”
“Well I won’t argue with that. I don’t think that I could be in better.”
“I am also here to tell you about the greater good. Moat sent me because she thought that it might prove useful to your purpose.”
“All knowledge gratefully received, so what actually is the greater good?”
“It is for the good of the many as opposed to personal selfish gain. It is an action without self interest for the betterment of your kind. When you work for the greater good you uphold your purpose so grow in understanding as to what your purpose actually is.”
“Right that will help me to get rid of my self consciousness as well won’t it?”
“That’s right you’ll evolve a lot quicker if you always work for the greater good.”
“I’ll bear that in mind,” Dave said and with that Dula changed into Moat before disappearing.
“She’s a sharp one,” Kaylie said, “I had forgotten to mention that.”
“Did you know it was her?”
“No,” Kaylie admitted, “I thought it was Dula. So a quick recap then always try and talk through the third party and always work for the greater good and it might be good to throw in a mantra to speed it on the way.”
“What like?”
Kaylie thought a while before he said, “What about this for one “I do not exist in person only as purpose” try that see how you get on.”
“I’ll give it a try. I think that I would definitely like to get rid of it, it seems quite a handicap.”
“Good, now to back track a little you thought that having pride was a good thing.”

“Er. I know different now.”

“Good, you were pretty much in the dark about it though. That’s how it works it feeds of your ignorance.”

“Well I don’t know about that.”

“Did I mention about taking things personally?” Kaylie said with a laugh.

“Oh,” Dave said duly chastened.

“Don’t worry it feeds of everyone’s ignorance. No, I mentioned pride for a particular reason it is actually a character flaw, it is one of the handmaidens of Narda.”

“Oh right,” Dave said taking a fresh interest.

“It is now time to define them to give you some idea of what you are up against. First things first, do you know any of them?”

“Pride, envy,” Dave said and thought awhile before he said, “Sloth.”

“That’s three of them you also have gluttony, lechery, avarice and finally Narda herself who is anger.”

“So that’s pride, sloth, gluttony, lechery, avarice and anger left. That should come in handy I have more of an idea now. It’s a shame that you don’t know their actual names though, I could have associated them a lot better.”

“They never give their names for that reason. You might be able to find them out from one of the animals in the dark-side but I would not hold out too much hope and besides I wouldn’t really want to trust them as they might be manifestations.”

“Yes I see what you are saying but you have given me a good start so I am happy, well happier than before.”

“Well things are looking up then which is just as well as we are about to leave the forest.”

The tree had sparsened out and in the distance they saw mountains that formed an impressive wall. Behind the mountains was only darkness.

“We don’t have to climb do we?” Dave said in shock.

“No there is a narrow passageway here is where Stelth stands guard.”

“One thing that puzzles me, however did they manage to get out to actually kidnap Queen Nomi?”

“Now that I don’t know unless it was the goblins but they would still have to sneak her back.”

“We’ll have to ask her once she’s safe.”

“Anyway we will rest here. We can talk some more until you grow tired.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and they all made themselves comfortable.

“So three days of darkness lie ahead,” Doug said, “I hope that goose is keeping an eye on that bucket Dixie as you know how draining it will be.”

“She’ll do well,” Dixie answered, “I would be more worried by the fact you have used up your spell.”

“Oh,” Doug said and went quiet.

“Never mind Doug,” Zinbar said, “After tomorrow Valentine and me will be in the same boat.”

“Thanks for reminding me,” Valentine said, “I was alright till you mentioned it.”

“It’s not a big thing,” Kaylie said, “We will be alright if we tread carefully. Besides Stima will sniff out a goblin before it can get too close.”

“True,” Doug said, “It’s just a shame that you can’t do it with Narda and her handmaidens.”

“You know I’m not sure about that,” Stima said, “That possession left a strange brimstone like aroma. I know I would recognise it again.”

“Maybe,” Kaylie said, “Although they are not all forced to have it.”

“True, but if I do smell anything I will definitely tell you.”

“Good, and hopefully they will all have it. You know thinking further into it there’s a good chance that they will.”

“There is?”

“Yes after all they came from the same essence, Narda.”

“And you can smell these out at a distance?” Dave said thinking that his chances were definitely picking up.

“Oh a fair distance though it has a lot to do with the wind. If I’m upwind it is virtually impossible.”

“And is there much wind in the dark-side?” Dave said turning to Kaylie.

“I don’t even know that. I’m afraid that the dark-side is an alien world to me.”

“Well it’s still a good advantage anyway,” Dave said, “Definitely a thing worth having.”

“Now confrontation,” Kaylie said, “What are your thoughts on the matter?”

“Sorry?”

“Do we avoid it or do we take it head on?”

“Tricky that, originally I was just intending to sneak in and hopefully avoid it but now I am a little wiser about the place. I know what they actually are and even how to defeat them.”

“Well I’m guessing that you will have to take Narda head on. We’ll be in there a day and a half so there will be a very good chance that she will find us.”

“I was thinking that myself.”

“And with each handmaiden defeated she will get a little weaker.”

“Are you suggesting actually hunt them out?”

“Oh no but there is a good chance they will be hunting you. I would suggest that if we come across them en route that we deal with them but that will leave us in a predicament.”

“It would?”

“It will alert her to the fact that something has actually entered her world, she will be a lot more guarded.”

“It must be done though for as you said with each one down she will get a little weaker. What about goblins?”

“You should be safe with them. They are not of her essence so their end will not affect her.”

“Good,” Dave said and tiredness overcame him.

Dave woke up and checked the time. It was 8 o’clock so he quickly got dressed and made himself some breakfast. He remembered that he had a half full tin of white gloss paint that he could use to paint the fence so after he had eaten he went to look for it. He found it under the sink where much to his surprise he found four small tins of Hammerite paint, all of different colours, that he had long forgotten existed. “I could paint the gnomes with this,” he said aloud to himself, “They should come up well,” and put all the tins in a plastic bag then made the short journey over to Mrs. Lewisham’s. As he was taking some tools out of the shed Ethel came out with a cup of coffee and said, “I see you have about filled that pond those poor frogs will be looking for a new home.”

“I’ll be evicting them from the reservoir today, there are about forty of them you know.”

“I can well imagine. It used to be a very popular place for frogs I can tell you. And you got rid of that eye sore as well I see.”

“Yes I used it to fill the pond the back looks a lot more open now.”

“Oh yes it’s a lot better and especially as you have got rid of all that ivy. So what’s on the agenda for today?”

“Fill the reservoir, slab the pond and I’ve got some stones coming at dinner. It should start taking shape now.”

“Sounds like you have a busy day,” Ethel said taking the mug of him, “I’d best let you get on with it,” and went back inside. Dave evicted the frogs then took the rake and spade and started taking some of the top soil from where the conifers had been. The soil was well above the level of the pathway so he had plenty to use. Soon the wheelbarrow had its first load. He had to lift it up to tip it in which proved quite heavy so he decided to put less in the next one. The soil itself did not make much of an impression telling him that he had quite a few journeys to make but as the soil was easy to dig this was not an ordeal. Barrowful after barrowful was removed and very soon the reservoir was three quarters full. The barrow had fallen apart by then so Dave had to resort to the plastic bin which made the job slightly more difficult but as it was near completion Dave did not mind. The

excess soil from the garden bed just filled the reservoir so Dave used soil from the bed that Jane had cleared the bulbs out of to finish off the garden pond. That done he cut up some of the plastic bags from the green house and put them on the pond, slabbing it the best he could. As the pond was oval in shape he reasoned that he would finish it off with stones so left it at that. Next Dave cut up some more plastic bags and laid them on the smaller garden bed. He had to cut holes in them for the three plants and pierce holes in them for drainage but that was quickly done. The area around the now dismantled feature had been stoned after a fashion so he raked it up and put it on the smaller bed. That done he put some of the rocks that had been at the base of the structure around the Belfast sink which seemed to finish it off nicely. Dave got the last of the bags from the green house, cut them up and laid them where he had raked the stones from. He used the rocks that were left over as weights and managed to cover about a third of the area. As he was finishing off Adam came round, "The stone's here, do you want to give me a hand to unload them?"

"Sure and just in time for I've about run out of things to do."

"You've done some work this morning. It really is starting to take shape. I wish I'd have brought them roses now. You look like you will soon be ready for them."

"I think I'll need three days to paint the wall and fence. That wall's bare stone so it looks like it will take two coats."

"Rather you than me, I wouldn't like to have to paint round all those holes."

"Oh I'm not looking forward to it don't you worry about that. Hopefully with the second coat I will just have to paint the face."

"Hopefully," Adam said and then on seeing the gnomes, "And where ever did you find them?"

"The gnomes, they were dotted all around the garden. I thought I might paint them up as Jane said her mother likes them. You're not going to believe it but she's given them all names."

"Really, mind you I have heard that some people do, they get quite attached to them."

"It was a complete surprise to me, and one of them, I think she called it Zinbar, even farts if you get close to it."

"Get away."

"No it's true," Dave said, went over and picked it up, "It's this one here."

"Then how come it didn't, you're having a laugh."

Dave turned it upside down and opened a plastic cover that was underneath it, "It just needs some batteries that's all. Two double A's by the look of it."

"I'll soon prove you wrong then as I've got some in the van. Oh and I will also fetch that squirrel whilst I'm there," and left Dave for a few minutes. After he came back he gave Dave the batteries and said, "Try these for size."

Dave put them in and switched it on and sure enough the gnome started to flatulate, "Told you," he said in a triumphant tone.

"Well I never did, it's amazing what they come up with nowadays."

"And you've brought the squirrel I see," and Adam passed it to him. Dave looked at it and said, "Yes that should do the trick."

"I even drilled some holes in the base. That should make it easier to fix. I'll put it on now if you like."

"Sure, I would like to see how it looks."

Adam screwed the base of the squirrel to the top of the stump and stood back before saying, "Yes it looks alright, it's definitely saved you a job."

"Do you think that she'll like it though?"

"She'll be made up, besides she will be that happy with the garden anyway, this will just be a bonus."

"That's the main thing."

"Don't you like it then?"

"Oh it's alright it's just not my sort of thing."

“Like the gnomes I suppose,” Adam said with a laugh.

“Well normally but I’ve got to admit these have something about them.”

“They fart,” Adam said laughing, “Perhaps they can talk as well?”

“Jane’s dog can,” Dave said laughing.

“Sorry?”

“She holds it and talks to it and it starts howling. You ought to see it, it’s weird.”

“I’ll have to take your word for that. Anyway shall we get those stones shifted? Oh and I brought the bark for around the roses as well, save making two journeys. What are you like for plastic sheeting by the way?”

“I’ve just ran out,” Dave said following him down the entry, “I can use the bags from the stones though I’m not sure if there’ll be enough.”

“Well if you need any more just give us a bell,” Adam said as he took off the first bag, “Jeez there’s some weight in these.”

Dave took off one for himself and agreed, “And we’ve got to cart all these down the entry.”

“Have you got a wheel barrow it will save a lot of trouble.”

“I used to but the thing fell apart, not that long ago in fact.”

“That’s just our luck, well it looks like we’ve got our work cut out,” and started the long trek to the bottom of the garden. Dave followed him and pretended to struggle just as much so Adam would not try to leave him to it. As they got to the bottom of the garden Adam put the first bag down and said, “It feels like my fingers have been pulled from my hands.”

“Try carrying them the way I do, support it from underneath.” They walked back and Adam tried it Dave’s way and found it easier. He still needed to stop at the end journey for a rest though. “Hang on a minute just let me get my breath back.”

“Sure,” Dave said not really tired, “I know what you mean.”

“I hope she appreciates all this hard work we’ve done,” Adam said much to Dave’s surprise, “It’s not easy this.”

“I know what you are saying, how ever did you manage to load all this up in the builder’s yard?”

“Me, God no, they pay people good money to do that, not me.”

“Oh,” Dave said laughing to himself.

“No, manual work you can keep it, it’s for the losers I reckon, no offense.”

“None taken, I’ve lost pounds in weight.”

“Rather you than me, I would rather be fat and happy then thin and miserable.”

“Each to his own I guess,” Dave said shaking his head in disbelief.

“No, don’t get me wrong if people are happy to do this sort of thing then good luck to them. Me, on the other hand, I was made for other things.”

“Really what other things?”

“Well I’m more of a leader of men, a motivator, not a doer of things. No through me others work harder.”

“Really.”

“Well look at you for a start under my guidance and help you’ve done all this.”

“Sorry?”

“Well let’s be honest if it wasn’t for my help you wouldn’t have done half of what you did.”

“You think so,” Dave said in surprise.

“Sure, if I hadn’t have got rid of those trees and brought in the materials where would you have been.”

“True,” Dave said not believing his ears but deciding to play along with it anyway.

“Yes but most people are not like you they can’t see it that way.”

“Ungrateful bastards,” Dave said suppressing the urge to laugh.

“My thoughts exactly, you do these people favours and they expect you to do the work.”

“Yes true,” Dave said guessing which way the conversation was going, “Let’s get the rest of these

bags in,” and headed back to the van. Reluctantly Adam followed and they both carried on. The rest of the van was unloaded and as he took a rest before going Adam said, “I’m glad that’s over, are you alright for money?”

“Well I could do with some.”

Adam took out his wallet and paid him up to date, “That should keep you going for a while. I will give you the rest on completion. Another 3 days wasn’t it?”

“Four including the roses and bark I would guess and any final touches.”

“Well fair enough. I’ve seen what you are doing and know that you are not standing around. There might even be a bit of a bonus at the end of the job from what you have saved on materials.”

“I won’t argue with that it will all come in handy.”

“You’ve worked well for it. I would say that you have made an old woman happy.”

“Well I hope so. It seems a shame the way she has been treated.”

“If there’s a God in Heaven then justice will prevail. Anyway I’ve got things to be getting on with. I will bring the roses around tomorrow shall I?”

“Yes a couple of days soaked in water should do them the world of good.”

Adam left and Dave got back to work. He started emptying the bags on the ground that had had plastic put over it and was surprised at how little of the ground they actually covered. He was on his sixth bag when a voice interrupted him, “I can’t believe how good you have got it.”

He turned and saw Jane, “You’ve just missed Adam he helped me carry the stones.”

“What seriously, you had him doing some work?”

“Oh yes, I think it was the first time that he had sweated in his life.”

“He’ll get over it I guess,” Jane said with a laugh, “By the way I like what you have done with the sink. Those stones look a lot better there.”

“Thanks, I thought they would hide the sink.”

“Yes they’ve done it well. Are you going to put the otter in front of it?”

“Could do I’ve never really give it much thought to tell you the truth. I’ll paint it first though.”

“Really, what colour?”

“Well white actually,” Dave said reluctant to tell her that was the only colour he really had.

“Yes I can see it white. It’s not their natural colour but it will give it a magical sort of feel.”

“My thoughts exactly,” Dave said lying, “I thought I would spruce up the gnomes as well. Well if that’s alright with you.”

“Yes sure my mother would love that. Have you got any paint because if not I could fetch it from the pound shop?”

“I’ve got some thanks,” Dave said and showed it her, “It’s only four colours I’m afraid but I think it should be enough.”

“Oh yes, I would say so.”

“By the way,” Dave said remembering, “Adam’s going to fetch the roses so that should save you a trip.”

“Fair enough, are we still alright with the finances?”

“I presume so I’ve never really put him down as a charitable man. Mind you he did bring that squirrel.”

“Sorry?”

“Oh you haven’t noticed then, come and have a look,” and took her to the squirrel.

“I knew that there was something different, you’ve cut down that big conifer tree.”

“Yes it was blocking off a lot of light into the yard.”

“My mother will be pleased and surprised she didn’t think there would be enough to cover it.”

“We saved a bit on the pond, so what do you think of the squirrel then?”

“Well my mother will like it that’s the main thing.”

“Sounds like we have pretty similar views,” Dave said with a laugh, “Adam assures me its all the rage but I’m not sure if he was saying it to get rid of it.”

“Well there is that I suppose.”

“I’m not complaining mind, it saves me having to dig up all those roots.”

“There is that as well,” Jane said laughing, “Now while I am here is there anything I could give you a hand with?”

“You can bulb the reservoir if you like. I’ve filled it with soil it just wants bulbing out.”

“Sure, you’ve filled the reservoir as well, you must have been busy and I’ve noticed that you have slabbed the pond too, when did you do all this?”

“This morning.”

“You must have got here early.”

“About 8.30.”

“You don’t stand around then?”

“Makes the day drag actually I think that I had better stone the pond before I continue with the rest of the stoning.”

“In case you haven’t enough?”

“Well yes but I don’t see it as a problem as I can spread the stones more thinly.”

“Right, well I’ll get started then.” As Jane planted the bulbs in the reservoir trough Dave filled in the gaps around the pond. It took three bags to do but Dave reasoned that he would still have enough.

“All finished,” Jane said after she had done, “Would it be a good idea to put some of those rocks around the Pampas Grass? I’ve seen it when I was abroad and it looked pretty good.”

“Sure,” Dave said and moved some of the rocks. After he had finished he said, “Yes they do look good.”

“Now anything else?”

“Well you could cut up some of those bags and lay them in front of me. I could follow you and it would quickly be done.”

“Yes why not,” Jane said and carried on. The ground was soon covered and Dave was not far behind her. She had to leave virtually as soon as she had laid the last sheet but Ethel came out not long after to console him with a cup of tea.

“You make a good team,” she said as he emptied the last bag, “I saw you from the window.”

“Thanks,” he said as he took the mug from her, “I think that’s probably it for today.”

“It looks about finished, just the part of the garden where the conifers used to be.”

“I’ve got some roses coming and then I am going to put bark down. I’ve got six empty plastic bags so that should give me a good start.”

“Sorry?”

“I lay them on the ground before I put the bark down,” Dave said elaborating.

“Oh I see. So you will probably be finished tomorrow then?”

“I’ve got about three days of painting before then, the wall, the front fence, the gnomes and otter.”

“Gnomes and otter,” Ethel said with a laugh, “You are thorough.”

“Well it will look nice when it’s done,” Dave said by way of justification, “That’s the main thing.”

“True, I like what you have done with the squirrel by the way.”

“You do, I wasn’t sure.”

“Yes it looks good believe me. She’ll love it I know that for a fact.”

“Do you?”

“Oh yes anything like that she was always keen on, you know that she gave all her gnomes names?”

“Yes Jane told me, is that usual?”

“Well I’ve heard about it before. She is the only one that I know who has actually done it though.”

“It takes all sorts I guess,” Dave said with a laugh.

“So you think that it will take another four days then?”

“I would say so, at the most.”

“Then I will tell you what, you’ve done well, very well indeed. You would have got on well with

Arthur he liked to work as well. He said that it made the day go quickly.”
“My thoughts exactly, yes I think I probably would then, so what did he do?”
“Landscape gardener, he tamed many a jungle I can tell you. I think he would have liked what you have done with this place. Yes he would have been very impressed.”
“Er thanks,” Dave said, not really knowing what else to say.
“Anyway I expect that you will be in a hurry to get off. After all that work you have done I am willing to bet that you are tired.”
“Well it was hard going for a while I must admit,” Dave said and passed her his empty mug, “I’ve a couple of less strenuous days ahead though so I’m not complaining.”
“I’ll leave you to pack the tools away then,” Ethel said before saying good bye.
Dave packed most of the tools away but took back a couple that were no longer needed. He was going to take a few back each day so it would not be much of a struggle. When he arrived back he made himself something to eat before settling down before he went to bed at 10.30.

Chapter 4.

Dave woke up to the sound of restless gnomes, his initial thoughts were back in his world but they soon passed and were forgotten. “Up and at them,” Ben said, “There’s work to be done.”
“Sorry about that,” Kaylie said, “I hope that we did not wake you up too early for I know you will need your strength.”
“It’s alright,” Dave said, “But what was all that noise?”
“I’m afraid we were just getting ourselves in the right frame of mind. We do this through chanting and dancing.”
“Oh, well I think so anyway.”
“It’s a gnome thing Moat told me that it doesn’t work with men.”
“Has she been back then?”
“No this was earlier, another occasion. Anyway we have a lioness to see.”
Dave got up and they all crossed a small tract of shrub-land until they came to the entrance and saw the lioness. She was huge, a lot larger than a normal one which was large enough.
“You may pass through except one,” she said and looked at Dave, “You must prove yourself.”
“How?” Dave said playing to form.
“You must answer me three questions but I warn that if you fail you forfeit your life. Do you still crave entrance to the dark-side?”
“I do.”
“Very well, what is the power of love?”
“Evolution of the Soul and expansion of the spiritual consciousness.”
“Very well,” she said somewhat taken aback, “You still have two more yet to answer.”
“I am ready.”
“What is the direction of love?”
“The direction of love is a Self loving purpose,” Dave said remembering back.
“Right,” she said even more surprised, “So finally the last question. What is love in essence?”
“Light,” Dave said and with that Stelth turned to stone.
“I don’t like that,” Kaylie said, “I don’t like that at all.”
“We’ve passed,” Dave said not understanding.
“Oh yes but look at the effect the passage is unguarded now. They could raid us any time they wanted.”
“Ah, yes that would make it a very mixed blessing.”
“It could not be helped I suppose. Zinbar, Valentine, do you want to scout ahead?”
Zinbar and Valentine said the spell aloud and both disappeared. Whilst they were waiting for their return Kaylie said, “I did not realise that she would be turned to stone this is most disturbing.”
“Yes, we won’t be safe after our return from the dark-side. We will be always on guard, is there

anything we can do?"

"I cannot think of anything and we are out of Moat's range now so she can't help us."

"What about Queen Nema," Dave said turning to Stima.

He went quiet for a while before saying, "She says that she knows of nothing and suggests attack as the best form of defence. Destroy them all their side so they can not follow."

"I don't know about that that means we will have to be over there a lot longer than I had first expected."

"If it must be done," Stima said, "She also said that with every hand maiden defeated the dark side will get a little lighter and we should use it as a gauge."

"Then it must be done," Dave said accepting it.

"All clear my side," Zinbar's voice came out of nowhere.

"We'll start our way in then," Kaylie said, "Zinbar scout on ahead just in case. We won't actually cross over until Valentine comes back."

They started to make their way through the narrow passageway, the darkness making it difficult to travel. As they came to the opening of the dark-side itself Kaylie said, "We'll wait here, what's keeping Valentine?"

"I'm here," Valentine's voice said.

"Then why didn't you speak up earlier?" Kaylie said.

"I've only just got here it's all clear."

"Good," Kaylie said, "Zinbar, are you still here?"

"Yes."

"Can you see Valentine?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Right, I want you to keep close to each other and scout a little ahead. You will know when the spell wears off then."

"Fair enough," Zinbar said, "One of us will come back and warn you if there's trouble."

"Good, now if you come across a goblin and want to deal with it yourself, you are more than welcome."

"Right," Valentine said, "We just say his name backwards don't we?"

"That's right," Kaylie said, "Good luck," and they set off. The rest of the group gave them a 10 minute start and then followed. As they crossed the shrub-land before reaching the darkened forest Kaylie said, "So this is the dark-side. We have always talked about it but I never thought that I would end up being actually over here. It's not much different really, only darker."

"True," Ben said, "Mind you we haven't really entered it properly yet so who will know what we will find."

"Smell anything yet Stima?" Dave said.

"Nothing yet, not an animal nothing. It is completely void of life."

"Good, we'll soon be amongst the trees hopefully that will give us more cover." They crossed through the darkness and into the trees with still no sign of life. The darkness, although not pitch black, was still dark enough to mean that Dave could not see too far ahead so they were not moving very quickly.

Up ahead meanwhile Eixid was indulging in his favourite hobby, torturing the rats. He used to love to tie their tails together and watch them struggle to free themselves. Sometimes much to his joy a tail would be pulled off and the winner would scamper off with two tails where once it had one. He had found that this re-tail therapy was good for his stress and today he had definitely needed it. Neb had been onto him constantly, picking faults and basically making his life hell. It was not his fault that Seba had died and just because Queen Narda took it out on Neb there was no reason for Neb to take it out on him.

"Why are you doing this?" a panic stricken rat said, "We have done nothing to you, why do you persecute us?"

“Because I can.”
 “That’s no answer.”
 “It’s good enough for you now pull.”
 “No.”
 “Pull I said,” Eixid said losing his temper.
 “I would rather not, I might lose my tail.”
 “You will pull,” Eixid said, his anger well ignited. He was that engrossed that he did not hear the bush behind him. He did feel the force of being pushed to the ground though.
 “Got him Valentine,” Zinbar said, “Release the rats.”
 “What is this,” Eixid said, “Who are you?”
 “I am Zinbar.”
 “Zinbar, Zinbar the gnome, how is it that I cannot see you?”
 “That’s something you don’t need to know. What you need to know is that I know your name and I also know that saying it will be your death.”
 “Ah.”
 “They’ve free,” Valentine said.
 “Good,” Zinbar said, “Come over, I would like to find out why they kidnapped Busta.”
 “Yes I was wondering that myself.”
 “So?” Zinbar said to Eixid.
 “It was nothing to do with me it came direct from Queen Narda herself. He hadn’t a counterpart in our world so she wanted him to swing the balance of power. That’s all I know.”
 “Oh you know a lot more,” Zinbar said, “I want to know whereabouts the dungeon is in relationship to the castle.”
 “It’s not far from the entrance, to the left of the main court yard. Are you here to release him?”
 “That’s something you don’t need to know either. Now you have been helpful to us and our appreciation of this fact will be shown.”
 “You mean that you are to let me go?”
 “That would depend on your answer to my last question.”
 “Well if I can help.”
 “Right, what is your name?”
 “What, I have been useful to you, why have you asked me that?”
 “Because I can Eixid,” Zinbar said and watched Eixid turn to dust.
 “Cruel,” Valentine said with a laugh, “I thought you were going to actually let him go for a moment.”
 “No, not after what I saw him doing to those poor rats. Speaking of which where have they gone?”
 “I am still here,” a rat said coming out from under one of the bushes, “Didu has gone though.”
 “We are strangers to your land,” Zinbar said, “We were wondering if you could help us.”
 “Sure, my name is Sila and I will do all that I can.”
 “Are there many of you?”
 “Countless.”
 “There are others that follow us. I would like to lay a trail before we get too deeply into your world for there is a good chance we might get lost.”
 “That is easily done although I don’t think that my friends will be able to see yours.”
 “They are not invisible, five gnomes and a mortal. They are not far behind us. Would you have some of your kind stationed to meet them?”
 “Sure, do you want us to guide you through? We can only take you to the edge of the forest as I am afraid after that we are no longer in our land.”
 “That would be good if you could. You must tell them our names though so they know you are genuine.”
 “Sorry?”

“We have heard that the handmaidens of Narda can manifest themselves as animals. They will be suspicious of you at first but tell them you were asked by Zinbar and Valentine and that they have one goblin less to deal with. That should sate them.”

“Fair enough, I will do that myself and I will get my friends to go up ahead and wait for you. Do you want us to wait your return also?”

“If you could,” Zinbar said and reappeared.

“The spell has wore off,” Valentine said, “We may as well wait here and tell them ourselves.”

“I will tell my friends to start laying a trail,” Sila said, “I won’t be long,” and ran off back into the bushes.

“Do you think that he will return?” Valentine said.

“Yes I should think so, well hope so anyway as over here he is the only friend we have got.”

Sila returned after a few minutes and said, “I have put the word around and it will soon be done.”

“Good,” Zinbar said, “Thank you. May we ask you some questions about your world as I’m afraid we are very ignorant of it.”

“Anything you like. If I know the answer I will gladly tell you it.”

“What other animals are in the forest and are they friendly like you?”

With that the rest of the group appeared and Zinbar brought them up to date about Eixid and the trail.

“Good,” Kaylie said, “And what are the other animals like?”

“I was just asking when you came.”

“The animals are few but friendly,” Sila said, “There are just us rats and the bats. They hate the goblins as much as we do.”

“Good,” Kaylie said, “And Narda’s handmaidens, do they ever come into the forest?”

“Only Atman, she collects bats’ wings for her potions.”

“Bats’ wings, what she just pulls them off?”

“Yes, bats’ wings and rats’ tails. I don’t know what she does with them but she uses quite a few.”

“And goblins, do many come here?”

“They all do occasionally, not an everyday occurrence but quite often.”

“Past the forest, do you know much about it there?”

“Sorry no but I have heard that the animals are a lot more inclined to Narda, some anyway as I would not like to tar them all with the same brush.”

“We’ll have to take our chances there then,” Kaylie said and then turning to Dave, “It looks like the first day will be quite easy and hopefully with the rats help so will the last.”

“I won’t argue with that.”

“I have told my friends that if they see something en route to warn you,” Sila said, “But generally speaking apart from the odd cat raid it’s very quiet.”

“Cats,” Dave said, “Are they allied to queen Narda?”

“Loosely. They do what they want when they want. If they think you would make a better ally I would say they would join you.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” Dave said and laughed before he said, “Well Stima it looks like you will be guiding us by smelling rats.”

“That’s what I do best.”

“Before we go I had better inform you that we will not be traveling back all together,” Kaylie said,

“We will probably be in three groups. Three of us will be waiting at the edge of the forest though so your friends will know when we have passed.”

“I will see that the message gets through before you return,” Sila said, “How long do you expect to be away for?”

“Just a day hopefully.”

“Plenty of time, I wish you good luck and a safe return.”

They set off on their way and it was not long before they passed their first rat. Rat after rat they

passed until they were well over half way through. Around then they passed a rat that called them over. "I am Stutt, Jula of the bats has asked me to ask you if he might talk with you for a while."

"Sure," Dave said and a bat flew over. "I am sorry to disturb you," it said, "But I was hoping that as you helped out Sila you might find it in your heart to help me."

"Well if we can, what's the matter?"

"It's Atman, she's in the forest not far from here. She has wiped out most of my kin and if she carries on I fear that there will be none of us left."

"And what do you want us to do?"

"Destroy her like you did the goblin. I have heard that you turned him into dust. Couldn't you do the same with her?"

"I'll need to know more about her. I know she's a handmaiden but I need to know what she is in essence."

"Sorry?"

"What motivates her actions, only by knowing that can I destroy her?"

"I don't know," Jula said with more than a hint of disappointment.

"She makes potions doesn't she?"

"Er yes, she uses our wings in them. That is what she is doing now, collecting them."

"And these potions, what are they actually for?"

"I'm not sure, love I think."

Dave looked at Kaylie and said, "I will go alone, it will be less suspicious."

"Are you sure?"

"It has to be this way," and then to Jula, "Could you guide me to her?"

"Yes, follow me," and took them to an opening not far from where they were. Dave took in her form and she was by no stretch of the imagination a demon. She was beautiful, long auburn hair that swept across her face, she had the look of a goddess and Dave was positively (or should that be negatively) enchanted. He composed himself though and walked over to her, "Excuse me," he said playing the fool, "I seem to be lost."

"You are indeed my fine looking man, for that is what you are is it not?"

"Er that's right."

"And however did you come to be here for it is not often that we are graced."

"I er just woke up here."

"A lost astral traveler, I have heard that it has happened before. So tell me, do you find me attractive?"

"Yes."

"Then maybe your thoughts have led you to me and if that's the case it must be for a reason," and came up closer and in a sultry voice said, "And what do you think that reason might be?"

"Er I don't know," Dave said, "Lechery," and with that she exploded into dust.

Meanwhile in the Palace of Narda another part of Narda died and her world got a little lighter. She stumbled back but the wall stopped her from falling. "Neb, Neb," she cried, "Fetch me my looking glass," and this was quickly done. "Nothing," she said looking into it, "Just an empty forest. Atman is dead, what is happening here?"

"And Eixid has not returned," Neb said, "He has been out all night."

"What do I care about a measly goblin," she snapped angrily, "Two of my sisters have gone, fell to some unseen hand. What is happening, I want to know what is happening?"

Back with Kaylie Dave had returned and with a smile on his face he said, "Is it me or has it just got lighter?"

"Thank you," Jula said, "I am beholden to you. Anything you ask and I will do my best to fulfill it."

"Information is what we really need," Dave said, "Do you know much about the land beyond the forest?"

"A little."

“And the animals,” Dave said picking up slightly, “Do you know if they are friendly?”

“Out of them all the only ones you can really trust are the badgers. Cats and foxes tend to change as their taste suits them and as for the snails and slugs, well I wouldn’t trust them far.”

“Right, and can your kind travel in the land past the forest?”

“Yes, we go quite often.”

“Could you arrange it for us to meet with the badgers, at the edge of the forest perhaps?”

“I could try.”

“That’s about it really.”

“I will do my best. Thanks once more and good luck,” and flew off.

“So what do you want to meet up with the badgers for,” Kaylie said after he had gone.

“It’s good to have a friend when you are in a foreign land and any enemy of Narda’s if a friend of ours.”

“Well there is that I suppose and they might prove useful to us somehow.”

“They’ll know the lie of the land and we might even be able to get them to guide us to the castle.”

“True,” Kaylie said and looked up into the sky, “Well we can see a little clearer now, was it difficult?”

“Well I must admit I was sorely tempted,” Dave said with a laugh, “I thought that it might have been lechery when Jula said she made love potions and on seeing her, well it just confirmed it.”

“That good eh,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “Anyway it does not do to dwell on negative things. Shall we be on our way?”

“Sure,” Dave said and they started off once more. After awhile he said, “I wonder what Narda’s thinking.”

“She’ll be pretty much in the dark,” Kaylie said, “She will feel the pain but won’t know how they fell so I’m guessing she’ll be pretty angry.”

Back in Narda’s castle Kaylie’s predictions were perfect. She had gathered the remaining goblins together and was laying down her law. “Something is going on and I don’t like it,” she bellowed, “I want action and I want it now. Go around to all the animals and find out what they know. Neb.”

“Yes Great Queen,” Neb said reverently.

“Where was that last place that Eixid was going to?”

“To the forest.”

“To the forest,” she said to herself before saying to the rest of the goblins, “Are you still here?” They all scampered off except Neb who was about to go but was stopped, “Not you Neb.”

“Your majesty,” Neb said and waited for the rest of the goblins to leave. After they had gone she said, “Right let’s weigh up what we know. Seba was lost over on the other side, not far from the entrance. You said that Eixid was lost in the forest, well so was Atman.”

“Right,” Neb said taking it in.

“Fool, can’t you see it. It means that whatever is doing this is heading our way.”

“Yes I can see that now Great Queen.”

“So if it is heading here it must be for a purpose. Find out that purpose and we will be halfway to defeating it.”

“Yes you are right Great Queen.”

“Fool, fool you are no good to me. You have no input to give. I will need my sisters for this. Go, raise Sula from her bed, get Dilt from the dining room and fetch Conu from the treasury.”

Nebu quickly scampered off and soon a tired Sula appeared, “What is it Narda, you know I need my 12 hours.”

“Two of your sisters are dead and all you do is sleep,” Narda said angrily.

“What,” Sula said yawning, “Why wasn’t I informed?”

“Neb,” Narda said looking angrily at him.

“I could not wake her up,” Neb said sheepishly. Dilt and Conu had appeared by then so they got down to the business in hand.

“There’s something strange going on,” Narda said, “Two sisters and a goblin are no longer with us. I do not know what caused their demise but I do know its heading our way.”

“Then we’ll deal with it when it gets here,” Sula said, “I don’t see what the fuss is, can I go back to bed now?”

“And die in your sleep for that is what will happen.”

“Maybe I can go and see it,” Conu said, “Find out what it wants and hopefully buy it off.”

“It is our death that it wants. The only way you will buy that is with your life.”

“Oh,” Conu said and went quiet.

“Now,” Narda said, “It is here for a reason find out what that reason is and we will be better equipped to deal with it.”

“Maybe your looking glass,” Conu said, “After all that was the last reason.”

“Maybe,” Narda said and went deep into thought, after a while she said, “The black bull, maybe they have came to rescue it.”

“Or Queen Nomi,” Dilt said.

“It could be any reason,” Narda said in despair, “It could even be that measly gnome.”

“Then we are no further forward,” Sula said, “I suggest that we wait and see.”

“Only death comes to those who wait. I want you to go out and see what you can find. I don’t trust those goblins I don’t think they are too fussy about who gives them the orders.”

“What now?”

“No in the morning,” Narda said sarcastically, “Yes now or you will be like the morning, non-existent. Go to the cats and tell them if they find out what it is they will be well rewarded. If they do find out what it is deal with it.”

With that Sula manifested wings and flew off. After she had gone Narda said, “Conu I want you to do the same with the foxes and Dilt the slugs and snails, and Dilt, don’t eat them.”

“Spoils the fun,” Dilt said as they both manifested wings and flew off.

“And me Great Queen?” Neb said.

“Stay close by that is all we can do for the present.”

Back in the forest things had moved on. The lighter sky meant that they could move a little quicker and so the rats went by at a slightly faster pace.

“I would say that we will soon be at the edge of the forest,” Kaylie said to Dave, “You’ll soon need to rest.”

“I don’t feel tired but I guess that by the time we get there I will.”

“We will have to wait for the badgers there anyway. So how are you actually feeling?”

“A bit better, the choices of what the handmaidens are are getting less so I guess it makes it a little easier.”

“A little, don’t forget though that the closer we get the more chance of seeing them so you’ll have to be on your guard a lot more.”

“Stima will sniff them out. I just hope that we don’t meet them more than one at a time.”

“Yes there is that,” and they continued at a pace.

Sula on the other hand was not getting far. She had called on Neba, the queen of the cats and she was not very forthcoming. “Help you. Now when a handmaiden of Narda comes looking for help I know there must be something seriously wrong.”

“No it’s not a major thing. I just want you to keep your eyes open that’s all.”

“Oh but they are open and have been open for some time now. They have noticed that the sky has got a lot lighter on two occasions. I know what that means Sula, two of your sisters have fallen. Now I would say that whatever did that was quite a major thing wouldn’t you?”

“As soon as we find out what it is we will sort it. It will be no problem believe me.”

“Really, so what would happen, say, if we did help you and you were defeated and a new order came to be? We would be seen as collaborators, not a good start to new friendships wouldn’t you say?”

“It will not come to that and when we do defeat it and Narda finds out that you have helped us she will be very pleased. Should she find out that you have been unhelpful though, well I wouldn’t know how she would react?”

“Threats aside you said that she would be pleased. Now I know that Narda is a generous woman, so tell me then, how would she be pleased?”

“Well let’s say she would be very accommodating, depending on what you had in mind of course.”

“We don’t ask much. We like to hunt, as you know, but Atman, she doesn’t understand that, she only lets us use the forest once in a blue moon. Now we know that she uses the forest to gather things for her potions but surely we could use it more often?”

“Find out if strangers have entered the world and you can have unlimited use of the forest. Point them out to us and you can even live in it if you like.”

“Then you have a deal, we will spy for you.”

Conu as well was finding it hard going. She had met up with Queen Sicka of the foxes and this vixen knew how the land lay. “This is a turn up,” she said, “A handmaiden of Narda coming to us for help and not only that two goblins came earlier. My, we are in demand.”

“It’s not a big thing we want it is just your eyes and ears.”

“I know but usually when you come around it is for our tails. So tell me Conu why should you want our eyes and ears?”

“It is not a big thing as I have said before,” Conu said somewhat taken aback, “And should you prove willing Queen Narda will be most obliging.”

“I hear your words and to me I detect a note of desperation behind them. Now judging by that I would assume that you are in great need of our help. So tell me and I am sure that you will understand why I am asking you, after all you have done to us why do you think that we should help you?”

“Well if you were to help us we would prove very good friends to you afterwards.”

“I hear what you are saying but let’s be honest judging by your desperation and by the fact that according to the sky two of your sisters have already died what makes you think that you will be in a position to be very good friends to us?”

“Oh,” Conu said surprised that she knew about her sisters. Composing herself though she said, “We are not desperate, as soon as we know what it is we can deal with it.”

“Well not being funny but it has taken two of your sisters. We always thought that you were invincible but it seems that you are not. Tell me Great Conu, how do you know that when you find out what it is, instead of dealing with it, it might be actually dealing with you?”

“I notice what you are saying and I note it well. Now what I say to you is that when and not if but when this thing is dealt with we could prove either good friends or bad enemies. The choice of our actions lie in your hands and mark these words well, we will remember.”

“I hear your open threat and I note it well. Now we know of your power and your abilities and though they are many and your power is strong we also know that it diminishes with every fallen sister. This new thing that has come, we know nothing of it but let’s be honest it must also be strong and powerful to do what it has done. You want our allegiance but at present we don’t want to commit ourselves. No when you can come to us and say that Queen Stat of the badgers has pledged then we can talk again.”

“Why ever do you need her pledge?”

“We will not do anything without the badgers behind us. Should you fail in your task and fall from power we will be put in a very awkward position and need all the friends we can get. Can you see my predicament?”

“But the badgers are not friends of Narda’s, I cannot see them wanting to help.”

“Without their allegiance there will be no deal. We will not ally unless we do it as a whole. Should you fail we will be marked down as traitors and anyone that did not ally will be seen by the new comers as friends. Not a very good beginning.”

“So that is your final answer then, you refuse to help us.”

“We have not decided, maybe our next meeting will prove fruitful.”

“Queen Narda will be informed,” Conu said and flew off.

Dilt had done the best out of the three. Queen Nula was more than willing to spy and no conditions were made. They all returned back to the Palace of Narda to find her fretful and frustrated. “You gave the cats leave to hunt in the forest,” she snapped angrily at Sula, “Whatever possessed you?”

“Atman no longer needs it, she is no more and besides it was the only thing that they wanted.”

“Very well,” Narda said, her temper subsiding slightly, “We can always renege at a later date I suppose.”

“But what is wrong with it, I can’t see the problem.”

“Concessions like that bring power. They should have no rights otherwise they will get above their place. We have treasures galore that we could have gave them, it works out cheaper in the end believe me,” and turning to Conu, “And you, you come back with a job half done.”

“I thought it wise I know how you feel about dealing with the badgers.”

“We will deal with anything until this enemy is vanquished. Any promises you make may all be retracted and also I have not forgotten the foxes reticence to join us. You will go later and see the badgers but now I want you to guard Nomi as it’s your shift.”

Back at the outer edge of the forest Dave and the gnomes had settled down for Dave had started to feel a little tired.

“You will definitely need your strength tomorrow,” Kaylie said, “After that hopefully things will get a little easier.”

“Quiet please,” Stima said, “I can smell a goblin.”

“Where?” Kaylie said in a whisper.

“Behind that large willow to the left.”

“Clary,” Kaylie said quietly, “Scout around wide to your left and circle him. Doug go to the right, pretend that you are going back into the forest first, that should divert any suspicion.”

Doug and Clary did as they were asked and much to Goud’s horror he was grabbed and brought into the camp.

“You are just a group of gnomes and a mortal,” he said with a marked tone of contempt, “What chance have you against Narda and her handmaidens?”

“We’ll do alright,” Kaylie said, “But it’s not about them really is it. We know that your name is your death so you are not really in the position to be able to scorn are you?”

“Oh,” Goud said and went quiet.

“Now just supposing that we decided to spare you.”

“What, like you did Eixid?”

“Well Eixid was neither well informed nor forthcoming. You now have the chance to be master of your own destiny. You may live or you may die, the choice my friend is up to you.”

“Are you offering to release me if I give you the information?”

“We will have to hold you a while until the job is done but afterwards if you have proved useful to our purpose.”

“You will release me. Very well I owe nothing to Narda and especially not my life. What do you want to know?”

“I want to know what’s going through Narda’s mind basically.”

“She is clueless she doesn’t know what’s going on. She sent us out to visit the animals to see if they were any wiser and to try and get them to spy for her.”

“And will they?”

“They weren’t very forthcoming, the ones that I met. They have reasoned by looking at the sky that she has lost two of her handmaidens already and they are wondering themselves what could have done it. It surprised me to see that it was just a few gnomes and a mortal, no offence meant by that.”

“None taken.”

“No she hasn’t a clue what’s coming although she does know that it’s coming her way.”

“So she is expecting something then, yes I should have guessed that,” and went deep into thought before he said, “Do you think that she has an idea of what we are actually here for?”

“I’m not sure. She doesn’t keep us informed, well only one, but the word is either the looking glass or the bull.”

“Oh, we will need to move the centre of action away from the castle then. Another diversion, this is getting complicated.”

“Is there anything else that she prizes in your world,” Dave said, “Something away from the castle?”

Guod thought awhile and said, “Not really, well there’s her horse I suppose.”

“Her horse where does she keep it?”

“It’s not far from the castle but far enough.”

“No I can’t see it working,” Kaylie said, “She’ll know that we wouldn’t have come all this way just for a horse.”

“Oh it isn’t an ordinary horse. No with this horse she can travel to the other worlds of creation.”

“It might be a good idea then,” Kaylie said, “Just to thwart a chance of her escaping if nothing else.”

“I don’t think we have enough gnome power,” Dave said, “We are all tied up.”

“We could bring up some of the reserves, Zinbar and Doug for instance. They don’t need to guide us back now for we have the rats.”

“Yes,” Dave said and then to Guod, “So this horse, what do we need to know about it?”

“It is called Axiom. It is guarded by one goblin and knowing the horse’s name gives you power over it.”

“Right and its colour?”

“It’s black, well that’s not strictly true as it gets lighter each time a handmaiden has fallen.”

“And it’s kept near the castle?”

“It is stabled a few fields away to the left. It is easily seen as it’s a large wooden building.”

“Well you’ve been a great help,” Kaylie said, “I think that’s all we need to know.”

“Then I can go then?”

“Of course you can Guod,” Kaylie said and watched him turn to dust. After he had gone Kaylie said, “Doug and Zinbar you will get the horse and when they start to pursue you we will raid the castle. Hopefully the raid will confuse them and they will not know which way to turn.”

“And what about me?” Valentine said.

“You will remain here and count us back when we return when the last group comes go back with them. We will warn the bull to look out for you so guide him back through the rat run.”

“Fair enough,” Valentine said. It was round about then that Dave started to lose consciousness. Dave woke up and checked the time, it was 8 o’clock. He had vivid memories of the gnomes but reasoned that, that was because he was going to be painting them soon. He got dressed and breakfasted and was in Mrs. Lewisham’s garden for around 8.30.

“Just like clockwork,” Ethel said giving him a mug of coffee, “I could set my watch by you.”

“Thanks, gratefully accepted.”

“So you are painting today, rather you than me, it’s a job that I have never liked.”

“It’s not that bad I just switch off and think of other things.”

“Oh a deep one I should have guessed. Are you going to make a start on that wall today?”

“Hopefully, I want to do the fence first but I should have time to do a little.”

“I can’t wait to see what it looks like when it’s finished. Anyway I guess you would like to make a start,” and took his empty mug of him before going back inside. Dave fetched the gloss paint and started to paint the fence. Much to his horror it soaked into the wood. He would have to second coat it and Dave had not bargained for it. He switched off, mentally speaking and got down to the work in hand. The morning dragged and he was bored almost to tears but by noon he had finished and

then Adam came around to break the monotony. "I've brought the roses," he said and then looking at the fence, "That looks smart. Hard going?"

"I had to two coat it."

"I didn't realise that she had gloss paint, I thought I was going to have to fetch some."

"She didn't, I had some round ours so I brought it in to use it up."

"That's good of you, you are definitely committed to the job."

"Well you brought the squirrel, speaking of animals, the otter."

"Sorry?"

"I'm going to paint it with the last bit of paint, should finish it off nicely."

"You really are committed," Adam said with a laugh, "Well should be anyway."

"She'll like it."

"Well that's the main thing. I've brought some buckets to soak the roses in and I see that you have an outside tap. I'll do it if you like."

"Er sure," Dave said somewhat taken aback by his enthusiasm, "I'll paint the otter then," and went down to the back of the garden. He put the otter in place and carefully painted it avoiding the eyes as best he could but intending to paint them later anyway. As he was finishing Adam came up and said, "Yes we are definitely doing a grand job here. She'll be well pleased."

"I hope so," Dave said, noting the 'we' but not pursuing the matter.

"Yes, you know I ought to take a few pictures and we can use it as a sort of portfolio. We should get plenty of work yes we seem to have a talent for it."

"Well maybe, we will have to come up with a decent wage rate first. I don't mind doing this as a one off to help a poor old lady."

"Of course," Adam said much to Dave's surprise, "You seem to have quite a talent for this and a talent should be nurtured. Yes you definitely have an eye for the detail."

"We'll see if we have any feed back before we make any plans. Don't count your chickens' sort of thing."

"Yes, yes, anyway is there anything else that you need?"

"No, well I don't think so anyway."

"You've got my number," Adam said and left him to get on with it.

Dave started the work of painting the wall and it proved to be quite a job. The concrete blocks had 8 holes in, four ellipses at the cardinal points and four segments, one to each corner. He felt like he had been there forever but to his utter dismay only a few blocks had been covered. The holes proved difficult to paint and his hands were soon covered with it due to the fiddliness of the design. By the time the day had finished he had only covered a third of the distance and to make matters worse Jane had not appeared to lighten the load. His thoughts had started to dwell on her more as he got to know her and if the truth be known he had started to fall for her a little. Her light, easy going nature and vibrant sense of humour had, had their effect on him and as he gathered some more of his tools and made the short journey home he thought about the talking dog and smiled and shook his head. (Mills and Boon eat yer fucking 'eart out.)

At home he made himself something to eat and settled down to an evening of loneliness going to bed at 10 o'clock because there was nothing else to do.

Dave awoke with thoughts of Jane fresh in his mind. They were only fleeting though so when Kaylie said, "The badger is here," they soon disappeared.

"Good, is he agreeable?"

"Best speak to him yourself," Kaylie said and took him to the badger, "This is Stiga, ambassador of the badgers," he said introducing him.

"Very pleased to make your acquaintance," Dave said diplomatically.

"Likewise, Kaylie has told me that you are looking for some guides."

"That's right, would you be willing?"

"It is a well known fact that we have no love for Narda or her kind. Now as for helping you though

I can see that there may be a problem.”

“A problem?”

“Now although we detest her we know of her power and we also know that if she found out that we have aided you her revenge would be awesome. You come here and do what you have to do then go back, what is left for us, just her vengeance.”

“Yes I see what you are saying,” Dave said with a heavy air of disappointment, “You don’t want to do it.”

“I did not say that. Now we know of Narda’s desperation and the fact that she has lost two of her sisters and a goblin.”

“Two,” Kaylie said correcting him.

“Well two goblins so we know that you must have some sort of power for up until now we thought that they were invincible. I look at the force you came with and it is surprisingly sparse, that tells me that you came to raid and not to make war.”

“Originally,” Dave said, “But our plans have changed.”

“So you are to make war?”

“No just to wipe them out, the passageway between the two sides is now unguarded so that is our only option.”

“Right,” Stiga said and went deep into thought. After a while he said, “I have informed the Queen of your intention to destroy them and she is getting a little more amiable. She would like to know of your power though for she would not like to champion a lost cause.”

“That’s fair enough two handmaidens have fallen to our power.”

“We have seen by the sky but there are five left. One of which, Conu happens to be at our camp at the moment. It seems that she also is in need of our services.”

“Oh I see, so if I defeat this Conu you will help me and if I don’t?”

“You won’t need our help, do you accept this challenge?”

“Inform your Queen but tell her not to inform Conu of our approach.”

“Good, it is but a short distance away.”

“You can tell me what you know about her on the way over,” Dave said and then to Kaylie, “I will go alone as it will be less suspicious.”

“May I come with you,” Stima said, “I might prove my worth.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and they set off. As they walked he said to Stiga, “So what do you actually know about her?”

“Not a lot really, just that she guards the treasury.”

“Treasury eh, right.”

Meanwhile back in the badgers’ camp Conu was in her element, “No, as I said it is not a problem as such, more of a blip. The foxes are with us, they just want to know that you are as well.”

“Well if the foxes are with you, you don’t need us,” Queen Stat said, “After all as you said, it is just a blip.”

“Maybe a blip might be a little underestimation but it is not a major problem. It will be sorted and then what will happen. Narda, she gets angry you see and she never forgets. Us though, we have had our differences in the past but that we can forget and move onto new and better times.”

“Better times, what did you have in mind?”

“Unlimited wealth all that you can carry and more, much more.”

“Your fancy trinkets are no good to us. It is not what we crave for it is no use to us.”

“Oh,” Conu said and tried a different tact, “No, I guess you are right. The foxes must look up to you so what about this then? We will make you the favoured animals of our world.”

As they were talking Dave, Stiga and Stima entered the camp, “Introduce us as strangers lost,” Dave said quietly to Stiga.

“Forgive the intrusion Great Queen,” Stiga said, “But I have chanced across two strangers to our world.”

Conu's ears pricked up at this though looking at the strangers they quickly fell down again. They did not look a threat though she reasoned that they might know what the threat actually was.

"Strangers," Queen Stat said, "You are not of our world, what is your purpose here?"

"We have no purpose Great Queen," Dave said, his humility adding more contempt to Conu's opinion of him.

"Then how did you come to be here?"

"We were enchanted Great Queen."

"Enchanted," Conu said, her interest well aroused, "Enchanted by what?"

"That I cannot say."

"You dare withhold information from me," Conu said angrily, "Do you know who I am?"

"Avarice," Dave said and with that Conu exploded.

In the Palace of Narda another aspect died and the sky got even lighter. Narda stumbled and fell to the floor. "My mirror," she screamed at Neb, "Pass me my mirror." She looked at it from where she lay and said, "Got it."

"Sorry?" Neb said.

"At the badgers camp see it is the white dog with red ears again, it must be him."

"It is just a dog, a strange looking dog but a dog nevertheless."

"Fool, imbecile, what idiots I have to serve me. That is the dog of Queen Nema of the fairies. If it is here then she is not far behind. So it is the fairies then. I should have known, how stupid of me, but how am I supposed to do all the thinking around here."

"You said that you should have known Great Queen?"

"Seba has been spying in her world, they must have known, or found out anyway. So they are at the badgers' camp. They are pretty close now. Bring everyone back to the castle and here we will wait for them. Leave Sinba with Nomi though for they have no interest in a zarg."

"It shall be done," Neb said and left the room.

Back in the badgers' camp the gnomes had arrived and it was quite a vibrant place.

"You have proved yourself," Queen Stat said to Dave, "And proved it well. We will be your guides and we will also tell the foxes this so they too will be your friends."

"Thank you Great Queen, your help will be gratefully appreciated."

"I have heard that the cats have made a pact with Narda though. They have sold themselves for the hunting rights of the rats in the forest."

"That can never happen the rats have been good to us, they are our friends. Without their help we would not have got this far."

"Then they are also our friends," Queen Stat said and thought awhile before she said, "After you have finished what you have to do we will move into the forest and protect them. We will also ask the foxes to do the same."

"I will be forever in your debt."

"So how many guides will you need?"

"Just two, one to the castle and one to the field where Narda keeps her horse."

"Very well and I will send a few ahead to clear the path of potential spies. Will you need guiding back?"

"No hopefully it will be quite light by then," Dave said with a laugh.

"Fair enough," Queen Stat said and sent 20 badgers ahead to clear a trail.

In the Palace of Narda the enemy had gathered and Narda was in the chair, "Right we know that it is the fairies so we know what we are up against. They too know magic so be on your guard. I have given the matter some thought and I would say knowing the vanity of Nema it is the looking glass that she craves so we also know what they want. Neb send one of the goblins back to keep an eye on Axiom as I know how she hates being alone and the rest of us will sit and wait."

"It will be done," Neb said and sent Rabniz to his demise.

"Sula," Narda said, "I will give you the honour of guarding the looking glass so don't let me down."

I want two goblins to guard the entrance and it's just a case of sitting tight now as they won't be too far away."

Narda was right in her prediction for Dave and his party had been making admiral progress. They had come across a couple of cats on the way brought back by the skirmishing badgers and so they had them held captive by the badgers as not to spoil the surprise. Queen Stat had also warned them of her intention to move the badgers into the woods to protect the rats so their hunting days would soon be at an end so they weren't having a good night. The party had crossed a desolate plain and in the far distance the Palace of Narda was only just a distance shadow in the semi twi-light that the sky had now become.

"There it is," Kaylie said and then turning to Doug and Zinbar who were about to part company, "Don't forget to stop off at Valentine so that he can count you out. Good luck and good hunting," and sent them on their way. After they had gone Dave said, "She might not even know that it has been stolen."

"Oh no, I am guessing that as she is personally attached to it she will feel its loss as if it was one of her sisters. No as soon as it leaves the fields she will know."

"And as soon as they leave the castle we'll go in. Will we be rescuing Queen Nomi at the same time?"

"Yes, she will be guarded by a handmaiden so her pain should send Narda back from her pursuit of the horse."

"Which one do you think it will be?"

"Not much to choose from now," Kaylie said with a laugh, "But if I was to make a guess I would say that it would be pride."

"Yes that would sound about right."

They edged forward, more softly now, until the castle was in a stone's throw and here the first group waited. Dave, Kaylie and Stima edged around to the cave near the castle and kept their eyes on the other group for the signal to go.

Rabniz was in a foul mood as he made the journey over to Axiom. How he hated that horse and the preferential treatment it got. Too good to live in the castle amongst the company of goblins it had said and so now he had the duty of guarding it and putting up with its incessant, insipid self centred drivel. He would rather have stayed in the castle and faced the fairies for at least he would have been in good company. He had heard that they would make for an ardent foe but he had total trust in Narda and though he thought her sisters worthless and incompetent Narda could easily make up for it. "Yes," he said aloud as he walked along the final stretch of the journey, "Fairies, they've got a cheek."

With that he was grabbed and forcibly pushed to the ground. "Hold your tongue and we might just spare your life," Doug said.

"Gnomes," Rabniz said in shock, "What are you doing here, are you in league with the fairies?"

"We'll ask the questions, so you think that the fairies are doing all this then?"

"Well aren't they?"

"We'll ask the questions I said. Now as I said we could spare your life, that depends on you."

"It does?"

"We've come for the horse."

"Axiom, Narda would never allow it."

"She hasn't much choice in the matter. Now you could be our friend or well, er dead, the choice is up to you."

"I could not with stand her vengeance. There is nothing that you could do to me that's worse."

"I just have to say your name Rabniz," Doug said and watched him turn to dust.

"We didn't really need him anyway," Zinbar said, "I would say that the horse is unprotected but we'll tread carefully just in case."

They quietly made their way to the stable and checked the area for other goblins. It was clear so

they entered into the building and saw the horse eating some straw. It stopped as they approached and thinking they were goblins said, "Where have you been, worthless goblins, I have been waiting around for ages. You know that Narda does not like me being left on my own. Just wait until I see her she will have something to say about this I can tell you."

"There seems to be a misunderstanding," Zinbar said, "We are not goblins we are gnomes."

"Goblins, gnomes, whatever you choose to call yourself it means nothing to me. Now clear up that mess I've made for I don't like the smell."

"You won't be here much longer so don't let it worry you."

"What, are you refusing my orders Narda will be told of this."

"Not by you horsy for you will not be here."

"Horsy, you dare to talk to me in that fashion. I have been to all of the worlds of creation I will not be talked to like that."

"You have not been to our world for you didn't know what we were but that will soon be rectified."

"What, do you mean to kidnap me?" and started bucking in a bid to kick them both.

"Axiom," Zinbar said and it fell under his spell. It became placid in front of their eyes and said,

"Mine is to serve."

"You will take us over to the light world."

"But it is guarded it is the only world I cannot enter."

"It is guarded no longer," Zinbar said and saddled it. After both of them had got on the horse walked out into the field and took off, flying in Valentine's direction.

Axiom's departure was soon felt by Narda and although she did not stumble for it was not like the pain of losing a sister she felt it nevertheless. "Axiom," she said, "They were not after the looking glass at all. Dilt take two goblins and we will try and head them off. They can't take it through the passageway as it is guarded so we shall soon track them down."

"The passageway mustn't be guarded," Dilt said, "They would not have got through otherwise."

"Fool, they have given themselves a spell that has made them invisible."

"What?"

"That is why I have not been able to see them in my looking glass. They sneaked in. They have the horse now though, find it and you'll find them."

Narda, Dilt and two goblins flew out of the castle and headed towards the stable to pick up the trail little realising they were being watched. After they had left the plan was activated. Ben said out the spell and found himself invisible. He walked through the unguarded entrance and saw the bull chained up and looking forlorn.

"Conneta," he said quietly, "I have come to rescue you."

"Who are you, is this some sort of trick?"

"My name is Ben I am a gnome from the world of light."

"I have never heard of a gnome, you are not from the world of light."

"We were formed after your departure. I haven't really time to stand around and explain. Silva sent me to get you."

"You must be speaking the truth. I have told no one about Silva, so you are to free me then?"

"Amongst other things after I release you I want you to rampage around the castle for a while, not long, just enough to make your presence felt."

"And then?"

"Head for home at the edge of the dark forest you will find something that looks a little like a goblin. He is called Valentine he will show you how to get through the forest. Go as quickly as you can for I don't know how long Narda will be away."

"Fair enough," Conneta said and Ben released him. As Conneta rampaged Ben sneaked into the Great Hall and found the room that the looking glass was in. Much to his surprise it was unguarded for although someone was there she was asleep. He took the mirror and hiding it under his jacket to make it invisible sneaked back through the great hall, out of the castle and headed back to

Valentine.

Whilst all this was happening Clary and Dixie had said the spell and had also made their way down to the castle. Quietly they crept down the stone stairs and saw Busta being taunted by two goblins. "You are to be here forever," Eilyak said, "The fairies came all this way for a horse and yet they'll leave you here to rot. How does it feel to be thought less than a horse?"

"Your friends have forsaken you," Enitnelav said, "Come and join us and truly live in our world. Not as a slave but as a slaver."

Outside noises stopped them there. Eilyak went to look out of the barred window and said, "That bull has got loose."

"That's all we need, one of us should have been checking on it. She'll have our blood for this she will."

"Not if we can catch it. She need never know that it got loose."

"Catch it, you think that I am going up against that, forget it."

"I'd rather face it than Narda," Eilyak said, "You wait here then," and left him alone with Busta. After he had gone Dixie grabbed the remaining Goblin and Clary released Busta from his chains.

"What's going on," Enitnelav said, "What is this?"

"Busta has got friends," Dixie said, "They seem to be in short supply for you though."

"They'll be back and then what will happen? Your fairies are no match for Narda. Enjoy your fun but it won't last. Eilyak help."

"Enitnelav," Dixie said and watched him vaporize.

"Do you think that he heard him?" Clary said.

"Probably," Dixie said and looked out of the window, "Get back in position Busta he is on the way back."

As Eilyak came down the stairs he was ranting wildly, "Took off it did, I didn't have a chance. She'll have our blood for this I can tell you. Enitnelav where are you, this is not time for games."

He was grabbed by Dixie then and thrown to the ground. "What is this?"

"Retribution," Dixie said, "Now how many are left in the castle?"

"Just Sula, me and Enitnelav."

"It should be safe," Clary said, "Just say the word and we will move out."

"Okay," Dixie said, "Eilyak."

Dixie scouted ahead to make sure that it was clear before sneaking Busta through the court yard. The bull had left a lot of mess behind it and they were surprised that it had not aroused the attention of Sula who they guessed was one of Narda's handmaidens. She did not seem around though so they were fairly quickly out of the castle and on their way to Valentine.

Sinba was Narda's next in command she had a lot more about her than the rest of her sisters. She had manifested herself into a black panther and although she could not see Dave and Kaylie she could certainly smell them. "Who is that, that has entered the cave, state your purpose or feel my pain." They both remained silent so she said, "I know that something is in here so come out from where ever you are hiding." With that Stima came into the cave for he had sensed the danger.

"A dog," she hissed, "A mere dog. What is your business here?"

"I have come to rescue Queen Nomi," Stima said without fear, "And to protect my friends."

"What good do you think you could do and what do you mean your friends?"

"He's talking about me," Dave said, Stima's presence forcing him to reveal his.

Sinba sniffed the air and said, "You are not a fairy, I do not know your scent."

"I am a mortal, a man."

"And yet you are invisible. No matter. You have come to kiss Nomi and raise her from her sleep. You will have to get past me first and I don't think that you are up to the job."

"Now that sounds like a little pride speaking," Dave said and with that there was one less handmaiden. He kissed Queen Nomi and raised her from her sleep and they all headed off back to Valentine.

Queen Narda was at the stables when she felt the pain. The wooden wall caught her fall but the pain itself was the greatest she had ever felt. "Sinba, no," she said and tried to get her breath.

"What is it Narda," Dilt said and on seeing the sky had grown lighter she too felt her grief.

"What is happening, I feel weak, so weak. Take me back to the castle I need to sleep."

"It shall be done," Dilt said and with the help of the two goblins carried her for she was too tired to walk.

Valentine meanwhile was in conversation with one of the rats, "So it's not too bad here then. On the whole I mean cat raids aside."

"Pretty quiet really," the rat said and stopped at that because the sky got a little lighter.

"Well there goes another one," Valentine said, "What's that, four?"

"I think so, whatever is that?"

"It's a bull, I've been expecting it."

The bull charged up and said, "Valentine?"

"That's me, go through the forest, just follow the rats and you can't go wrong."

"Thanks," Conneta said, "I will see you when you get back then," and ran off into the forest.

"Strange looking creature," the rat said, "I wouldn't like to mess with it."

"Me neither, I'm glad it's on our side. Just three more groups and we've done. I should have got Doug to bring the horse back it would have saved me the walk, ah well."

"I could send a message back if you like. It won't take too long to send it down the line."

"No it's too late now thanks."

"It will save a day's walk," the rat persisted, "Seriously it won't take long as we move quickly when we want to."

"It wouldn't be that quickly," Valentine said and thought awhile before he said, "A bat though, that might do the trick."

"I can quickly call one," the rat said and let out a shriek. Within seconds a bat had landed and Valentine said, "I was wondering if you would do us a service?"

"After you have helped us it would be a privilege and not only that, an honour."

"Oh right, I was wondering if you would fly over the forest and find the horse called Axiom for me. It should be on the other side of the passage into this world."

"Yes I could do that, and what would you like me to tell it?"

"There will be two creatures like me there. Tell the one called Doug to leave Zinbar there and bring the horse back to save us a long trek through the forest."

"It will be done," the bat said and flew off. After it had gone Valentine said, "The rest of the gnomes should be pleased with that. I'm guessing they should be on the way back if they have succeeded."

"And if they haven't, I'm not being funny but how would you know?"

"Good question," Valentine said, "Very good question," and left it at that.

Ben's invisibility had worn off about halfway back to Valentine and he found much to his horror that he had been cornered by two cats.

"You're a stranger to this world," the larger black one said, "Queen Narda has told us to keep an eye out for strangers. She'll be pleased when we bring you back."

Now a gnome in prime health is a pretty even match for a cat but being two of them they had a distinct advantage. Ben decided that he would try and pass himself off as a goblin and brazen it out.

"I am no stranger here," he said angrily, "I am out on business for Queen Narda herself. She will not be pleased by this interruption she will not be pleased at all."

The cats were unsure at this but the larger one continued, "You are not a goblin, you are like one but you are not one."

"I am, I am the king of the goblins. It is I and I alone that keeps Narda's looking glass."

"The Looking Glass of Narda," the other cat said, "I have heard tell of this thing, it can see into the future."

“That and much more, she is in urgent need of it and so will not be pleased if I am held up.”

“Then you have it with you?”

“I am never without it.”

“May we see it?”

“Only very quickly for the later I arrive, the angrier she will be.”

“I will take you on my back,” the larger black cat said, “You will quickly make up lost time.”

“Fair enough,” Ben said and showed them the looking glass. A picture of Queen Neba appeared and the two cats watched it intently. After they had finished Ben put it away and said, “You must never tell Queen Narda of this for if you do our lives will be over.”

“You have our word,” the black cat said, “Now get on my back and I will carry you.” Ben did as he was told and they were soon on their way going almost at break neck speed.

Dixie and Clary’s spell wore off at the same time and so Busta could see who he was actually talking to. “Well I see that you are both still as ugly as ever. It’s good to know that some things have not changed.”

“Cheers,” Dixie said, “I think we should have left you where you were you seemed to be getting on well with your new friends. They seemed anxious for you to join them why was that?”

“I don’t know but you are right they were pretty keen. I’m just a popular guy I guess.”

“They obviously do not know you,” Clary said with a laugh, “Anyway you have definitely got your work cut out when we get back.”

“I have?”

“You could not count the piles that want raking, yes your holiday is over I’m afraid.”

“Some holiday,” Busta said and they carried on their way.

Dave’s and Kaylies’ spell also wore off at the same time. They were a little behind the others for a gnome contrary to its size can move very quickly, a lot quicker than a man. Queen Nomi had not traveled with them for it was not thought wise. She had turned herself into a turtle dove instead and flew back on her own. They had a long way to travel but they were in good spirits for they knew that all their objectives had been reached. They were still wary though for they knew that Narda was still at large.

“No sign yet,” Stima said as he walked slightly in front of them, “A couple of cats ahead but they are nothing to worry about.”

“Yes the job’s done,” Kaylie said, “They don’t need to spy anymore so we should be safe for a while.”

“There are still three handmaidens left,” Dave said, “The job is not quite done yet. We owe it to the badgers.”

“They will come to us. Don’t worry we will see them quite soon. I thought that we would have seen them before now.”

“My thoughts exactly, surely they are not just going to let us go.”

“No that would be the end of them, rest assured they will come.”

Meanwhile back at Valentine’s Doug and the horse had returned, “You idle git,” Doug said.

“Well it will save us all a walk.”

“No I wish I had thought of it myself. So any others back yet?”

“Not yet but it shouldn’t be too long now,” and seeing a figure in the distance, “Is that Ben?” and called him. Ben came over and Valentine said, “You were quick.”

“I tricked a cat into giving me a ride it’s amazing how quick they can go.”

“Not as quick as a horse,” Doug said, “Hop on the back and I will show you.”

“I won’t argue with that,” Ben said and got on. Just before he took off Doug said, “I’ll be back as soon as possible as the others shouldn’t be too far away,” and took off leaving just Valentine and the rat.

Queen Narda back in the castle had awoken up to bad news. Not only had Queen Nomi gone, the bull, the gnome and her treasured looking glass had also gone. As soon as she found out she

summoned Sula and gave her hell. “What the hell are you playing at? I gave you a simple task to do and you fail me miserably. You know how much that mirror meant to me, what happened?”

“I fell asleep,” Sula said sheepishly.

“I gathered that,” Narda shouted angrily, “I would kill you myself if I did not know how much pain it would bring me.”

“I can’t help how I am it is you that created me. It is you that made me this way.”

“So it is my fault is it then I curse myself for ever creating you. Neb how many goblins are left?”

“Only two Great Queen, me and Yralc.”

“And the other two, the ones we left in the castle?”

“No more,” Neb said sadly, “They lost their lives guarding the bull and gnome.”

“And you slept through all this,” Narda said to Sula, “You should be ashamed of yourself.”

“I am what I am, what else can I say?”

“Waste of space. I will go to the cats and see what they have to say. All is not lost for though they might have got into our world by stealth I guarantee that with all they are carrying they will never get out,” and with that she grew wings and flew off.

Meanwhile back with Valentine, Doug and the horse had returned

“That was quick,” Valentine said, “It seems that you had only just left us.”

“It doesn’t take too long, so any sign of the others?”

“Nothing, I shouldn’t think that they will be too long though.”

“And has the sky got any lighter?”

“No change.”

“I could go and have a look for them if you like. Pick one of them up and take him back.”

“You like that horse don’t you?”

“Yes it’s an amazing thing to ride.”

“Alright, then just stop by on your way so I can take him off the list.”

“Will do,” Doug said and took off once again. No sooner had he took to the air he saw Dixie, Clary and Busta in the distance so he quickly made his way towards them. Much to their surprise he landed close to them and said, “Anyone of you want a ride back?”

“Well we all do,” Dixie said.

“One at a time I’m afraid so who’s first?”

“Take Busta,” Dixie said, “I’m sure he’s the most homesick.”

“Thanks,” Busta said and got on. They took off and they stopped off at Valentine to tell him that the other two were not far away before carrying on their way.

Narda was landing at Queen Neba’s camp as this was happening.

“We are indeed honoured,” Queen Neba said, “You have turned up in person to show your gratitude.”

“What?”

“For helping your goblin friend to bring you your looking glass we know how much it means to you.”

“Speak clearly I haven’t a clue as to what you are on about.”

Queen Neba told the story and Narda was livid, “That was no goblin and it was stealing my looking glass. Where was he dropped off?”

“Quite near to the forest.”

“Gnomes, fairies, this is a mass invasion,” Narda said as she flew off back to the castle.

Dixie and Clary had just pulled into the forest when Doug returned so Dixie got on and went straight back.

“Any sign of Kaylie?” Valentine said to Clary after they had gone.

“Not seen him but hopefully he should not be too far behind us.”

“Ben’s back as is Zinbar, quite a successful raid wouldn’t you say?”

“Yes not bad, it’s not over yet though.”

“No?”

“Dave’s going to have to spend another night here. We can’t risk taking him on the back of that horse for if he falls asleep he will fall off.”

“Oh, I did not realise.”

“And all the handmaidens must be defeated. No there is still a distance to go.”

“Maybe I should not have sent the gnomes back then. I did not realise that they would still be needed.”

“No, Narda’s lost a lot of her strength now so we should be alright with what’s left.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes and besides we could give a better defence from our side of the passageway we will wait there for them.”

“Good idea it is only a thin passageway so they will be more of a target.”

“And Dave, will he be safe here?”

“Stima will be with him, no one will get near him.”

“Fair enough, there’s Doug coming.”

“I’ll tell him that, that will be it for today. I don’t think that Kaylie will leave Dave so I will stay with them both.”

“Ready for another one,” Doug said as he landed.

“That will be the last,” Valentine said as Clary got on. Valentine explained the situation and Doug agreed so they left it at that for a while.

Back at the castle Narda had returned. She called Dilt and sent her to the forest to try and ascertain the situation and cause mischief if the chance arose. She then returned back to her bed for all the losses she had suffered had taken more of a toll on her than she had realised.

Kaylie, Dave and Stima had reached Valentine by then and they were in good spirits. Valentine told them that they had been using the horse to taxi the gnomes and they thought it a good idea.

“We thought it might be a good idea to wait for them at the passageway and ambush them,”

Valentine said, “It is only a small entrance so we can use it to our advantage.”

“Yes,” Kaylie said, “I like it. Well that’s if they don’t hit us when Dave is asleep that is.”

“Oh,” Dave said sheepishly, “I’m sorry about that. I can’t help it, it just seems to come over me.”

“Oh it’s not your fault, you work differently to us that’s all. No you’ve done well to get us all through this.”

“Me?”

“Yes without you we would never have even dreamed of taking on this adventure.”

“I did not realise,” Dave said humbly and with that comforting thought fell to sleep.

Chapter 5.

Dave awoke not really looking forward to the day he had in front of him. He checked the time and seeing it was 8.10 quickly got dressed and breakfasted. He was a couple of minutes late at the garden so Ethel said to him as she passed him his tea, “You’ll have your pay docked if you’re not careful.”

“Thanks,” he said taking the mug of her, “I overslept a little today keeps on like this and I will have to get myself an alarm clock.”

“Thinks aren’t that bad surely,” Ethel said with a laugh, “You’ve done a good job with the fence by the way and that wall, what you have done with it anyway, looks good.”

Dave went to have a look at the wall and much to his surprise it did look good. “I thought I was going to have to second coat it,” he said, “But looking at the bit I’ve done I think it should be alright.”

“It looks good to me.”

“That’s a weight of my mind I wasn’t looking forward to having to repaint it I can tell you.”

“Well to me it doesn’t need doing but you’re the fellow doing it.”

“Then it doesn’t need it. Will Jane be around today do you think?”

“Doubt it, not today no.”

“Oh.”

“You seem disappointed. Either you want a hand with the painting or perhaps you have fallen for her?”

Dave’s slight blush told her that he had so Ethel said, “Well why don’t you ask her out then, she won’t bite.”

“Well I was thinking about it but it looks like I’ll not see her before I have finished.”

“She’ll be here tomorrow for definite, why not ask her then?”

“Yes so if she refuses I will not have the embarrassment of having to see her again.”

“That’s not a good attitude to have. Don’t forget that faint heart never won fair maiden.”

“I’ll er bare that in mind,” Dave said and gave her back the now empty mug.

“I’ll ask her for you if you like it won’t be a problem. I think she quite likes you anyway.”

“Oh no I’ll ask her myself thanks. What do you mean that you think she likes me by the way?”

“I thought that would get your intention,” Ethel said with a laugh, “No I can just tell these things that’s all. I’ve sort of years of experience in the matter.”

“Oh,” Dave said slightly disappointed, “So she didn’t actually say anything then?”

“No it was an inner feeling. Don’t be disappointed though for my inner feelings are seldom wrong.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” Dave said with a smile.

“Anyway I’ll not hold you up any longer, the sooner you start the sooner you finish Arthur always used to say,” and went back inside leaving Dave to start the job. Dave fetched the paint and his brush and got down to the mundane job of painting the wall. Hour after hour passed and slowly but surely the wall changed colour. Much to his relief Adam came around at dinner to break the monotony. “That looks like hard work,” he said without greeting, “Rather you than me.”

“It’s a job and a half I can tell you,” Dave said glad to be stopping for a rest.

“Well it’s coming on a treat it should light up the garden when the sun hits it.”

Dave stepped back from the wall and said, “You know I think that you are right, it really does reflect the sun.”

“Yes she’ll be made up by it and when the roses grow and merge it will be something to see.”

“You must like gardening then,” Dave said upon realisation, “I never took you as a gardener.”

“Well it wasn’t by choice I’ll admit. I got into it just to pacify a nagging missus. You’re lucky on two counts, single and living in a flat without a garden.”

“Well sometimes I’m not so sure. About being single I mean as I can take or leave gardening.”

“But you are pretty good at it,” Adam said in surprise, “I thought that you must have liked it yourself.”

“Oh this I don’t mind, landscaping, but to actually keep it maintained I think I would find it pretty boring.”

“Well I never knew, now that is a shame because I could have lined you up.”

“Really,” Dave said not too interested.

“Yes my aunt Sylvia, she was looking for a gardener, one day a week as it’s getting too much for her. She’s not poor and she’s willing to pay £50 a day.”

“£50,” Dave repeated, “Well it might be worth a look at that price.”

“She doesn’t live that far from you either. I will take you over one day next week if you like.”

“That sounds good to me yes I’ll go over and have a look.”

“Good, now not being funny would I be right in thinking that you would be pushing it to finish by tomorrow?”

“I think so. This wall is proving harder going than I first thought.”

“Well I could do a bit if you like. Don’t worry about losing a day’s pay because as you are doing my aunt a favour I’ve decided to not make on the job. You can have everything left over after materials.”

“Honest,” Dave said, surprised on two counts, “So you are offering to give me a hand to paint the wall?”

“Oh no I’ve seen the work involved I’m not that kind hearted believe me.”

“Well I won’t be able to put the roses in until tomorrow.”

“No, I was thinking of painting the gnomes.”

“You want to paint the gnomes,” Dave said with a laugh, “I’ve never heard anything like it.”

“Alright so I used to have Airfix kits when I was a kid, I sort of got a taste for it.”

“Well you can if you want I suppose I’ve only got four colours though so you’ll be restricted for choice.”

“What you got then?”

“Green, red, black and silver and I’ve also got some artists paint brushes.”

“It will have to do I suppose.”

“And don’t forget to finish the otter it just wants the eyes, nose and mouth painted black.”

“Will do,” Adam said and got to work.

As Dave carried on with the wall he bantered with Adam and so the time went quickly. By the time Adam had finished Dave was not far behind but he was glad of the break when Adam called him over to have a look at his handiwork.

“Very good,” Dave said, “They look almost lifelike and the otter too, it looks a lot better now you’ve redone its features.”

“I thought that you would like it,” Adam said proudly, “And that paint dries pretty quickly too.”

“I’ll let you set them out then. I was going to scatter them around the rocks but if you can think of a better place.”

“No they should look good there,” Adam said and started to lay them out. After he had finished he said, “Well, what do you think?”

“Yes that will do, that will do nicely.”

“Anyway that’s me for the day. Are you going to need a hand to fetch the tools back?”

“No, thanks for offering but I’ve started taking them back a few at a time. They’re nearly all back already.”

“Right I’ll see you later then,” Adam said and left him to finish off. Dave finished the rest of the wall within an hour and so with the last of the paint went back to paint the wall’s face. After he had used it up he called it a day and taking some more tools went back to his flat. The only tools he had left at Mrs. Lewisham’s now were the ones he needed for the last day, a spade and a Stanley knife so there wasn’t much to carry back at all.

Dave settled down after he had made something to eat and thought about Jane. It was his last day tomorrow and so his last chance so his thoughts were tinged with a slight desperation. He went to sleep at around 10.30.

Dave woke up to find Kaylie and Stima close by. “Valentine is out on patrol and it’s been a quiet night,” Kaylie said, “Doug should be bringing the horse soon.”

“Ah,” Dave said, “I’ve been meaning to tell you something.”

“You have?”

“I don’t think I can get on the back of a horse,” Dave said sheepishly.

“Sorry?”

“I’ve got a very strong fear of them, it goes right back to when I was a child.”

“Oh,” Kaylie said, not really knowing what else to say.

“Well I can walk back with him,” Stima said, “I can’t travel on the back of a horse anyway.”

“Then I will walk back also,” Kaylie said, “I will send Valentine back with Doug and tell them to wait at the passageway.”

Valentine meanwhile was still on patrol well to be more precise he was on his way back. He was just out of their vision when he chanced upon a badger who approached him in a friendly manner.

“Queen Stat has sent me over to see if you needed any help.”

"I think we are about done. Most of us are back already."

"Oh, then is there anything else I can do, what about some milk?" (It is a little known fact that gnomes like milk and use it in the same way that humans use alcohol. It had been long banned from the world of light because of the negative effect it had on them, making them generally aggressive and boring to boot.)

"Milk," Valentine said remembering back fondly, "It's been a long time since I tasted that."

"Well you deserve to celebrate after your victory, it has to be marked."

"I'm tempted I must admit but I had better not as it has been banned in our world."

"You're not in your world now."

"Well that's true, do you have some with you?"

"No but its not far."

"Lead the way then," Valentine said and the badger took him to a large cave. At the entrance it said, "We keep it here in the large cauldron, follow me," and they entered to see a large cauldron which was that big it needed a ladder to get to the top.

"You certainly have a lot," Valentine said, "It must make for quite a party."

"Oh we have them all the time. Just climb the ladder and drink your fill. I'll come up behind you as I could do with some myself."

"Fair enough," Valentine said and he started his ascent, closely followed by the badger. At the top though Valentine started to panic, "This isn't milk its..." and got no further for he was pushed into the molten lava. (What actually happened to Valentine was that he was trod on by someone who had come into the garden to steal the pears from the pear tree which would have been a little too Pythonesque for this fantasy.)

The badger changed into Dilt and laughed in a manic way before changing into Valentine and descending the ladder.

Back with Dave Kaylie was getting restless, "What's keeping him, Doug will be here soon. Stima could you go out and have a look for him?"

"Sure," Stima said and ran off.

"So you are scared of horses," Kaylie said, "To tell you the truth I'm a little wary of them myself."

"It all goes back to when I was a kid. One reared up and only just missed my face with its hooves. No ever since then just being near them brings me out in a cold sweat."

"I can understand that, I think I would be the same myself. Oh look, the wanderer returns," and pointed to Valentine who had just emerged into view. As he came up to them Kaylie said, "Where have you been? We thought you would have been back ages ago."

"I got way laid, you are not going to believe this they have milk here."

"Milk, it's banned."

"Only in our world, over here they drink it until it comes out of their ears."

"Milk," Dave said, "What's so special about milk?"

"It has a very strange effect on us, it sends us funny."

"Sends you funny?"

"Yes, sometimes in a good way but sometimes in a bad. It was banned because it was deemed that it made us too war like."

"Oh, we have something similar in our world, we call it alcohol."

"Alcohol," Kaylie said in disgust, "We used to give our children that to help them grow."

"Anyway," Valentine said, "So what do you say?"

"Sorry?" Kaylie said.

"The milk, you should see how much of it there actually is."

"We can't touch it."

"But it's a celebration and besides it would be a shame to let it go to waste."

"No we're going to need a clear head still."

At that moment Stima returned and his ears pricked up and he started to taste the air, "That smells

come back,” he said, “The one I got when I was possessed.”

“There must be a handmaiden close by,” Kaylie said and started to look around.

“Very close,” Stima said and looked at Valentine in a suspicious manner.

“We had better be careful then,” Valentine said trying to avert suspicion.

“So how many are left?” Stima said.

“Three,” Kaylie said thinking it a strange question.

“And what are they again? Kaylie what is Narda?”

“Well anger,” Kaylie said not knowing where he was going.

“So that’s one down and two to go Dave name me another.”

“Sloth,” Dave said as confused as Kaylie.

“That leaves... Valentine.”

Valentine backed off slightly and would not answer, leaving both Dave and Kaylie suspicious.

“Well,” Kaylie said, “Answer him.”

“No,” Valentine said and started to try and change form. Great wings started to grow and his complexion started to take on more of a reptilian tint. Before he got too far though Dave said,

“Gluttony,” and the form disappeared just leaving dust in its wake and a lighter sky.

Back in the Palace of Narda, Narda awoke in pain. She cried out loud and pitifully and Neb rushed in to see what was the matter.

“They’ve taken Dilt,” she said weakly, “What’s to become of us?”

“We’ve strong Great Queen,” Neb said not used to seeing her in self pity, “We will beat them.”

“I wish I had your faith but all I see is woe. I can’t leave this bed yet and I fear that they will see our weakness regroup and attack the castle.”

“I will stand by you Great Queen none will pass, not whilst I am here anyway.”

“You’re a faithful friend. Please send for Sula though I doubt if she’ll be much use.”

“Your majesty,” Neb said and left the room.

Back at Dave’s Stima said, “I was a little reluctant to point the finger as I did not expect it to be one of us.”

“Yes,” Kaylie agreed, “It was a tricky situation. In future none of us will be left alone it will be safer that way.”

“And Valentine,” Dave said, “Do you think he’s still alive?”

“Doubtful,” Kaylie said sadly, “Very doubtful.”

“I’m sorry,” Dave said, “I did not know him very well but he seemed a decent fellow.”

“He was but we knew there would be losses, I’m only glad that we came off so lightly.”

“True, very true.”

Back with Narda Sula had made her presence.

“Asleep again,” Narda said weakly, “They could attack at any moment and what would happen then?”

“I can’t help it I feel constantly weak.”

“Then it is the end.”

“No they are only gnomes and fairies. Even in our weakness they will be no match for us.”

“Then what? Even if we did defeat them we would be too weak to control this world.”

“No, no, no, we have no time for this. I will take the goblins and meet them head on.”

“Leave Neb with me, I do not want to be alone.”

“Fair enough,” Sula said and left the room.

“I fear we shall never see her again,” Narda said after she had gone.

“She will triumph,” Neb said although he too had his doubts.

At the fringe of the forest Doug landed with Axiom and said, “Right whose first?”

“None of us,” Kaylie said, “We’re going back on foot.”

“Rather you than me, where’s Valentine?”

“Bad news I’m afraid,” Kaylie said and told him.

“Oh,” Doug said sadly, “I’ll go back and tell the others,” and took off once more.

“I guess we had better start walking,” Dave said and they set off on their way. They spoke little as they journeyed for if the truth be told there was little to say. Valentine’s death had put it all into perspective so they were more than slightly subdued. When they were about half way back though things picked up a pace.

“Air attack,” Stima said, “Take cover,” and they took shelter behind the trees and watched a large winged reptile land in the clearing. Another, smaller creature landed behind it and they both surveyed the area with contempt.

“Well gnomes, fairies, whatever you are,” Sula said, “I am Sula and I am here to do battle. Step out from your miserable hiding places and face me if you dare.” Dave, Kaylie and Stima remained silent thinking it wise for the time being. “Come on what are you afraid off? You’ve killed my sisters now I will have my revenge.” still no answer. “Maybe I’m too frightening for you,” Sula said and changed her form into that of a large pink bunny rabbit, “Is that better?”

With that Dave stepped out of the clearing with Stima by his side.

“You are not a gnome,” Sula said, “Neither are you a fairy. You are a man I thought that you were friends of ours. In your world you use us all the time.”

Dave was somewhat taken aback by this but decided to play along, “Then why did you attack me?”

“I thought you were the enemy, this is a time of strife. What are you doing with Queen Nema’s dog?”

“I stole it.”

“Ah it is starting to make a little sense now. They must be here to try and retrieve it,” and thought awhile before she said, “So what was it doing at the scene of my sister’s death?”

“I don’t know.”

“What?” Sula said and sensing something amiss started to change her shape. Dave saw it happening though so he said, “Sloth,” and the world got a little lighter. Stima rushed forward and pounced on Yralc pinning him to the floor and holding him as prisoner.

From Narda’s bed she felt the pain and her ever weakening state sent her back to sleep.

“Change your form,” Kaylie said, “Or you will dies like that,” and Yralc duly obliged. “Your world is about finished. See how the sky is almost daylight. Where is Narda?”

“She is at the castle she has taken to her bed.”

“She is weak,” Kaylie said to Dave, “All this must have taken it out of her.”

“Are we going to have to go back?”

“It looks like it. She may be weak at the moment but in time she will grow strong again.”

“That’s what I thought I’m going to have to get the horse back aren’t I?”

“It will save a lot of time, time in which she might recover.”

“True but how are we going to send word to Doug?”

“I’ll try and find a rat,” Kaylie said and went off calling them. Dave turned to Yralc who was still held firmly in place and said, “How weak is she?”

“She could barely talk, she is very weak.”

“And how long will it take her to recover?”

“I’m not sure I’ve never seen anything like it before, it’s all new to me.”

“Well it must be done I suppose.”

“Do you mean to kill me?”

“It must be done.”

“I’ve told you all I know I’ve been a good friend to you. Surely you don’t treat your friends that way?”

“I’m sorry,” Dave said for if the truth be known he was starting to have his fill of death, “It will be painless.”

“No, please no.”

“Yralc,” Kaylie said coming back. “Don’t be too soft on them Dave,” he said on seeing his

demeanour, "It must be done."

"I think I'm losing the stomach for it," Dave admitted, "Valentine's death has sort of brought it all home."

"It will soon be done you can put it all behind you then. I've sent a bat so he should not be too long."

"I don't know if I can do it."

"You will, just don't see her as she is see her as what she will become if you let her get strong again."

"I'll bare that in mind."

"Do you want me to come with you, it will mean traveling on a horse but I don't mind?"

"Well if you would."

"Sure, I understand."

Back in her castle Narda had awoken from her slumber, "Neb," she called, although weakly with more strength than before.

"Yes Great Queen," Neb said rushing in.

"I'm better now when they come I will be ready for them. Help me out of this bed so I might walk awhile."

"Yes Great Queen," Neb said and did as he was bid. Narda walked, frailly at first but soon a little stronger. "Yes," she said, "I will soon be back. I will create new sisters when I am at full strength and then, well then we will raid. No one invades my land and goes unpunished."

"I will look forward to that Great Queen."

"And you my friend, you will not be forgotten. If we deem to let any gnomes survive I will change them into goblins and you will be their king."

"Thank you Great Queen you are more than generous."

"Yes," she said, getting stronger with her anger, "And I will have better sisters this time. Not the worthless shower I had before. Anyone that can be defeated by a gnome or a fairy is not fit to be called a handmaiden of Narda. Mark my words well Neb as it is spoken so shall it be done."

"Yes Great Queen," Neb said pleased to see that her old self was coming back.

"And Axiom, they dared take my beautiful horse, how they will pay, how they will pay."

Meanwhile in the forest Doug had landed, "You wanted me?"

"No just your horse." Kaylie said, "I'm going back to the castle with Dave."

"What about me?" Stima said.

"You must stay here this time I'm afraid," Dave said.

"But I promised Queen Nema that I would never leave your side. It was the reason that she let me come."

"She will understand, contact her and let her know."

Stima went quiet for a while before saying, "She wishes you well and warns you that Narda's power can quickly be invigorated."

"Right," Doug said to Stima, "It looks like we are walking back then," and then to Dave, "Just say Axiom and tell it where you want it to go and it will do the rest."

Dave got on the back of the horse with more than a little trepidation and when Kaylie had also got on said, "Axiom the Palace of Narda."

The horse took off and in a surprisingly short amount of time Dave not only got used to it he was actually enjoying it. "Yes," he said to Kaylie, "I don't know what I was worried about. Look, see the castle in the distance we have saved ourselves a long walk."

The distant castle quickly grew bigger and soon they were standing in the court yard. Dave tied the horse up and looked around the place to see if he could find any signs of life. "I wish Stima was here," he said, "He would have sniffed them out."

"True, looks like we are going to have to hunt them down. Maybe she is still in bed?"

"We'll try there first then," Dave said and they both walked into the Great Hall.

Unbeknown by both of them they were being watched by Narda and Neb. "They dare just ride into my castle as if I was nothing," Narda whispered angrily, "A gnome and it looks like a mortal. Whatever is a man taking sides with a gnome for? They were supposed to be our friends."

"Were they?" Neb whispered back, "I thought that Queen Nomi could only be awakened by a mortal's kiss?"

"Yes, I put that spell on with good reason."

"You did?"

"It was reasoned that man could never enter this world, well only if he was pure in heart but we had them that far under our thumbs that we knew it could never happen."

"Sorry?"

"Their world is that bleak and boring they need us to spice it up. Yes they are usually grateful and gladly forsake their purposes."

"They forsake their purpose?" Neb said in surprise, "I thought that their purpose was their life."

"It is," Narda said with a smile, "That's why they are mortal. They don't call us the creeping death for nothing."

"And knowing this they are still your friends, they sound very er. Stupid."

"Oh they don't know this," Narda said with a little laugh, "No they wouldn't be that friendly. We work in darkness for that is our way. I should have guessed but it seemed that far-fetched. I thought that the fairies carried Queen Nomi off as she slept. I mean who would have thought that a man could cope without Earthly desire, it defies reason."

"And shall we deal with them now Great Queen, with their destruction it will be over."

"Not yet but soon. The longer we leave it the stronger I will be. Besides a pure mortal, this intrigues me. I want to know how he has come to be this way."

"Is that not dangerous? He seems to have the power of destruction of you for not being funny Great Queen he has killed all your sisters."

"I think that comes more from fairy spells but that is another thing I want to find out from him. No I want to keep him alive for a while. I need to find out why he forsook Earthly desire so I might stop others following his path. I also need to know this spell of theirs so that when I create new sisters they will be immune from it."

"I see Great Queen, my apologies your wisdom knows no bounds."

"I slipped for a while I'm alright now though, I guess it was just the shock of losing my sisters."

"It was indeed tragic Great Queen."

"No, not tragic Neb they were worthless. It was more the shock that I had created them wrong. I won't make that mistake again I can tell you. Learn by your mistakes I say and believe me it won't happen again. Now Neb I want you to go and hide Axiom to cut off their means of escape."

"Yes Great Queen," Neb said and left her alone.

Meanwhile Dave and Kaylie were still looking around the rooms.

"Not a trace of her," Dave said, "Do you think she has gone to ground?"

"She won't be that far away I can guarantee you that much."

"So why doesn't she show herself, it can't be fear I know that for a fact."

"She's biding her time, getting stronger as she does. No I bet she's probably looking at us as we speak."

"I wish Stima was here, he would have smelt her out."

"True, she will reveal herself when she is ready though, have no fear of that."

Neb had returned by then, "All done Great Queen, they will not find it."

"Good, now we shall make our presence felt."

Dave and Kaylie were walking back through the Great Hall when they saw her.

"You dare to enter my castle with neither invite nor consent," Narda said, "And you a man, you are supposed to be our friends."

"I have come to do what needs to be done," Dave said, "You are the last and then it is all over."

“Your spells might work with my sisters but I am of stronger stuff, I created them. Now you though, you intrigue me. I can kill you with the ease of snuffing out a candle but I choose to spare you, for a while anyway.”

“That’s very gracious of you to what do I owe the honour?”

“As I said you intrigue me. I want to know why you have turned your back on me whilst all the rest of your kind seek out my friendship.”

“Maybe they know no better but as for turning my back on you, well, I don’t think that I ever was your friend.”

“So you think that you know better then. That is a proud thing to say and yet I sense no pride in you. You are a strange man mortal.”

“I am not a mortal, I used to think that I was but now I know better.”

“So you think that you will live forever?”

“Under different forms yes, and maybe when I finally get rid of my Earthly desire, who knows I might not need to recreate myself.”

“You know of that then, and what about the rest of your kind?”

“I cannot speak for them I do not know what’s in their hearts.”

“Very well, and this spell that defeated my sisters, what is it?”

“It was no spell it was just a case of recognition.”

“What,” Narda said and Dave noticed a trace of fear in her voice.

“Take you as an example all I have to do is say what you are in essence and you will be no more.”

“You don’t know what I am,” Narda said unsure, “That’s well beyond your grasp of understanding.”

“I know what you are for you are the only one that is left. Envy, lechery gone, avarice, pride gone, gluttony, sloth gone so all that is left is anger.”

With that Narda was no more and Neb rushed forward, “What have you done to my queen, bring her back now.”

“She is no more,” Dave said, “And neither are you Neb.” The land of darkness became the land of light and the two worlds became one.

Dave and Kaylie hunted around for Axiom but it was that well hidden it took some time to find it. When they did they went back to the forest to find that Doug and Stima were virtually home so Doug was pretty disappointed when they landed near him, “What kept you, the passageway is in sight, we’re nearly back.”

“Sorry about that,” Dave said, “We got waylaid for a while.”

“And judging by the sky it’s all over isn’t it?”

“All done,” Dave said sadly, “The adventure is over.”

“I told you that you would get a taste for it,” Kaylie said, “Never mind I dare say there will be more.”

“You think so?”

“You have the horse now you can go anywhere that you want.”

“Really, you’re giving me the horse?”

“It’s no use to us we are creatures of this world and no other. You can have it with pleasure.”

“Thanks, I’ll still leave here for you though I know how much Doug likes it.”

“Really,” Doug said, “Great.”

“Yes and besides your world is a lot bigger now so you can travel much farther.”

“True,” Kaylie said.

“The creatures of the night though,” Dave said, “How will they cope?”

“They’ll just adapt, they’ll be alright. Anyway we’ll go through the passageway and camp. You’ll be tired soon.”

“I wish it wasn’t like that, I really do.”

They crossed the passageway and settled on the other side. No sooner had they done that then Dave

felt tired and lost consciousness.

Dave woke up and checked the time. It was ten minutes to eight and he was happy to be going. He reasoned that the remaining work should only take about half a day so he was in a pretty happy mood. He hoped that he would see Jane but if she had not appeared before he had finished he was not planning on hanging around. He got dressed and breakfasted and was soon at the garden with a cup of coffee and raring to go.

“Last day then,” Ethel said, “I bet you’ve been looking forward to this one.”

“Well it was hard going for a while I must admit but to be honest I have enjoyed it.”

“Good, so one last day then, a full one?”

“About a half, I should be finished at dinner.”

“Oh, Jane doesn’t usually come around till about mid afternoon.”

“Sorry to hear that mustn’t be meant to be then.”

“We’ll see,” Ethel said as she took his empty cup of him, “Anyway I’ll look forward to seeing it all done,” and left Dave slightly confused when she went back inside.

Dave got the spade and Stanley knife from the shed and locked it up once more. He went to check the roses and see what colours they were and found that there were six different types, two of each. He decided that he would put two of the same in the middle and radiate the others out in pairs so he placed them roughly where he wanted them to go. He stood back awhile to see how they looked and wasted a little time as he was reluctant to start. He then dug, planted and watered the first one before quickly moving on to the second. In no time at all, all 12 were in and it looked like he would be finishing well before dinner. Resigned to his fate he started to cut up the last of the plastic bags and lay them on the ground. He pierced a few holes in them and emptied out the first pack of bark. He stamped it into place and stopped for a while to see how it looked. Adam came in around then and said, “Yes very nice, I was not sure about it first. I was going to have it stoned but I thought there was too much of an area already done that way.”

“It breaks the monotony.”

“Will you have enough to cover it?”

“Yes plenty, there might be a bit left over in fact.”

“Really, I might have a use for it.”

“For what?”

“See where the lawn goes right up to the fence it’s a right pain to mow. What about putting a thin bark border between them, should make it a little easier.”

“Sure I can do that,” Dave said happy to pad the day out a little more.

“That will make Jane’s life a little easier. Anyway I’ve brought the rest of the money with me,” and passed it over to Dave who put it in his pocket without counting it.

“Cheers,” Dave said, “And how does Monday sound for going over to see your aunt?”

“Yes I’ll pick you up at around 10.”

“Fair enough, I’ve done with the buckets if you want to take them back.”

“Yes sound, now is there anything else you think that you might need?”

“No ta, it’s all sorted now.”

“Good, well I’ll see you Monday then,” and left him to carry on.

Dave emptied another bag and stamped it in and then cut up the used bag and laid it on the ground. He carried on that way until the whole area was finished and as he stood back to admire it Ethel came out with a cup of tea, “All done then I see,” she said as she passed it to him.

“Not quite I just have to put a border between the fence and lawn.”

“It looks nice what you have done already, finishes it off well it does.”

“It will keep the weeds away as well. Yes hopefully it will be just mowing the lawn and that’s all maintenance wise.”

“Well she won’t argue with that. You know I’ve got Jane’s number if you want it.”

“I’m not sure about just ringing up I would rather do them face to face,” and thought awhile before

he said, "Yes I'll take it if you don't mind."

"Here it is," she said taking a piece of paper out of her pocket.

"That was quick."

"Well like the gardening of yours," she said with a laugh, "It does not do to hang around."

"I'll bare that in mind," Dave said thinking that he had been hanging around all morning in the hope that she might come early.

"Give her a bell," Ethel said as she took the mug of him, "She will be pleased to hear from you."

"Thanks," Dave said and gave her back the key to the shed, "I won't be needing this anymore."

"Right I'll leave you to it then and hopefully I will see you soon," and left him to it.

Dave marked a line down the lawn and cut it with his spade. Next he scraped the grass off by cutting it from underneath and then laid down plastic to cover the bare soil. He emptied a bag of bark on it and worked it in to fill all the spaces before finishing the border with another bag. As he was stamping it down the two dogs came running down the garden, straight past him and to where the gnomes were sited.

"Would you like a drink?" Jane called from the doorway.

"A cup of coffee please," Dave shouted back.

She brought it out and said, "It looks like you have about finished it now."

"Literally just. Those dogs like them gnomes don't they?"

"Well they look almost life like you did a good job painting them they look a lot better."

"Adam did it he seems to have a flair for things like that."

"Certainly does," Jane said and looked around, "You've made my life a lot easier I can tell you.

Don was supposed to keep his eyes on it but it all fell down to me. Mind you I would not blame him the garden was a bit too much for anyone, let alone an old man."

"Don?"

"He's a friend of my mothers. He comes around in the morning and sometimes cleans up but generally just keeps her company."

"Oh right so he will probably be keeping an eye on it again then."

"I can't really say, you see he doesn't get paid. My mother might bring in a bottle of whiskey for him now and again but that's it."

"Sort of a honey trap," Dave said with a laugh.

"Yes I suppose so," Jane said laughing, "It certainly draws him to her. I think he's just as glad to get out of his house though so it's a mutual thing."

"He lives on his own?"

"No married, he just doesn't get on with his wife that's all. I think it's more his fault though as he likes the drink a little too much for her liking."

"Oh right, speaking of drink I was wondering if you would like to go out for one, one night?"

"I'd love to but I haven't got the time."

"Oh" Dave said with more than just a hint of disappointment, "Never mind."

"No I really would," Jane said and thought awhile, "I'll give you my number, give us a ring in a couple of days. That will give me a chance to sort something out."

"I've already got it."

"What?"

"Ethel gave it me. I wasn't sure if I was going to see you today. In fact we only just caught each other as I would have been gone in another couple of minutes."

"Oh, she still matchmaking then, God bless her."

"So I'll give you a ring in a couple of days then?"

"That will be best it will give me some time to sort out someone to baby sit."

"Fair enough I'll look forward to it."

"It was only a quick visit I'm afraid. Do you want a lift back now you've finished?"

"Yes thanks, it will save me a walk."

Jane locked the back door and dropped Dave off. It was only early afternoon so he decided to celebrate by going for a drink. He was not really a drinker as such although he liked to go out occasionally when his finances were buoyant. The pub he generally went to was a small back street local on the same street that he lived. It was never a busy place at the best of times so he was not surprised that there was only one person in when he entered.

“Alright John, what are you having?”

“A lager shandy please Dave, I haven’t seen you in for a while.”

“No I’ve been a bit busy.”

“Oh, working then?”

“Well just finished actually, I was doing some old woman’s garden.”

“Not site labouring anymore then?”

“I got pissed off with the agencies, they don’t pay much and they mess you around.”

“Go self employed then. I am and have been for years.”

“But you’re a joiner.”

“Labourers can as well. Do that and I could easily get you a job where I’m working.”

“Really, where’s that?”

“We’re doing up two blocks of flats in Sycamore Road. Well one blocks virtually finished but there’s still a few more months with the other one.”

“A few months, and what does it pay?”

“I reckon if you play it right you could get £85 a day. I know they’re pretty desperate for they’ve been using agency workers and they are not that committed.”

“You wouldn’t blame them, not for what the agencies pay anyway.”

“True, no if I was you I would nip down the tax office and get a C.I.S card. You haven’t got a passport photo by any chance have you?”

“I can easily get one.”

“Sound, anyway they take off 18% or so at source, I forget now, and send you vouchers. Send them off when you get your tax return along with receipts and hopefully you might even get some of it back at the end of the tax year.”

“Receipts?”

“You know, petrol, work clothes, stuff like that. Oh and every few months they send you a bill for national insurance. It only twenty odd quid so I wouldn’t worry when it comes to paying it.”

“That sounds good, do you want another drink?”

“I’ll get these,” John said and ordered another round. After he had done that he said, “You would probably be better going today as it takes a few days before you get your card. I’ll see the man Monday when I get back to work, give you a bell you can come up as he will probably want to see you himself.”

“Monday, ah, I was supposed to be seeing someone about a gardening job.”

“Well it’s up to you but I’m guessing that this job will pay much better.”

“Oh too right, Blisters won’t be happy though, it was for his aunt Sylvia.”

“Let him do it then,” John said with a laugh, “I mean look at him he needs the exercise.”

“True,” Dave said laughing.

“Anyway I’ve got to go into town so I could drop you off. It will save you a walk.”

“Yes that would be good, thanks.”

“They’ll give you a form to fill in and want some proof of identification, passport, driving license, it’s a long time since I’ve done it so my memory is a bit vague.”

“I’ll take it all down get it done on the spot then. I’m going to have to nip home if that’s alright.”

“Sure I’ll be waiting in the car.”

Dave went back and took anything that he thought would come in useful. He even took a couple of bills because they had his name and address on. He returned to find John waiting in the car so they went down the town and soon Dave was self employed. He phoned Andy to give him the good

news though Andy did not see it in the same light. “We could have made some real money. I had put the word around and I was starting to get some feed-back.”

“Sorry but this too is real money. It is also regular. John reckons that I’ll get £85 a day.”

“He’s a dreamer the agencies only pay £6 an hour, what’s that, about forty quid a day.”

“Maybe but the firms pay the agencies a lot more than that I can tell you. No, £85 a day sounds about right.”

“Oh well,” Adam said admitting defeat, “Good luck then, it looks like I’m doing Sylvia’s garden,” and hung up. Dave went to bed at 10.00 with hopes of a bright future before him.

Dave woke up to find that all the gnomes had gathered and were full of bravado. Conneta the black bull was also there as was Axiom the horse.

“So Dave,” Kaylie said, “Your work is done and you will soon be leaving us.”

“Oh and I was just getting settled.”

“There are other worlds to travel and besides as I said before you are more than welcome to visit us any time.”

“Well there is that,” Dave said cheering up slightly.

“And Ben has got something for you.”

With that Ben stepped forward and said, “The Looking Glass of Narda, now you can see into the future.”

“Sorry, I’m not sure that I would like that. It could take away a lot of the excitement of life.”

“How do you mean?” Ben said somewhat taken back by Dave’s refusal, “I thought that you would have loved to have it.”

“I think that if I knew the future life could get quite boring. Besides I know that it means a lot more to you so you can have it.”

“Really, honest.”

“Yes, if I knew everything that was going to happen I would not need to think and so my mind would get slothful.”

“Wise words and well spoken,” Kaylie said, “You’ll go far in life. Anyway Conneta would like to have a few words with you.”

With that the bull stepped forward and said, “I would like to thank you for rescuing me, now I know that it was not your main objective but I would like to thank you just the same. I was foolish in my youth and spent an eternity regretting it. I am older now and hopefully wiser so hopefully I can put all that behind me.” With that the bull turned white and said, “Now I must see Silva and apologise for my recklessness. I wish you well in all that you do and thank you once again,” turned and ran off. After he had gone Ben said, “About this looking glass, it could prove useful to you, you know.”

“Really, I can’t see it.”

“It could warn you of hidden dangers, ones that you mind could not possibly discern.”

“Well there is that but if I had it I think that I would quickly use it to bad purpose.”

“Then I will warn you instead through your dreams.”

“Yes that sounds better. I won’t argue with that.”

“That’s sorted then,” Kaylie said, “Busta.”

Busta stepped forward and said, “Er I would like to thank you myself.”

“You won’t when you see how much work they have left you,” Dave said with a laugh.

“So I’ve been warned,” Busta said losing his bashfulness a little, “Thanks anyway.”

“Anyway,” Kaylie said, “Let’s go for a walk Dave. There are some things I would like to reveal to you. Knowing them should make your life a lot better.”

“I won’t argue with that,” Dave said and they started to walk back through the forest. As they were doing this Doug took Dixie back on Axiom so he could check on the goose and make sure that things in general were well. He promised to return for the others straight away so they waited by the passageway. Stima alone went with Dave and Kaylie for they were going to stop off en route and return him to Queen Nema.

“So,” Kaylie said, “The first thing I will tell you is this, never judge only counsel. You will find that it comes in very handy when dealing with other people’s emotional problems.”

“Really, so why is that then?”

“It’s all to do with personal involvement. When you judge it comes from the ego and so you take a personal interest and end up taking on any negative thought waves for your ego hooks onto them.”

“And when you counsel?”

“It comes from the rational side of the brain so there is no involvement, I mean emotional involvement when I say that for you have to get involved to know the situation so you may actually counsel but it’s not actually a personal involvement.”

“Right, so you don’t take things personally and end up dwelling on them.”

“Good, which brings us neatly to my next point. Emotional attachment distracts rational thought. Now when you get personally involved in problems not only do you attract their negativity it also impairs your judgement for it comes from the emotional side and not the rational. You actually handicap yourself from seeing the big picture so the advice you give is often flawed.”

“Because you get personally involved and only see it from that point of view.”

“That’s right and this brings me to my third point, an outside view gives you inside knowledge.”

“Yes it was like that when I was painting the walls, I had to step back to see it properly. When I was actually painting it all I could see was the many holes.”

“Painting the wall?”

“I can remember,” Dave said upon recognition, “I’ve been doing a garden in my world.”

“Good, that means that our worlds are now united. But you are right, if you can step back from a problem you can see it as a whole and so you get a better understanding of the situation and be more equipped to deal with it.”

“Yes I can see that now.”

“Experience is the best teacher I’ve mentioned that before if I remember rightly.”

“Yes that’s right, about getting your fingers burned.”

“Good I’m just checking to see if you still have your memory of this world intact.”

“Oh,” Dave said upon realisation, “You mean I might have gained one memory and lost another?”

“That’s right so that’s about covered problem solving. Just turn emotional problems into mental ones and you should be alright. Now the next point I would like to bring up is self righteousness is its own reward. There is not much to say really only you can have your reward either in heaven or on Earth.”

“Sorry?”

“It’s all to do with spiritual growth,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “Get self righteous and you will lose it as it will just be wasted on an ego lift.”

“Er what will?”

“The spiritual lift you get from doing a good deed, you felt it in the cave.”

“Oh right, so you could actually divert it then?”

“Yes it goes straight to the ego. Now the next point is sort of similar, conditional help hinders progress. When you help someone don’t get self righteous as it actually hampers your spiritual growth. That lift I was talking about can either boost the ego or the Soul. They both grow from this boost so bare that in mind.”

“I’ll try.”

“The next point speaks for itself really. A good example means more than just words but I guess you’ve worked that one out already.”

“True.”

“So onto the next one never let personal animosity get in the way of the big picture. Not a lot to say about that really.”

“No it’s self explanatory.”

“Good so point eight then. Control your passions or they will control you. Now as you might have

gathered you do this through recognition.”

“Like Narda you mean.”

“That’s right,” Kaylie said with a smile that played somewhat on Dave’s mind. After a moment’s thought Dave said, “Was Narda my anger?”

“As opposed to anger in general, that’s right.”

“So this world then, it exists only in my mind doesn’t it?”

“It is within you as it is within all men. To explain it properly would probably be beyond my grasp but I will try if you would like me to.”

“I’m not sure,” Dave said laughing, “I’m guessing that if it was probably beyond your grasp to explain it, it would definitely be beyond my grasp to understand it.”

“Well fair enough.”

“But on further thought you could give it a go. I mean if I don’t fully grasp it I might at least get a better understanding.”

“Well here goes then,” Kaylie said and took a breath. After he had exhaled he said, “Your mind is a small scale replica of creation itself, all the worlds of creation exist outside your mind as well as within. Does that make sense so far?”

“Sort of although I can’t equate it with reality.”

“Ah there are many realities, reality is not just your world it is where you are now. You will have to elaborate a little.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “What you say I can accept as truth but I don’t understand it fully.”

“You have to really experience it. You have experience our world enough for it to merge into your consciousness so now you can travel to the greater world. You have done this by purifying it and taking the knowledge from it so growing in awareness.”

“Right, well I think. Are you saying that now I have sorted out the small world so to speak I can travel to the big one?”

“Close, no what I am actually saying is that you can now travel consciously to that world as you are now aware of it. Before you could travel to the big world but it was not under your conscious guidance, you just ended up there.”

“Yes I can understand that. So all men have to go through this to travel consciously to the corresponding big world?”

“That’s right. They, too have to purify the worlds and become aware of them through their knowledge.”

“Amazing, and this knowledge, is this what we are going through now?”

“Well this and what else I have told you. It all adds up.”

“And is there much to do?”

“You have had eight, there are only another four.”

“And that’s it then?”

“Just a visit to Queen Nema and then one to Queen Nomi you will be fully aware then.”

“So what’s the next point then?”

“Point nine a bad word bares similar fruit. Not much to say on that just to say that your actions create reactions so think before you speak.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Good, point ten, a calming breath can control a seething rage. You can control your temper by recognising that you are getting angry. It’s all to do with recognition of self so try and be aware of your moods and you will have a lot more control over them.”

“Right, count to ten sort of thing.”

“I suppose so,” Kaylie said with a laugh, “Next point then, when doing a good turn always go one better. If you are helping someone out just go a little bit further. You’ll be surprised at the good opinion from others you’ll get by doing this. This one you’ll have to actually experience to truly see it.”

“Fair enough and the final point?”

“Rationalising irrationality is the imagination’s growth. Do you think that you would be up to explaining that one yourself?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Is it something to do with building up your mental powers?”

“Go on?”

“Do you mean I’m right?”

“That would depend on your elaboration.”

“Well you build up your imagination by rationalising the unknown like God and that sort of thing and anything unknown by definition is irrational because you have to know at least something about it to rationalise it.”

“Good and just in time as we are at Queen Nema’s camp.”

They entered in and Dave went straight to see her.

“I see congratulations are in order,” she said in a friendly manner, “Did you find it difficult?”

“Well to tell you the truth it was not as bad as I thought it would be. No it all just seemed to fit into place.”

“Good, now I am guessing that Kaylie has put you wise on quite a few things.”

“Yes he has been most enlightening. He told me that you have more things to say.”

“That’s right. Not many for your time in our world will soon be over.”

“But I will see you again, in the big world I mean?”

“Oh yes and who knows you might see me in your world now that you are conscious of our existence.”

“Really, I’ll look forward to that.”

“Estella you mean,” she said with a laugh.

“Oh” Dave said, embarrassed to be found out.

“She’s not for you I’m afraid her heart lies with the Earth Mother.”

“Sorry?”

“She has dedicated herself to a life of service to her as we all have. Beside I hear that you have got a girl back home.”

“Well I don’t know about that I haven’t actually been out with her yet.”

“You will and you will be happy.”

“You think so?”

“It is destined to be. Now first things first I would like to talk about something close to my heart, the Earth Mother.”

“Very well.”

“She is within everything that has life and she can make her presence felt in everything that has life.”

“Sorry?”

“That might be difficult for you to understand because you live in an artificial environment. The closest thing that you would get to her would be common sense.”

“She is common sense?”

“Yes but think of it more as an inner knowing, she is the voice within you.”

“Right.”

“And not only you she is within all animals so it might be a good idea to recognise what certain animals are symbolic of.”

“Do you mean like the rabbit being symbolic of fertility and the birds’ higher spiritual consciousness?”

“That’s right or the robin symbolic of rebirth, the raven selfishness and the pigeon emotional turmoil.”

“Really, yes I’ll look into it.”

“Know what they are symbolic of and you will get a deeper understanding. If you are thinking

about something and see a raven, well blackbird or crow too, then you know that you are being selfish. Can you see what I am saying?"

"Yes but I guess the environment that I live in will restrict what I can actually see."

"Very true so I would suggest a walk on the wild side when you have things on your mind. Forests or virtually anything that hasn't been interfered too much by man's presence. You'll soon find peace of mind."

"I'll definitely remember that, that could come in very handy."

"Good, we aim to please. So that's symbolism on a personal level. Animal behaviour can also tell you a lot. They can warn you of natural disasters, the changing of the seasons, for they are more in tune with the world."

"Yes."

"You'd probably know the last part of that but I have to mention it as it is part of the knowledge I have to impart."

"Well I did know about the seasons and I had some idea about natural disasters I must admit."

"We'll go back to common sense then. What it is in essence is the best and safest way to do something. Now this inner knowing comes from having a common sense of purpose. Pride blinds you to this for it only sees things from a self interested way so it misses out not only on seeing the big picture but also this inner knowing."

"Right, I can understand that."

"Good, so one final thing about the Earth Mother, she follows the Law of Love."

"The Law of Love?"

"You have to give in order to receive. You do this from the Earth Mother's point of view through tending the earth. Do this and she will gladly give up her bounty."

"Healthy crops and that, Estella told me something about it. Harnessing the Earth's energies I think."

"Yes that's one level but also that energy you are talking about is Earth knowledge. This knowledge feeds the Soul."

"Oh, I thought it was light that fed the Soul."

"Light is knowledge, it comes in many forms. This particular light is knowledge of the Earth Mother."

"Right I'll bare that in mind."

"Well that's all that I can tell you. Just keep the Earth Mother in your heart and things will generally speaking go your way."

"Thank you that has been most helpful," Dave said then said his goodbye and left.

"All done?" Kaylie said on seeing his approach.

"Yes she was telling me about the Earth Mother."

"A subject she holds dear to. Now Queen Nomi, I will take you through that short cut I mentioned."

"That will save a long walk."

"I thought you would like it," Kaylie said and took him to a small cave. They entered it and walked for only what seemed a very short distance before they came out at the depression where Dave had first saw Estella.

"You mean that's it, and after all that walking as well."

"It's the journey to the answer, that's when you find out things along the way."

"Well true I suppose."

With that King Dia the Great White Bear came running up and said, "Conneta has told me you were back. You've done very well and should be pleased with yourself. Yes this is indeed a great day."

"Have you seen Queen Nomi?" Kaylie said.

"She is not far I will take you to her."

As they walked Dia said, "Things will definitely change now. Our world is now yours. Long have I missed Conneta though I have noticed a change in him."

“Well he’s turned white,” Kaylie said.

“Well that but he has also lost his arrogance.”

“So what is Conneta actually symbolic of,” Dave said, “I mean he is a symbol isn’t he?”

“That’s right,” Kaylie said, “He’s your basic survival instinct.”

“What, but I thought that I had to get rid of it.”

“No, evolve it.”

“Purify it,” Dave said on recognition, “That’s why he turned white wasn’t it? Symbolic of purity.”

“You’ve got it and when you rescued Queen Nomi that meant that you found your purpose.”

“She is my purpose incarnate yes I can see that now. So I had to conquer my desires to find my purpose.”

“Good you are truly starting to understand our world now.”

“And Busta, did he have any relevance?”

“Self consciousness, well he was when controlled by desire or when he was over on the dark side.”

“Amazing so what about now then? Now he is in the light world I mean.”

“Soul consciousness.”

“Oh yes I can see that now. This world is truly an astounding place.”

“There’s plenty more to it but that will do for we will be seeing Queen Nomi in a minute,” Dia said and sure enough she appeared.

“Dave,” she said, “So we meet again. I would like to thank you once more and leave you some knowledge as a reward.”

“Gratefully accepted and besides saving you was a privilege.”

“Ah humility a nice thing to see and something that will go a long way to achieving your purpose.”

“It will?”

“Yes humility is selflessness, it has no pride. Pride is what stops you from achieving your purpose.”

“That was what was guarding you,” Dave said realising.

“That’s right,” she said with a smile, “So with pride defeated I was free and not only that I was bought into the light.”

“And so now you are to enlighten me.”

“Yes, you see the Land of Creative Formation is not really a hard world to understand. You came here for a purpose and that was to find your purpose.”

“And my purpose is?”

“To love one another and tend the Earth. That might sound simplistic but life is not really that difficult when you take away your selfish desires.”

“It certainly sounds simple.”

“You’ll do well, go in peace, see each man as your brother and remember that selfishness is not your essence for you are love.”

With that she disappeared and Kaylie said, “Well back to the caves then. We can celebrate and give you a good send off.”

“I won’t argue with that,” Dave said. Dia said his goodbyes and left them to walk on.

“Yes,” Kaylie said, “It’s just a shame that we have no milk to give you for it would really enhance the occasion.”

“Milk, I was more one for alcohol.”

“Oh there is plenty of that,” Kaylie said in disgust, “I don’t know how you could but you are more than welcome to it.”

Part 2

The Land of Imaginative Extension

**She lifts me up and drives me wild
Then scolds me like a naughty child,
In purity I guess she's styled
But to me she's well defiled.**

Chapter 1.

Time in the usual sense of the word does not exist in the creative realms so what we might think of a day there might actually be six months. Alternatively six months could pass in our dimension and we could return to find it only a day. Six months have passed since Dave's journey to the Land of Creative Formation and though little had changed there his life had changed dramatically. No longer the bachelor he had moved in with Jane and outside influences apart they were generally happy. Work too had moved on a pace and although the work on the flats had finished he had moved to another site (a school) with the same firm so he was still actively self employed. A down side to this move was that the site was in another town and so Dave needed some transport and as he could not drive it had to be a motorbike. He had passed his test in his younger days but it had been a long time since he had actually rode one so he had been quite nervous at first. Now the bike itself had been bought from a friend as an unfinished project so it had been pretty cheap but Dave in his naivety had rode it as finished so his journeys to work were often precarious at first. Eventually it was all sorted and it was around about that time that the dreams returned.

Dave found himself walking through a passageway of fire. Above and either side of him it flickered and gave off a soft soothing heat. It was a strange kind of heat, not a burning sensation that you would normally expect to feel and Dave was even tempted to try and touch it but instinct had over ruled him so he let it flicker unfelt. The passageway seemed to go on for miles but eventually he came to an opening and outside he found another world.

It was a strange barren world where all the mountains were volcanoes and all the lakes fiery. Geysers abounded pouring hot air into the atmosphere and the vegetation was sparse with only the occasional cactus making its presence felt. If the truth be known Dave was tempted just to turn back but a familiar face made him change his mind.

"Odo," Dave said, "Well I never."

"Welcome to the Land of Imaginative Extension."

"You're welcome to it, it looks like hell."

"Funny you should say that it encloses the underworld."

"What, you mean that I might end up seeing a dead person?"

"Don't use that expression around here Dave. It's not a popular word I can tell you."

"I bet, so what do they usually say?"

"Either no longer in the physical or in need of reformation but never dead, I must emphasise the point."

"I'll bare that in mind. Now would I be right in thinking that the Land of Imaginative Extension is the elemental world of Fire?"

"Well yes," Odo said with a laugh, "How did you know?"

"Sort of a lucky guess so if I remember rightly you said that each world held two?"

"That's right this is the other world, the land of the Salamander."

"And how do they equate?"

"Sorry?"

"Well in Creative Formation the two worlds represented the Earth's fertility and bountiful treasure. I was wondering if the land of Fire was made along similar lines."

"Oh right. Yes the world of the Salamander represents fire's powers of purification and the underworld imagination's ability to look beyond reality, imagination being the fire of your mind."

"Yes I can see that. So what am I actually doing here then?"

"Good question. It might be a good idea to visit King Sepi of the Salamanders and see what he has to say."

"Well I've nothing to lose I suppose, lead the way I guess."

Dave followed Odo across a flat barren plain until they came upon a large lake of fire. A large lizard left the lake and walked towards them. "You must be the mortal called Dave Jessel. I am Sepi and I am in need of your services."

“Right, what er. actually for?”

“I need a peacemaker to settle a dispute. I have been told that you would be ideal.”

“I’m not sure of that. I never really thought of myself as diplomatic.”

“Are you rejecting me?”

“No, er well I’m not sure.”

“This is not a time for false modesty if I did not think you could do this I would not have asked you.”

“Oh,” Dave said somewhat taken back by his abruptness.

“Well?”

“Alright then, what’s the story?”

“The story, where would I begin, it happened that long ago that is has become well ingrained in folk lore. First things first, the Pheonix, have you ever heard of it?”

“Er yes, wasn’t it some sort of mythical creature?”

“Define mythical I would like to gauge your understanding.”

“Fanciful,” Dave said shrugging his shoulders, “Just a story without any truth.”

“So you would agree with King Juma of the fire flies? King Lima of the moths says differently. He says that it exists in form. So now you see my dilemma.”

“And they’re disputing this? Not being funny but it’s a bit trivial isn’t it?”

“Not to them, many have died.”

“Really. So how am I expected to mediate between them, I mean I agree with King Juma for a start.”

“You must find the Pheonix.”

“So you must believe that it exists.”

“I know it exist but I cannot take sides.”

“You have actually seen it?”

“Not me but someone I know.”

“Who?”

“Ermal of the Flame it was a long time ago but he saw it nevertheless.”

“Ermal,” Odo said, “I never knew that.”

“You know him?” Dave said.

“Yes I know him well. He does not live far from here as a matter of fact.”

“So do you still want to help?” Sepi said to Dave.

“Well I could have a talk with him I suppose. I am a stranger to your world. Surely you could find someone better, someone who knows the place at least.”

“You are the most suited.”

“I could come with you if you like,” Odo said, “I know the world at least and besides Ermal can be quite funny around strangers sometimes.”

“I’ll talk to him,” Dave said to Sepi, “Weigh up what he has to say and then give you my answer.”

“You cannot say fairer than that I suppose.”

“And if I do find the Pheonix, what next?”

“Your word will be good enough. You see you are an outsider to this world and as such unbiased.”

“So that is why I’m most suited,” Dave said upon realisation.

“Amongst other things go and have a talk with him and seek me out on your return,” With that Sepi turned around and walked back into the lake.

“Well, not far did you say?” Dave said to Odo after Sepi had gone.

“No, follow me,” Odo said and taking him around the lake made their way to a rocky outcrop where at the middle a wizened old man sat intently gazing into a large and powerful fire.

“Ermal,” Odo said, “It’s been a long time. I would like to introduce you to a friend of mine, Dave.” Ermal looked up from the fire and said, “Step forward mortal man. Come gaze awhile and tell me what you see.”

Dave did what was asked of him but said, "I see nothing, only the flames."
"Then my friend you are not ready."
"Sorry?" Dave said taken aback.
"You seek the Pheonix, until you can see into the flames you will never find it."
"But how did you know?"
"I can see into the flames, there is nothing hidden from me."
"Oh, may I have another look?"
"Go ahead," and Dave tried again but to no avail. After he had given up he said, "And is that where you saw it then, in the fire?"
"No I saw it rise from the Valley of the Redeemed."
"The exit to the underworld," Odo said, "You have been there?"
"Longer ago that I care to mention but the sights I saw there still haunt me to this day."
"I'll bet. It is a place that I have only heard about but from what I have heard it is not a place that I would like to visit."
"So what is this place," Dave said, "Why is it so bad?"
"Within the valley lies the exit of the underworld," Odo said, "It is protected from the world of the Salamander for it can give you a false entry."
"Sorry?"
"You have to go through the entrance of the underworld before you can go through the exit and the only way to gain entry is to cast off your shell in the physical world."
"Die?"
"Not a word I would use as I said. So to make the exit secure it has been packed with the most hideous and frightening forms imaginable. Believe me you would rather pass on than enter that valley."
"And that is where the Pheonix took off from?" Dave said to Ermal.
"It could have been either the valley itself or the underworld. I did not get that close."
"So you did not actually enter the valley?" Dave said.
"To get even close to it takes more nerve then I can muster," Odo said, "No the horror is not just in the valley alone, the whole surrounding area is well protected."
"And I am supposed to go there to find the Pheonix, I'm not sure. Besides, just because it took off from there it does not mean that I will find it there."
"True," Odo said, "It does sound foolhardy when you put it like that."
"Well the choice is yours," Ermal said, "I only know of one other who has made the journey so there is no shame involved."
"You know of another, who is that then?"
"Mad Dinga but you will be wasting your time talking to him as I'm afraid the journey destroyed him."
"I have heard of him," Odo said, "Isn't he supposed to live on the edge of a volcano?"
"That's right, Mount Sorrow in the Vale of the Barren Plain."
"They say that he lives on the venom of scorpion stings and that he talks to rocks."
"I have heard," Ermal said, "Though whether or not it is true I wouldn't like to say."
"Can we see him?" Dave said.
"Sure," Odo said, "Are you still thinking of going then?"
"Not really but I thought that meeting him might be an experience."
"Well there is that," Ermal said, "And it definitely would be."
"It is a far walk," Odo said, "But it is up to you."
Dave thought awhile before he said, "Well it's got to be done I suppose. I mean after all, thinking about it, I came here for a purpose."
"Good," Odo said, "I'm glad that you realised that."
"And if it's to find the Pheonix then so be it. This man might have information."

“Well it’s on the way anyway,” Odo said, “So really you’ve nothing to lose.”

“Only my sense of reason,” Dave said and then turning to Ermal, “Would you tell me what you know?”

“Sure, now as you have gathered I did not enter the valley so I’m afraid that anything in it is alien to me. What I can tell you is that you first have to cross the Desert of No Return which believe me is an ordeal in itself. Giant insects live there. Now these insects, I did not get too close to find out if they were friendly and if you actually see them you will know why. I would definitely avoid them if I was you. Should you ever manage to cross the desert you will come to the Land of the Molten Men and these are definitely not friendly. They are the valleys first line of defence and are programmed to destroy anything that manages to cross the desert.”

“And they can be destroyed?”

“I doubt it they are made of molten lava.”

“Oh, and they can move about?”

“Very slowly but if they do find you, you have nowhere to run anyway so it is pointless. Anyway should you manage to sneak past them you come to Sena, the Giant Scorpion. Nothing gets past her that was as far as I got. Now I could see the valley in the distance so I guess there wasn’t anything after her but I would not stake my life on it.”

“Well thank you anyway. You have been a great help and have given me a good start.”

“Dinga might have got further. If you can get some sense out of him he might prove useful.”

“I’ll bare than in mind,” Dave said and left him to go back to staring in the fire.

As they made their way through the rest of the rocky outcrop Odo said, “Imagination, the fire of your mind. Do you want to talk about it for a while, it might pass the time.”

“Yes sure we’ve plenty of time to pass.”

“So what is it then?” Odo said much to Dave’s surprise.

“Er I don’t know. I thought that you were going to tell me about it.”

“Well what do you think it is, surely you must have some idea?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Is it the ability to create an image?”

“Good, not bad at all but we will try and take it a little deeper.”

“Be my guest,” Dave said with a laugh.

“Right, like that is it. Well alright I will give you this one. It is the ability to look beyond reality with the resources at your disposal, the greater the imagination the less the resources.”

“Resources?”

“Knowledge.”

“Do you mean light?”

“Good, you have taken with you knowledge from the last world, this should be easier then.”

“Well I don’t know about that.”

“We’ll see,” Odo said with a laugh, “Now the imagination is the tool of the Self, why is that then?”

“Because it lives in darkness?”

“When it’s in an unenlightened state but yes you are right. The Will’s tool is the intellect but that’s another world so we will not dwell on it.”

“Fair enough it does not do to take too much in one go.”

“Yes right, now as I said it is a tool of the Self and in an unenlightened state it is clouded in negativity, why is that then?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Is it because the Self in an unenlightened state is centred on survival and so clouded by Earthly desire?”

“Excellent its understanding of its purpose is to basically survive and so it cannot see beyond that. As its imagination grows though things start to change a little and it grows in understanding of things beyond reality seen and this alters reality perceived.”

“Sorry, how would that equate?”

“Reality seen is a self seeking state all you see is basically what is before you. You do not need

imagination for that and so you have a mental power that lies idle through lack of use. It still exists though it is just that the Self now uses it to bad purpose. It tends to think negatively for as it lives in the darkness it sees things darkly.”

“Pessimistic, I can see that.”

“Good and not only that as it has no real purpose that it can understand it tags on to the wrong ones.”

“Wrong ones?”

“Pride, anger, that sort of thing, now as you start to see beyond reality a little you start to cleanse your Self of the wrong purposes for when you see them for what they are they don’t exist anymore for they have served their purpose.”

“So these false purposes, do you mean to say that they were put in for a reason?”

“Yes to tempt you.”

“What, I just thought that they were evil.”

“No,” Odo said with a laugh.

“To what purpose then, you are not trying to tell me that they were put in just so that you can get rid of them surely?”

“Now I know it was said that life was simple but it’s not that simple. No by facing temptation you get mentally stronger for each time that you face it and don’t succumb you increase your will power.”

“Oh right I can see that but don’t you mean emotionally stronger?”

“It’s all mental, anything to do with the mind it. Don’t over rationalise is or it loses its power. No the mind evolves through emotional to intellectual to spiritual, that’s the big picture.”

“Ok I’ll bare that in mind.”

“And you are your Will before it turns spiritual.”

“When I am reborn as my purpose.”

“Good, well remembered except by then you have merged with your understanding so become both your purpose and your understanding of purpose.”

“Oh right I should have remembered that from the other world.”

“There are a lot of overlaps between all the worlds so some of the things I say you will already have grasped.”

“Is that why you said that things should be easier?”

“That’s right. Now not only when you defeat temptation does your Will get stronger your Self also grows by purging itself of these temptations for they are what stunts its understanding. You see your imagination is actually your Self’s intellect.”

They left the rocky outcrop and came across a desert, only a small one though for in sight was a wall of volcanoes that pumped smoke into a darkened sky.

“Just beyond there lies the Vale of the Barren Plain,” Odo said, “We are making good progress but we will talk of other things for a while to let what I’ve told you sink in.”

“Fair enough, so are you to come with me into the Valley of the Redeemed?”

“Into the underworld itself if need be.”

“Do you know much about the place?”

“Not really, only what I’ve been told.”

“Been told?”

“Yes you see sometimes when you leave the Valley of the Redeemed you take some memories with you. Not many and they don’t stay fresh in your mind for too long but it does happen.”

“And these memories, what were they?”

“Well they don’t like being called dead was one and whilst they are waiting to be reformed they live in their own memories was another.”

“Could you elaborate on that last point?”

“Sure, basically they go back to certain times in their lives and live there. Say if someone died when

they were 70 they might live at the time of their lives when they were 20. They would go back to that time and there they would stay until their mind starts to question that reality. By that time they will be ready to move on.”

“Question that reality?”

“Whilst they are in that reality they will think that they are on Earth therefore still alive in the sense that you mean. Eventually though they will think something is wrong. Little things like seeing someone and then realising that they are dead. The next stage then is realising that they too are dead then they are ready to move on.”

“And is there a purpose to this or is it just to pass time?”

“They have to cleanse themselves of their Earthly memories. Realising that they are no longer on Earth does this. It has to be done gently though as it could be quite a shock to the less enlightened.”

“I’ll bet, and what about the enlightened ones?”

“Fully enlightened go to the collective conscious or the fairy world, less enlightened go to what they believe in.”

“What like if you were a Christian you go to Heaven?”

“Or Hell depends on your perception of how you lived your life.”

“And those that believe in re-incarnation?”

“They go straight to be judged. Everyone will be judged eventually for when they are ready to move on that is the next step.”

“So that is the underworld then a collection of memories.”

“That’s about it although there is one part I have yet to mention.”

“There is?”

“Perdition, this is the place where they send those that deprive their Self’s growth through an act of their own free will.”

“Sorry?”

“Commit suicide, it is the worst thing you could possibly do. Anything else you can move on but suicide, no.”

“So you mean that Adolf Hitler who was responsible for the death of millions of people could have moved on?”

“Hitler, yes I know that name. Didn’t he commit suicide?”

“Oh,” Dave said and thought awhile before saying, “Do you think that there was a connection?”

“As if divinely inspired,” Odo said with a smile, “A lot of the man-gods I used to know went the same way. They thought it would be easier but it seems they did not know as much as they thought they did.”

“Well I never.”

“It’s alright having free will but if you cause too much havoc with it you will lose it. So basically that is all I know about the underworld.”

“And what would the Pheonix be doing there? No it must have come from the valley itself.”

“I wouldn’t like to guess, as I said I don’t know too much about the underworld.”

“I don’t know about that you seem to know a lot to me.”

“I only know up until they are ready to move on I don’t know what they have to go through after.”

“Oh and you think that the Pheonix might be involved in the process somehow?”

“Well it does rise from the ashes I’m not saying that it is, I’m just saying that there are a lot of things I don’t know.”

“Fair enough, now Ermal mentioned the molten men, do you know much about them?”

“No it is a completely alien world to me, I had not even heard of them before he mentioned it, sorry.”

“That’s alright I am guessing that we will be sneaking past them so hopefully we don’t need to know about them.”

“Dinga might know more.”

The desert disappeared and was replaced by volcanic mountains, as they clung to the foothills Odo said, "So are you ready to hear about imagination a little more?"

"Sure, we got as far as Self's intellect if I remember right."

"That's right, now we will call our unenlightened self a negative imagination and an enlightened one a positive."

"Yes I can see that."

"And what turns negative into positive?"

"Light."

"Good, now this light actually builds up your imagination and is knowledge of things beyond reality seen. It might be knowledge of God, the elements, Mother Nature or the Self. You will go into it further in another world so I will not dwell on it."

"I'll look forward to it."

"I'm sure. Now another way to build up your imagination is to rationalise your dreams, why is that then?"

Dave thought awhile before he said, "If you can rationalise them that means they must have been rationalised."

"Good, rationalised by what?"

"I don't know er something beyond reality seen?"

"That will do, that's all you really need to know for the time being. You realise that it wasn't done consciously by you so there must be more things in the mind than just you. This goes a long way to helping you lose your self-consciousness."

"Right, I can see that it could have that effect."

"Now a lot of people do not understand what dreams are. They think that they are just flights of fancy with no rational basis and so are unimportant."

"Well I used to."

"But you see differently now. No dreams are there to help your Self development and aid your spiritual growth. They can also warn you of impending misfortunes so basically if you learn to interpret them you have a distinct advantage of life experience."

"Easily said but how do you actually interpret them?"

"It works on a different level. Dreams come from the imagination and so are heavily symbolic."

"I talked about symbolism in the last world except it was to do with seeing animals."

"That works in dreams too and with the same symbols. Now most dreams are personally symbolic so the recipients are really only the ones that can truly and fully understand them having said that others can give an adequate answer but it is better to be able to understand them yourself for the sake of personal growth and to be more self reliant."

"I'll bare that in mind. Could you give me any hints though?"

"Sure, if you see a death in a dream it usually means the death of a negative aspect like sloth or avarice."

"Right but I actually had a dream in which I died, is that the same thing?"

"I would say that, that would be more to do with testing your mettle."

"Testing my mettle?"

"To purge you from your fear of death another similar one would be falling off a cliff."

"I have heard of that one. Some people say that if you don't wake up you die."

"No," Odo said with a laugh, "Your plummet slows down and then you feel yourself flying."

"Seriously?"

"Yes it's a very good feeling I can tell you. So this fear of death then, do you know what it actually is?"

"Not really."

"It is your basic survival's ultimate fear. Lose that fear and you lose your basic survival's hold on you. And how do you go about actually losing it?"

Dave thought awhile and said, "By realising that it is just a physical death and not a mental one."

"Very good you've grasped it well. You can also realise this through a belief in the afterlife so basically your imagination is your saving grace, as it grows your fear of death diminishes. Incidentally this fear of death works its way through your consciousness and manifests itself as fear of failure so as you lose it you also grow in confidence."

"Really, and that is why you start to think more positive then."

"That's right but the best way to think more positive is to stand back and look at the big picture. If you can do that you will tend to see things clearer and so differently."

The mountains finished and they came to a vast barren plain that stretched as far as the eyes could see. In the middle was a huge volcano that looked out of place amongst the even land.

"Mount Sorrow," Odo said, "The home of Dinga, this should be quite interesting. The stories I have heard about this man are unbelievable."

"What like eating scorpion venom?"

"That and many more, some say that he was brought up by the vultures of the Great Desert and was never born just found."

"There are vultures here, what other animals live here then?"

"Mainly reptiles, insects and a dragon it is a harsh place to live so they are pretty hardy creatures."

"I'll bet and do they eat in this world?"

"No it's only in your world do the animals eat. They do kill though for this can sometimes be a violent place."

"I'll bare that in mind. And you said that a dragon lives here. To me they were just like the Pheonix, mythical. Have you ever seen it yourself?"

"Many times, I often visit. Sila, yes she's quite one for the conversation. I'll introduce you to her if you like."

"I'm not sure about that, I have heard that they are pretty dangerous."

Odo laughed and said, "They are probably the tamest animals in this world. The only danger you would have would be being talked to death. Where ever did you get that idea from?"

"That's what our legends say, knights used to have to slay them to rescue maidens."

"Really," Odo said laughing, "Now when I said that they weren't dangerous that was only because it is in their nature not to be. They are well equipped to take on and beat any foe, those knights that you talk about would be no match for a dragon. Maybe those stories are symbolic though for a lot of knowledge was hidden in stories."

"So what do you think that they meant then?"

"Well the maiden could be the purpose that you served I suppose."

"You know that might be right, they were very big on chivalry in those days, service to women was a major part of it. So what would the dragon be? Something that obstructs you from this purpose," and thought awhile before he said, "Self interest?"

"It would fit in though whoever formulated the stories must have had a warped view on reality. We'll stop off and ask her about it if you like, it's on the way."

"Well fair enough now that I know she is safe. So you said that a lot of knowledge was hidden in the stories, why would they do that?"

"Same as in my day to keep people ignorant whilst saving the knowledge for a select few. We glanced upon it in Creative Formation. Ignorant people are pretty easily manipulated and can generally be controlled without them knowing it. It has evolved into quite an art form but generally involves playing on fears or perceived fears. Anyway this knowledge that was hidden was called esoteric knowledge and the whole science was called the occult."

"I've heard of that. I thought that it was more to do with witch craft and devil worship though."

"Some took that path. Generally speaking they received a little knowledge and put it to bad purpose. No I'm talking about the actual knowledge itself. This knowledge was called the higher truths and by knowing it you built your intellect. Understanding it is the key though for when you do it builds

up your imagination. Now if you know it without understanding it you evolve out of balance and become proud and hard hearted. If you both know and understand it you evolve in balance and grow in awareness.”

“I realise that but not being funny you seem no better off. I know that you said that when you evolved you go up to the collective conscious but if that’s the case wouldn’t you be better off having a good life on Earth and just coming back again and again.”

“You could do that but then you would miss out on what the occultists were actually searching for.”

“Turning lead into gold that just sounds like the means to a wealthy lifestyle.”

“It was symbolic. From base, Earthly to spirit. What they were actually looking for was eternal youth.”

“What,” Dave said in surprise, “You mean that you could never grow old.”

“Well look at me,” Odo said with a smile, “But surely I’ve mentioned it all before?”

“It was just an abstract concept I think it must be starting to sink in a little now.”

“You’re starting to grasp it that’s all. I am a man, the same as you are. That abstract concept is my reality. We had this knowledge long ago, thousands of years in fact. The knowledge is still around it’s just that it has been well hidden in many varied and different schools of thought. It has to be reformulated that’s all. You do this by understanding and cross referencing it and sorting out the wheat from the chaff.”

“Sorry?”

“Over time a lot of false perceptions have been added. People got a bit of knowledge and thought that they knew it all and so could rewrite the word. Knowledge gets lost that way. That was why it was hidden in many different thought forms, if it was deleted from one it might still get through. They also added their own interpretations and if you follow them you could get well off track so be discerning.”

“I’ll bare that in mind. Does this mean that I am going to become an occultist?”

“Yes so have your spell book ready,” Odo said with a laugh, “Incidentally I wouldn’t really advise you to get involved in that sort of thing as it can be very self deluding.”

“It’s not really my sort of thing do they work by the way?”

“Oh yes.”

“I never knew that though don’t worry I won’t be tempted to try and see.”

“Good, we’re here now. He must live in that cave. I had better give him a call.” Odo called him and a voice answered, “Who are you and what business do you have here?”

“I am Odo and I have with me a friend called Dave. I was told that you might prove useful to my purpose.”

“Told, told by who?”

“Ermal of the Flame.”

“I will be down presently,” the voice called back and a small ape like man left the cave and scampered down to meet them. “I am Dinga,” it said, “Some people say that I am mad but I say I have good reason to be,” and laughed in a manic like way.

“And it is that reason that we have come here to see you about. Ermal said that you have crossed the Desert of No Return. We mean to do the same.”

“Then it is you that are mad,” and looking at Dave, “Your friend, he has the look of death in his eyes.”

“What,” Dave said taken aback.

“He is a mortal,” Odo said.

“Oh,” Dinga said, “And you mean to cross the desert with a mortal man, no it can’t be done.”

“It will be done.”

“And you need a guide, is that it?”

“No we just want you to tell us what you saw that’s all.”

“Tell you what I saw,” Dinga said with a laugh, “I’ve been trying to block it out but still it haunts

me.”

“Then maybe you could unburden it on us, who knows it might ease it a little.”

“I’ll gladly tell you what I saw although whether you believe it is another matter.”

“We’ll take that chance.”

“Come up to the cave and I will tell you the full story.” They followed him up and after they had settled themselves Dinga began, “My story began many, many years ago when I was foolish enough to think I could do anything. I had heard of the Valley of the Redeemed and the Temple of Resurrection with its venerated Ring of Purity.”

“Temple of Resurrection?” Odo said.

“Isn’t that what you seek, that’s the only reason that anyone would want to cross the desert.”

“No,” Dave said, “It’s the Pheonix we seek.”

“Seriously, you must be mad but that is of no concern of mine. Anyway I meant to have the ring for I thought it would give me the respect that I craved for so I left my family and in the foolishness of my youth vowed that I would not return without it.”

“Your, family,” Odo said, “So where are you actually from then?”

“The Great Desert my family were not of my kind. They could fly and as I couldn’t they looked down on me both literally and mentally. That was why I wanted the ring it was to win their respect. I set off vowing to bring it back and for five days I crossed the desert blinded by the Sun and evaporating in the heat. I saw giant monsters along the way but I hid from them as fear was my captor. Huge insects that could devour me in one go. I should have turned back there and then but like a fool I continued, thinking that once I had crossed the desert that would be it, how wrong I was, how very wrong. Eventually I did cross it and I came across a mountain range inhabited by the strangest creatures I had ever seen. They were made out of molten rock and must have been 8ft tall. I hid from them and slowly made my way through the range until I came to a small desert that was inhabited by a great scorpion. Sneaking past it I had the valley in sight, well I guess so because I never got any further.”

“No,” Dave said, “So what happened?”

“A great winged lizard swooped down on me. It picked me up and took me to a huge mountain depositing me in its nest. There were three babies in there although when I say babies they were twice the size of me. She just left me there and flew off whilst her youngsters circled around as if to eat me. It was a very lucky escape I can tell you. I only got out by the skin of my teeth. That was it for me, I sneaked back out and came here and here I will stay.”

“You must miss your family,” Dave said.

“More than anything.”

“Why not go back then, surely it is only your pride that keeps you here.”

“It is a different world here,” Odo said, “Vows can never be broken, I’m afraid it’s a rule of the world.”

“Oh,” Dave, “Then I vow to bring it to you.”

“You are not of this world and so are not bound by its rules,” Odo said, “That is a good thing for that was a foolish vow you just made.”

“Well it seems more worthwhile then going all that way just to look at a Pheonix. Don’t forget that we are going to have to face a lot of danger on the way.”

“Then wouldn’t it be better to go straight there and back without diversions. If the chance is there then take it but don’t put yourself out as it means you will be in there longer than necessary.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and then to Dinga, “I will try my best anyway.”

“Thank you for the thought if nothing else. I fear that your good intentions will end up like mine though so you will excuse me if I don’t get too excited.”

“I understand.”

“Time is moving on now Dave, you will need to rest awhile,” and then to Dinga, “May we stop here?”

“Sure, you are more than welcome.”

They talked awhile about things in general and it was not long before Dave felt himself lose consciousness.

Dave woke up and checked the time it was a quarter to seven. He switched off the alarm clock before it could go off and went down the stairs to make a cup of tea for both himself and Jane. She came down just as he was pouring it out.

“You timed that right,” he said passing it to her, “What have you got planned for today then?”

“Just drop her off at school and then nip round and see my mam. I’ll try and get some sleep later as I’m back on tonight.”

“Not looking forward to that I bet.”

“No it’s getting worse you have never met such a bunch of back stabbing, idle bitches in all your life.”

“And I thought that nursing was such a caring profession,” Dave said with a laugh.

“It used to be but that seems such a long time ago that I have long forgotten it.”

“You don’t have to do it you know.”

“I’ll take early retirement in a couple of years I can put it all behind me then.”

“A couple more years, are you sure that you are up to it?”

“Now that I couldn’t tell you.”

“Well anyway I had better be getting off or I’ll be late,” Dave said and kissed her goodbye. He left the house and getting on his bike made the 12 mile journey to work. Now would be a good time to tell you a little about Jane and her circumstances for it will pass a little time whilst Dave is traveling.

Jane was a good natured person and like all good natured people had a tendency to be put on. She had attracted a lot of parasites along her path of life and used up a lot of time trying to pacify them. Now you would think that these parasites would be grateful but life doesn’t work like that I’m afraid. No, they openly disrespected her and abused her good nature to such an extent that she had very little time with Dave. Dave, though he was good natured too, was not a person to be put on and so countless arguments ensued. Time after time he was told to mind his own business Jane little realising that it was his business for when she suffered so did he. Some things had changed though for by the very fact that Dave was there a few hangers on were deterred. Her social life would be a good example. She used to have to pick up her friends and drive them into town, leave her car and go back and fetch it in the morning. That changed quite quickly for with Dave there she did not feel the urge to go out as often and her friends started to actually miss her company so when she actually did go out it was on her terms. An old boyfriend who had been pestering her even though he was married quickly disappeared when he found out it was Dave so her nights out became less fraught too. She was starting to stand up to her family a little more now as well, perceiving them not as clever as they told her they were. Dave himself had, had a couple of run ins and had proved himself more than a match. Work though was the main problem. She only worked part time but she ended up doing the shifts that no one else wanted. Not only that the people she worked with were lazy and devious so she ended up having to do her work and half of theirs. They envied Jane and instead of being grateful picked faults with her work, even though it was supposed to be theirs. Dave though did interfere sometimes for he realised that her main problem was not having a ready wit. He had started to enlighten her a little and her mind had sharpened enough for her to be mentally stronger. She would tell him what had happened the previous night and they would go over what she could have said. An example would be saying to the fault finders, “I wish you wouldn’t struggle when I’m carrying you,”

Fate too was on her side and situations generally went her way. The Ward Sister once had it in her mind to humiliate Jane in front of the rest of the staff for she knew that Jane knew her job and this made her stand out. Jane had signed that she had gave a patient his medication and when it was time for his next dose the following nurse could not find it (Even though it was a large box in the

medicine cupboard) so signed it out of stock (She had not informed the chemist of this either which was a pity because he would have told her that she still should have plenty.). Time after time it was marked out of stock, so the Sister wanted to know how Jane could have managed to give the patient his medication when there was not any to give him. Instead of checking the box herself first she tried to bawl her out but Jane stood her ground and said it was in the medicine box. The Sister stormed over, in her mind to prove her wrong and much to her horror and humiliation, the medication was there. Plenty of other situations went her way but the whole environment was both stressful and mentally draining and she would have been a lot better out of it.

Dave pulled into the school looking forward to a pretty easy day. They were erecting a new science block and had to dig a long trench to join it to the electricity supply. The trench itself was going to have to go along the school boundary, branching off in places and be a total length of about half a mile. Long gone were the days of hand digging though for the bulk of it would be done by a J.C.B with a mini digger for the hard to reach places. Dave's main job was to check the area for previous cables and put a thin layer of sand down to bed the cables in. Even the sanding would be easy for his friend Steve would be operating a mini dumper truck so all he really had to do was rake it flat. Nothing of note happened that day except for an interesting chat Dave had with a ground worker called Andy so I thought that I would relate it.

"I was talking to a mate that had a bike like yours," Andy said as they were having dinner.

"Really, and did he have as much trouble as I'm having with mine?"

"Well he did tell me something interesting at one point it was only firing on two cylinders."

"Sounds like the coils."

"So he thought, he swapped them around to find out that it wasn't. Anyway to cut a long story short he found out it was the C.D.I. unit. It seems that the regulator/ rectifier had perished with age and so it was putting out too much voltage and frying the C.D.I unit. £500 it cost and he had to wait a month as it had to come from Japan."

"Something to look forward to I suppose."

"It seems that it was a common fault so I would say you were right. He had to use a regulator from another bike to get around it, a Super-dream believe it or not."

"Really. My friends got one doing nothing at the moment it might be a good idea to swap it around before it does any damage."

"Saves you a lot of expense you'll come across a little problem though for your regulator has five wires leaving it whilst the other has six."

"That's knackered me then I know very little about wiring. I was hoping to be able just to swap them round."

"It's not really a big problem. I'm seeing him tonight as a matter of fact. I'll ask him to draw you a diagram."

"Yes, cheers," Dave said and that was it really.

Back at home though things were a little more interesting, Jane's brother had come back to his mother's house and saw Don drinking whiskey at seven in the morning. He had thrown him out and banned him from ever going back.

"Well not being funny but he shouldn't have been drinking at that time in the morning," Dave had said on hearing it.

"I know that, that's not the point though. My mum needs the company and there is no one else to replace him. He was around there 25 hours a week, what's going to happen now though?"

"Get some of her money from your nutty sister, she has more than enough to pay for someone to come round."

"Waste of time she is, it will be left to me as usual. I'll have to leave work and look after her myself."

"Look, let me go and sort it."

"No it's none of your business," Jane snapped and that was how most of the conversations usually

went. Dave returned later to bed, alone and unhappy.

Dave awoke to find Odo and Dinga talking. "Ah," Odo said on seeing him waken, "We've just been having an interesting conversation. It seems that Dinga has remembered some things that might prove useful."

"Well we can do with all the help we can get," Dave said.

"It was when I was hiding from the molten men," Dinga said, "I overheard some things."

"Yes?"

"It seems that the valley itself is inhabited by creation's failures, it's sort of a dumping ground."

"Oh right, did you get any descriptions?"

"No but I found out that they all had certain weaknesses, that is why they were failures. Find out what these flaws are and you can easily over power them."

"I'll bare that in mind. You wouldn't happen to know what they are?"

"I'm afraid not."

"Oh well never mind."

"It might not be that hard to work out," Odo said, "I'm guessing that you would just have to find out what they are symbolic of and work out what is wrong with the symbolism."

"Sorry?"

"I would probably be better off giving you an example," Odo said with a laugh, "You might see a flying pig."

"What," Dave said, "When pigs can fly," and started laughing.

"Sorry?"

"Oh it's one of our sayings basically it means that it will never happen."

"Oh right. Well anyway in the world of symbolism the pig signifies gluttony, an Earthly desire. Flying would make it spiritual so giving out a conflict of interests."

"You know I can understand that. You would have to get rid of the pig within you before you could fly."

"That's right so they could never pair up. Now I am thinking that just by recognising this fact alone should be enough to destroy them."

"Well it worked in the last world," Dave said picking up, "And do you think it might also work with the molten men?"

"I'm not sure. I think they were actually created for a purpose and if that's the case they would not be flawed."

"I did over hear that they came from another world," Dinga said, "A world much different to this one."

"Then maybe they were just dumped here as well," Odo said, "We would probably just have to work out why and that would tell us their flaw."

"Yes I can see that," Dave said, "Though I don't really know how we could ever find that out," and to Dinga, "Did they say anything about their last world?"

Dinga thought awhile before he said, "Not really, except that it was a lot better than this one."

"That sounds like a fall from grace," Odo said, "That would mean they were probably turned into molten lava as well."

"Could they be the man-gods that did not commit suicide?" Dave said, "That would fit the bill."

"You know I think you are right. They would have too much knowledge to go back on the wheel of life and they would never be accepted in either the fairy world or collective conscious. They would have to go somewhere, yes it would fit."

"So why do you think they were turned into molten lava then, was it symbolic?"

"Could be," Odo said and thought awhile before he said, "Well volcanoes are symbolic of violent upheavals and what comes out of violent upheavals unrest." he thought some more and said,

"Maybe they were condemned to an eternity of unrest?"

"Yes I can see that but how would you go about actually destroying them?"

“You couldn’t they are immortal beings. The only thing that would actually destroy them would be an act of their own free will.”

“You mean suicide I can’t see them wanting to do that.”

“Me neither, we’ll just hopefully sneak around them.”

“Fair enough, any thoughts on the scorpion?”

“I would say that, that was also a symbol but we can talk about it on our way to Sila.”

“Yes we had better be making tracks,” Dave said getting up. They thanked Dinga for his hospitality and walking down the mountain carried on through the barren vale. As they walked on Dave said, “I wouldn’t say that he was mad.”

“No he seems quite coherent to me. Maybe he was just a little misunderstood,” and started laughing, “Anyway back to the scorpion. I think that it was put there for a purpose and so wasn’t a creative flaw.”

“Right.”

“So what do you think it is symbolic of?”

“What me, I thought that you were going to tell me.”

“Time to start thinking for yourself now I am only here to guide you, it is your quest.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t know where to start.”

“Anything special about it?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “It has a sting in its tail?”

“Good so it is something with a sting in its tail and it’s also there to stop you getting into the underworld. Well that’s not strictly true for it is actually there to stop you getting into the Valley of the Redeemed.”

Dave thought some more and said, “So it’s actually there to stop you from being redeemed without physically dying.”

“Good you are coming on well.”

“And it has a sting in its tail,” Dave said, thought awhile and said, “Is it Earthly desire?”

“Close but this is the world of Fire, a different world.”

“The world of the imagination, I think its fear of death but I can’t really see the sting in the tail.”

“There is nothing to be afraid of. The sting is that your fear of death is the only thing actually stopping you from realising this.”

“Oh right, so how would I actually defeat it for the only thing I could actually think of would be to die.”

“Just recognise it for what it is. It grows strong from you fear so the less you have the weaker it gets.”

“I’ll remember that.”

“So are you up to doing the winged lizard with three chicks? You seem to be getting quite a taste for it.”

“Well winged means spiritual I guess but as for the lizard I wouldn’t have a clue.”

“Cold blooded,” Odo said giving him a clue.

“Emotionless?”

“Go on.”

“Lack of compassion in a spiritual sense, no I can’t see it.”

“You’re close surely your spiritual purpose is to be compassionate.”

“Well yes but that isn’t.”

“It’s stopping you from redemption, doesn’t that tell you that its negative?”

“Right?”

“A negative purpose perhaps?”

“Oh yes, the wrong purpose.”

“And what three things come from having a negative purpose? Baring in mind it had three chicks.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Self consciousness?”

“That’s one.”

“Self delusion?”

“Good, just one left.”

Dave thought for a while and said, “Self centredness?”

“Excellent, it is good to see that you are getting acclimatized now.”

“Yes I’m starting to see things a bit clearer now. This journey is not just to see the Pheonix is it?”

“No.”

“And you knew this all along?”

“You weren’t quite ready, you are now though.”

“So I have to defeat all these things to purify this world, that’s quite a task you’ve set me.”

“You’re almost ready, we’ve still a way to travel but rest assured when you get there you will be ready.”

“I still need some more Fire knowledge don’t I?”

“The Desert of No Return?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Would that be life?”

“Why do you say that?” Odo said not answering him.

“Once you start there’s no return.”

“That will do. I’ll give you the last one. Insects are petty annoyances through life and by the fact that they are huge it means they are blown up out of proportion.”

“And what would they actually be? What sort of things could stop you from redemption?”

“It’s more to do with the fact they waste precious time. You are not really on Earth for that long. As you go through life you have to work for the greater good. That does not mean doing things for people who are more than capable of doing things for themselves. Believe it or not you actually hamper both yours and their progression for you deprive them of the chance to grow.”

“I’ll remember that, so what’s next then?”

“Emotional bonds, do you know much about them?”

“Not much really, it’s sort of like family and things.”

“One way of putting it I suppose,” Odo said with a laugh, “Well these bonds are actually ties and they are stronger than any chains. They even transcend death itself.”

“Really?”

“Yes they hold the departed in a state of limbo that we call the world of spirits. Now before we continue, have you ever lost someone that was close to you?”

“Well my mother actually.”

“And did you see her in a dream?”

“As a matter of fact I did. It was a real lucid one. I was even conscious of the fact that she was dead.”

“Did your grief get easier afterwards?”

“Well yes, a little.”

“Good, it is quite common to see your loved ones after they have left you. Now clairvoyance, what do you think of that?”

“I’ve never had much truck with it to tell you the truth.”

“Really, why not?”

“Well the answers seem to be too inane like I have an Uncle Jimmy from the other side who has a message for Andy about a letter, that sort of thing.”

“At first sight but it’s not the message itself, it is more the fact that they are giving it and if the message proved true then it would be peace of mind for Andy.”

“Well I can see it when you put it like that. So these chains then, are they actually grief?”

“Yes so the next step would be to work out what it is and then why it should hold them.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and thought awhile before he said, “I guess it is sorrow at losing a loved one.”

“Sorrow, for them or for you?”

“Good point. I guess it would be for them in my case for when I saw my mother it diminished.”

“And why did it diminish?”

“Because I realised that she hadn’t died just moved on to a better place.”

“And what does that tell you?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “I’m transferring my fear of death on them.”

“And that’s what grief is, fear of death in essence but there is a lot more to it. So bonding then, how does it work?”

“I haven’t a clue I’m still coming to terms with grief.”

Odo laughed and said, “Alright I’ll do this one. It works through shared memories and experiences, this is friendship bonds. A family bond is this too but it goes a little deeper as it is also programmed in you.”

“Sorry?”

“To give ones off spring the best chance of survival makes for good maternal instinct and to adapt oneself to the social climate makes for a good friendly tie.”

“Oh right, and attract a mate would also fit in I suppose.”

“Yes, now these bonds cut the deepest, that’s why generally speaking your grief is heaviest for family members. Grief is a subconscious fear of death. Can you elaborate on that?”

“The holiday is over,” Dave said, “Is it because it comes from the Self in its unenlightened state?”

“That’s right, it doesn’t know that it is eternal and so thinks a physical death as its own.”

“Right, so when I saw my mother it pacified my Self for it reasoned that if she could do it then so could it.”

“Basically yes but not only that seeing your mother also activated its curiosity as to what actually lay beyond death.”

“You know I did start to question my perceptions of reality. Is that a common practice then?”

“Generally but not always, no I guessed it by the fact that you managed to get here. You must have taken a first step and if it was not your mothers it was someone’s.”

“I see what you are saying. Yes it was my mothers.”

“Now spiritual consciousness is symbolised by a dragon. Once you have awakened it, it never rests.”

“A dragon, like Sila?”

“That’s right she’s not far from here. Incidentally slaying the dragon is symbolic of turning spiritual and that’s the only way that you can achieve your true purpose.”

“So you knew all along. I should have guessed really.”

“You weren’t quite ready for it. Anyway we’re here.”

Chapter 2.

Dave found himself looking into the mouth of a great cavern. “I’ll give her a call,” Odo said, “She loves to have visitors,” and shouted, “Sila are you at home?”

“One moment,” a voice shouted back and soon Dave found himself face to face with a dragon. It was huge, about 10 ft tall and although it looked menacing it exuded an aura of peace.

“This is Dave,” Odo said introducing him, “He, too is a man.”

“A man,” Sila said lighting up, “My this is an honour I don’t get many visitors, I’m very pleased to me you.”

“The pleasure is all mine,” Dave said.

“And a charming man too. You must come in and tell me all about your world it is many years since I last visited.”

“You have been to my world?”

“Yes your legends speak highly of me, well some of them anyway.”

“Ah but I thought they were symbolic of something else, like to slay a dragon meant to get a

spiritual conscious.”

“Originally but most people misunderstood them and over time the symbolism was lost and all that was left was bad intent.”

“Er,” Dave said sheepishly, “Do you actually breathe fire?”

“No poison. It is an attack mechanism that was programmed in me. Anyway we’ll talk better in my lair,” and they followed her into a large spacious cavern.

“Make yourself at home,” Sila said and after they had settled, “So Dave what brings you to the land of fire?”

“I have come to purify it.”

“You have a deep understanding, I congratulate you and how are you feeling, nervous?”

“A little, yes.”

“And do you know what’s expected of you?”

“Quite a bit of it.”

“Good, I could take you as far as the end of the Desert of No Return if you would like.”

“That sounds good, if you don’t mind.”

“Not at all, I could easily carry you both so there is no problem.”

“Thanks, I think I’m supposed to be facing some giant insects on the way though.”

“We’ll stop off, it shouldn’t be too hard. You know how to defeat them don’t you?”

“Not really.”

“Oh, all you have to do is face them and whatever their problem is turn it back on them.”

“Sorry?”

“I would be better off giving you an example really,” Sila said and thought awhile, “If they want you to do something for them say to them shouldn’t you be doing that for yourself?”

“Right,” Dave said, not much wiser but on the right track.

“But stay awhile and we’ll talk. It is a long time since I have had company.”

“Sure,” Dave said and looking at Odo, “If that’s alright?”

“We’ve plenty of time, especially now as we’re getting a lift there.”

“Good,” Sila said, “So tell me Dave, how is Man’s quest for immortality getting on?”

“I only just realised that he had one. I think that most if not all people are completely ignorant of it.”

“Really, so what went wrong then?”

“I’m not sure. I think the closest thing I ever came across was eternal life in heaven.”

“Heaven? That’s just a state of mind through knowing that you have eternal life, are you sure that’s right?”

“Well yes it’s just that the Heaven we believe in is a place you go to after you have died.”

“Really, so how did the mix up come to be?”

“I don’t know, to tell you the truth I have never got into it.”

“No, why was that if you don’t mind me asking?”

“Well it was sort of frowned upon. You were considered a bit simple if you believed in God.”

“An enlightened soul with a purpose to serve, why would that be classed as simple minded?”

“What, that’s not what he’s perceived as.”

“Really, so how is it actually perceived then?”

“An old man in Heaven I suppose, as I said I did not really get into it too deeply.”

“And what about re-incarnation, do people still believe in that?”

“Well some do but that’s more of an Eastern thing.”

“Sorry?”

“The eastern side of the world.”

“You do know that the world is round don’t you?”

“Well of course.”

“Oh it’s just that a lot of knowledge seems to have been altered somehow.”

“They used to think that it was flat.”

“They still must do,” Sila said with a laugh, “I mean how can a spinning ball have sides?”

“I suppose if you put it like that.”

“So there must be two different schools of thought. One that believes in re-incarnation and the other in a place called Heaven.”

“Well three, there’s a lot of people that think when you die that’s it.”

“That’s well of path, what a waste of life. So how did it get that way?”

“I’m not sure.”

“I might be able to help you with that one,” Odo said, “It was through lack of imagination,”

“Sorry?” Dave said.

“Imagination works through symbolism. The stories were taken as literal when they were just stories to hide the knowledge in. Take the flood for example.”

“The one that came about through the melting ice?”

“Yes except that it was put down as divine retribution which left a nasty impression.”

“It did?”

“It gave thoughts of an outside influence and not only that, one with a temper.”

“Oh right, yes I can see that, any others?”

“Tower of Babel, that was symbolic of the knowledge being hidden in many mythologies or many languages. You can only rebuild the tower by cross referencing them.”

“Yes I can see that.”

“God throwing Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden that was symbolic of man evolving free will and if this so called God was angry with them why did he give them a purpose?”

“Did he?”

“Yes he sent them out to till the land, symbolic of tending the earth.”

“Amazing.”

“So you see all is not what it seems. No Man took it at face value so eventually as he grew in understanding of the world around him things did not make sense. A lot of men instead of looking deeper into it dismissed it out of hand.”

“And were there many?” Sila said.

“Quite a few and quite a sizable portion of the others still cling to it as literal.”

“I think that finding dinosaur bones went a long way to discredit it,” Dave said.

“Really,” Sila said, “Why was that then?”

“Well if you add the ages of the ancestry in Genesis the Earth is only a few thousand years old. They dated the bones in millions of years.”

“And the people who cling on to the stories as literal, what do they say about it?”

“Well first they said it was planted by God to test our faith then either the archeologists have got the dates wrong or falsified them.”

“You mentioned testing your faith,” Sila said, “You’ve confused me, what do you actually class as faith?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Belief without proof I suppose, well as long as it was written in the scriptures.”

“So how do they grow in the spiritual sense? I mean you do it through understanding normally. If you take things blind you will never understand them.”

“I guess they just don’t grow that’s all.”

“Another waste of life.”

“So what is faith then?”

“Reasoned spiritualism, it’s your understanding.”

“Oh I never knew that, it does indeed sound like we are well off track.”

“It seems that you have the tenets it’s just that you haven’t looked deeply into them.”

“Lack of imagination,” Dave said on realisation.

“So what do the people who believe that you just die put their faith in?”

“Science I guess, they seem to have a lot of faith in it.”

“Well why not it is a noble thing but a confusing one too. Well unless your perception of science is different to mine.”

“Sorry?”

“To me science is looking deeper into things to find out how they come to be.”

“I would say that our perceptions are the same then that is what our scientists do.”

“They only look at material things,” Odo said, “From a rational point of view.”

“Oh,” Sila said, “That would explain it. No the science I’m talking about is looking at mental things from an imaginative point of view. So what have your scientists manage to come up with?”

“Well they’ve split the atom.”

“To what purpose?”

“To create energy I guess though they can use it to make weapons of mass destruction.”

“So they still like to war then, I thought they would have been sickened by it now.”

“Too many greedy people and not enough resources.”

“And this science is it only for Man’s material drive?”

“Oh no, medicine too they can transplant kidneys, livers and most organs now. Yes they have come on quite a way.”

“Why should they need to do that the body with all its parts should last forever?”

“Life seems to take its tolls I’m afraid plus I don’t think we live too healthy a lifestyle.”

“Ah life should be simple it is only perceived difficult or made difficult by others.”

“Well I won’t argue with that, I’ve noticed that when I go to work. It’s not the work itself that bits alright it’s the crap that goes with it.”

“And you say that a lot of people aren’t healthy now, how did that come to be?”

“Over eating and due to new technology lack of exercise.”

“New technology?”

“The motor car saves a lot of people a lot of walking plus there are a lot of labour saving devices.”

“You do know that you were born to labour? That was your purpose, to tend the earth.”

“Yes though to tell you the truth it was not that long ago when I found out.”

“Well the body is programmed to be active. Physical activity equates with mental balance and not only that without this activity the body quickly deteriorates.”

“I can see that now you have mentioned it and there are a lot of overweight people to prove the point.”

“The body’s not equipped to carry excess weight it puts too much strain on the heart. So how much excess weight are they actually carrying?”

“Some might carry as much as 10 stone but I’ve heard of people weighing in at 40.”

“What, however did they manage to get that way?”

“Through over eating.”

“Yes but can you imagine walking around with a ten stone weight on your back it must be tiring.”

“I suppose so I’ve not really thought about it.”

“Well you’re pretty healthy looking but not only that, going back to being overweight, you average a pint of blood to each stone of weight.”

“Really, now I never knew that.”

“That means that the heart has to pump an extra ten pints of fluid. No, that’s not advisable. And are these overweight people happy to be this way?”

“Not really, a lot of people try to go on a diet to lose weight but as soon as they get off it, it just comes back for most of them.”

“They perceive food in a different way,” Odo said seeing Sila’s confusion, “They hunger for the taste and eat for that reason and not because they are hungry.”

“Ah gluttony,” Sila said, “I should have realised and this lack of physical activity would be sloth I bet.”

“That’s right,” Odo said, “Since they lost their purpose they take great comfort from Earthly desires.”

“That would explain it. Yes I should have realised that thinking about it. And the other desires are they prevalent?”

“Yes,” Dave said, “But I had better say first that the world is not equal, while some are obese others starve.”

“Well if you take more than you need others have to go without,” Sila said, “Is that not the ultimate truth?”

“I thought that was the Law of Humility,” Odo said.

“It is also.”

“I think that we touched on laws in the Land of Creative Formation,” Dave said.

“Well now it is time for Imaginative Extension,” Sila said, “So hold onto your hat and we’ll quickly go through them.”

“Fair enough, it never really sank in to tell you the truth.”

“That’s because it was just a grounding hopefully I will be able to reinforce it.”

“I won’t argue with that.”

“Well the first law we’ll talk about is the Law of Self Regulation and basically in essence it says that creation regulates itself.”

“Yes I remember,” Dave said not really sure.

“And do you know how it does that?”

“Well not really I did not understand it at all.”

“It creates the situations.”

“Sorry?”

“I would really need to give you an example to illustrate that. Can you think of a situation where someone has tried to humiliate another and it back fired on them?”

“Well I can as a matter of fact,” Dave said and related the story of Jane and the Ward Sister.

“That’s a very good one,” Sila said after he had finished, “We’ll deal with the Ward Sister first then. Normally speaking she would have checked the cabinet first.”

“Yes I was wondering about that, common sense would have told her that.”

“Her pride blinded her to that. She was just focused on her bid to humiliate Jane and so saw nothing else.”

“I can see that but how does creation actually fit in with it?”

“There is a little bit of creation within us all. Part of us is all the same underneath, that is what you call common sense. Now usually when you uphold your purpose it guides you to greater things. Go against it though and it will turn against you. If that Ward Sister had not acted out of pride it would have told her to check but because she did it kept quiet knowing that she was heading for a fall.”

“Right, I thought that it would have been a bit more complex than that though.”

“That’s only one part. It made sure that the first nurse did not find it or inform the chemist and every other nurse that followed her it just left them to their sloth.”

“Oh so you mean that it was all created in advance?”

“As I said it creates the situations and as it is not restricted by time the seeds it plants could have been a long time ago.”

“It sounds like an ardent foe.”

“Uphold its laws and you’ll find it a benevolent friend. The first of which is the Law of Poetic Justice. What you sow so shall you reap and usually in an ironic way.”

“Like the Ward Sister?”

“That’s right. Now a lot of people only see it in a negative light but if I were you I would try and see it from a more positive point of view.”

“So it works for the good as well then.”

“Yes, you sow good seeds and they will return a hundred fold.”

"I'll bare that in mind."

"It's worth remembering now the next one I'd like to talk about is the Law of Consequences. The consequences of this life plant the seeds for the next one."

"I have actually heard of that."

"Good, now to play this law your best bet would be a balanced life for then should you not make it this time you will come back to a similar type of life. This will give you more of a chance for spiritual growth."

"Right, I've never thought about it in that light before. It sounds good sense."

"Now the third law is the Law of Humility."

"If you take more than you need someone will have to go without."

"Good. Now the law speaks for itself but I would like to tie it in with the Law of Equality and that is that we are all equal in the eyes of the divine."

"How would you do that?"

"Easy really if you perceive everyone as equal then you would know that they have the same needs as you. It has come to certain peoples' minds that they are superior and have more refined tastes."

"Yes I have actually come across that school of thought myself. It's pretty common in fact."

"Sounds like an unequal world, finally the Law of Love, you have to give in order to receive."

"That's talking about the divine spirit isn't it?"

"That's right you did well to know that."

"It was pretty well explained in the last world also I experienced it in the caves of purification and rebirth."

"Good, experience is the best teacher. Now if you haven't actually gathered all the laws are to do with balance."

"Yes I noticed that."

"And did you also notice that the 8 natural laws are balanced?"

"Natural laws?"

"Adapt to habitat, climate, social climate. You must have covered it in the last world."

"Oh that's right, yes I remember now."

"So you have the six spiritual laws one of which is repeated as the ultimate truth and then the eight natural laws, putting them together?"

"Sorry?"

"0.618."

"And?"

"It's called the Golden Division, it's what gives creation its balance, surely you have heard of it?"

"No."

"Oh I thought that you would have known that, it's called Phi."

"I've heard of Pi but I thought that was 3.142."

"No Phi, the spiritual word as opposed to the word."

"And does Pi stand for anything?"

"Yes it represents the three aspects of the divine, love, light and power and comprises of its essence, the spirit of love, its elemental make up, Earth the Soul and spirit of knowing, Air the Spirit and spirit of life, Fire, the imagination and spirit of insight and Water the intellect and spirit of wisdom. The combination of 1, 4 and 2 is seven or the seven spirits of God, five I've just remembered leaving purpose and understanding the last two on the list the power, masculine purpose and feminine, understanding."

"What, all that?"

"Yes quite a lot of things crammed into a few numbers. So how did you get on with it?"

"Well I understood the elements also the power, the purpose and understanding of purpose. The spirits I've come across before in the last world but as for them being the spirits of God and what you said about an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve I could do with some more

understanding.”

“Sure first things first I will elaborate on what God actually is.”

“An enlightened soul with a purpose to serve.”

“That is a fully evolved God. God is actually the transformation of the Self as it climbs through the levels of understanding so basically God is everything that has life.”

“We did something about the levels of understanding although there were no spirits mentioned.”

“We’ll soon rectify that. We have mentioned that there are seven spirits that go to make God. I will now show you how they equate with the levels of understanding.”

“Right, this should be interesting.”

“Good now as I’ve said within everything that has life is God’s spirit of life but not only that within everything that has life is God’s love for love and life go hand in hand. Now at its lowest level the spirit of love, the creative force is the ability to recreate itself or a being with the ability to recreate itself.”

“Flora and basic fauna.”

“That’s right, now to evolve to the second level the being needs another spirit of God and that is the spirit of understanding. At this level though it is instinct so the being is under the control of the Earth Mother and her natural laws.”

“Right, that would be animals.”

“Yes but bare in mind that Man is also an animal for no matter how high up the ladder you are we are all perceived in the same light and also that some of the other animals have developed intelligence but not to such a degree.”

“Alright, so it’s not such a clear cut thing then”

“That’s right, now as the being evolves further it reaches levels three and four the spirits of wisdom and insight. Basically it develops a Will of its own and can now think for itself. It is no longer held by its instinct although it is still within it. Insight gives you the ability to look into things so you do not have to take them at face value and wisdom the experience to make sound judgement. You also now evolve on two levels, Will and Self, so things start to get complicated. Now finally for these levels wisdom gives you a free will and insight gives you self consciousness because the ability to look within makes you aware of yourself.”

“Yes I can see that now you have said it.”

“Now level five, this is the actual journey that we call life. Through it you develop your Self through purification and expand your Will to give it a spiritual leaning. To develop your Self you have to evolve your ego which is done through selflessness. This is done through either works of charity or just putting others before you on one level and knowledge of Self on another. The Will is expanded through spiritual wisdom which is basically knowledge of its purpose. It can be done in one lifetime but failing that the Soul reincarnates itself until it’s done.”

“Right, I’m going through that process at present.”

“That’s right. Now level six is the mergence of the pure Self with the Will. This happens in a dream when you feel a lift from your solar plexus, leave your body and feel that you are part of everything.”

“Sounds quite frightening.”

“Probably not as frightening as the dreams that come before.”

“Really something to look forward to then.”

“They’re only there to test your mettle. To strengthen you up for it that’s all.”

“Right though I don’t think that, that would null my fear.”

“Well level seven kicks in not long after, this is when you meet your maker and it happens in reality.”

“Meet your maker. I thought that you only did that when you died.”

“Well you do, your maker is you spiritually reborn. This goes to the collective conscious where you get a channel to the divine from God’s sixth spirit, the spirit of knowing. With this spirit you know

all things spiritually and it is level eight. Your old will has to die before it can be reborn and if you thought that your dreams were scary, well they pale into insignificance.”

“Really so er what actually happens then?”

“Well I don’t really want to get into too many details but you have a merge of thought and memory so all the thoughts that you have you think that you’ve had before.”

“That doesn’t sound too bad, I was expecting something a lot worse.”

“Wait and see,” Sila said with a laugh, “Now at level eight you are an enlightened soul so all that you need is a purpose to serve. Level nine the lord God and purpose that you serve. This could be one of three so I’ll give you them one at a time. The first is pride, a self seeking purpose, you recognise the God in yourself to the detriment of others. You see yourself as pure and holy and because of this you develop a messiah complex, one that needs attending to. You might develop your own cult and as you get more deluded you completely go off path and expect your followers to do the same.”

“I have heard stories about mass suicide.”

“Yes you’ll be surprised. Anyway the second purpose is when you God is a god of anger. Well righteous indignation to be precise. You perceive the world to be Godless and in need of a good shake up. With the inner strength you get from your evolution you can make quite an impact. Finally you have the God of love. Pick this one and you go to level ten and get a deeper understanding of the word. You’ll cover that in another world so I will not go into detail here.”

“Alright.”

“Now to understand life itself basically it is spiritual energy and how it works is that the body is animated by the mind which is animated by the Self or put it another way $E=MC^2$.”

“The theory of relativity?”

“You mean the theory of everything. E is spiritual energy, M is mass or body and C is the mind (all matter had inbuilt mind potential) so mass is animated by mind which is animated by self. This is how everything with life operates.”

“I never knew.”

“Yes it’s surprising what you can get when you look deeper into things. It just takes a little imagination.”

“I think you are right.”

“So basically that is God, everything that has life. Are you up for more light?”

“Sure, what else do I need to know?”

“Well there’s plenty but a lot of it will be covered in other worlds so I will just give you the things that you need to know for ours.”

“I won’t argue with that.”

“You’ve still a long way to go but we’ll take it one step at a time so it won’t be an ordeal.”

“Fair enough, so what’s first then?”

“I would like to talk a little bit about reality but first I would like you to define it so I can gauge your understanding.”

“Well I’m not sure. I thought that the world I lived in was reality and this was just a dream.”

“And now?”

“This is also reality. I’m afraid that my black and white picture has taken quite a hammering.”

“What would you say that it was if you had to define it?”

“What you see and what you can touch I suppose, I’m afraid that’s the best I can do.”

“Right it seems that we have a long way to travel then.”

“Sorry.” Dave said cursing his ignorance.

“It’s not a big thing, so anyway reality. This comes over in two ways, objective and subjective. Objective reality is the reality of matter and subjective reality is the reality of mind.”

“Er could you elaborate a little on that?”

“Sure, basically reality comes over on two levels, the world you live in is a reality but your

perceptions of it are also a reality, your reality. One is a state of matter and the other a state of mind. To actually define reality it is a state of mind built on imagination. Now this works on many levels so is quite a hard thing to grasp.”

“It sounds it.”

“We’ll take it one step at a time. We’ll start with built on imagination. Everything you see around you has to have been imagined first. The shoes on your feet, not only had they had to be designed, the idea of actually wearing them had to be imagined first.”

“So first you imagine the idea and then you have to imagine the design.”

“That’s right. Now everything with life has had to be imagined first and not only that it has had to be imagined over countless generations for it had to evolve to its purpose. The giraffe did not always have a long neck it had to evolve one. So not only were the animals designed they were designed with a purpose in mind and that was to fit into the eco system. Yes a lot of imagination went into it. Herbivores to keep the vegetation in check, predators to keep the herbivores and themselves in check, everything was designed to balance so the world could evolve into paradise.”

“Really, so what er went wrong?”

“Man,” Sila said with a laugh, “He upset the balance but we’re getting off track a little. Now reality as a state of mind is actually controlled by your imagination, that’s what builds it in fact. How you imagine situations can quite alter your state of mind dramatically. Even this works on many levels. The reality of what you imagine your God to be would be a good example. If you imagine him to be a god of anger you will tend to lead an austere highly moralistic lifestyle. A god of pride a self indulgent type of life style and a God of love, a balanced life style.”

“Yes I can see that and also your belief in an afterlife alters perceptions.”

“That’s right, now imagination helps you to climb the levels of understanding which is a different type of state of mind. One of awareness of the world around you or consciousness so as you can see it has a very potent effect on you.”

“Yes I can imagine.”

Sila laughed and said, “Then you are halfway there. We’ll talk a little about situations in the day to day running of your life now. If you imagine them to be in a negative light have you noticed that it seems to be a self fulfilling prophesy?”

“Sometimes, sort of speak of the devil kind of thing.”

“Well a lot of that has to do with your approach to the situation. Your negativity will attract the negativity of others so sometimes you are actually walking into a foregone conclusion.”

“I’ll bare that in mind. How could I changed it though, well if I could that is for if it controls me I would have no control over it.”

“Mantras are good.”

“Oh yes we talked about them in the other world.”

“Well although the Self controls the imagination you control your Self. Control is a bit too strong a word for it for it’s really a situation of mutual interest. Your understanding of the situation controls your imagination but it’s actually your Will that gives you your understanding.”

“Oh yes, I think we sort of covered that.”

“It’s an expansion. So to put it all in a nut shell your imagination controls virtually every aspect of your life. Your place on the levels of understanding, the overall picture of your life and the day to day running of your life and basically that is reality.”

“Amazing and yet we don’t really put more store in it.”

“Yes it is a very underestimated force anyway speaking about life I would like to give you a few pointers that hopefully might help you along the path.”

“Well I won’t argue with that sometimes I think I need all the help I can get.”

“Isn’t life going too well for you at the moment?”

“Oh no it’s going fine, on the whole.”

“Well don’t be despondent then it attracts negativity. No how you portray yourself to others reflects

back on you. Learn that well and you will find that life moves a lot more smoothly. Think positive and you give off a positive aura, this will uplift most people that you meet. Not all because it can attract envy in some people but generally speaking it will work to your favour.”

“And the people that envy, how should I deal with them?”

“Use your discretion. You have the advantage because you know their motivational force whilst they live in darkness because they don’t.”

“Fair enough I will try and be more positive in future.”

“Good, you know it makes sense. Anyway I would like to talk awhile about the nature of your being, any clues as to what it is?”

“Love.”

“Right, except it goes a little deeper than that.”

“I thought it sounded too easy,” Dave said with a laugh.

“You’ll enjoy it. Now as you evolve to your purpose your nature changes so the nature I will be actually talking about will be that of an enlightened soul.”

“I didn’t realise that. I thought that you couldn’t change your nature for that was what you were.”

“Oh no, not at all, where once you might have had pride in your heart when you lose it, it is then your nature to be humble. Get rid of your anger and you become patient, get rid of your sloth and you get fortitude. No as you get rid of each character flaw you also get rid of its hold on your nature so basically if it was in your nature to be proud once you lose it, it’s no longer in your nature. This is what we call Self development.”

“I have heard the expression though I’ve never equated it in that light.”

“That’s what it is in essence. Now once your Self is fully developed your mind can reach its full potential and all the abilities I am going to talk about will be fully developed. Some of them you will have by degree.”

“Sorry?”

“By degree of understanding they come about through experience of life so you might have some but they won’t be as developed and you would probably use them to bad purpose. You will understand better as I explain them to you.”

“Fair enough.”

“Now the first ability I’m going to talk about should interest you it is the ability to adapt quickly to new situations and turn them to your advantage.”

“Would that be called thinking on your feet?”

“That’s right you must have come across it before then.”

“Yes it’s quite a highly prized talent.”

“I’m glad that you recognise it for what it is. Now this ability comes about through common sense for these new situations are generally old ones that have been revamped. You see the underlining trend and deal with it. It’s very good for peace of mind because you don’t waste your time dwelling on it in a negative way but deal with it in a positive constructive way. Remember that to dwell negatively is destructive and to deal constructively is creative and you won’t go far wrong.”

“Well I did used to waste a lot of time dwelling on things I must admit. I used to go over situations in my head and try to work the best things to say or do but in the end it just proved fruitless so I guess it was a waste of time.”

“Good as long as you have learned from your experience. No this talent gives you the confidence to know that whatever situation rears its head you will be more than ready and capable of dealing with it.”

“To tell you the truth I’ve sort of already come to the conclusion and since I did I seem to approach things with a lot more confidence. I’ll tell you another thing as well since my attitude has changed things have got a lot better.”

“Good, when you lose your fear of failure all that is left is success.”

“Yes I think you are right.”

“Well the next ability I am going to talk about is the ability to plant seeds to alter consciousness at a later date.”

“That’s a new one to me. How does it work then?”

“Basically when you are dealing with unenlightened people generally speaking you are dealing with their pride. Pride being pride thinks that it know it all on one level but on another level, if these things you are talking about are spiritual they could bring about pride’s death so it is hardly likely to champion them.”

“Right,” Dave said with a laugh.

“Anyway we’ll deal with the first level first. When you are talking to people you are actually talking to the Self it’s just that pride gets in its way. Now pride thinks itself clever and that it can work out things for itself so any advice you give, no matter how good it is will be treated with disdain for pride will think itself more cleverer and worldly wise than you. As I said it likes to work things out for itself but it, like the Self it occupies it can only go on information given to it. Give it the right information and it will come to the only logical conclusion, yours.”

“Right and I’ve noticed that when you do give people advice and they don’t take it you get very frustrated.”

“That’s because you take it personally. It is only your pride that gets frustrated so don’t worry about it.”

“I suppose it is, I’ve never thought about it in that light before.”

“That’s because it likes to work in darkness. Also when you give people advice you tend to get impatient if they don’t take it and come across as pushy which would blind others to your common sense.”

“Yes I’ve noticed that as well it’s like feeding the pigeons isn’t it?”

“Sorry?”

“Well if you run to feed them you scare them off, walk slowly and it doesn’t frighten them.”

“That’s one way of looking at it I suppose,” Sila said with a laugh, “Now on the second level most spiritual insights are actually got through contemplation for that is how the Self grows in understanding. You come out with the full story not only will it not fully understand it, the pride within it will just dismiss it as fantasy and you as mad for it likes to destroy the message by destroying the messenger. When you talk about things concerning the imagination you have to be very discerning and reveal only what you perceive them ready to hear. As they grow in understanding the seeds will grow and their consciousness will alter accordingly. So to put it in a nutshell when dealing with proud people only tell them what they need to know and let them work out the rest for themselves.”

“I’ll remember that.”

“So onto the third ability then, the ability to see the good in any given situation and to take strength from your being.”

“Is this about optimism?”

“Yes in a way. Basically it is saying that any situation can have its good and bad side it’s how you perceive it that matters. Every situation has a chance of mental or spiritual growth and recognising this can alter your perceptions radically. Also by recognising it you can take strength from your Self for you have aroused its interest.”

“Take strength, how would that work?”

“Emotional strength, knowing that you are going to grow from it means that it has a purpose and so in your mind it happened for a reason. You’ll perceive it as a test then and knowing that you will automatically tap into your inner strength.”

“Oh right I can see it but surely certain situations happen without reason?”

“No everything happens for a reason it’s just that certain things are harder to define than others.”

“So what about the poor, surely they have no reason to starve?”

“Man’s greed is reason enough but if it’s any consolation to you they are spiritually blessed.”

“Well maybe to me although I’m not sure that they would perceive it that way themselves.”

“Everyone is an individual but as I said Man’s greed was the cause. I’m afraid the best thing on offer is inner strength. The spiritual laws are only reactions to their actions and as Man, in his ignorance does not recognise them he can not equate them with his actions. Now in the world that you live there is no reason that anyone should starve and if it was in balance they would not.”

“Well true I just get a bit angry about it sometimes that’s all.”

“Its righteous indignation, don’t take it to heart as it clouds your judgement. No you live a good life so you have nothing to fear.”

“Sorry?”

“Well that’s what it comes from fear of God.”

“Really, how would that work?”

“I’m guessing that this perception of God, even though you say that you never really got into it, is well ingrained in your psyche. You see him as a judgmental figure, so either he caused it or he is not dealing with whoever did cause it.”

“I suppose so although it’s not a conscious thing.”

“No it comes from the Self. As it has not been judged it doesn’t know what’s expected of it. That is the actual fear. Now how does that equate with an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve?”

“Well it doesn’t.”

“And never will. No there will be no mass judgment it will be a matter of individual consciousness. If you are not ready you will not evolve that’s all, well not in that lifetime anyway.”

“But there will be some form of judgment won’t there?”

“Oh yes.”

“So what will actually judge you then?”

“Your Self, well when it is pure that is.”

“And when will it happen?”

“Level seven when you meet your maker.”

“So right, so righteous indignation is just fear of God then?”

“Yes mixed in with a little guilt because you feel that you are not doing enough yourself. And as for the poor as I said they are individuals but rest assured they will advance quite significantly and the spiritual laws do apply.”

“So their reason could be spiritual growth then?”

“An effect more than a reason. We, too have to adapt to the environment.”

“True.”

“So onto the fourth point this might help you deal with the last point. It’s the ability to realise that difficulties are only short lived by understanding the big picture and take strength from my patience, the spirit of insight.”

“Right and how would that help?”

“The Law of Consequences.”

“Oh yes, so the perpetrators could expect to be the victims in the next life time.”

“It all has to balance, even in an unbalanced world.”

“Yes I can see that now.”

“Well it also works on another level. If you perceive these difficulties as tests you can deal with them through patient understanding. The spirit of insight helps you to see them as tests and it also helps you to understand the big picture. Once you understand the big picture you can deal more effectively with the difficulties for not only does it give you the strength to do it you grow in strength by doing it.”

“Oh so these difficulties are actually tests to strengthen your resolve?”

“That’s right, in the same way that temptation is there to strengthen your will power. They are both there to help you in your evolution.”

“Right I think that, that might help me.”

“Hopefully it all will. One last point before I finish. The Self can only really be purified by emotional turmoil so when these difficulties do arise if you recognise them for what they are you help the process move along rapidly. Failure to recognise it means that the situations will have to be repeated until you do.”

“So why emotional turmoil then, does it thrive on pain?”

“It grows through pain, well that’s not strictly true as it grows through experience. It is the actually experience that gives you the pain. Emotional turmoil comes about through re-assessing things once held dear to and getting new understanding from them. Those insular perceptions of life can take some shifting sometimes I’m afraid.”

“And this is what causes the pain, re-evaluation.”

“That’s right. So anyway point five, the ability to recognise that although I might suffer hardship while I keep on the path of light temptation has no hold on me and fate will be in my favour.”

“The path of light?”

“The path to enlightenment life’s spiritual journey.”

“I didn’t know it was called that.”

“Really, than I am guessing that you also don’t know what you are in essence?”

“Er no.”

“Oh, well that’s soon sorted. You are an evolving soul on the path of light and when you are fully evolved you are an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve.”

“Right, sorry about that, please continue.”

“Now I suppose that your friend Jane would be a good example of this.”

“She would?”

“Yes, she stood out as a good worker and because of this the others gave her a hard time.”

“Well I suppose so, I’ve never really thought about it in that light before.”

“If she would have fell in with the rest of them and become just as idle and two faced they would have probably accepted her. Yet she was never tempted to”

“I don’t think that she even thought about it.”

“No and fate was indeed in her favour.”

“True.”

“Well when your life takes a spiritual vent you do stand out and can attract a subconscious envy from others.”

“I wouldn’t really say that Jane was spiritual.”

“No that was just an example. You don’t have to be spiritual for fate to be in your favour. You just have to live a good life for it goes a long way to purification of Self. I would recommend taking up a spiritual life though for it expands your spiritual consciousness and so you evolve in balance and can face hardship a lot better.”

“I couldn’t agree with you more. I’ve seen the effect it all has on her.”

“In time for if it destined to be then it will surely happen.”

“I hope so. I’ve tried to help but I fear it falls on deaf ears.”

“In time. Try just planting seeds and see what happens.”

“Yes maybe you are right. I do tend to get frustrated with her.”

“That’s only your impatience. You have an emotional bond with her and so her pain is yours. Don’t let it cloud your judgment as it will delay the process.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Now before I close this point I would like to talk a little about fate. We have mentioned the laws and how they can work in your favour.”

“That’s right, the medicine cabinet.”

“Well I would like to talk about another aspect of it and that is how it can actually help you to evolve to your purpose.”

“Like throwing up difficulties so you can grow.”

“That but also introducing you to people that can help you along the path through either their knowledge or their need for your help. When you take the path of light you will be surprised at what might happen. Another thing about fate is that it will meet you halfway.”

“Sorry?”

“When you are prepared to deal with any situation it will come to your aid. You have to make the first step though.”

“Right, you have to make the conscious decision to actually deal with it first though.”

“Yes that’s called wanting to bring it into the light. Once you have done this, out of an act of your own free will, fate is on your side.”

“You put a lot of credence in free will, why is that if you don’t mind me asking?”

“Sure, Man is the only animal that has the potential of achieving a God-head. Within him lie all the worlds of creation so basically he is a blue print of creation itself. Now he cannot be forced to take up his purpose for we are only here to guide him, it is his choice. Free will has a positive side and that is the ability to think for yourself. With this ability, when he has fully evolved, he can truly uphold his purpose for it gives him the means to be creative. A downside though is that when he is not evolved he can be destructive.”

“So it’s a necessary evil?”

“Yes, sort of. Anyway point six. The ability to see past the vanity of ego centred life and recognise the truth in any situation and act accordingly with only love in your heart. Any thoughts on that?”

“The truth in any situation, what actually is that all about?”

“That is the experience to be learned from any situation. This truth is what the Self actually feeds on and grows from.”

“Oh right, well I’m guessing that ego centred life is a life of selfishness although I am having trouble equating it with vanity.”

“It comes from pride,” Sila said enlightening him, “That is what makes you selfish. Without it you are humble or selfless and so ready to uphold your purpose.”

“Oh right so you are talking about the ability to look beyond reality seen and gain experience for your understanding’s growth. Now act accordingly would that be to deal with the situation?”

“Yes, but not only that but with love in your heart for that should be your motivational force.”

“As opposed to pride and anger.”

“That’s right. Now the relationship between love, anger and pride is called the triad of purpose. Would you happen to know what that relationship is?”

“Well I’m guessing that pride is self love but as for anger, I’m not sure.”

“Spurned or misguided love, so they both come from love then.”

“Right and enlightenment helps you achieve this?”

“That’s right it helps you to see beyond reality and to work out what your actual purpose is. As you grow in light your ego centredness diminishes and you lose the vanity of self consciousness. You perceive situations in a totally different light and get a deeper understanding of life.”

“Yes I can see that.”

“Good, now point seven, the ability to put my trust in my Self and relinquish my Soul should that be required of me. The first part is talking about self reliance probably one of the greatest gifts you can have, any ideas why?”

“I’m not sure really. I equate self reliance as relying on no one so I can’t actually see how it would fit in.”

“It’s more to do with relying on your Self. It’s the ability to look within to find the answers as opposed to finding them on the outside.”

“Right though why is that considered such a great gift to have?”

“It can only really be done when you have a channel to the divine. This gives you the spirit of knowing and along with it the memory of your race. With that you seem to know everything spiritually for your spirit has fully fledged and joined the collective conscious.”

“Everything?”

“Everything that is really important. You probably won’t know things considered trivial just the things that matter.”

“And is this gift considered important because it means that your Spirit has evolved?”

“That’s right but not only that it means that your Soul has purified.”

“Right, and relinquish my Soul I don’t really like the sound of that.”

“It will never be asked of you it’s more to do with no fear of death.”

“I see, and are you sure about that?”

“Yes,” Sila said with a laugh, “We haven’t gone to all that trouble for nothing. No when you lose your fear of death then you can truly taste the real joy of life. Anyway point eight, the ability to give myself without negative consciousness to the outcome of this transaction. This is probably one of the hardest abilities to attain.”

“Really, why is that then?”

“Because a good heart does attract a lot of people who will take advantage and believe me they can cause you a lot of resentment.”

“I know I’m afraid I’m guilty of it myself.”

“You get a lot of people taking advantage of you?”

“Well not me, Jane.”

“Oh right, and does she resent it also?”

“Sometimes, it depends how blatant it is really.”

“So you resent it for her?”

“I suppose I do though I do believe I have good reason to do.”

“Maybe but it hardly makes for peace of mind.”

“Well true it has caused us a lot of problems I can tell you.”

“I bet. Now what if I was to say that the only part of you that resents it is the ego would that make any difference?”

“A little I suppose. I am trying to change actually I just find it difficult.”

“It’s good that you are trying to change so maybe I could help you along a little.”

“Well if you could it would save me a lot of hassle.”

“The only thing you have to do is recognise what’s behind you, fate.”

“I do see it in action I guess I mustn’t have recognised it fully.”

“It takes time sometimes. It sounds to me that you are just a little impatient that’s all.”

“Maybe, and a little confused.”

“Really, why is that then?”

“Well I know that you have to give yourself unconditionally why should people take advantage the first point? The second how can you give yourself without negative consciousness when I am guessing that these people are symbolised by the insects in the Desert of No Return and so have to be dealt with?”

“To your first point I would say that it is because we live in an unbalanced world. The people who take advantage do so out of not only ignorance but also have Earthly desire. Probably greed, sloth or pride. Now although they think they are cleverer than you by the fact that they think that they can manipulate you, they are not. They are a lot less evolved and a lot further from their purpose and instead of making an advance they are just stagnating so their actions are just as detrimental to themselves as they are to you.”

“You know listening to that makes me feel a lot better and it’s an ego thing?”

“Yes it’s the fact that you think that they think that they are more clever, that is your pride’s resentment.”

“Yes I guess so, well not me Jane.”

“By proxy then,” Sila said with a laugh, “But also you must resent the fact that Jane lets herself be put on.”

“Well yes I would say that, that was the crux of it.”

“In time she will wise up but whilst she doesn’t fate will make sure that the people who gave her their loads to carry will get others.”

“I have noticed that they seem to have a lot of problems now that you have said that.”

“It’s not personal though people who lead that type of lifestyle generally come unstuck.”

“So it’s the lifestyle that fate has problems with.”

“Yes they’re just wasting it. Now as for the second point it’s all to do with personal involvement that comes from the ego and not the true Self. And you are right they are symbolised by the insects in the desert and want dealing with. This is done through the power of discernment this is what Jane needs to build up. Now I am guessing that the people who put on her also put the extra problems on her as well.”

“Well yes so I guess fate’s retribution doesn’t really work then.”

“In time, it’s forcing Jane’s hand to confront them for the burden will get too much for her.”

“Oh right, yes I can see that. So she does need to deal with them then, it’s not me.”

“No you are right but you are going about it in the wrong way. She needs to deal with them so she can grow and learn from the experience. Your resentment will only cause Jane to resent you and not only that it might even hamper her progress for she will think that you are the actual problem.”

“Yes I’ve noticed that she tends to turn on me.”

“Only natural, be patient and discerning and leave it to fate.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Good, point nine then, the ability to realise that no matter what has gone before me has no hold on me now. Basically this is talking about people who live in the memories of what they used to be little realising that they have moved on.”

“And these memories do they have much of an effect on them?”

“Oh yes quite a dramatic one sometimes.”

“And can you get rid of them?”

“No they are always there.”

“So how do you deal with them then?”

“By realising that they have no hold on you now,” Sila said with a laugh.

“But there’s more to it than that surely?”

“Well it might be a good idea to bring the memories forward and find out what could be learned from them. Maybe some of them are lessons unlearned. Once learned the pain should go away and you can grow from it generally though it is just recognising the fact that you are a different person, more evolved.”

“Right.”

“And finally point ten. The ability to be myself. Not a lot to say really accept yourself for what you are and don’t put on any false pretense for that it not the real you.”

“Right and that is the nature of my being.”

“That’s right anyway there is not really anything else that I can tell you.”

“Well thank you, you have taught me a lot and I appreciate it.”

“That’s my pleasure and if it’s any help you are a good student. Don’t worry about Jane though for she will find her way.”

“I think you have helped me a lot with that, you have definitely given me peace of mind.”

“Good, now I know that you get tired in this world so if you like you can stop here and recharge yourself.”

“Well it is getting on a bit,” Odo said, “It would be wise to start the quest refreshed.”

“Sure then,” Dave said, “Well if you don’t mind.”

“Not at all,” Sila said, “I like the company.”

“That’s settled then, tomorrow is another day and I do feel slightly tired.”

“Well we will talk awhile until you fall asleep,” Sila said, “You can tell me more about your world

for it seems completely different to how I used to know it.”

They talked for a time but it was not too long before Dave found himself losing consciousness.

Chapter 3.

Dave woke up just before the alarm clock went off he felt strangely elated as if a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He went downstairs and made himself something to eat and waited for Jane to return from work. He heard a car pull in so he made her a cup of tea and as she was coming in gave it to her.

“I did it.” She said giving him a kiss.

“Sorry?”

“I gave my notice in. you should have seen their faces, it was a picture.”

“Well you didn’t like it there so it was for the best I guess.”

“You don’t mind?”

“Not at all you don’t need the stress.”

“It seems strange I’ve worked there all my life. Yes it will definitely take some getting used to.”

“So what are your plans?”

“I’m going to look after my mother. Natty’s going to give me £70 a week out of mum’s money.”

Dave bit his tongue and held his temper. Natty or Natalie to give her, her proper name was Jane’s sister. It was her along with Jane’s brother Steve and another sister called Davina who had hijacked Jane’s mother’s income when she had lapsed into dementia. They had marched her down to the solicitor and took out an enduring power of attorney on her. Davina was the executor whilst Natalie looked after the money from the pensions and rents from two houses that her mother owned. Dave did not know the full extent of the dealings but guessed that a lot of Jane’s mother’s income was used as sweeteners, if not for Davina who had nothing much to do with her mother for Steve who liked to live the high life and pretend he was a gangster. Natalie had even the cheek to nominate him for a Carer’s allowance which was quite ironic really as he could not look after himself let alone his mother.

“Well fair enough,” Dave said much to her surprise, “Anyway I had better make tracks you can tell me all about last night when I get back,” and kissed her good bye.

Dave’s journey to work was uneventful, just as the day itself was. The trenching was coming on well but with two diggers that was to be expected, and quite a lot of the trench had been done. He saw Andy at dinner and he gave him the list. Now I know that this is not Zen and the art of motorcycle maintenance but I will relate it nevertheless. (Incidentally to me quality is the effect to love’s cause but I digress). Dave’s bike was a GSX 750 from the early eighties and the regulator/rectifier had five wires leaving from it. They were red, yellow, red and white, blue and white and finally black and white which is earthed to the unit. The Super-dream (250 or 400 as either will do) had six. They were 3 yellow, red and white, green and finally black. With me so far? Now the red and white from the Super-dream replaces the red from the other, the three yellows replace the yellow, the red and white and the blue and white in any order and the green is earthed to the unit instead of the black and white. The final black from the Super-dream is the in current voltage and this has to be cut into the orange wire that leads to the brake light switch. Good luck.

Dave’s arrival back home also proved enlightening. After he had finished his tea he said to Jane, “So what actually happened then?”

“Well you wouldn’t believe it, the amount of people that came up to me and tried to persuade me not to go.”

“Well they don’t know what they’ve got until its gone I suppose,” Dave said with a laugh.

“It’s their problem now anyway it’s got to the stage that I can’t bare to be there. It was even starting to affect my health I was getting constant headaches.”

“It’s not natural to work nights I used to do it myself. I think that it messes the body clock about too much.”

“Well it hasn’t done mine any favours. The Ward Sister even tried to make me stop an extra week to try and cover the holiday period.”

“Really, what did you say?”

“I refused. Many a time I’ve seen her about trying to alter my shifts to make it easier to keep an eye on my mother but she did nothing. Funny thing though she was almost begging me to stay. She said that I could do any shift I wanted and seemed most accommodating, too little too late I say.”

“Well fair play to you I’m glad to see that you are wising up. So you’ll be looking after your mother full time then?”

“Some ones got to do it and beside I don’t think I could have put up with that job much longer. Most of the good ones have left now I should have gone long ago.”

“It’s done now and I think by the sound of it they will greatly miss you.”

“Their loss, anyway the week end starts tomorrow, any plans?”

“We could go up and see your mother and I’ve got to do a little work on the bike but it won’t take long.”

“Well Natty will be at my mum’s all week end so she should have enough company.”

“It doesn’t matter and besides I haven’t seen your mother in ages.”

“I’d rather you didn’t I’ve got a few things to talk with Natty about.”

Dave held his temper once more and said, “Fair enough I might nip over to see John then.”

“Yes you haven’t seen him in ages so he’ll be pleased.”

“Right,” Dave said and thought it prudent to change the subject. They talked some more until Jane had to go to work and Dave settled down to another lonely night.

Dave woke up to find Sila and Odo waiting slightly impatiently.

“The big trip,” Odo said, “The Desert of No Return, feeling nervous?”

“A little.”

“Don’t be, they feed of your fear.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.” Dave said. They left the lair and Dave and Odo climbed on Sila’s back and she took off. High into the sky they flew and soon the cave seemed small and insignificant.

“I won’t take you too high,” Sila said, “We won’t see the insects if I do.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said, a little nervous as he did not quite know what was expected of him. It was not long before they saw the first one.

“Down there,” Odo said, “Do you see it?”

“Sure,” Sila said, “I’m going in,” and swooped quickly to the ground. After they had landed both Dave and Odo got off and took in the sight before them. It was a giant ant. It was about the same size as Sila and it just stood there looking at them trying to gauge their level of fear. Eventually it said, “You are strangers to these parts, have you business here?”

“No we’re just passing through,” Dave said, “We stopped for a rest that’s all.”

“You must be lost then for the only thing that lies in the direction you were going is the Valley of the Redeemed and that is not a place you want to visit.”

“Really,” Dave said pleading ignorance, “Why is that then?”

“It is an evil place, a place that no one ever returns from. No it’s not a place that I would like to visit.”

“I’ll bare that in mind. So you must live here then?”

“That’s right. Anyway now that I’ve helped you perhaps you would like to return the favour.”

“Sorry?”

“It is a hot day and I am tired. I still have a journey back to the nest and this heavy root to carry,” and Dave looked at a root that was the size of a small tree.

“I could never carry that, look at the size of it.”

“Not you I was thinking more of your friend with the wings he looks more than capable. He could be there and back in no time.”

“What do you mean he?” Sila said

"I'm sorry, I apologise for my mistake."

"And what about your other mistake?"

"My other mistake," the ant repeated in confusion.

"I am a dragon."

"A dragon," the ant said and they noticed more than just a hint of fear in his voice.

"That's right it's not my purpose to do your purpose. You insult me by asking." With that the ant just disappeared and Sila said, "See it's as easy as that."

"It just disappeared," Dave said, "And it didn't take much effort."

Sila smelled the air and said, "There is another one on the way," and soon they saw a large ant heading their direction.

"Have you seen Ena," it said when it reached them.

"Ena?" Dave said pleading ignorance

"My brother," the ant said and on seeing the root, "There he goes leaving me all that work to do again."

"Does it happen often?"

"All the time."

"That must be quite frustrating."

"You don't know the half of it. I don't suppose that you could give me a hand could you. I've been on my feet all day."

"Me, a lot of good I would be."

"I was thinking of your friend, he seems more built for the purpose."

"Me," Sila said, "If I was built for the purpose I would look like you," and with that the ant disappeared.

"Do you realise that there could be millions of them," Dave said, "If they are anything like the colonies at home."

"They're only symbols," Sila said, "Hopefully there won't be too many of them."

"I hope not otherwise we could be here to the end of time."

"Well that won't be that long for you I'm guessing," Odo said much to Dave's shock.

"What?" Dave said, his fear of death coming to the fore "Is there something I should know?"

"Well judging by your progress it won't be too long. You are coming along very well."

"So it's a good thing, how do work that out?"

"You only come to the end of time when you don't need it anymore you have achieved your purpose so your evolution is complete."

"So the end of time won't happen en masse?"

"To some it will the ones that haven't achieved their purpose."

"And what will actually happen then?"

"They'll just evolve to no existence."

"Sorry?"

"Go sterile it will happen through a diminishing sperm count."

"Anyway," Sila said, "Do you want me to scout the area and see if there are any more?"

"Well if you wouldn't mind," Dave said and Sila took off. After she had left he said, "So how long do you think I'll be then?"

"Sorry?"

"Before my time is done."

"Won't be in this world I'm afraid. It will probably be after the next one."

"Oh right, that close then."

"Don't worry about it, it will only happen when you are ready to deal with it."

Sila came into view and quickly landed. "All clear," she said, "Climb on board," and they duly obliged. They carried on their way and about half way across came across a cluster of them so landed nearby. Twenty large ants watched them in surprise and as Dave and Odo got off the one

closest to them said, "You look like mortals, whatever are you doing here?"

"We are in search of Ena," Odo said.

"Ena, he is my brother, whatever business could you have with him?"

"That's for Ena alone to know. We have urgent business with him so be good and tell me which one of you is him."

"He is not here at present, is it important?"

"It is of the greatest importance, we are on business for the Mother of all Things herself."

"Really, then it must be important."

"Will he be long?"

"Shouldn't be, he is out with Oza collecting."

"May we wait?"

"You are more than welcome."

"So how many are in your colony?" Odo said pretending to be making conversation.

"We are thirty strong. We used to be many more but time has taken its toll on us."

"Well that will soon be over."

"Really," the ant said looking suspiciously.

"Yes the Mother of all Things has found you a purpose," and with that all twenty disappeared.

"That's the way to do it," Sila said, "So only 8 left then."

"So what actually happened there then?" Dave said.

"It's the same as what would happen on Earth," Odo said with a laugh, "Like all people involved as petty nuisances give them a real purpose and they soon disappear."

"Is that true then?"

"Yes try it and see you'll be surprised."

"I think that I will."

"Climb on and we'll finish them off," Sila said and they quickly took off. They searched for what seemed like ages before they came across the first one. Landing closely by Dave and Odo got off and approached the ant, "Excuse me," Odo said, "I was wondering if you could help me," and with that the any disappeared.

"What?" Dave said

"Another way to get rid of them is to throw what they do back at them," Odo said with a laugh.

"It wasn't worth getting off," Dave said as they both climbed back on. Sila took off once more and the search continued. They searched long and hard and covered a huge area before they found the next one. Landing they both got off and Odo said, "Watch this one you'll love it"

They walked to the ant who on seeing them said, "You are a bit out of your way aren't you. You are very close to the hidden territory."

"We are here with a purpose in mind," Odo said.

"A purpose, around here? You are most definitely lost."

"Not at all, things are changing around here."

"Really in what way?"

"We've found you a job," and the ant disappeared.

"Not bad that," Dave said, "I tell you what though it takes a lot longer to find them then to actually deal with them."

"Yes I noticed that myself but it has to be done this way," and they both climbed back on once more. Another long search began and it was quite a while before they found the next one. Seeing them land it said, "You timed that right I could do with a hand."

"Really," Dave said, "What's the matter?"

"My brother is trapped it's not far from here."

Dave looked at Sila who smelt the air and said, "There is nothing for miles around."

Dave looked at the ant once more and said, "And how close did you say your brother was?"

"He is not far," the ant said with a little nervousness.

“There is no one for miles. What is this, some sort of trick?”

“I would not lie about something like that it is your friend who is lying.”

“What?” Sila, “Are you calling me a liar?”

“You must be, I mean why should I lie about something like that?”

“To deflect us from our purpose, that comes about through not having a purpose of your own,” and the ant disappeared. They climbed back on and carried on with the search. After a relatively short time they came across two so landed and got off. As they approached Odo said, “You two look like strong creatures, I’ve just the job for you,” and both the ants disappeared.

“Two more down and only three left to go,” Dave said, “I hope they turn up soon though as I’m starting to get a little tired.”

“Well it has been a long time,” Odo said as they both got back on. Sila took off and much to Dave’s joy they came across the last three close together and not far from the last two. They landed and one of the ants said, “You should not be here this is a forbidden area, you must go back.”

“I would love to,” Dave said, “But I’m searching for my brother. Would you help me?” with that the ant disappeared and the other two looked on in horror.

“What has happened?” one of them said eventually, “Where has Ida gone?”

“I don’t know. I just asked him for help and he disappeared. Would you help me instead?” and the second ant disappeared. The last one backed off in fear and looked like it was going to try and make a break for it so Dave quickly said, “Would you help?” and he disappeared.

“The Land of the Molten Men is not far from here,” Sila said, “You look like you need a rest though.”

“I am tired. Could I stay here for a while?”

“Probably the best place just out of sight and not that far to travel to the next day.”

“Thank you, you have been a great help.”

“That was my pleasure. I will give you a couple of days and then come back and look for you if you like.”

“That would be great if you don’t mind.”

“I will stay till you sleep though I don’t think that will be too long.”

“True,” Dave said and felt himself starting to lose consciousness, “Very true,” and left the world.

Dave woke up to find that Jane was already home from work

“Not long now,” she said as she passed him a cup of tea, “Only twelve more days.”

“Good,” Dave said taking it off her, “And then you new life can begin.”

“I suppose it is really, I mean I’ve been there most of my working life. They’re still trying to get me to stay and you wouldn’t believe it but there are people from other wards asking me whether I would like to work with them.”

“Really, seems like they are missing you already.”

“Anyway I’ve got to go off and see my mum and take the dogs for a walk. I expect that you want to crack on with that motorbike of yours.”

“It’s still early, there’s no hurry.”

“It’s half past nine, you’ve overslept.”

“What,” Dave said in surprise, “I don’t usually do that.”

“You must have been tired. Anyway I’ll see you later,” and left him to get dressed. After he had finished Dave went straight to the garage and started working on the bike. He did not really like working with electricity as he was quite wary of it so it was with a great deal of trepidation that he took to the task.

Anyway with the same amount of trepidation I would like to talk about comparative reasoning and hopefully give you some new understanding on life. Now some people seem to see God anywhere which is all well and good unless you happen to be standing next to them in the kitchen at a party but I digress. This is actually a slightly deeper understanding of life and the more spiritually aware you become the deeper the understanding will be. With me so far? Good, now this comparative

reasoning is used by themselves to justify their faith and is a personal justification that cannot really be used on other people for it works on the individual's understanding and own experience. Having said that I do believe that everything does have a deeper meaning and knowing this and understanding the deeper meanings will give you more awareness of life in general and deeper existence in the spiritual sense.

And what subject am I going to put up for comparative reasoning? I thought that I might try the electric system of a motorbike and compare it with the mind. First things first though you will have to understand the charging procedure of the electrical system. The crank turns in the alternator and generates AC (alternating current) current which is sent to the regulator/rectifier which turns it DC (direct current) charging the battery and giving the system life. (Bit simplistic but you get the idea.) Now as mind and body are interlinked so too is the electrical system and the engine (internal organs) and auxiliaries like lights and indicators (senses) but I do not want to go too deep with the analogy except to say that it provides the spark that ignites the petrol that drives the pistons which turn the crank and brings us back to the start of the process.

So how does it actually compare then? Petrol (knowledge) is ignited by the spark plug (imagination- the spark of life) which turns the crank via the piston and generates life or electricity through the AC generator. Now this is not life as we know it for it is spiritual life (awareness) and so has to be rectified to direct current (consciousness) to be able to live in reality, materially speaking that is. Once rectified and also regulated because of its strength, if not it could blow you mind, mentally speaking, it feeds the battery (memory) in the understanding sense but also it goes to the ignition switch to be turned on (by the Will). Having done that I thought I might have a go at the Soul or regulator/ rectifier so first the old one, two wires come from the generator, these would be the spirits of life and love. The main power line divides into two and goes to the ignition switch (the spirit of wisdom) and the battery (the spirit of understanding). A fifth wire goes to earth or the spirit of knowing for this is your channel to the Earth Mother and the sixth wire goes to the engine kill switch or the spirit of discernment. I had better elaborate a little on this one for I'm guessing that you might not see it at first. With this spirit you get free will and can over ride the Earth Mother's hold on you or your instinctive drive. With this spirit you can also make the conscious decision to take your own life so the name (engine kill switch) proves quite apt. And the difference between this and the Super dream? The extra wire is the spirit of purpose and it goes into the brake light switch wire or to put it another way you get control over your dreams.

Dave finished the bike and took it out for a test drive. Whilst out he decided to call on John, "Alright John," he said getting off. John was doing some block paving so Dave said, "You look like you could do with a hand."

"No it's nearly done now thanks. You've gave me a good excuse to stop for a cup of tea though."

"I've some useful purpose then," Dave said with a laugh, "So how's work then?"

"Not bad. I reckon there's another 6 months on it. What about yourself?"

"A couple of months and then I might take a few months off."

"Lucky for some. Anyway come in and I'll put the kettle on," Dave followed him in and they were soon drinking tea.

"So you are doing your house up," Dave said, "Well it will certainly add value."

"Never ending job, there's always something that wants doing. She wants me to convert the attic soon."

"Really, well if you need a hand with anything just let me know."

"I'll definitely bare that in mind. It won't be for a while yet as I've quite a lot to do."

"What else have you got then?" Dave said looking around

"I've got a conservatory to put up, a kitchen to finish and the garden wants looking at. I can do that all myself but the loft I will need a hand to get the stuff up."

"I probably won't be working by the time you've done all that lot that will give me plenty of time."

"Fair enough, do you want another drink?"

“Yes go on and then I’ll have to get back. I only took the bike out for a test run.”

“Test run, has it been playing up?”

Dave explained what he had been doing and they talked some more before Dave finished his drink and left. On arrival back he found that Jane had returned.

“How did you get on?” he said.

“Well we came to a good arrangement. Steve will come and stay at the weekend and eventually when he gets better he will give up work and move in full time to look after her.”

“Right, so what’s the matter with him anyway?”

“He thinks he’s got a tumour on his back. He’s going to see a doctor about it one day and when it’s sorted he’s going to come off the drink and lose all that weight.”

“I was going to say, I’ve only seen him twice but from what I saw he didn’t look able to look after himself.”

“That will change.”

“And in the meantime?”

“I will look after her. It will only be for a short while though as he is registered as the main Carer.”

“Oh, is that why he gets the Carer’s allowance?”

“Well yes of course. He doesn’t really need it he’s got his own jewelry business and does very well.”

“As long as that’s sorted then, and what about you?”

“Sorry?”

“After your mother is taken care of?”

“Get a part time job, maybe a district nurse of something along those lines. I can take early retirement in a couple of years so work’s not really a big thing.” With that the phone rang and Jane went off to answer it. After she returned she said, “That was Don, he wants me to take him over to his daughters.”

“Can’t his wife take him?”

“I guess not otherwise he would not have asked me. I shouldn’t be too long,” and with that she left him. Dave spent the rest of the afternoon watching the television and as it was a Saturday and Dave did not like sport he was merely going through the motions. Instead his mind drifted back to Steve. He knew that he would never be fit enough to look after his mother so Jane would end up having to carry the responsibility alone. From what Jane had told him about Steve he knew that he was a wastrel and a waste of time and space. Their family, before Dave had known Jane, had liked to buy and sell houses and Steve had, had seven of them to finance his lavish lifestyle. He lived a strange lifestyle, one that involved stopping at hotels and basically one of non existence for even his shop was registered under an assumed name. It was not even a shop as such but the back room of one where he bought and sold gold and diamonds and met up with his gangster friends. Jane had definitely got her work cut out Dave thought to himself as his mind turned to Don.

Since Don had been ejected from her mother’s house he was in need of a purpose. Before he would go around at eight and stay there to around noon returning home full of whiskey and reminiscences. Sometimes if he was too early he would sit and wait in the greenhouse and what Don called early was not the same as what we would. He had been a lorry driver for a while before he retired and had got into the habit of waking at four in the morning. To compensate this he would go to bed at eight in the evening so he had a full day it was just that it was staggered. This meant that sometimes he might be at the greenhouse at six and have to wait for two hours but Don did not mind this as it was better than the alternative of his home life. Now though things had changed where once he had been an asset now he had become a burden. He had always been a bit of a small time wheeler- dealer but now he took to it with gusto. He would, well he always did but now it was more noticeable, scrounge anything that he could lay his hands on and sell it on for next to nothing to buy that elusive bottle of whiskey. Now listening to this you would think that he was mighty impoverished but that was not the case. Don had, had a management job and along with its pension

and the states he was on a pretty good income. It was just that his wife took it off him and only gave him £6 a week pocket money, her excuse being that she needed to run the house. At first it was not an ordeal because he had a part time gardening job or two to compensate, after awhile though they dried up and Jane's mothers became a focal point to pass the boring mornings. Now though he needed Jane to fetch and carry for him and her out of guilt because of what he had done for her mother and how her family had treated him, felt obligated to come to his aid. At this point in the story it only involved going to car boots and auction houses which Jane liked so it was not much of a problem. The story evolves to fruition in the next tale so I will not say much more about it. Jane's return brought him out of his mind drift so he got up and made them both a cup of tea. "All done," she said on entering, "Her daughter had an old lawn mower that needed a bit of work on it so she gave it him."

"Does he know much about lawn mowers then?"

"Well not really," she said with a laugh.

"Oh."

"He'll probably just sell it, it's worth a few quid even as it is."

"So are you car booting with him tomorrow?"

"Not tomorrow but next Sunday, we're going to set up stall."

"Has he got much to sell?"

"Not really, just a few bits and bobs and some eggs from his hens, it might make him a few quid. I've also gave him some of my mum's clutter, more to get rid of it than anything else so it should give him something to go with."

"Well it did need clearing out so it makes good sense."

"So did you end up seeing John then? I forgot to ask earlier what with everything going on."

"Yes I said that I would give him a hand to convert his loft." (That too is another tale so I will not dwell too much on it.)

"Will you have the time?"

"It won't be for a couple of months, that site I'm working at should be finished by then."

"You'll still be working though won't you?"

"Well I thought that I would take a little time off, live off my savings for a while. Don't worry I'll still give you the same money as when I'm working."

"So how much have you actually got saved up then?"

"I'll have about seven grand I think, by the time the job is finished that is."

"Seven thousand, however did you manage that?"

"Easy, with the lifestyle I'm leading and the money I'm on every week's wage can last me three."

"I think that I ought to be charging you more then," Jane said with a laugh.

"You're most welcome to it."

"I'm only joking you give me more than enough. So how much do you actually spend on yourself then?"

"Not a lot really, twenty to forty pounds on average. That's not including petrol money to get to work."

"Well you get an extra £10 a day for that, what do you call it traveling expenses?"

"Yes," Dave said with a laugh, "And I keep the receipts and claim it back of the taxman so I sort of get it twice."

"Amazing, so what do you plan to do with your holiday then?"

"Anything that wants doing around the house. I might even give you a hand to look after your mother and basically just see what comes along."

"Yes why not. I did not realise that you could have such a lifestyle."

"It's not what you earn it's what you spend that matters, believe me I've found that out the hard way."

"So why are people so greedy do you think?"

“A cushion for their ignorance maybe? I’m not really sure to tell you the truth.”

“A cushion for their ignorance?”

“They know no better. They think that they can achieve peace of mind through shallow gratification but it doesn’t work so they end up craving for more.”

“Well Natty’s like that. Her husband’s on real good money but she spends it quicker than he can earn it.”

“I don’t think that she’s all there anyway,” Dave said and laughed before he said, “And besides I think she’s cursed by fate.”

“What?”

“Well let’s be honest everything that she has anything to do with just falls apart around her. She has no common sense and come to anything worthwhile she hasn’t a clue. Oh she’s devious, don’t get me wrong, but she’s not clever.”

“Yes I noticed that. The funny thing is that before you came along I thought that she was.”

“Really, why was that then?”

“Because she told me I guess,” Jane said with a laugh, “She was a lot older than me so I sort of looked up to her.”

“And now?”

“I see her for what she is, a complete waste of time.”

“Well that’s one thing. I’m surprised that you hadn’t noticed it earlier though, I mean to be honest it’s pretty blatant.”

“She always managed to turn the blame on me. In fact in the end I thought that I was the one who was a moron.”

“As I said she is devious but if you follow two rules and you shouldn’t come unstuck.”

“Two rules?”

“Yes, the first one is always keep your eye on the big picture because they like to try and side track you and the second is if it’s none of their business make sure that they know it.”

“Well I heard that she did not do too well when she came around for my clock,” Jane said with a laugh.

Dave laughed and said, “No I destroyed her. I hit her from that many different angles that she needed a protractor. No she’s as thick as pig muck when it comes down to it.”

“Anyway she’s just a waste of time so we won’t waste time talking about it. Mary’s at her dad’s so what about I pick up a bottle of Vodka for tonight?”

“Sounds good to me. There’s still plenty of cola left so it should make for a good mix.”

“That’s sorted then. I won’t bother going to my mum’s, she’s got more than enough company.”

“Yes,” Dave said with a laugh, “I would keep away from your sister as it might be contagious.”

“I only hope it’s not heredity, mind you it hasn’t kicked in yet.”

“I don’t know about that,” Dave said still laughing.

“I’ll just nip to the shop,” Jane said and soon they were both getting drunk.

Now Dave did not visit the Land of Imaginative Extension that night for alcohol and astral traveling do not mix. Bare that in mind if you want to ride the super-dream, don’t drink and drive, it dulls your senses and clouds your judgement. Odo was not aware of this for the astral worlds are not controlled by time, so matter how long away Dave was it would only seem like a few minutes.

Dave awoke Sunday morning to find Jane very hungover.

“Oh my head,” she said, “Never again.”

“You said that the last time.”

“And I’ll probably say it again. Any chance of a cup of tea, my mouth’s as dry as a bone.”

“Sure, shall I bring it up or are you coming down?”

“I’ll come down,” and they both went downstairs.

After they had finished Jane said, “So what are your plans for today?”

“I thought I might finish that patio off.”

"I thought you already had."

"I was going to put a block border around it, it should finish it off nicely."

"Oh, er wouldn't that be expensive?"

"No I reckon Jim should have a few spare."

(Jim was one of Dave's closest friends. They had worked together on many occasions, generally building and ground work, but lack of work meant their partnership had, had to split. Dave then got involved with Adam and when the work picked up once more for Jim he started working with his brother in law mainly block paving.)

"I'll take you then, you haven't seen him in ages."

"Sounds good, we'll have another drink first though as you look like you still need a little hydrating." They had another drink and journeyed over to Jim's.

"Alright Jim," Dave said on seeing him, "I'm afraid I'm on the scrounge again."

"What are you after then?"

"Have you got any blocks. I don't need many it's just to finish off a patio."

"I've a few spare, how many are you actually talking about?"

"About seventy I would say."

"Should have. They're over at my brother Tom's just help yourself. So anyway how's work treating you?"

"Not bad. Pays well and I guess that's all that matters in the end and yourself?"

"Picked up quite a bit I do a lot of work for a large company and it pays well but the only trouble it you have to wait so long for it."

"Yes I've heard that these big companies like to hold on to the money as long as possible. I hope that you are putting up the prices to compensate for it."

"Of course," Jim said with a laugh and they talked some more before Dave and Jane left to see his brother. As they were loading up the bricks Tom saw that Jane was taking a keen interest in a caravan that was parked there.

"Do you like it," he said, "I bought it for my lad to live in but he has no use for it now so its up for sale."

"Really," Jane said much to Dave's surprise, "How much to you want for it?"

"A hundred quid as it's you but I'm afraid you'll have to let me know quickly as I'm about to advertise it."

"Can I come back tomorrow about it as I've someone to see first."

"Er sure," Tom said and they finished loading up

As they drove home Dave said, "Whatever do you want a caravan for?"

"Don't you like it?"

"Yes, don't get me wrong it's in excellent condition and it's at a good price but we don't need one."

"It's not for us, it's for Don."

"What?"

"He's on about getting a caravan and moving to Wales."

"What to live?" Dave said in surprise.

"Well of course."

"Well how is he going to live? I can't see his wife giving him more pocket money."

"He'll get a gardening job."

"No-one's going to employ him he's too old and feeble and besides he's got no savings. How is he going to live in the meantime? He's got to find money just to park for a start."

"He'll park it anywhere that won't be a problem. He just has to find a lay by or field."

"And when did he come up with this idea? I thought you told me that his wife treated him like a king. If that's the case why does he want to leave her?"

"He only came up with the idea recently. As for what he said about his wife, well he's probably too embarrassed to say anything else."

“It’s a foolish idea he’s in no fit state to do any real work and besides I’m sure the locals are going to take kindly to a penniless old man turning up and trying to compete for their work. He’ll starve to death within a fortnight. Why doesn’t he just go to his wife and ask her to give him some more of his money back. If he wants to move to Wales then fair enough but at least he will have some money coming in that will support him.”

“He said that she’s got none spare she needs it all to look after the house.”

“She’s conning him. Most of the food comes from the allotment he has and I can’t see the bills coming to a lot.”

“You’ll be surprise how much it costs to run a house.”

“Behave it’s me you’re talking to.”

“Well it’s none of our business anyway,” she said and changing the subject, “Are you going to put those bricks in today?”

“May as well it shouldn’t take too long.”

They pulled up at home and Dave got straight to work. He cut out and scraped the turf away and gave the area a good sand bed. He had just started laying the blocks when Jane came out with a cup of tea. “Don’s just called,” she said passing it to him, “I’m just going to nip out for a while.”

“Er sure.”

“It shouldn’t be too long,” and left him to it. Dave carried on after he had drunk the tea and pretty soon it was finished. As he stood back to admire it Jane returned, “He wanted four hundred quid for it.”

“Sorry?”

“The caravan I thought he told us a hundred.”

“He did but that was us.”

“What?”

“A hundred pound was what he paid for it, that’s the price he would sell it to a friend. Anyone else he would sell it at the real price.”

“That’s not fair.”

“He was doing us a favour, no one else. So what happened then?”

“Well he wasn’t there when we went around. I saw his daughter and she said he was after five hundred quid for it. I said that he said a hundred so she rang him and Don talked to him about it.”

“Really and what did Tom say?”

“Well he said that, that price was for you anyone else it would be four hundred.”

“He did tell you that.”

“I thought it was just a figure of speech you know like normally its fifty quid but to you a tenner.”

“No,” Dave said with a laugh, “They’re Travellers. Out of respect for me as a person he would sell it to me for what he paid for it. In return I would give him a little extra that they call luck money. I’ve helped him out before as he’s helped me so it’s a mutual thing. He knows that if I was in the same position I would do the same. Don though he’s a stranger and so he pays the full price. If you would have talked to him you would have got it at the cheaper price.”

“I thought that Don would make a better job of it than me.”

“What, it was just a friend doing another friend a favour there was no need for pretence.”

“Well it’s too late now. Anyway those blocks finish off the patio well.”

“Yes I’m well pleased with it,” and then looking at his watch, “You know it’s still pretty early I may as well concrete those steps in.”

“I was going to nip down to the breakers and see if they had some tyres for my car.”

“Would they be open Sunday?”

“These ones are. You’re doing a good job, I’ll see you later,” and left him to it.

“Right,” Dave said and going back to the kitchen made himself another drink to debate his strategy.

Jane had moved into the house a couple of years before she had met Dave. It was a new house and she had not done too much with the garden as she had, had too little time. The garden itself was

divided in two by a trellis that cut across the middle, the first half was reasonably flat and the second fairly steep as it was on a hill. She had put stepping stones across the lawn of the top half and a framework of steps down the bottom, filling the insides with bark which had rapidly deteriorated. Dave was going to put concrete in instead to make the framework more stable and give a better footing. He had spent most of his weekends doing the garden up for if the truth be known after doing up her mother's garden he had developed quite a taste for it. He had widened the borders in the top half and filled them out with shrubs. He had also put more borders alongside the steps in the bottom garden and bulbed them out with bluebells and then put three trees there too to enhance the meadowy feel. He had planted two climbing roses by the trellis and extended the patio from two sets of nine slabs that had been outside the two sets of French Doors to all the way across the back of the house. Even the side of the house had not been left for where it had just been stoned he put a couple of shrubs in, made a trellis, bought a stone Buddha and turned it into a shrine. Now though he just had to finish the steps and it would be all completed. This job was not as easy as it sounded though for he had to mix the concrete in a bucket and then carry it down the steep bit of hill and as a bucket of concrete only managed to fill one step it meant he would have quite a few journeys to make.

"Ah well," Dave said and got to work. His first bucket was quickly mixed and the first of the 11 steps duly filled. When he was on the 8th step Jane came back and said, "You're not going to believe this he's only gone and bought one of the most decrepit looking caravans you would ever see in your life."

"Sorry?"

"Don, he was out at the breakers with me and saw this well I don't know what you would call it. He paid a hundred pounds for it as well he would have been a lot better off with Tom's. It looked like something from the fifties."

"Maybe he likes the nostalgia," Dave said shrugging his shoulders, "How's he going to get it back anyway, you haven't got a tow bar."

"His daughter's going to fetch it for him. I told him not to buy it but he wouldn't listen. He said it just wanted a bit of work on it."

"Well if he's happy with it."

"You wouldn't say that if you had seen it. I reckon it must have been standing 10 years. You should have seen the relief on the man's face, he was glad to get rid of it."

"I'll bet," Dave said with a laugh, "It sounds like Don is quite a desperate man."

"Well I said I've got some curtains and cushions that might brighten it up a little but I'm guessing it will be like making a silk purse out of a pig's ear. Anyway how are you getting on?"

"Nearly done," Dave said and finished off mixing the 8th bucket, "Just another three mixes after this one and then the garden is completely finished."

"Well you have certainly transformed it. Yes it looks a lot better than it did. Do you want another drink before I have to get off once more?"

"Where you going this time?"

"I've got to pick Mary up from her dad's, I shouldn't be too long and then I'll make us all something to eat."

"Fair enough," Dave said and carried the bucket down to the step. He did not like the fact that Jane had to drop off and fetch Mary back from her father's as he saw that, that should be his job. He did not know the man but from what he had heard from Jane he was glad of it. Like most of the fiasco's in Jane's life it was sparked off by Natalie's interference. She was a good friend of his mothers and thought that it might be a good idea to have him marry her younger sister who she thought being now thirty years old was in need of a husband. She constantly phoned Jane pestering her to meet him and the deed was done and the heart ache began. As you can imagine the marriage did not last too long but that was no concern to Dave as he finished concreting the last step. He was just glad that it was finished and the garden was now done. It did not look the part at the moment but he

knew that when it was a little more established everything would just blend into place so he was happy with the work he had done.

Jane and Mary's arrival back from her father's followed shortly afterwards and then they had something to eat. Dave and Jane retired to bed at 10.30 both with thoughts of work for the next day.

Chapter 4.

Dave awoke to find Odo close by, "Right," Odo said, "A short journey and then the torment begins."

"Bring it on," Dave said getting up.

As they walked the short distance to the Land of the Molten Men Odo said, "We could talk a little more about the imagination if it will help to pass the time."

"Sure," Dave said with a laugh, "What do you want to know?"

"One of those days is it?" Odo said with a laugh, "Right we'll talk about creative design then. What do you know about it?"

"Er everything was created with a purpose in mind."

"And what do they say about it in your world?"

"A bit vague really. The evolutionists believe that evolution is random and done through natural selection and the religionists say that it proves the existence of God."

"Natural selection, do you mean like through the natural laws?"

"Oh no, the habitat and environment basically they say that we evolved through genetic mistakes and natural disasters to put it bluntly. I don't think they have even thought about natural laws or their existence."

"And yet they're enshrined in their being how strange, sounds like they have a long way to travel. Now these laws are the guidelines that the creative force works and if you look to the deeper workings of nature you will see that very easily, well that should do anyway. Not much else to say as it was just a short journey."

"Oh right."

"Anyway we're here now," Odo said, "We'll sneak quietly in and try and gauge the situation."

"Fair enough," and they crept silently around the foothills of a large mountain until voices made them stop and listen.

"Anything to report?"

"You're joking, nothing here and there never will be."

"Keep looking Dava."

"Dava," Odo whispered to Dave, "That's my brother."

"Really."

"Yes we used to be pretty close until he got deluded. I wonder who else is here."

"Well the other ones gone why don't we approach him?"

"It's got to be done I suppose. Be wary and get ready to run if necessary."

"Alright," Dave said and they both got up and made their way towards him.

"Who is that?" Dava said, "What business have... Odo is that you?"

"Dava," Odo said, "Is that you?"

"I'm being punished for transgressing divine law. I am condemned to live like this for eternity. But you how is it that you are not condemned also?"

"I was, but not in this world, I, too, used to look like you."

"So what happened then?"

"I found a loop hole."

"You did?"

"If I took my own life it meant that I had made the conscious decision to begin again. This gave me a fresh start."

"Really, that would explain a lot."

“Sorry?”

“All but 12 of us committed suicide and those that didn’t are the ones that are condemned. I should have guessed really.”

“There are 12 of you here, so who are the others?”

“Mela and his brother Lumba, Crota Sina, Cumba, Lira, Oscot, Kilna, Siga, Dinna and Laya.”

“Now they are names from the past. It must be thousands of years since I last heard them mentioned. So what are you actually doing here then?”

“We stop anyone trying to get into the Valley of the Redeemed though to be honest you two are the first I have ever seen in all the time I’ve been here.”

“Oh sorry this is Dave he is part of my atonement.”

“What?”

“It’s part of the deal. When you have wiped the slate clean you have to enlighten someone to make amends for your previous actions.”

“Well I thought that there must be more to it than just taking your life and what else do you have to do?”

“That’s it, I have to show him around all the creative worlds and then I can go home.”

“Home, now there’s a place I’ve long since wanted to return to. You do know that I have to stop you entering the valley though?”

“That’s not on the list of places to visit. No it is only as far as here that I have to take him.”

“Well fair enough. It’s nothing personal you understand I’m just programmed that way.”

“Oh I understand for I too was once programmed. No we are happy enough just to be here for this is the final place we have to visit. After this I can go home and start life all over again.”

“That sounds good. So not being funny how did you actually manage to commit suicide for if you were like me you would have been pretty much indestructible.”

“It took a few goes I admit but in the end I found the only way to do it was to fight fire with fire.”

“What?”

“I jumped into a volcano it was as simple as that.”

“Seriously, so what actually happened then?”

“I felt myself liquidizing and soon enough I had melted enough for my spirit to leave my body.”

“Yes I can see that working. I will call all the others and see what they have to say about it.”

“Are they just as unhappy as you?”

“Each to a man you are probably the best piece of news we’ve heard in a long time.”

“You do know that some of them don’t see eye to eye with me?”

“Time will have changed all of that and besides whilst I’m here you will not come to harm.”

“Alright then call them together and I will come to you.”

Dava slowly made his way of and after he had gone Dave said, “Don’t you get on with some of them then?”

“Most of them, we have different views on life and they tended to look down on me as a bit naïve.”

“And do you think that they will believe the story?”

“That was what I was worried about.”

“I’d better keep my running shoes on then,” Dave said with a laugh.

“It’s worse than that. Even if one of them rejects the story your job is not done and if they don’t take their life voluntarily there is no chance of defeating them.”

“As bad as that, I did not realise.”

“Yes so we have to tread very carefully. I’m hoping that time would have dulled their memories and hatred of their purpose will blind them to anything else.”

“Time will tell on that one.”

“And I would say that time is now,” Odo said and pointed to 12 figures making their way slowly towards them.

“It is Odo,” One of them said and Odo recognised his voice.

“Is that you Mela?”
 “It is though you could never tell by looking at me.”
 “I too was once like you.”
 “Dava has told me and I did not believe him but now I am not so sure.”
 “Well I only found it out by chance. Originally it only came out of an act of desperation. I just couldn’t face life anymore so decided to end it all.”
 “I must admit that that thought had occurred to me on many occasions I just didn’t know how to go about it that’s all.”
 “Even that came by chance, well that and a bit of logic.”
 “And what would you know about logic?” a voice recognised as Laya said.
 “He knows more than you,” Dava said rebuking him, “After all he is not like us anymore.”
 “How do we know that he ever was we only have his word for it that’s all.”
 “It’s obvious isn’t it only a fool would say otherwise. We are the only ones that never took our lives. Where are all the others?”
 “I don’t know but that doesn’t mean that he’s telling the truth.”
 “What reason have I got to lie to you?” Odo said.
 “I don’t know what’s in your heart,” Laya said.
 “But I know what’s in yours,” Mela said, “It is long known the hatred you have for Odo.”
 “And I have good reason to. My reason is justifiable and let no man say otherwise.”
 “Maybe but don’t let it cloud your judgment, unless of course you are content to live out the rest of your existence looking like that.”
 “No I’m not but I am not that desperate that I would take his word for it.”
 “And what purpose would he have lying to us all?” Dava said, “I am his brother and a lot of these here were once his friends.”
 “I will go with the majority that is all I will say on the matter.”
 “Then we will put it to the vote. I say he speaks with truth and we would be wise to follow his path. Lumba?”
 “Yes, I see no reason for him to lie.”
 “Crota?”
 “I say that anything is better than this and even if he was lying we’d get over it, nothing to lose.”
 “Sina?”
 “Yes I cannot take this anymore.”
 “Cumba?”
 “Even if he was lying we have nothing to lose. I mean we are indestructible at the end of the day.”
 “Good point, Lira?”
 “I think that Cumba has said it all.”
 “Oscot?”
 “I say yes.”
 “Kilna?”
 “I can see no other way.”
 “Siga?”
 “I say we give it a try.”
 “Dina?”
 “I’m with the rest of them.”
 “Dava, need I ask?”
 “My view is well known.”
 “And finally Laya.”
 “I have said that I will go with the majority but I do it with a heavy heart.”
 “Then it is settled,” Mela said and turning to Odo, “After the deal is done what happens next?”
 “I seen the Mother of all Things and she absolved me with an oath to enlighten another soul”

“This man that stands before us, is he the one?”

“That’s right his name is Dave.”

“So Dave you are enlightened?”

“I am still on the path.”

“He is close,” Odo said, “And when he has done I can go home.”

“Imagine that,” Dava said.

“Then you wouldn’t mind him being tested,” Laya said

“To what purpose,” Mela said, “The vote has been cast.”

“I don’t mind,” Dave said, “It’s good to be tested.”

“Very well,” Laya said, “Three questions. First what are you in essence?”

“An evolving soul on the path of light.”

“And on completion?”

“An enlightened soul with a purpose to serve.”

“Good and finally what is the direction of your being?”

“To evolve to my purpose.”

“You are indeed close to enlightenment,” Laya said and turning to Odo, “I apologise. You are indeed telling the truth.”

“Then it is settled,” Mela said, “We shall go on to rebirth and put all this behind us,” and Dave and Odo followed them to the nearest volcano where one by one they went to perdition.

After it was done Dave said, “So what was the trouble you had with Laya then, if you don’t mind me asking.”

“It was nothing really although at the time we thought it was. It was over the affection of a woman actually.”

“And it was never forgotten, not even after all this time.”

“Some things we don’t forget. The affection of a woman was held as the highest honour to a man god and this one more so for she was the prettiest.”

“So what happened then?”

“She picked me.”

“And did you fight over her?”

“No, at the time to fight another man-god was forbidden as we were all considered too precious. There was a lot of trouble with the mortals around then.”

“Oh, but they did turn on each other eventually for I remember you saying that.”

“The real power had been lost by then. They were more like dogs fighting each other for scraps of the table.”

“Well I guess that, that was the last of them. Do you think that you’ll miss them?”

“Not really their time had long run out.”

“So what now?”

“The scorpion I guess but hold back a while for I need to rest.”

“Are you alright?”

“A little tired I don’t need to go back as often as you but I do need to go back occasionally.”

“I will stand guard then,” Dave said and with that Odo went to sleep. It was not too long before Dave was joined by a small lizard.

“Is your friend dead?” it said.

“No merely sleeping.”

“Sleeping, what’s that?”

“Recharging himself.”

“We do that through the sun why don’t you do that?”

“We are not lizards. What actually are you doing here anyway?”

“I live here. Is it you that has got rid of the molten men?”

“Well my friend, were they friends of yours?”

“Oh no they were very cruel to my kind and we are glad to see them gone.”

“It was necessary, and the scorpion, it that also an enemy?”

“No, but neither is he a friend do you mean to defeat it as well?”

“Well try.”

“And the winged lizard?”

“Afraid so.”

“Oh she’s no friend of mine she feeds her family with our kin. You’ll be doing us a good service by getting rid of her I can tell you.”

“Well I’ve got to get past the scorpion first and from what I have heard he is a formidable opponent.”

“I might be able to help you.”

“Really, well all help will gratefully be accepted so tell me how.”

“I happen to know that her sting is harmless, she told me herself.”

“I’ll bare that in mind. I’ve heard that she’s big though so she will still be quite a problem.”

“Fear is her only weapon, your fear. Go in there with a staunch heart and she’ll be no match.”

“Right.”

“Defeat the scorpion and I will return and help you to defeat the winged lizard.”

“You will?”

“Yes do that and I will make myself known to you once more.”

“Fair enough.”

“Your friend is about to wake, I must go,” and scampered off.

Odo awoke and Dave told him all about the lizard. “Is it to be trusted?” he said afterwards.

“Well the advice does make sense but be on your guard anyway.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Hopefully it’s genuine. More from the flying lizards point of view as I’m not too sure as to how we are going to deal with it.”

“Oh I don’t like the sound of that it seems a very dangerous creature.”

“I was thinking that myself, anyway let’s take a look at this scorpion,” and Dave followed him through the foothills until they came to a flat plain. They hid for a while just looking at it and debating their next move.

“It is big though,” Dave said as they watched it make its patrol, “I don’t think that it makes much difference about the sting it looks more than capable without it.”

“We’ll see,” Odo said getting up. Dave also got up and they were soon spotted by the scorpion

“What business have you here? State your purpose or quickly die.”

“I am here to confront my fear,” Dave said and much to his surprise it got a little smaller.

“And what is your fear?” the scorpion said trying to brazen it out.

“My fear of death of course for it’s the only fear that wants confronting.”

“And how do you propose to confront your fear for it is a well known fact that everything has to die. You are born and then you die, even a child knows that.”

“Maybe but a man is a little wiser than a child and knows better.”

The scorpion got a little smaller and said, “And what does a man know that a child doesn’t? And is it not the case that a man dies?”

“Some but they are reborn as other men for man might live and die but the Soul lives on forever.”

The scorpion got a lot smaller at that and said, “Where are your facts. You talk of the Soul but bring forward no proof,” and grew a little though it was hardly noticeable.

“I have proved it to myself that’s all that matters to me,” and with that the scorpion shrank to normal size and Dave trod it underfoot.

“Quick get back to the foothills,” a voice called out and they quickly obeyed, it was the lizard.

“So you have done it and done it in style. You don’t want to be out in the open as the winged lizard has keen eyesight.”

“You said that you would help us to defeat the lizard,” Dave said, “Do you still want to?”
 “Sure, you just have to take away its purpose that’s all.”
 “But it has no purpose,” Odo said, “That’s what I was told anyway.”
 “It does. Its purpose is to feed its chicks. Take them away and it has no purpose.”
 “Of course, I should have realised but will it actually kill it?”
 “Yes it will purify itself.”
 “Sorry?” Dave said.
 “Burst into flames.”
 “Oh right.”
 “One of you will have to climb into the nest whilst the other keeps the mother busy.”
 “I’d like to do that,” Dave said, “Well if that’s alright with you Odo.”
 “Climb into the nest, sure. Do you know what to do when you get there? Although they are just chicks their size means that they will be formidable.”
 “I was going to turn them against one another hopefully they will kill each other.”
 “Sounds good.”
 “I will guide you to the nest,” the lizard said, “I know of tunnels that cross the open land.”
 “Good,” Dave said, “I don’t really like the idea of being out in the open.”
 “There are some caves to your left,” the lizard said to Odo, “It should be safe there, it will try and get in but it’s too big. Just lead it there and keep it entertained for a while. Give us a bit of a head start though for I don’t know how long its curiosity can be maintained.”
 “Fair enough,” Odo said and made his way to the caves whilst Dave and the lizard went to the tunnels. They were surprisingly large and Dave could easily walk through them.
 “So however did these tunnels come to be here?” he said as they walked along.
 “Legends say that they were built by the molten men not for reason but out of boredom. They don’t really serve any useful purpose so I guess they were built just to waste a little time.”
 “And they had a lot of time to waste, thousands of years by all account.”
 “To them it must have seemed longer. I have heard stories of how they used to be and believe me justice was well served when they were put here.”
 “Odo has told me of their ways and I think that you are right.”
 “Your friend was he one of them?”
 “Yes but he was not of their kind he is a good and humble man.”
 “Then he is truly blessed,” the lizard said and turned into a beautiful maiden.
 “What is this?” Dave said in surprise.
 “I am Kena, I too knew Odo but that was a long time ago.”
 “Are you the one that he competed with Laya for?”
 “That’s right we were deeply in love for quite a while.”
 “Really, so what happened then?”
 “They were turbulent times with all the upheavals. I thought it wiser and safer to move back with the man gods. Odo’s hermitic lifestyle meant that he could be an easy target.”
 “You went to Laya?”
 “In my ignorance and long have I regretted it.”
 “So why did he hate Odo, I mean in the end he got the girl.”
 “But Odo got me first and he never forgot it. His honour would never allow him to.”
 “Oh and how did you come to be changed to a lizard?”
 “Punishment for my arrogance I was deemed hard hearted and cold blooded in my actions towards Odo. I was changed into a lizard and placed close by to Laya though my form and his cruelty meant that we could never meet for if we did he was sure to kill me.”
 “And now, how is it that you are back to yourself?”
 “It was deemed that my punishment would be over when Odo returned to me a humble man. Mind you I don’t know how he’s going to react to me after I betrayed him like that.”

“Well time is a good healer and he’s had plenty of time to get over it.”

“You are indeed a wise man.”

“I’ve had a good teacher,” Dave said with a laugh.

“We’re here now,” Kena said as the tunnel changed to the bottom of a mountain, “I know the best way up if you would care to follow me.”

“Sure,” Dave said and started to make the ascent after her. The climb was not that hard really for Kena led a good trail and it was not long before they had the nest in sight.

Meanwhile Odo with a close eye to the sky stepped out into the open and just waited around. It was not long before he saw the lizard circling overhead. He pretended that he had not seen it and watched it descend to a lower level and hover a while. Again it descended and hovered but this time it got ready to strike. Seeing this Odo got himself ready and when it did strike quickly made his way to the caves narrowly avoiding being caught.

“What do you want from me?” Odo shouted from the safety of the cave dodging the lizard’s great claws.

“Food,” the lizard said trying madly to dig him out.

“But I have none,” Odo said just to keep it talking.

“You are food.”

“You can’t eat me I don’t taste nice.”

“I’ll be the judge of that.”

Meanwhile Dave had climbed into the nest and said, “Which one of you lucky creatures is going to eat me?”

“I am,” self delusion said, “For I am the best.”

“You always have the first bite,” self centredness said, “I want it for a change.”

“And what about you?” Dave said to the one that had not spoken yet.

“Well if you wouldn’t mind,” self consciousness said

“You all can’t have me so which one of you is most deserving?”

“Me off course,” self delusion said.

“And why is that?” self centredness said, “I’m as good as you any day.”

“What, how do you work that little pearl out?”

“Well it’s obvious isn’t it I’m the favourite after all.”

“Behave I always get fed first.”

“That’s because you shout the loudest,” with a sneer.

“What are you trying to say?”

“I thought it was pretty obvious am I speaking too quickly for you?”

“Why you,” self delusion said and struck it with its beak.

“You’ll pay for that,” self centredness said and returned the favour. Soon they were at it claw and beak and blood was flowing profusely. Dave turned to self consciousness and said, “Quick now’s your chance, they are both weak now, you can easily finished them off.”

Self consciousness did not need to be told twice but rushed straight into the fray.

Meanwhile Odo was still taunting the mother, “I thought that in this world you did not eat flesh?”

“You’ve been misinformed,” the lizard said still clawing wildly, “Now come on out and I will promise you a quick and painless death.”

“And if I don’t”

“It will be slow and painful.”

“No you don’t understand. If I don’t come out you will never catch me. You cannot come in after me and neither can you reach me. So tell me how you intend to kill me.”

“Why you,” and clawed even quicker.

Back at the nest things were coming to a climax. Self delusion lay dead and the other two weren’t far behind it. Still they went at it and even in their weakened state they fought hard and long.

The mother had felt the pain of her child’s death but had carried on not knowing what it was. Odo

still taunted it and kept it occupied until back at the nest self centredness had fallen and self consciousness had been weakened that much Dave easily finished it off. The lizard turned into flames and Odo knew that the job was done.

Dave and Kena made their ways down the mountain and as they did they saw Odo making his way across the plain. By the time they had reached the bottom he had crossed it and on seeing Kena Odo was more than a little shocked. "Is it really you?"

"Can you ever forgive me?"

"Many years ago I did that. I understand the circumstances and I could not really blame you for it."

On seeing that they wanted to be alone for a while Dave tactfully withdrew, "You must have a lot to talk about. I will go ahead and scout the Valley of the Redeemed."

"You mean to enter the valley?" Kena said in surprise.

"Yes," Dave said, "That's what we came here for."

"It's not a place that you want to visit it is a dangerous desolate place."

"It must be done."

"There is only one entrance and it is guarded by two great monsters. You will never get passed them."

"It must be done."

"Very well I will show you the way."

"Then we will wait awhile for I'm sure you and Odo have a lot to catch up on."

"We have all the time in the world to do that," Odo said, "But it is getting on and you will be tired soon. Why not rest awhile and make a fresh start when you return."

"Good idea," and turning to Kena, "These two monsters, what do they look like?"

"Fear some beasts, the first one is a great winged lion and the second a large dog with a rats head. And even if you were to get past these I have heard stories of other fearsome creatures. Seriously it is not a place to be going to."

"We have to," Odo said.

"You said that they were creation's failures if I remember right," Dave said, "So if we work out what the guards are symbolic of then we will be able to defeat them."

"Is that true?" Kena said.

"I'm not sure about the guards," Odo said, "They may have actually been created for that purpose. We will have to actually work out what they are symbolic of and see if there's a flaw."

"I remember that you said that winged meant spiritual although I'm not sure about the lion."

"Generally symbolic of strength, if that's the case its talking about spiritual strength and that is not a flaw. It's something you need to get redeemed."

"Ah then we have a problem."

"Not necessarily," Odo said thinking deeply, "You get spiritual strength through understanding wisdom so I am guessing it will ask us questions."

"Yes I can see that, and the other?"

"A dog with a rat's head, well dog is symbolic of God."

"Sorry?"

"They say that you live in His reflected light also it is faithful and loyal and serves Man."

"An enlightened soul with a purpose to serve but a rat's head?"

"I always thought that a rat was symbolic of understanding," Kena said, "Would that be understanding God then?"

"Yes maybe," Odo said, "Understanding the purpose that you serve."

"What?" Dave said.

"You know love as opposed to pride or anger bearing in mind that God is a state of mind and it is actually the purpose that you serve that makes it."

"Oh right, so do you think that it can also be appeased by answering questions?"

"I would say so one would be questions about enlightenment and the other the purpose that you

serve.”

“Or to put it another way you can only get redemption through spiritual strength and serving the right purpose.”

“Yes that about sums it up.”

With that Dave felt tired and drifted off back to his dimension.

Dave woke up just before the alarm clock and switching it off woke Jane, “Another day, do you want a drink?”

“Please, I’ll give Mary a shout and see you downstairs.”

Dave got up and as he was finishing making the tea Jane came down to him, “So have you got anything planned today?” he said giving her the cup.

“Drop Mary off, nip and see my mum, do a bit of shopping and hopefully get a couple of hours sleep this afternoon.”

“Yes, working tonight.”

“I don’t mind going now, strange isn’t it?”

“No not really, you can see an end to all that torment so it’s not that bad.”

“You’re probably right, I’ve never thought of it like that before.”

“Well if you are lucky and I feel energetic I will write you a poem to celebrate.”

“You write poetry, you kept that quiet.”

“I am a man of many talents,” Dave said with a laugh.

“I’m starting to wonder,” Jane said but the phone stopped her at that, she said, “Whoever would be phoning at this time in the morning?” and went to answer it. She came back after a while and said, “That was Don, he wants to know if I can take him over to see a friend who has some books for him.”

“I think you are starting to see more of him then you are of me, are you going to?”

“May as well, it shouldn’t take too long as his friend doesn’t live that far away.”

“You ought to find him a job. Keep him busy and he won’t be such a pain.”

“I don’t think anyone would employ him. Besides he’s going to Wales soon so he will be out of the way.”

“True, so what do you think he wants the books for, something to read when he gets up there?”

“No he’s going to sell them. He knows a man who has got a book shop.”

“Oh right,” Dave said and finished his drink, “Anyway I had better be going as I don’t want to be late,” gave her a kiss and went to work. The day itself was uneventful and nothing of note happened. The trench was about finished and all the cutting out across the pathways and playground had been done so everything was ready to lay the cables the next day. He even found time to not only write Jane a poem but also another one he called **Death of a Navy**, Want to hear it?

**A dim lit morning on a winter’s day
Saw me standing in a windy sway,
Cutting trenches to the best I’m able
Watching out for the odd stray cable,
Mind is drifting through boredom’s curse
Composing myself I wrote this verse.**

**‘What has become of the great men of the pick
Who excelled us in stamina and never got sick,
Who swung with the fists as much with the axe
And drank like a camel living life to the max,
Were they just a legend, did they really exist?
Or just shadowy figures enhanced by the mist,
For I’ve heard their bravado, they were the best**

Can't see it myself though, not in hard hat and vest.'

So as you can see quite an uneventful day. Dave's journey home was just the same and when he got back Jane was there and waiting. "Did you get much sleep?" he said as she gave him a drink "A couple of hours, you should have seen the books that he got. There were loads of them, it filled the boot."

"It might be a good idea for us to start a library you never know when it comes in handy."

"He said that you can help yourself to a few of his and I could always look out for them at car boots."

"Yes and I'll have a look around the charity shops at the week end."

"The library will have a sale on soon. They always have one about this time of year."

"That's settled then, if nothing else it will fill those two empty book cases."

"Ah there's method in your madness," Jane said with a laugh, "So much for you quest for knowledge."

"I'll read them all eventually. It was more for Mary than anything else."

"Oh right, so anyway this poem, did you manage to write it?"

"Yes, I called it **No Hope Society** do you want to hear it?"

"Of course, it's not often someone writes me poetry."

**Nine o' clock and I'm back at work
Lost in a moment where I often lurk,
A peaceful time, not stress demanding
When nursing was just understanding,
When politics was on T.V.
Not on the wards with you and me,
Guess times have changed and no mistake
A vocation once now just a fake.**

Chorus

**NHS what have you become
Devoid of love just a septic thumb,
Suck in the air, to some good luck
But not to me it's in your arse its stuck.**

**So tell me now, why should I care
When all around me is despair,
When everything comes down to cost
And competence has now been lost,
Where everyone just calls in sick
So all that's left is just the thick,
Back stabbing too it's all the rage
It's time I left, moved on a stage.**

Chorus

**What holds me here I've got to know
Why stagnate when I should grow,
Why comply with this false ideal
That for many years has lost appeal,
Drifting through for a pension book
All hope of purpose long forsook,
What a life I could shed a tear
Why can't I just defeat this fear?**

Chorus

**So what's this fear inside my head?
Why should I stay in this place of dread?
Why do I tolerate what I cannot change?
To sit here moaning is more my range,
No, no more, I've had my fill
So this fear I'll have to kill,
Let's cut the meat and get to the bone
All that it is, is the fear of the unknown.**

After he had finished Jane said, "That sounded good but I did not understand it."

"Sorry?"

"The fear of the unknown, what was that about?"

"Oh it's the subconscious fear of something new. It keeps a lot of people stuck in their situations because they fear that they might find themselves in a worse situation."

"So like if I left my job the next one I do might actually be worse. I don't think anything could be worse than that job I've been doing."

"Yes but you have faced your fear and gave your notice in how many more haven't?"

"True, so that is what has been holding me for all this time then?"

"Basically, if not getting a worse job it manifests as how are you going to support yourself, though to some people that is a genuine fear."

"Well I've got to admit that the money you give me has allayed that somewhat."

"So I have a useful purpose," Dave said with a laugh, "I thought that it was just my good looks that carried me."

"I don't know about that," Jane said laughing, after she stopped she said, "So this fear then, does it manifest in other ways?"

"You think that you are only capable of doing that one job so to all intents and purposes it is the only job in the world. Most of it boils down to lack of confidence and the inability to see the big picture."

"The big picture?"

"The employment situation is pretty buoyant at the moment but a lot of people still think there is a recession."

"Why is that then?"

"It's generally what they read in the papers and see on television. They always seem to talk about job losses and not the new ones that are created. I don't know if it's a conscious thing but they seem to like keeping people in fear."

"Why is that then?"

"Keep the wages down I suppose. They have economists predicting doom and gloom yet they are that short of labour they are taking on vast numbers of migrant labour and trying to get people of the dole and incapacity benefit."

"Funny you should say that I know this woman who though registered blind still had to get a job."

"Oh it will get worse. We are not having so many children nowadays and as the elderly are living longer we will not be able to support them soon."

"Really, that sounds like we are heading for quite a fall then."

"I would say so. You'll be alright though you will be old enough to take early retirement next year."

"That job's one saving grace I feel sorry for the youngsters though, what hope have they got?"

"True, they won't get a state pension and a lot of the private companies have gone zombie."

"Sorry?"

"They are not taking on any new members, no new life."

“So what are they going to do to support themselves, how are they going to manage?”
“Some are buying houses to rent out though I’m guessing that, that is quite a limited market.”
“I suppose so I would say that most people would want to buy their own houses.”
“True, though with prices as they are if you are not on the property ladder you’ll have a job to get on.”
“So I’ve heard.”
“Even that has a detrimental effect on the economy.”
“Really?”
“Yes a lot of people are selling up and moving abroad, buying cheaper houses there and leaving themselves a nice little nest egg to start a new life there.”
“Oh yes I seem to see a lot of programmes about it.”
“I’ve heard that it’s about a quarter of a million each year. Quite a drain when you think about it.”
“True, no it doesn’t look too good at all. Mind you to look on the bright side I could easily get a job when I am ready to return to work.”
“Lucky for some, so are you going around to see your mum before you go to work?”
“Yes and I am dropping Mary off at her father’s so there’s still a bit to do.”
“I bet you’ll be glad not to have to put up with all that crap soon.”
“I won’t miss it if the truth be known. So what are you going to do when I am gone?”
“I might do another poem, I’m starting to get a taste for it and it will pass the long boring hours that I am not with you.”
“Right, you mean you’ll go down the pub more likely.”
“Now would I do that? Besides I’m banned.”

They both had something to eat and after Jane and Mary left Dave settled down and wrote two more poems. I’ve included them for no real reason but I hope you like them.

The first is called

The Legend of Harley Bob

**In smoke filled bars they say his name
In hushed up tones to hide their shame,
For though they’re tough they’re not rough enough
To mess around with Harley Bob.**

**In large dance halls across the town
This biking man had high renown,
For at every hop he was the top
No one could bop like Harley Bob.**

**His bikes a legend in itself
Decked out in gold and chrome a wealth,
He rode it hard, his calling card
He don’t fear danger Harley Bob.**

**With suicide forks and spoke-less wheel
He pulled the girls for they liked the feel,
They held on tight with all their might
No one could ride like Harley Bob.**

**Some people say he don’t exist
To them I say just watch the mist,
For on a cold dark night when the moon is slight
You might just meet with Harley Bob.**

On a personal note I actually wrote that for a joiner called Martin who I had worked with on a couple of sites. He was a dry humoured man who came out with one of the best lines I have ever heard. He went up to one of the painters on the site and said, "Couldn't you get a trade when you left school?" Deep respect man. Now the story behind the poem was that at the time I had a Honda low-rider and he used to pretend he had a Harley Davidson and knock around with a gang whose members included Harley Bob and a Mr. Midnight. Martin Wain I give you immortality (pretentious of what). Now the second poem is not personal but a general indictment. I called it

Spoilt Bastard

**Mummy buy me this for everyones' got one
Its only fifty quid, see it's not a con,
It's going to make me popular so it must be cheap
Go on mummy buy it and from me you'll hear no peep.**

**Mummy what is this, you know I don't like that
You know I can't eat this it's a load of crap,
I think that you're a bad mummy giving me this food
You'd better make me something else or I'll get rather rude.**

**Mummy clear this up it looks a real mess
Come on get a move on I've got to iron my dress,
You know I've got a part on so please for goodness sake
Hurry up and tidy up and don't forget my cake.**

**Mummy you're no good Sally's mother is much better
You don't do anything for me and she's a real go getter,
She buys her everything and she's even got a dad
I reckon that it's your fault I turned out this bad.**

Dave put the poems away once he had written them and though he had no useful purpose for them he reasoned that one day he might. He decided that he would write a few more and try to get a collection of them. Once he had it he was not sure what he would do with it. He could either try and get them published or even go on tour because he had heard of pubs and clubs that sometimes held poetry nights. That would be a long time off he reasoned for he would not get too far with only four of them. It gave him something to think about as he went to sleep though.

Chapter 5.

Dave woke up to find Odo and Kena reminiscing about times gone by. They were not really good memories and from what he had heard they sounded like dangerous times. On seeing him stir though they stopped and Odo said, "So the big day then the Valley of the Redeemed. Soon you'll be finished in this world but I have bad news to tell you my friend."

"Really, what's that then?"

"It is my destiny to stay in this world with Kena."

"Well that's good isn't it?"

"For me yes but it means that I cannot guide you in the next world that you travel."

"Oh right I see."

"But fear not they are good people and you will make other friends. Besides you can come and visit us soon."

"Yes," Dave said picking up, "I'll look forward to that."

"Anyway there's work to be done and a purpose to be served." Both Dave and Kena got up and Kena took them to the entrance. The winged lion saw their approach and stopping them said, "You

have no purpose here. Go back to where you came from this is a restricted area.”

“We seek entrance to the valley,” Dave said.

“To what purpose?”

“We have come for the Ring of Purity.”

“Fair enough, you know that you must be tested?”

“I guessed.”

“And failure equates with death.”

“I understand.”

“Very well you have six questions to answer, three from me and three from my friend. You have to answer all of them or you fail. Do you accept the terms?”

“I do.”

“Your first question, what is reality?”

“A state of mind built on imagination.”

“Good, and the next question goes to one of your friends. Which one of you wants to take it?”

“I will,” Odo said, “If that’s alright with you Kena?”

“Sure be my guest.”

“Fair enough,” the lion said, “What is the meaning of life?”

“Purification of the soul and expansion of the spiritual consciousness to achieve our purpose and be at one with the universe, our purpose being our divinity and the universe our balance.”

“Good, finally then, what are the five states of grace?”

Kena thought awhile and said, “They are instinct, intellect, spiritual negative, spiritual positive and divine.”

With that the lion disappeared and the mutant dog took over, “So you have passed the first part. I think you will find the next part a little harder. Same terms in the same order. Question one, what is the triad of purpose?”

Dave thought back and said, “Love pride and anger.”

“Very well, what is the essence of purpose?”

Odo thought for a moment and said, “The aim of my purpose’s direction is love for that is the essence of my being.”

“Finally question three, what is the trinity?”

Kena thought and then said, “My Spirit is my father and where once it is anger it is now love which is patient understanding. My Soul is my mother, my understanding through experience and I am my purpose and that is my faith, trust and confidence.”

With that the animal disappeared and they moved forward but much to Odo and Kena’s horror they found that there was an invisible wall that blocked their progress and only Dave could get through.

“What has happened?” Dave said in surprise.

“I should have realised,” Odo said, “I’m sorry Dave but it looks like you are on your own.”

“Realised what?”

“Both Kena and me have already been redeemed, we cannot enter. You will be alright though Dave just work out the symbols that is all you have to do.”

“But I’m no good at symbols I don’t know the first thing about them.”

“Just listen to your inner knowing it will never lead you astray.”

Dave tried to get back but found that the invisible wall that had stopped Odo and Kena getting in also stopped him from getting back out. Reluctantly he turned and went into the valley. He hid behind a large boulder and had a look around the place to try and ascertain it. It was a large barren place speckled with boulders though in the middle looking out of place was a large white stoned building. He stayed awhile looking for signs of life and debating what he was going to do. His eyes lit on the temple once more and much to his surprise he saw it was on fire. It was an intense vibrant flame that disappeared virtually as soon as it started and a large bird appeared and flew high into the sky.

“The Pheonix,” a voice inside him said, “Another soul redeemed.”
 “Are you my inner knowing?” Dave said in surprise.
 “I am though you don’t need to speak.”
 “Fair enough,” Dave thought, “So what do you know about the creatures of the valley?”
 “Only that there are seven in number and that they know you are here.”
 “Really.”
 “They lie in wait so be careful.”
 “So what must I do?”
 “You must defeat them and then take the Ring of Purity. With that you may enter the underworld.”
 “I’m not sure that I want to do that, I can see no benefit from it.”
 “There is somebody that waits for you there they are in need of your help.”
 “Really, who is it?”
 “You will find out when you get there now look to your left.”
 Dave did as he was told and saw a strange creature dart from behind one of the boulders and run to another one. It was a large black cat with wings and it was making its way to Dave using the boulders as cover.
 “So what is it symbolic of?” Dave thought.
 “Well black is negative.”
 “Right but what is the cat actually symbolic of?”
 “Your turn, you have to grow.”
 “But I haven’t a clue.”
 “What do you know about cats?”
 “I don’t know,” Dave said getting slightly flustered.
 “Think”
 Dave thought awhile and said, “They are very independent animals.”
 “Good, or in other words?”
 “Free will,” Dave said upon realisation.
 “So a negative will, and the wings?”
 “Spiritual?”
 “Good,” the voice said as they watched the cat dark to another rock, “And putting it all together?”
 “A negative will cannot be spiritual,” Dave said and at that moment the cat that had been running to a nearer rock disappeared.
 “A negative will cannot be spiritual as it is composed of Earthly desires, one down and six more to go. Keep your eyes open and we will wait for the next one.”
 “Fair enough. Tell me more about the negative will whilst we wait though for I don’t know much about it. I thought that it was the Self that was clouded with Earthly desire.”
 “The Self is clouded by Earthly desire. The will is actually a manifestation of the Self so the negative will is all the Earthly desires manifested.”
 “Oh right, and the positive will, would that be the spiritual will?”
 “That’s right this evolves as the negative will diminishes.”
 “I think I can see another one over behind that far rock. I saw movement but I can’t quite work out what it is.”
 “Stick with it when it gets a bit nearer you’ll see better.”
 “Right,” Dave thought and after a while the creature darted to a nearer rock and Dave thought, “I’m not sure, it looks a bit like a wolf.”
 “It will be a wolf crossed with something else then. Do you know what a wolf is symbolic of?”
 “Not really.”
 “What do you know about it?”
 “Not much, isn’t it supposed to be a cunning animal?”
 “Well it is but it is also a wild dog.”

“A wild dog,” Dave thought awhile, “Well a dog is symbolic of God, the state of mind.”
 “Good and this state of mind, what does it turn you into?”
 “More caring,” Dave thought, just guessing.
 “That’s one aspect but it also turns you into a teacher, if not by words then by your actions.”
 “I did not know that.”
 “Yes you have to spread the word for your light is there for all to see. It sort of attracts people to you and even if you don’t do it consciously it just comes naturally to you.”
 “Right, and being wild?”
 “You do not live in the world of Man but a more natural lifestyle, so what is a wolf?”
 “A spiritual teacher.”
 “Good now watch him as he’s going to make his move,” and sure enough the creature darted to behind another rock.
 “No I didn’t quite catch it. It looks like his head is not the head of a wolf though.”
 “And what does that mean?”
 “I’m not sure.”
 “What’s inside the head then?” the voice said giving him a clue.
 “The brain, it’s what makes the decisions. Is it what leads its thinking?”
 “Yes find out what the head is and this is quickly sorted.”
 “Right,” Dave thought and studied the rock intently. After awhile the creature made its move and got close enough for Dave to see that it was. “It’s a monkey.”
 “And what’s that symbolic of?”
 “I’m not sure, would it be primitive man as we are supposed to be descended from the apes.”
 “Good, now primitive man, what sort of man was he?”
 “I don’t really know, wasn’t he a cave man of some sort I heard.”
 “Well think of Adam and Eve if that’s any help, before they left the garden.”
 “Before they had free will you mean, does that mean that they were in instinctive mode then?”
 “Good so putting all that lot together what does it tell you?”
 “A spiritual teacher cannot be lead by primitive instinct.”
 The creature was in open running between two rocks when it disappeared.
 “That’s another one down,” the voice said.
 “I thought that to become a spiritual teacher you had to lose your primitive instinct?”
 “You do but there are a lot of spiritual teachers that only have the wisdom without its true understanding and so are still motivated by Earthly desires and carnal pleasures. They are not in balance so basically they talk the talk but don’t walk the walk.”
 “Right and is the monkey more to do with carnal pleasures than Earthly desires?”
 “That’s right a magpie with its penchant for collecting things would be symbolic of Earthly desires.”
 “So if I see a wolf’s body with a magpies head I will know what to say, a spiritual teacher cannot be led by Earthly desires.”
 “Good.”
 “There’s another one, just moved behind that far boulder to the right.”
 “Recognise anything?”
 “Too far away at the moment but the body looks a little too bulky to be a wolf.”
 “Keep your eye on it, it’s just about to move,” and sure enough the creature darted to a rock slightly nearer to them.”
 “I’m not sure. It looks a little like a bear but at that distance I can’t really say.”
 “We’ll take it as a bear then, we can always re-evaluate it if it’s not.”
 “Fair enough, so what is a bear symbolic of?”
 “You tell me.”
 “Oh, the only thing I really know about it is that it hibernates.”

“That will get us far,” the voice said with a laugh, “Would you say that the bear is a possessive animal?”

“I don’t know to tell you the truth. I really don’t know much about them.”

“Well it is symbolic of possessiveness. It’s more to do with emotional attachment than material things otherwise it would have been a magpie’s body.”

“We did something about emotional attachment I think but I don’t really know whether it was a good or bad thing.”

“Initially its good but as you evolve it tends to cloud your judgement for it tends to bring about a thing called favouritism.”

“Oh yes I can see that, so what actually is it, in essence I mean?”

“It’s the effects of one of the natural laws but also the mind has to attach itself to things to give it, its direction. These things are the purpose that it serves.”

“Yes, so it has always been programmed to serve a purpose then?”

“That’s right. Its getting ready to move so keep your eyes peeled.” The creature darted to a nearer rock and Dave thought, “Yes it’s definitely a bears body but I cannot make out its head, it’s definitely not a bear though.”

“Right so we know that it’s about emotional attachment we just have to find out what leads its thinking and that’s another one down.”

“Fair enough, it looks like it’s going to make its move again.”

“It will be close enough to see it properly soon,” the voice said as the creature moved to a nearer rock.

“I’m not sure but I think it looks like a dog or could be a wolf.”

“We’ll take it as a wolf then, there’s really not that much between them.”

“A spiritual leader then, though thinking about it shouldn’t the body be a wolf?”

“Normally but this is more to do with the mind than the body.”

“Oh right so it’s more to do with mental outlook as opposed to physical reality.”

“Yes carnal pleasures are of the flesh that is why the last one had a wolf’s body.”

“So would the answer be that a spiritual leader must not have emotional attachment?” Dave thought and the creature disappeared whilst on the move.

“Got it.”

“What, no attachment at all?”

“Not whilst teaching. He may have attachments but he should not let them interfere with his work.”

“I was going to say.”

“We’re not that cruel, the love of a woman is the most uplifting thing there is, no it’s highly recommended. Anyway that far rock to you left,” and Dave looked to see a figure dart from one rock to another.

“It’s quick, it was just a blur.”

“Stay with it, it’s about to go again,” and sure enough the creature moved again.

“I’m not sure, I think it’s got a body like a dog but its tail is too bushy.”

“And what animal has a bushy tail?”

“A fox?”

“Good, which is symbolic of?”

“Cunning.”

“No it’s more to do with insight.”

“The ability to look within, how does that actually equate with a fox?”

“That’s what gives it, its cunning. When you can look inside situations it gives you the edge. Plus on a deeper level, one you have not come across yet, it means the word seeing insight.”

“Oh right, it’s moved again. Hang on it looks like it has the head of a bird.”

“Right, which type of bird?”

“I can’t quite make it out yet, is it important?”

“Well yes, if it was the head of a dove it would be symbolic of love, a raven selfishness. There are many types of birds and each symbolises something different.”

“I should have realised, we touched on it in the last world.”

“Anyway it’s on the move again and getting closer, soon you’ll know for certain.”

“I would say that it is the head of the magpie, didn’t you say that was avariciousness?”

“That’s right.”

“And if you are avaricious does that mean that you can’t have insight?” Dave said and with that the creature disappeared.

“Obviously not judging by that,” the voice said with a laugh.

“But I don’t understand, how could one affect the other, it doesn’t seem to equate.”

“With avarice you only see what’s in front of you, that’s the little picture.”

“Funny you should say that I think I can actually relate to that.”

“Good wisdom through experience, so what happened then?”

“I was labouring on a building site. They were paying me only a low wage but I was working for an employment agency so that was expected I guess.”

“Go on.”

“Well I had to phone them up about something, I forget what now, and I happened to say that I was a joiner by trade. The man on the other end of the phone, well he started on about more money and I sort of got the picture I was chattel, just there to earn him a living.”

“Why, because he was offering you more money, that does not sound right.”

“No,” Dave thought with a laugh, “No it was not what he could pay me, it was more what he could charge for my services. I found out later that as a labourer, although I was only getting £6 an hour at the time, they were charging the firm I was working at £18 an hour.”

“And a joiner would get more I suppose, that must have been pretty disheartening for you?”

“Not the words I would use,” Dave thought with a laugh, “I left not long afterwards.”

“I’ll bet. Anyway a quick recap then. Avarice blinds you to the big picture and it’s only by seeing the big picture do you get insight.”

“Why is that then?”

“Seeing the big picture means looking beyond reality seen.”

“Oh right, and that gives you insight?”

“Well it’s not quite as simple as that. Once you start to look beyond reality seen fate works in your favour so if there is anything you need to know it somehow gets revealed to you. Not only that you seem to know the motivational force behind the people that you are dealing with so you are given quite an advantage.”

“You know I sort of recognise that. Many a time I have bumped into someone and they have given me information that proved useful to me at a later time.”

“You’ll be surprised and notice though how you also knew that the man on the phone was motivated by avarice.”

“Well it was blatant,” Dave thought with a laugh, “But I understand what you are saying because I can think of other occasions that were more subtle.”

“Good, I think there’s something else on the move out there.”

“Where?”

“Far rock to your left, keep your eye on it and it will soon reveal itself to you.”

Dave did as he was told and saw a large creature dart out and make its way to a closer rock. “I see it but I can’t make it out as yet,” it moved again and much to Dave’s joy it was a winged pig, “I know this one, Odo explained it to me although I never thought it would be here.”

“So what is it then?”

“It’s a winged pig.”

“And the symbolism?”

“Well a pig symbolises gluttony, a character flaw that you have to get rid of before you can truly be

spiritual.”

“And so the flaw is?”

“You can’t be truly spiritual whilst you have gluttony in your heart,” and the wing pig disappeared.

“Good, so tell me why not then?”

“Well it goes against the Law of Humility and the ultimate truth.”

“Which is?”

“If you take more than you need somebody has to go without.

“Very good, well remembered. You are coming on remarkably well.”

“Er thanks.”

“Anyway don’t get too complacent there will be another one coming along soon.”

“Right,” Dave thought and scanned the area, “There’s just two left and after that?”

“Go into the temple and see the Ring Master.”

“Oh, so it’s not over then?”

“Yes, he will be your guide through the underworld. Once these creatures are defeated you have accomplished your task so there will be no more enemies left to deal with.”

“Good you had me worried then, so what actually is the Ring Master?”

“He’s a man the same as you, well not quite the same.”

“What?”

“You’ll soon find out,” the voice said mysteriously, “But you have two more to deal with so keep your wits about you.”

“They’re taking their time I thought they’d be on their way by now.”

“I don’t think they were expecting the last one to fall so quickly. They may be reassessing the situation.”

“In what way?”

“Well there’s only two left they might decide to go together.”

“Oh,” Dave said nervously.

“No you’re alright I can only see one of them.”

“Where?”

“To your right that farthest rock.”

“Yes I see, it, and again,” as the creature ran to a nearer rock.

“Can you make it out yet?”

“No it’s going too quickly, look there it goes again.”

“Any clearer?”

“I’m not sure but I think it’s got the body of a dragon, as for the head, it’s too far away.”

“And the dragon, what is it symbolic of?”

“Spiritual consciousness I guess. That’s what I think Sila said anyway.”

“It is in a way but what creates spiritual consciousness and what is it in essence?”

“Spiritual wisdom.”

“That’s right and you can take it as read that it will not be a dragon’s head. Watch it, it’s about to move again.”

The creature darted to another rock and still Dave could not see it clear enough for recognition. The next rock though was different, “It looks like a slug.”

“And what is a slug symbolic of?”

“Sloth?”

“Good so what does that tell you?”

“You can’t get spiritual wisdom with sloth leading the thinking,” Dave said and the creature disappeared.

“So why is that?”

“I’m not sure, does it take hard work to get it or something like that.”

“Not quite,” the voice said with a laugh, “Though understanding can be hard work sometimes.”

“Er right.”

“A major hurdle to getting enlightenment is sloth, mental sloth I am talking about, that’s why it was its head not its body.”

“So why is that then?”

“It cannot cope with the discipline that the mind needs before it can achieve it. It is quite an arduous path that tests all your mental powers for its only by testing them do they grow.”

“Right, but how does sloth actually work then?”

“It doesn’t, that’s why it’s called sloth,” the voice said with a laugh, “No it creates trivial problems as obstacles and hampers progress by telling you you’ve done enough for you know all that is worth knowing. It does not like the idea of going around ground already covered for it does not believe in re-assessment which is a major part of spiritual growth.”

“Sounds like quite an ardent foe.”

“It can be and mixed with a little pride it makes quite a potent brew.”

“I’ll bet, so why is re-assessment such a major part of spiritual growth then?”

“That sounds like sloth talking.”

“No, I was just interested.”

“I was only joking. No you have to re-assess things to put them in a new light and so get a deeper understanding.”

“Er right.”

“I guess I had better elaborate. The Great Spirit only reveals to you what you are ready to hear when you are ready to hear it. Let’s take God as an example.”

“The enlightened soul or the old man in Heaven,” Dave said starting to realise a little.

“That’s right. Take Genesis at face value and he is some sort of vengeful figure that looks after a chosen few as long as they are prepared to adore Him.”

“Right.”

“Now look deeper and it says that there is an outside force beyond reality seen that influences your life. That is the seed and from it you grow in spiritual awareness.”

“Yes I can see that when you put it like that but how do you get to an enlightened soul from that?”

“By looking deeper once again the more you understand this outside force the more the seed grows until soon that outside force turns into a force that is inside you. This is done through spiritual wisdom or knowledge of the divine. Now as you grow in understanding of this knowledge you evolve towards your purpose and then you become your purpose. The enlightened soul is the God that’s within you and you are the purpose so you serve.”

“Right and at any place along the way you could stop and think you’ve done enough.”

“True, anyway there’s movement up to the left.”

Dave looked to the left and thought, “Seen it, can’t quite make it out but I can see that it’s black.”

“Negative, right.”

The figure darted once more and Dave thought, “I’m not sure but it looks like a rabbit. I thought that was symbolic of fertility.”

“Normally but its black.”

“Negative fertility?”

“Which is?”

“Lechery?”

“Good, keep your eyes open and see what sort of head it has.”

The creature darted to a closer rock and still Dave could not make out what it was. Again it darted and still no luck. The third time though he recognised it, “It’s a rat, I thought that, that symbolised understanding.”

“It does, so what does that tell you?”

“You can’t get true understanding with lechery in your heart.” And with that the creature disappeared, “Why is that then?”

“I will tell you as we walk to the temple,” the voice said so Dave got up and started walking. “Right,” the voice said, “Lechery is the craving for carnal pleasure and that is its only understanding. This is a throw back from our instinctive days when to give your offspring the best chance of survival meant producing as many as possible in the hope that some would reach maturity. To enforce this, the act of sex was made pleasurable so it would be tried again and again with obvious results. Now the drive to reproduce still takes over people and a lot of them cannot shake it.”

“Well I’ve heard that men are supposed to think about sex every thirty seconds.”

“I don’t know about that,” the voice said with a laugh, “Anyway whilst you have this desire it clouds your judgement to the extent that, that is all you see. To get true understanding you have to be able to see behind the shell of outward physical appearance and with lechery in your heart that will never happen.”

“Yes I can understand that.”

“Good and just in time,” as they entered the temple. It was a large ornate place that was adorned with statues of Greek Gods and Goddesses. Dave walked forward and saw an altar in the middle and on it was a gold box. He opened the box and found a simple brass ring, “The Ring of Purity,” he said in surprise.

“Were you expecting something a little more elaborate?” a voice said behind him almost making him jump. He turned around and the figure that he saw made him grow cold. It was the grim reaper, death itself. He stood awhile trying to assess his thoughts until the voice said, “He won’t harm you,” which seemed to take away his fear.

“Well yes,” Dave said, “Judging by the surroundings.

“Ah the trappings of life,” Death said, “But when you get right down to it, what is life?”

“Evolution?”

“Good, mind you, you would not have got this far if you weren’t. You must be David Jessel.”

“That’s right,” Dave said wondering how he knew.

“This is your world and I am your death, do you want to see it?”

“What?”

“Your death, do you want to see it?”

“Not really, I think that some things are best left hidden.”

“Well I want to see it,” the voice said much to Dave’s horror.

“Shut up.” Dave thought, “It’s my death not yours.”

“Go on, what’s the matter with you. You are in the Valley of the Redeemed surely you don’t fear death anymore?”

“Alright, alright I suppose I had better.”

“It has to be done,” Death said and with that the wall in front of Dave turned into a screen and he saw himself sitting on a settee at home. He looked restless and agitated and was trying to write something down but seemed to be changing his mind half way through, scrapping it and starting again. On and on this continued until he just seemed to give up, sit back and say ‘meet my maker’. With that the screen turned back into a wall. “See it wasn’t that bad was it?”

“Was that it then?”

“Pretty much so.”

“Hold on,” Dave said on recognition, “We’re talking about a mental death aren’t we.”

“That’s right.”

“I should have realised, so when is it going to happen then?”

“Very soon, you have already redeemed yourself in this world it just takes a little time to sink in.”

“You had me going then, I thought that you were going to show me a physical death.”

“That’s not death that’s just casting off a shell. The only real death is the death of your old self but even that gets reformed so it isn’t really death as such.”

“Oh, well that’s cheered me up.”

“You need not worry, now whilst you are here there is someone that wants to see you.”

“That’s right.”

“Well put the ring on then follow me,” and Dave did as he was bid. They went over to a door that had appeared from nowhere and Death opened it and Dave could see that it led to a well lit room that had a flight of stairs descending into darkness. They walked down the stairs and entered a dim lit room and lingered awhile so Dave’s eyes could adjust to the darkness. When they finally did he saw that the room was completely empty.

“Why have we stopped,” Dave said in surprise, “There is nothing here to see.”

“We are just getting you acclimatized, you are about to enter another world, a world that is totally different to anything you have seen before.”

“Right, so what can I expect to see then?”

“Well normally you would be going out where you’ve come in so first I had better explain how it works.”

“Sounds good to me.”

“The underworld is actually just a holding world. We are only here to look after the Souls whilst they purify themselves of their last lifetime once purified they go up to the light to be reformed.”

“What does that actually involve, some sort of judgement?”

“Not a judgement as such more of a reassessment than anything else. Your previous actions are taken into account and you next time on Earth moulded by them. Basically you sow the seeds in one lifetime and reap the consequences in the next.”

“So if you are rich one life time you’ll be poor the next.”

“Well yes but there’s a little more to it than that you actually try to put yourself in a life that will give you more chance of spiritual growth so that is also in the equation. Any growth that happens in your previous life comes forward to the next though as this is actually your Soul you probably won’t be conscious of it at first.”

“And the character flaws do the ones you defeat in one lifetime stay defeated or do they come back into the next life to be defeated again?”

“Once they are defeated that’s it but situations that will help you defeat the rest are also included in the assessment.”

“Sounds like quite a complicated assessment and the knowledge that you bring forward with you, is it always re-awakened?”

“Not always, it might lie dormant a lifetime but generally speaking the more evolved you are the more chance you have of re-awakening your Self.”

“Right, I suppose that the society you are born into can have quite an effect on this?”

“Undoubtedly, if you are born into a close minded society you don’t really get much chance at all. We have to work around the world and I’m afraid that the way it’s turning it’s getting harder to do.”

“I can imagine, so this re-assessment then, who actually makes it?”

“The Soul with the guidance of the Great Spirit.”

“I have heard that term before, what actually is it?”

“The collective conscious, otherwise called the light.”

“Oh right so as the Soul is purified of its last life it goes straight to the light for re-assessment and then comes back to Earth for new opportunities of growth and purification.”

“Basically, anyway,” and a door appeared in one of the walls, “Go through that door and I will see you when you get back.”

Dave walked through the door and much to his surprise found himself back in the street that he used to live when he was a child. It was slightly different to how he remembered it though. There were no double yellow lines on the road and only two or three cars where he had always remembered it as a busy main street. The cars themselves were of old design and the year 1960 came into his head. As he walked down the pavement to the house that he used to live he saw a figure that he vaguely remembered as a child. It was his parish priest yet he had never seen him looking that young for he

had always remembered him as elderly yet he was seeing him in his middle ages. "Morning," Father Murphy said, although he did not recognise him he was just being civil.

"Morning," Dave said returning the favour. Dave walked on and came to see a woman in her early thirties standing outside the door of his old house, "Mum, is that you?"

"Need you ask," she said with a smile.

"I'm lost for words I don't know what to say. Er why aren't you in the light, you died twenty years ago."

"It is you that holds me here I found out long ago that this was an illusion."

"So what's keeping you then?"

"It's your grief, that's what holds me."

"I thought that I had dealt with it, do you mean to tell me that I haven't?"

"Obviously not."

"So how can I do it?"

"Talk to me awhile, see that I still live and then you will know that death was not the end of my life."

"Sure, so er how are you?"

"I'm very well, all my illnesses have gone and along with it the pain."

Dave's mother in the last years of her life had not been a well woman. She had, had a myriad of ailments that had made her life, if not hell then very close to it. She had needed the aid of a walking stick for the last 20 years so to Dave that was basically most of the time he had known her.

"I'm glad you seemed to suffer a lot in the last stages."

His mother had, had three heart attacks in her last years though what actually killed her was acute kidney failure after a heart attack brought about by an asthma attack.

"Yes it came as a welcome relief in the end I can tell you."

"So what was it all for, the pain I mean, why all the suffering?"

"That's life I guess, if there was any value to it I've yet to find out but I'm thinking a lot of it was to do with my own actions."

"Sorry?"

"I left having a family a little late and bringing up a large family was quite a struggle, it all took it out on my health."

"So you think that it was due to circumstances?"

"Maybe, I won't really know for sure until I see the big picture."

"True, I would say that you must be quite evolved though if that's any help."

"Really, how do you work that out?"

"Well you chose nursing, quite a caring profession and from what I remember of your life it was pretty selfless."

"It had to be," she said laughing, "Finances dictated it. I felt sorry that I could not give you what the other families got though that was something I regretted."

"Don't I turned into a better person for it and besides I remember you saying it was the struggles of life that gave you character, that was something I never forgot."

"Really I said that, I must have been deeper than I thought."

"You told me that and many other things. No I would say that you must have had some good understanding."

"Well I had good faith in God."

"Ah, that's not really the path that I followed."

"Yes," she said with a laugh, "I noticed that you stopped going to mass not long after I passed over."

"I did not see the point."

"It's just a place where like minded people gather. God is not something that's preached from the pulpit it's something that's inside you that gives you emotional strength to deal with the struggles of

life.”

“Oh I did not realise that you knew that.”

“Faith comes more through Soul experience it does not come from sermons although they have their place. No it’s the ability to believe in life after death that counts. All the struggles of life come to nothing if you believe that there is more to life than life itself.”

“And you understood all that?”

“Not at first but over time. Maybe the struggles had their place then for they seemed to have given me a certain amount of insight.”

“Perhaps you are right, and your next life, have you decided on it?”

“I didn’t know that I had a choice, are we talking about re-incarnation?”

“Yes,” Dave said in surprise, “What did you think was going to happen?”

“Oh, I thought this was purgatory.”

“I suppose that it is in a way but there is no heaven or hell to go to, you just go up for assessment for your next life.”

“I never realised that, how do you know this?”

“Death told me, come back with me it’s time to move on.”

“I don’t know how.”

“Just follow me,” Dave said and it was with a little reluctance that she agreed. Dave took her back down the street and they soon came across the door. They went through it and came face to face with Death.

“All done,” he said, “Good.” He took Dave’s mother up the stairs and after awhile came back again,

“She has moved on, thank you for your help.”

“Me, I thought I was the hindrance.”

“No it was her fear that held her here but now it has gone she can move on.”

“So it was not my grief then, that’s a relief I can tell you.”

“Your work is done now.”

“Then I can go back?”

“Just a couple of people to see,” and took him back up the stairs. Dave left him and walked the short distance across the valley to be reunited with Odo and Kena. “All done then?” Odo said, “How do you feel?”

“Strange,” and told them about his meeting with his mother.

“You’ll need time to come to terms with that but you will gain great strength from it believe me.

Anyway we have a long walk ahead, did you manage to get the ring?”

“Yes,” and showed it to him.

“Good, now don’t forget that you promised it to Dinga.”

“I will call and see him on the way back.”

“And did you see the Pheonix?”

“It left from the temple, the temple seemed to catch fire just before hand.”

“Like now,” Odo said and pointed to the temple. Dave turned to see it aflame and then a Pheonix arise and take to the sky.

“A purified soul,” Dave said and wished his mother farewell quietly to himself.

“We’ve a long walk ahead of us,” Odo said, “But hopefully we will quickly see Sila,”

“Sila?” Kena said

“She’s a dragon she said that she would give us a lift across the desert.”

“Oh, well that should save time.”

“So what are your plans?” Dave said.

“Just find ourselves again,” Kena said, “And then who knows, Odo said that he will take me to all of the worlds of creation when I am ready.”

“Good, give my regards to Kaylie when you see him.”

“Er sure, who is he?”

“He’s a gnome from the Land of Creative Formation,” and turning to Odo, “What’s the next world I am to travel?”

“It is called the Land of Relative Definition, it is a world of Water.”

“So that’s Earth, Fire and then Water and what are the two worlds it encloses?”

“The land of ice and fog and the land of the giants, you should like it there.”

“I’m not sure about that, the land of the giants I don’t like the sound of that.”

“They’re friendly people they represent mental growth whilst the land of ice and fog represents emotional separation.”

“Oh, and these giants, are they big?”

“Giant,” Odo said with a laugh, “No they are about seven feet tall on average, you might get some at nine feet but they don’t grow much bigger than that.”

They had crossed the valley of the scorpion by then and were just entering the Land of the Molten Men.

“I won’t be sorry to see the back of this place,” Kena said, “Anyway Odo you mentioned the land of ice and fog, what lives there?”

“Undines.”

“What are they?” Dave said.

“Small creatures about the size of gnomes they have fins where fairies have wings.”

“Are they friendly too?”

“Sure, when you enter the world you must go and see King Dine and he will guide you and tell you what’s expected.”

“Fair enough.” They had crossed the Land of the Molten Men and entered the desert. Their eyes scanned the sky for signs of Sila but there was no joy.

“It looks like we are walking,” Odo said, “Now we can only go in two journeys as she can’t carry us all.”

“Yes I was thinking that, what’s going to happen then?”

“I was going to suggest that you ask her to take you to Dinga. You can give him the ring and then ask her to take you to see King Sepi so you can tell him that you have seen the Pheonix.”

“That sounds good but what about you and Kena?”

“I was just going to ask her to drop us off at the other side of the desert. I was then going to show Kena the world on foot.”

“On foot!”

“Yes we prefer to walk but I’m guessing that now you have finished you’ll want to tie up all the loose ends pretty quickly and get ready for your next world.”

“I suppose so and I will see you again before I go back to reality?”

“No we part company but don’t worry we will see you again.”

“Good I wouldn’t like to think that this will be the last time I saw you.”

“No chance of that I’m afraid we’ll be bumping into each other quite often. Anyway that looks like Sila in the distance.”

“You two may as well go first she’ll be quickly back for me.”

“Well if you don’t mind,” Odo said as Sila landed. They said their goodbyes and Sila quickly left again. As Dave waited he thought about his mother with a twinge of sadness. It did not last for long though and instead he just took comfort from the fact that he had seen her again. He smiled to himself as childhood memories came to the fore, good memories, ones that he took great joy from. Yes his life had not been that bad once he had got his mind out of the negativity. He was lost in a moment so he nearly jumped when a voice said, “Are you planning to walk all the way?”

He looked up to see Sila. “You’re back early I thought you would have been miles away.”

“And you looked like you were.”

“Sorry yes, my mind was on other things.”

“So where do you want me to take you to,” and Dave told her about King Sepi and Dinga. “Well I

could take you to Sepi first, get it out of the way.”

“Fair enough,” and soon they were there. King Sepi called King Jumo of the fireflies and King Lima of the moths and Dave told them what he had saw thus ending the war and bringing peace to the land. Next Sila took him to see Dinga who was more than pleased to see him, “I never thought that I would see you again,” he said.

“And baring gifts,” Dave said and gave him the brass ring.

“So this is it,” Dinga said in awe, “And after all this time I can at last go home.”

“You have family?” Sila said.

“Yes although it is many years since I last saw them.”

“You must miss them. I, too have a sister but she lives in the Land of Relative Definition.”

“I’m going there next,” Dave said

“Really, could you go and say hello to her from me, her name is Cula.”

“Sure, any messages?”

“Yes tell her that I’m sorry, she will understand what I mean.”

“Fair enough.”

“You are most welcome to come and stay with my family,” Dinga said, “They are good people and can fly like you.”

“Well I must admit that I have been getting lonely of late,” Sila said, “How is it that they can fly, are you of fairy stock?”

“No,” Dinga said with a laugh, “I am not of their kind, they are vultures.”

“Really, are you related to Kunba the bold?”

“That is my adopted father, do you know him then?”

“Yes, he has mentioned you although I was expecting to see a vulture.”

“He has mentioned me?”

“Yes he misses you dearly and is sorry that they teased you.”

“Well I shall see him soon enough. Yes you are more than welcome to come with me.”

“Then that’s sorted,” Sila said and turning to Dave, “We will see you again?”

“Many times,” Dave said and tiredness quickly took him.

Part 3

The Land of Relative Definition

Her wants to keep me in ignorance

Or else she'll lead me on a dance,

With hope aspiring to advance

Though come to aid it's left to chance.

Chapter 1.

Three months had passed by and Dave's job was duly finished. Instead of taking things a little easier though he decided to revamp Jane's house. Gone were the standard magnolia walls, the trade mark of new buildings and in their place were white, pastel shades of yellow and purple and vibrant paprika for the kitchen. The outside too found itself gloss white and when all that was finished Dave put laminated flooring in all the down-stair rooms with the exception of the toilet where he lay down lino which he had liberated from the first site he had worked on.

Jane too had also been busy. With her job finishing she took to the task of caring for her mother with great gusto. She would go around four times a day, seven days a week for now Steve was rarely coming over at weekends. Even the odd occasion that he did she still had to go round for his deteriorating health made him not an asset but a hindrance and it was even getting to the stage that she was also having to look after him. Jane still clung to the hope that he would get better but from what she had told Dave about his pain and his reluctance to see anyone about it Dave guessed that it might actually be serious. She had took to phoning her mother at 8.45 every night to make sure that she was alright and on weekends she would always ask if he had come and generally be disappointed. Her sister too was apt to give her a hard time phoning her up with trivial fault finding to try and justify to herself that she actually cared for her mother and took an interest in her well being. Life for Jane was like an out of the frying pan and into the fire situation and Dave could see that it was starting to affect her and interfere with the relationship that she had with her mother. He could do little though, only live in the hope that she might come to her senses and see the whole situation for what it was. Her mother would need an organised care plan. One that cost money and one which Natalie would not even contemplate for she could see a better use for it. She had condemned her mother to a lonely, insular life and thought that taking her mother on holiday now and again would compensate for it. Well that might be a little unkind for Dave thought it more of an excuse for her and her friends to have a free holiday at her mother's expense but even then there was no holiday for Jane as she still had to look after her mother's two dogs.

Jane had also attracted another lost cause along the way; the mother of a friend of Mary's who Jane had known when she was a nurse. She had disregarded doctor's advice about having children and found herself wheel chair bound and in need of some help. Not physical help but financial so Jane was registered as Carer. Now this friend's paranoia meant that Jane had to leave her car over there Saturday nights and most of Sunday so just like the days before Dave's arrival she was car-less on a Saturday night.

Don too had become more of a nuisance for in his quest to start a new life he needed Jane's help and was not backward in coming forwards in asking for it. She had took him twice to Wales to look for suitable places already but with the idea of a caravan lifestyle falling out of favour his mind had become set on a boat. He returned to the caravan's previous owner in the vain hope to see if he wanted to buy it back but was quickly told it was worthless and asbestos ridden so all that was left was the scrap man. Most of them actually wanted to charge him to take it away but eventually he found one that would take it away free of charge. Don even threw in the lawn mower for good measure content in the fact that he would be taking out a loan for a boat and willing to put his losses down to experience. He had a new purpose now, one that had that much effect on him that he even stopped drinking. He was going to live on a boat and make his living taking people out on deep sea fishing trips, a sport that he loved dearly so he thought he was in a win- win situation. He had a friend called Tim who had offered to help him and knew someone whose uncle actually owned a boat, a 21 ft North Sea oil rig's lifeboat that had been used for net fishing by the uncle until he thought that he was too old for it. Sure it needed a cabin but Tim said that if Don could make a shell for it he would fibre glass over it and finish it off for him so even though Don was actually older than the boat's owner he saw a bright future for himself with it. He quickly agreed to the asking price of £2,000 for it although he was stuck at how to actually move it for he needed a trailer and did not have one. The owner agreed to wait though so Don had one built as a cost of £700 so his

£3,500 loan was being quickly eaten into. Another £100 to Tim for petrol money and they were ready to go. Jane got dragged in to accompany them and so found herself setting off on a trip to Scunthorpe at 5a.m. on a cold Sunday morning. The journey itself was uneventful though that was to change once they got there. On arrival the boat was loaded onto the trailer and much to their horror the tyres blew. The car tyres proved no match for the boat and had to be replaced by sturdier ones. It was around seven in the morning so they had to wait for 3 hours for the garage to open at 10, the time that Jane had expected to be back home for.

Quite a disaster and an omen for the future but Dave in his naivety did not take it to heart. He had offered to help Don make the shell, free of charge, thinking that it would compensate him for what he had done to help Jane's mother and besides with him out of the way in Wales he could not waste anymore of Jane's limited time.

Dave's first day was a complete disaster for Dave in the mistaken belief that Don actually knew what he was talking about followed his instructions. He had started to put supports around where the cabin was going to give the basis for a toe-board only to have to rip them out again for they were all wrong. The second day though Dave took control and under fresh instruction from Tim the job started to move. The boat had a step on both sides that had been constructed to give it extra buoyancy. Don had previously tried to cut it out to give the boat more internal space though luckily Tim had stopped him before he got too far. Dave used the step to fix 2 x 1 battens on to form the skeleton of the cabin and though pleased with his work he thought the cabin was too small because it had been compromised to allow more space for people to fish from.

It was after the second night that the dreams returned. Dave found himself swimming under water heading for a bright light that was above him. Bubbles were all around him and much to his surprise he found that he could breathe. He carried on his way and soon the bright light had turned to day light and he found that every where around him was covered in ice. He got out the water to find two more surprises awaited him. He was not wet and the place was not cold. He looked around for any signs of life and on not seeing any decided to explore the area. It was a mountainous place so he just skirted around the foothills going nowhere in particular just looking for someone who would tell him where he was. Soon the mountains finished and along with them most of the ice. The terrain was now flat and only icy in places. Up ahead in the distance he saw movement. He rushed towards it but the figure ran off so he followed its direction and soon came across a large white fox.

"I mean you no harm," Dave said slightly out of breath, "It's just that I am lost."

"You are in the land of ice and fog. How is it that you come to be here?"

"I don't know," Dave said as time had numbed his memory to the creative worlds.

"You must be here for a reason define it for me."

With that Dave's memory returned and he said, "This is the Land of Relative Definition isn't it?"

"That's right, so what is your reason to be here?"

"I am here to see King Dine."

"That is not a reason."

"Then I am here to purify this world and grow in understanding of it."

"Good, my name is Bita and you are?"

"Dave, Dave Jessel, are you here to help me?"

"Maybe. Do you need a guide?"

"I am completely ignorant of this world; I could do with all the help I can get."

"Then I shall guide you to King Dine and tell you of our world along the way."

They carried on along the semi icy plain and as they walked Bita said, "It is a good world generally speaking though be careful of the Walking Darkness as she can be very nasty."

"The Walking Darkness?"

"Queen Gilda of the Dark-side she lives in the land of mist along with her servants, her trolls and numerous allies."

"So why is she called the Walking Darkness?"

“Where ever she goes she leaves darkness behind her. She likes to work in ignorance you see.”

“And how powerful is she?”

“She rules the land of mist. She is equal to King Dine who rules the land of the ice.”

“And the land of the giants who rules that?”

“I know nothing of that world. It is closed to us for it is separated by the land of mist.”

“Have you never been to the land of mist?”

“No it is a place that is forbidden to us.”

“So you know very little about it then?”

“Not much, only what we have been told by Ivan the Troll.”

“Ivan the Troll?”

“Yes, he was once a friend of Queen Gilda but now he has moved to our side. It was he who told us about the world of mist.”

“Oh, so it sounds like he could be useful.”

“Well only if you intend to go there and that would be a foolish thing to do. You er, don't intend to go there do you?”

“I'm guessing that, that's the reason I am here.”

“Then you are a lot braver than me. Whatever reason would you have?”

“To purify it.”

“You have mentioned that before. What does this purification actually entail?”

“If it's anything like the last world I guess it must be to defeat Queen Gilda.”

“Are you mad? She is invincible.”

“She must have some weaknesses?”

“She is unbeatable. You are new to this world and know nothing of its ways. Take my advice and keep well away from her as you will come to great harm. King Dine will put you wise about her.”

In the near distance Dave saw a fortified stockade so he said, “Is that where he lives?”

“One of his camps they are a nomadic breed the Undines. They rarely stay too long in one place.”

They entered a large gateway and saw a cluster of wooden log cabins. Figures came from everywhere and soon they were surrounded by forty small men with fins on their backs who looked at Dave strangely having never seen him before.”

“Are you a giant?” one of them said.

“No,” Dave said with a laugh, “A man.”

“Like Odo?” the same one said.

“That's right, it was he who told me to go and see your king.”

“Then I will take you to him my name is Colla.”

“I'm Dave,” Dave said as he followed Colla into a Great Hall where he saw the king. After introductions King Dine said, “I have been instructed to give you all the help that you need.”

“That's very kind of you.”

“Kind I did not get much choice in the matter. You do realise that should you fail this quest you will bring war to us?”

“No, but I don't intend to fail.”

“Good, then let me tell you a little about this world for this knowledge will be power to your mind.”

“I won't argue with that.”

“You are now in the world of water. It is divided into two parts, the land of ice and mist or emotional separation and the land of the giants or mental growth.”

“Right so er what actually is emotional separation?”

“Basically it is the freeing of Self. You will never get true mental growth until it is done.”

“And how does it equate with the reality of this world?”

“You cannot enter the land of the giants until you have purified the land of mist and fog.”

“I see. And the land of ice that is your world isn't it.”

“That's right.”

“And is it pure?”

“Yes there is nothing here that wishes to harm you.”

“Then it is just the land of mist.”

“Well I wouldn't say just. It might be a good idea to talk with a friend of mine, he will put you right.”

“Ivan the Troll?”

“That's right,” King Dine said and called for him. Soon Dave found himself face to face with a troll. Now a troll, if you have never seen one and are in need of a description, is pretty much like a Neanderthal man. Excessively hairy and large framed, smaller in height than a man although larger than an undine. After the introductions Ivan said, “So you mean to visit my world, don't you know that it is a dangerous place?”

“I know little of your world though I have heard it to be dangerous.”

“Then I will tell you about it although I fear it might dissuade you from your task.”

“No matter the danger it must be done.”

“Very well the first thing that I tell you is that all is not what it seems.”

“Sorry?”

“Queen Gilda is an illusionist. She keeps her world in check through sorcery. She only really has one true ally, the rest of us are held by her spells.”

“Right, and who is this ally?”

“It is Cula the dragon, a terrible foe.”

“Sila's sister?”

“I don't know of her family I just know that she isn't to be crossed.”

“And the others?”

The trolls are the most numerous. They are good people in their natural state but as I said they are spell bound to do her will.”

“And this spell, can it be broken?”

“Yes I have done it myself but it is not an easy task to perform.”

“Really, so what does it entail?”

“She holds the trolls through the ownership of a lock of each ones hair. This she keeps in a large cask and the only way is to burn it though you will have to get past Cula who guards it.”

“And is this how you did it?”

“No I was once the king of the trolls and so given special status. She kept my hair separate from the rest and it was quite by chance that I came across it. I did not realise at the time that, that was what was holding me. It was only after I burned it by accident that this came to light.”

“Not being funny but how did she manage to get hold of a lock of every ones hair?”

“Through my fault and her trickery I'm afraid. She told me that she could make us more powerful if she took some of our hair and put a spell of courage onto it.”

“Oh, and the other allies?”

“There is Gona the iceman. He is not actually under her spell but he is controlled by his fear of her. He is her adviser and a very wise man.”

“I thought that wisdom negated fear?”

“Usually but he is wise enough to know when he is well off and quite adaptable to change with the circumstances. I would say that if you could prove yourself to him you would have a very good friend.”

“Right, and has she any others?”

“Three hand maidens, Silka, Pina and Queba. They are held by her spells and can be freed the same way.”

“And do you know these spells?”

“No, they too are guarded by Cula.”

“The animals that live in the land of mist, are they friendly?”

“There are no animals in the land of mist they have long since left the area.”

“So how do you actually get into the land, I mean is it guarded?”

“No,” Ivan said with a laugh, “It does not need to be. No one in their right mind would ever want to go there.”

“Oh, does that mean that you don't want to go back?”

“Go back? I've never really thought about going back before. Mind you it would make sense as you will need a guide. Yes I will go back for what sort of king leaves his people in slavery.”

“Good for I fear without you I would not get very far.”

“Will there be others too?”

“I'm not sure. I don't like the idea of going in with too many as it means there is more chance of getting caught.”

“I see your point,” King Dine said, “Although I have been instructed to send one of the undines to instruct you along the way.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and then with a laugh, “Though I doubt if you'll get one to come off their own free will.”

“I will,” Colla said, “For is has long been an ambition of mine to go to the land of mist.”

“Very well,” Dave said, “Then that's all sorted.”

“Er I was wondering if I could come along?” Bita said.

“You,” Dave said in surprise, “Why ever would you want to do that?”

“I crave adventure and besides I could be useful to you.”

“You could?”

“I have a keen sense of smell. I could alert you to danger long before it makes its appearance.”

“Right, so it's settled then.”

“There is one thing though,” Ivan said, “No one from our world may enter the land of the giants so should you prove successful we must leave you there.”

“Fair enough I should count myself lucky to get that far so anything more would be a bonus.”

Meanwhile unbeknown to them their every move was being monitored.

“Fools,” Queen Gilda said looking into the pool of fore seeing, “Do they think they are a match for me? Gona, who is this stranger?”

“It looks like a man Great Queen.”

“A mortal, whatever is he doing in this world?”

“He means to purify it Great Queen.”

“Over my dead body.”

“That is the only way.”

“What? Then I say attack is the best means of defence. This time of peace sickens me especially when they plot behind my back. It is about time we raided them and showed them good reason to fear me. Gather half the trolls and have them march on Dine's camp destroying everything that they see.”

“By your command,” Gona said and went off to do it.

“Pina,” Gilda said, “I want you to take half the rest and patrol the borders. No one must get through. Do you understand?”

“Yes Great Queen,” Pina said and did as she was bid.

Unbeknown to Queen Gilda though Ivan, even though he was freed from her bondage still had a strong sub conscious tie to the rest of the trolls. “They mean to attack us,” he said, “She had sent Gona with half the trolls. This is not good, not good at all. I do not want to kill my brothers especially as I know that it is not through free will that they come.”

“There is a problem then,” Dave said, “For they mean to kill you.”

“I know. Curse that Queen Gilda and my stupidity.”

“There may be a way,” Bita said, “We don't need to kill them just take them prisoner and hold them.”

“Yes,” Ivan said, “For once the spell is broken they will be on our side.”

“Right,” Dave said, “So how many are we talking about?”

“I would say about 20,” Ivan said.

“I suggest that we dig holes and set traps,” Dave said and this was duly done.

Gona and the trolls had crossed the border by then and were quietly making their way to the camp.

“Zombies,” he muttered angrily to himself, “How can I work with zombies? They can't think for themselves, what good are they? You,” he said calling the one nearest to him, “What is your name?”

“Name,” the troll just repeated.

“What's the point? I don't know. I just hope that we are not spotted that's all,” and with that the ground beneath him gave way and he found himself in a great pit. On and on the trolls went until the pit was full.

“Got them,” Dave said, “They will never get out of that without our help.”

“There,” Ivan said, “That is Gona the Iceman.”

“Gona,” Dave shouted down, “What brings you to this land of ice?”

“You know my reason,” Gona shouted back, “You will soon also know Queen Gilda's vengeance.”

“It is not destined to be my friend,” Dave shouted down, “I thought that you as a wise man would know that.”

“Who are you?”

“Dave Jessel.”

“Our legends have spoken of you. They say that you are to bring about Queen Gilda's downfall.”

“That is my purpose and maybe with your help I will achieve it.”

“Are you offering me a deal?”

“Well you're the wise man work it out,” Dave said with a laugh, “I'm offering you freedom from fear.”

“Only if you beat her I would not like to see her vengeance if you don't.”

“Your choice weigh up the odds.”

Gona looked around him and said, “Very well let me up,” and a rope was lowered for him.

After he had reached the top Dave said to Ivan, “What about your friends?”

“They would be better off left where they are for the time being. Don't worry it will not be hardship as they will be none the wiser.”

“Fair enough,” King Dine said, “I'll post a couple of guards to make sure that nothing amiss happens.”

Back with Gilda her temper was rising, “See how quickly Gona turns on me. Silka call Pina back we need a new plan. So David Jessel has finally turned up. Queba, what do the legends say?”

“He is destined to destroy you Great Queen. Legends say that he is a paragon of virtue and beyond temptation itself.”

“No one is beyond temptation,” Gilda said with a sneer, “He has his weaknesses the same as everyone does. No he will fall no matter what destiny says.”

“Yes Great Queen.”

“And then, once he is defeated I will march personally to the land of ice and rescue the trolls. Then we will rule both the lands and who knows maybe the land of the giants afterwards. No, the stigma of David Jessel has kept me captive long enough. I look forward to meeting him so I can quickly destroy him.”

Back in the land of ice Dave and Gona were deep in conversation. “So,” Dave said, “Emotional separation, what's all that about?”

“It's a separation from your basic instinctive drive. This needs to be done before you can truly grow in awareness.”

“And Queen Gilda, what is she actually symbolic of?”

“You understand symbols you must be more learned than I thought. She symbolises pride.”

“And is knowing this her downfall?”

“Not in this world.”

“So how would I actually defeat her?”

“Purity of thought, you have to be beyond temptation itself.”

“Does she work through temptation then?”

“That is one of her weapons. She works through fear as well and is quite heavily into guile.”

“Quite a foe then and how does she actually equate with the basic instinctive drive?”

“She is the drive for self preservation. She also is animal cunning so be very careful.”

“I’ll bare that in mind,” Dave said and the scene changed to one from another world.

“Traitor,” Gilda said, “He will be made accountable for his actions. None of this will be forgotten. Pina, what kept you?”

“I got here as quickly as I could Great Queen. It’s those trolls though, they move too slowly.”

“Never mind. We need new plans but first I want to know how they knew we were coming.”

“I don’t know Great Queen unless the man has powers that we don’t know about.”

“That might explain it. I shall put a veil around him so that should sort the problem out.”

“You mean to attack again Great Queen?”

“No, well not straight away I want you to take half the trolls and rescue the ones that were captured then hide until I send you further instruction.”

“Yes Great Queen,” Pina said and Gilda put a veil around Dave although as he did not actually have any power he did not realise. Ivan on the other hand was still aware, “They’re sending out a rescue party under Pina. I suggest that we hide and give them a push when the time is right.”

“Good idea,” Dine said and the deed was duly done. Gilda was not pleased to say the least, “What is going on?”

“Maybe they fell by chance after all the trolls move slowly and if the place was guarded they would have been seen a long way off.”

“True,” Gilda said, “It looks like attack is no longer an option. We will have to stand guard and wait.”

“And Pina?”

“There is nothing I can do for her at present. I will keep an eye on her and when the time is right.”

“Fair enough Great Queen.”

Pina on the other hand was getting impatient. She was stuck at the bottom of the pit and in no mood for compromise.

“Your queen has deserted you,” Dave said, “You must have no merit in her eyes.”

“She’ll be here and then you will pay for your actions.”

“I wouldn’t hold your breath. Besides it would be in your interests for her to be defeated.”

“She is the purpose that I serve, what madness makes you think that I would benefit from her fall?”

“She has you spell bound. Once that spell is broken you will see things more clearly.”

“Liar, what sort of trick is this?”

“It’s no trick. You were the one that was tricked and not by me.”

“You waste my time with your lies. Nothing you say is true. Be gone for I am wise to you.”

“You are wasting your time with her,” Gona said, “She is too far under Gilda’s influence.”

“Then it is time that I made my move. I would say that we have weakened her enough.”

“What are your plans then?”

“I will first see Cula, get her on our side and then Gilda is isolated.”

“How do you intend to do that?”

“I’m not sure as yet. Defeat her if I have to. You er wouldn’t know how to actually go about it would you?”

“I don’t think that it is possible. I think that she’s invincible.”

“Then I will have to try and come to terms with her,” Dave said and thought awhile to let the kernel of an idea sink in, “Right,” he said and called Ivan, Colla and Bitia together, “It is time. We march

on Cula.”

“The dragon,” Colla said in surprise, “I thought that it was Gilda we were after.”

“She holds most of her power. Without Cula's good will Gilda is nearly helpless.” before Dave could get any further he felt tiredness creep in, “I must rest,” he said and much to the others shock he fell asleep.

Dave woke up at 8.30 to find Jane already awake.

“So what are you doing today?” she said.

“Just putting plywood around it Tim can finish the rest of it.”

“Well I promised to help him decorate it, carpets and curtains; you know add a woman's touch.”

“I thought that he had a wife for that.”

“Well he did ask.”

“What. Isn't it enough that I've helped him with the cabin?”

“He'll be gone soon.”

“True, anyway I suppose we had better get up.”

9.30 saw them pull up in the allotment at the back of Don's house.

“What time do you call this?” Don said on seeing them, “I've been up since four.”

“Well you haven't done a lot to the boat,” Dave said.

“I've been working on the allotment.”

“What for I mean you will be leaving it all behind you soon.”

“I'll still come back occasionally. Harry said that he will keep an eye on it in the meantime.”

“Oh right. So you are not actually starting a new life then.”

“I am, it's just that I'll come back every so often.”

“Must be a lot of money to be made from deep sea fishing,” Dave said, “Well,” he said with a pointed laugh, “Unless of course you think that Jane's going to come and pick you up.”

“Oh no,” Don said quickly, “I'll just take the train.”

“Good. I was going to say. I mean you don't want to be thought as helpless do you. They'll end up putting you in a home.”

“That will never happen.”

“Good so plywood then, do you have any?”

“There are a few pieces in the shed that should be enough. If not Harry said that he has some more.”

“Right,” Dave said and after Jane had left followed him into the shed.

“Bad news I'm afraid,” Don said, “Tim said that he's only really got time to put the fibre glass on. I was wondering if you would cut the windows out. I've got a jig saw but my eyes are not what they used to be.”

“Yes sure,” Dave said and picked up a couple of half sheets of plywood, “When's that then, in a couple of days?”

“It won't be to early next week I'm afraid he's got too much on at present.”

“Can't be helped I suppose, so what are your plans for the inside?”

“A couple of benches to sleep on and a sink on one side as you go in and a cooker on the other pretty basic but it will do the job.”

“A sink, however are you going to plumb it in?”

“A water pump and a bottle will do. I just fill the bottle every time it gets empty.”

“So no hot water then?”

“I could easily heat it up in a kettle. I took the water pump from the caravan so that should save a few quid.”

“Right, and have you got a cooker?”

“I've got three but they all want a little work on them.”

“Calor gas ones?”

“Yes that's right.”

“And what about electricity?”

"I'm going to put a splitter on the engine then work off a battery."

"Well that's all sorted then," Dave said and put the first piece of plywood against the frame to check it for size, "One cut should do it," and it was quickly done.

"You seem to be managing alright I'll go and take a look at the cooker and see if I can get it working," and went back to his shed.

Dave carried on at good pace and when Don came back to see if he wanted a cup of tea he was fixing the roof on. "It's definitely taking shape," Don said, "I don't think that Tim thought it would be done so quickly."

"There's not much to it really."

"I was thinking of painting the hull a different colour. Blue would be more suitable."

"Yes, are you thinking of painting the deck?"

"No yellow looks alright."

"Are you sure? White would suit it better. It will look like a brand new boat."

"Not worth the hassle."

"No use spoiling the ship for a hap'poth of tar," Dave said but the irony was lost on Don, "I'll tell you what I'll paint the hull if you get the paint for it."

"Sure. I'll get some for tomorrow then. I've got some more 2x1's left as well so I'll make the frames for the inside."

"Fair enough, I'm about finished here so I'll give you a hand." Dave finished off as Don fetched the wood. The inside frames did not take too long and by the end of the day it was almost finished. Jane picked Dave up and as she drove him back she said, "So all done then?"

"Well I said that I would paint the hull for him tomorrow. Oh and I will also cut out the holes for the windows as Tim is going to be too busy."

"A couple more days then?"

"Yes but staggered as he won't be able to fibre glass it until early next week."

"He must be busy then. So er how come you didn't make the shell with the windows already in?"

"My thoughts exactly but that's how Tim said he wanted it that way. I would say he'll waste a hell of a lot of fibre glass doing it his way."

"And plywood. Are you sure he knows what he's doing?"

"I've yet to see his work so I can't really judge. I know that he knows a lot more than Don but that's not really a yardstick."

"I think he lost his temper with Don on the phone," Jane said with a laugh, "It seems that Don has been pestering him trying to find out when he's going to start."

"Not a thing to do when you are relying on his good will," Dave said laughing, "I reckon that I will be doing a lot more to it than I first thought."

"You'll get your reward in heaven," Jane said laughing.

"I'll bare that in mind," Dave said as they pulled up outside the house.

Jane made a cup of tea for them both and when she returned said, "Oh I've started taking Mary's friend to school in the morning."

"Really," Dave said in surprise.

"Yes, she doesn't like going to school with her dad as he drives that disabled van. It's on the way so it's no big deal."

"So," Dave said changing the subject, "Anything else happened?"

"Well it seems that I am Don's bit of stuff," Jane said with a laugh.

"What?" Dave said, his tone hardening slightly.

"Yes," Jane said not noticing, "Diane was at the jumble sale and heard his ex wife talking to one of her friends and she called me that young bit of stuff that Don was knocking off. Diane said that she soon put her straight and told her that I had a fellah."

"I should think so," Dave said biting his tongue, "So where did she get that idea in the first place?"

"I don't know."

“And I've noticed that his wife is not too friendly towards you as well.”

“Look he's just a friend of my mothers.”

“He sounds like he's a sad deluded man. He must have said something.”

“He'll be gone soon don't worry about it. Anyway I'll make the tea as Mary will be coming back soon,” and the subject was changed. The rest of the evening was uneventful and Dave retired to bed at 11 o'clock.

Dave woke up to a confused crowd.

“What just happened there?” Ivan said.

“I have to sleep to recharge myself, it's no big deal.”

“Oh, and does this happen often?”

“No not really. Anyway we have things to do and dragons to see.”

Back at Gilda's Dave's lapse from consciousness did not go unnoticed.

“There,” Gilda said, “We have found his weakness. He cannot truly live in this world as he is still tied to his own.”

“Can we actually capitalise on that?” Silka said, “He will always have someone to stand guard over him.”

“Then we will isolate him. I will put a spell on to stop the others from entering my land. Let him enter and keep him busy for a while and when he lapses once more we will have him.”

“A noble plan,” Queba said.

Dave meanwhile was making his way across the flat icy plain along with the others.

“We will soon be there,” Ivan said, “Bita can you smell anything?”

“All clear, nothing for miles.”

The icy plain suddenly became fog bound as rolling sheets of low level fog took the place of the ground below them. Bita, Colla and Ivan found to their horror that their feet could not move and Dave who was up ahead turned to see what was keeping them.

“It's no good,” Ivan said, “I think that she's put a spell on us.”

“Then it looks like I will have to go on alone,” Dave said not really looking forward to it.

“You should be alright,” Ivan said, “Just go straight ahead until you come to a twisted oak. Cula's lair lies just behind it. Good luck and fare well.”

Dave carried on into the mist and soon they were lost from sight. The mist thickened a little more but as it was still only ground covering he could see fairly well. Trees lay to the left and right of him and they seemed to take on a mild menace to his rapidly paranoid growing mind. He felt that something was behind him though every time he turned to look there was nothing there. Again and again the feeling returned and no amount of checking could restrain it. He heard the noise of a wolf in the distance and this surprised him more than a little for Ivan had told him that no animals lived in the land of mist. Dave heard the sound of a cracking branch and quickly turned to where the noise had come from only to find that there was nothing. He even walked over to the tree to check it for signs of damage but there was none. He cursed his self and his paranoia and reason came to the fore. Bita had said that there was nothing around so all this must be the work of his imagination but why should his imagination turn against him as they were usually on good terms.

“Magik,” Dave said and took strength from his being.

As Gilda looked on in the distance she said to Queba, “He is stronger than I thought, I will have to increase the power.”

Dave carried on in his ignorance of this until he came across a great tree that blocked his path. He moved to one side to go around it but much to his surprise the tree also moved. Again he moved only to find the same reaction. “What is this?” Dave said without fear and much to his horror the face of a hideous old woman appeared on its trunk.

“David Jessel,” she said in a deep haunting voice, “David Jessel,” she repeated still haunting but at a higher pitch, “You are not welcome here. Go back. Go back.” The last 'go back' was at a higher pitch to emphasise the horror.

“Who are you?” Dave said but all the creature softly said was, “Go back, go back, go back.”

The mist around Dave's feet started to thicken and take the shape of outstretched arms beckoning him to them and voices that had come from nowhere chanted in a soft slow unison, “Come, come, come.”

“You don't exist,” Dave said, “You are not here,” but still they beckoned, getting stronger, more solid in form. One of the arms grabbed Dave's left leg much to his shock for if it was an illusion it did not feel like one. He kicked out and the hand lost its grip. “You are not real,” Dave said louder than the last time, “This is just an illusion.”

All the trees around him took on forms grotesque and hideous. Old men and women, twisted, contorted in their countenance contempted Dave with sneers and manic laughter. One of the faces, an old man said, “Come or go it's up to you but you'll be dead before you're through, so think hard now you mortal being is this reality that you're seeing.”

“What?” Dave said and the spell was broken.

“What is this?” Gilda said in the distance, “Someone is interfering with my spells.”

“But there is no one in this world with that sort of power,” Queba said.

“That's what I thought but you saw it for yourself.”

“I did Great Queen.”

“So it mustn't be from this world,” Gilda said and went deep into thought before saying, “They shall not stop us whoever they are,” and cast new spells.

Dave walked on unaware and shaken from his experience. It did not make sense to him, first they were trying to harm him and then to help him. Was this another of Gilda's tricks to try and drive him mad? It was then that the voice made its appearance, “It is her own foolishness that has caused this.”

“What,” Dave said aloud.

“She had put a veil around you to stop you using your power.”

“But I haven't got any,” Dave said with more than a hint of confusion.

“She does not know that. She thinks that it was you who fore saw her raiding party.”

“Oh.”

“It is not a good idea to speak. She is monitoring you and can hear your every word.”

“I'll bare that in mind,” Dave thought to himself, “So how does this veil work then?”

“It stops your perceived powers getting out but it also affects her powers getting in.”

“Right,” Dave thought as a shadowy veiled woman appeared before him.

“You have dismissed my advice,” she said hovering above the ground, “And for that you will pay dearly.”

“Who are you?” Dave said without fear.

“That is not for you to know,” the woman said and lifted her veil to reveal a rotting face that had lost its left eye and whose nose had virtually fell off, “All you need to know is that your life will soon be lacking.”

“I do not fear death.”

“They all say that. I have seen many and each one said the same but when it came down to it... Well you shall soon see,” and with that disappeared. “Was that Gilda?” Dave thought.

“No, just an apparition that she conjured, she works on fear so her magik only works if you let it.”

“So what about them arms? One of them grabbed hold of my leg.”

“You must have been more scared than you thought then as your fear grows so does her power. Now be careful as she means to capture you when you are asleep.”

“Then I am doomed unless I can defeat her in the first day but I don't think that's possible.”

With that another figure appeared from behind one of the trees and stood defiantly looking at Dave. As Dave got closer he saw that it was a troll.

“He is real,” the voice said, “But don't worry as you are far too quick for him.”

“What does he want?”

“He is just there to try and scare you off. Walk past him but get ready to run if I tell you.”

Dave walked past him and the troll started to follow him but Dave's quicker pace meant that he was quickly left behind. As they walked further they came across a great iron barred fence that blocked their path and stretched in both directions as far as Dave could see.

“I'll never get around that,” Dave thought in frustration.

“Just walk through it, it's not there.”

Dave tried to do as he was told but the fence proved solid so he ended up with a sore head.

“It's real.”

“No it's not it's only your inner fear that perceives it to be that way.”

“Then I am lost.”

“Not at all just look beyond the fence and dismiss it from your mind.”

“What? That won't work.”

“Try it. Just have faith in yourself.”

Dave walked forward once more, looking ahead to the distance trees and sure enough it worked.

“That's amazing,” he thought, “So what is this inner fear then for if it is the fear of death then I thought that I had got rid of it.”

“No, it's the fear of the unknown, because it looks real you think that it is but in the world of magik all is not what it seems. That is what is unknown to you.”

“Oh right I will try and keep conscious of that.”

In the distance Gilda was getting desperate, “He must be under some sort of guidance. No one could have done it otherwise.”

“So it would seem Great Queen,” Queba said, “But there is no one there to guide him.”

“That's how it looks unless of course they travel under the cloak of invisibility.”

“Fairies,” Queba said, “I have heard that they have the spell but they are from a different world.”

“They have never come here before, that doesn't mean that they can't.”

“True and the legends do say that he has traveled to their world.”

“It would make sense. I will set a spell to counter act it so we can see whose actually helping him,” she thought a while and said, “Let what's before lose its hold so I can see what makes him bold,” but nothing happened.

“This spell must be more powerful than I thought. They cannot be fairies as they don't have that strength of mind.”

“Then I am at a loss Great Queen.”

“He still has to sleep. Then he is ours.”

“True, Great Queen.”

“I'll still keep him occupied though,” and laughed in a manic like way, “It might tire him out.”

Dave carried on his way and took the concept of inner fear to its logical conclusion, “So back on Earth then. Would I be able to walk through walls if my faith was strong enough?”

“You could try,” the voice said with a laugh, “Although I wouldn't advise it.”

“Oh,” Dave thought with more than a hint of disappointment.

“You live in a land of matter. While you occupy your physical body you are restricted by its laws. Your astral body though works on a higher vibration so that could walk through walls and solid objects.”

“Right, now correct me if I'm wrong but this is my astral body isn't it?”

“That's correct.”

“Then how is it that things are solid I thought I would just be able to walk through them.”

“These are astral worlds; they too work on a different vibration.”

“Oh,” Dave said but the appearance of another figure brought the conversation to an end. It was the same size as Dave though ashen faced with deathly staring eyes. Slowly it made its way towards them and said, “I was once like you.”

“You were?” Dave said not really knowing what else to say.

“Yes, look at me now and learn by my mistakes. Go back before it is too late.”

“What happened?”

“Is it not enough that I have been condemned to walk the walk of the dead?”

“I want to learn by your mistakes. Until I know where you went wrong I cannot learn.”

“My mistake was trying,” the man said and disappeared.

“Anyway,” Dave thought, unperturbed by the incident, “You were saying about different vibrations?”

“Yes, the astral worlds work on a much quicker vibration. The physical body restricts the astral body in much the same way as the physical body is restricted by wearing too many cloths and heavy boots.”

They came across a large twisted oak tree and Dave thought, “We are here. Cula's lair is supposed to lie just beyond.”

“That's not real. It's just another of Gilda's tricks.”

“Is there no end?”

“I'm afraid she hasn't started yet. These are mere illusions, wait until she really starts.”

“Really so what is she actually capable of?”

“Anything that you can imagine now up until now she has been lenient because of the legends but the closer you get, the more desperate she'll become.”

“Legends what legends?”

“The legend of David Jessel and the legend of the fall of Gilda.”

“What,” Dave said in surprise, “Do you mean to tell me that there are legends about me?”

“Yes. I thought you knew.”

“No, er, so what do they say?”

“You want to hear them?” the voice said with a laugh, “How vain.”

“It's not that. They might prove useful that's all.”

“Right,” the voice said in a tone that told Dave that he did not believe him, “Very well then. Legends say that there will come the day when a man shall walk in the world of water. Now though he is mortal he will walk in righteousness and vanquish all that stands in his way. I hope you are taking notes, I'm not just here to pander to your ego you know.”

“I am, I am. You were saying?”

“Anyway they say that he will melt the ice man and bring freedom back to the trolls and nothing can defeat him for he walks in favour of the Mother of all Things.”

“And that is why Gilda is afraid to go too far. Fear of retribution.”

“Well yes but don't hold too much faith in it as it depends how desperate she gets.”

“True, and what else do the legends say?”

“You're enjoying this aren't you,” the voice said with a laugh.

“No, it's just that they might uncover something useful that's all.”

“Yeah right they say that he is beyond temptation and corruption for his essence is pure and free from desire though it has been said that he gets big headed occasionally.”

“What really?”

“Just joking, no that was only really a precursor to the fall of Gilda.”

“And how did that go, did it leave any clues?”

“Decode three riddles that will be her actual downfall.”

“And the riddles?”

“It didn't actually say, only that to decode the riddles will break the spells on her three hand maidens.”

“So these three hand maidens, are they part of Gilda?”

“No well sort of because the spells are actually part of Gilda.”

“Sorry?”

“She has put part of herself in each one. With each spell broken she loses part of her power.”

“And all three?”

“She will be powerless. She won't be destroyed though only altered.”

“Altered?”

“Purified.”

“Then I'll actually be helping her.”

“Yes but she won't see it like that. Well not until it's done anyway.”

“And what were the hand maidens originally?”

“Three sisters all noted for their wisdom and purity. They too were tricked for their good natures were to be their downfall.”

“Really, how?”

“They trusted Gilda. They even helped her to formulate the spells in the mistaken belief they would be wiser through them.”

“She sounds very devious this Gilda, and quite a silver tongue.”

“Yes be very careful in your dealings with her as she is very slippery.”

“It sounds it, what was that?”

A low humming noise surrounded them. It was a monotonous drone that seemed to make Dave's body vibrate. It got louder until it was almost deafening.

“She's trying a different approach a more psychological one.”

“And what's it supposed to do?”

“Wear you down mentally. She's trying to tire you out.”

“She's trying to make me sleep? Would it work that way?”

“Not this way,” the voice said with a laugh, “It will just get on your nerves and if anything make your mind restless. It seems that she has still forgotten about the veil she has put around you.”

The noise suddenly abated and in the distance Gilda said, “Again another spell misguided. What is happening?”

“You don't think that it is the Mother of all Things herself that is guiding him Great Queen?” Queba said.

“No she cannot openly interfere. She can only react to my actions.”

“But whoever is doing this is powerful. I don't know anyone in all the worlds that is as powerful as you. Well only on the dark side.”

“Queen Narda. No it is impossible. Whatever reason would she have?”

“May I advise you to contact her Great Queen she might know something to your gain, after all aren't your enemies and hers both the same.”

“Good idea,” Gilda said and the pool they were looking into cleared. Gilda said, “Great Queen Narda your sister needs you,” and a picture of Ben appeared much to his shock because her face appeared in the looking glass as he was polishing it. “Whoever are you?” he said.

“Don't waste my time just get me Queen Narda or you will feel her consequences.”

“She's er busy,” Ben said with a laugh much to Gilda's annoyance.

“What? Fool, you dare trifle with me. I am not here to bandy words with you. Do as you are told or you will pay dearly for your insolence.”

“Not by Narda's hands,” Ben said still laughing, “I'm afraid that you are a little too late.”

“What are you talking about? Speak up fool or you will rue the day you ever saw me.”

“She's dead, along with her hand maidens and goblins. She's in no position to help you.”

“Dead,” Gilda said confused, “You dare mock me. It is well known that she is invincible.”

“Was,” Ben said correcting her, “Hey Busta come over here and look at this funny woman,” and another gnome appeared.

“She is strange,” Busta said, “Who is she?”

“She didn't say,” and then to Gilda, “Who are you anyway?”

“That is no concern to either of you. Just tell me where Narda is and if you have stolen her mirror nothing can help you.”

"She's dead," Ben said, "I've told you that already. Now tell me your name or this conversation will not go any further."

Reluctantly she said, "I am Queen Gilda of the land of ice and mist in the water world now will you tell me what has happened to her?"

"She was killed, wiped out with all her allies, everything."

"Killed by who?"

"David Jessel, well we helped as well."

"This does not sound good Great Queen," Queba said, "Not good at all. It sounds like he does not mess around."

"It's time to finish him then I had not realised any of this."

"And he holds half our forces already, we must move quickly."

"I have underestimated him. I will not make that mistake again."

"Anything else you want to know while we are still here?" Busta said interrupting them.

"No," Gilda said angrily before changing her mind, "Yes I would like to know who is guiding him."

"Wouldn't have a clue about that and besides I wouldn't really want to tell you anything that could be detrimental to his well being would I?"

"Then you are no good to me," Gilda said and her face disappeared from Narda's looking glass.

"There is only one thing for it," Gilda said, "Though I am reluctant to do it."

"What's that Great Queen?"

"Release Cula. She will make short work of him and whoever is guiding him."

"Very well Great Queen and timely too as he lies not far from her lair."

"All the better then for it will soon be over," Gilda said and sent Queba on her way.

Dave meanwhile was still in conversation, "So these riddles then, do you know anything at all that might help me to understand them?"

"I can't really answer that, well not until I have actually seen them."

"Oh of course, how silly of me it must have been all of that noise."

"The legends state that you decode them. I would take comfort from that."

"So it's a foregone conclusion then," Dave said cheering up quite a lot.

"I wouldn't go that far. Tread very carefully for no matter what the legends say it is not over until it is over."

"I'll bare that in mind but I have to admit that knowing the legends say that I win is a great relief to me."

"Good, take strength from it but that is all."

Out of the mist a large figure made its way towards them. It was only a shadow at first but as it got closer Dave could make out what it was.

"Oh whoever next I'm getting mighty vexed with all these spectres will she never learn? Walking dead, spectral tress, dull music and now a dragon."

"Careful Dave, this is not an illusion."

Chapter 2.

"So," Cula said, "Apart from a wish to die what brings you to my world?"

"I have a message for you."

"A message? What message could you possibly have that would interest me?"

"It is from Sila, from the world of fire."

"I know where she lives and nothing she could possibly say would interest me."

"She told me to tell you that she was sorry and that you would understand."

Cula went quiet for a while as she thought things over, eventually she said, "You have done me a service and for that I thank you but I'm afraid I still have to kill you."

Dave was taken aback by that and needed to stall for time whilst he thought of a new plan so he said, "Fair enough but will you please tell me what this is all about as I have traveled far in

confusion.”

“I doubt that, you came here with another purpose.”

“I did?”

“To destroy Queen Gilda, she told me herself that you are David Jessel of the legends.”

“I am David Jessel but as to your legends I am afraid that I am a stranger to your world so I know nothing of your legends.”

“Really?” Cula said in surprise, “So you are saying that you only came here to deliver that message?”

“It was a debt of honour. Sila was very good to me in her world, she saved my life.”

“Really?”

“Yes, that's why I am obligated to her, though if it is to cost me my life I would be interested in the story behind it.”

“Very well and as for your life, well we will talk of that later.”

“Fair enough, please continue.”

“It all goes back to early times when things were first being formulated. The Mother of all Things created us both as symbols. Sila was created as spiritual consciousness and I was created mental consciousness. That is why I am red and she is white. Now in our youth and inexperience we were both proud of ourselves and our attributes and would often argue over their prospective merits. I would say that mine was a world of reality and hers only a concept and in return she would say that imagination was the only true reality and my reality was just an illusion. I think in the end it all came down to jealousy for I thought that the Mother of all Things favoured her above me which is daft really because we are all equal in her eyes.”

“The Law of Equality.”

“That's right, so you know the laws then?”

“Yes, Sila taught them me.”

“Oh, well anyway it all came to a head and I could no longer live in the same world so we were given our own.”

“Are these your worlds then?”

“They were created for us. Originally we were both of the world of earth but with our constant arguing it was not a good place to be.”

“So Sila was created the world of fire and you the world of water?”

“Not just created for us but created from us.”

“Well not being funny but if it was created for you how is it that you do not rule it?”

“Power doesn't interest me. Anyway where are my manners, you are a guest to my world and I have not offered you my hospitality. You must come back and stop at my lair for a while.”

“That is very kind of you,” Dave said and as they walked back Cula said, “Yes you will like it here and you can tell me all about Sila as it is many, many years since I've seen her.”

“What is this?” Gilda said from a distance, “I send her out to kill him and they come back as friends.”

“He has a certain devious about him,” Silka said almost in admiration.

“And his deviousness could be our death,” Gilda said putting her in her place.

“I never thought. Why not just go around and destroy him where he is?”

“Two good reasons the first is that I am not sure of Cula's loyalty and the second, well I don't really want to face the consequences, that's why I left it to Cula in the first place.”

“Oh, but what if he falls to sleep there, you'll have lost a chance of destroying him.”

“There'll be others. I was only going to capture him anyway I'd have let one of the trolls kill him.”

“Very wise,” Silka said in true admiration.

Dave and Cula had arrived at the cave by then and as Dave looked around he could not help but admire it, “It's very spacious, you must be comfortable here.”

“It serves its purpose. So how was Sila when you saw her?”

"Fine, very talkative."

"She always was," Cula said with a smile.

"What's that pot?" Dave said looking at a large saucepan that seemed out of place.

"Oh that Gilda gave me that as a present."

"Really, it's an unusual shape, do you mind if I have a closer look?"

"No help yourself," and Dave did. As he looked closely at it pretending to be interested he accidentally tipped it up and locks of hair fell out.

"Oh sorry, I did not realise that there was anything in it. What is it by the way?"

"It looks like hair. I did not know it was there. What a strange gift to give."

"It's unusual. Mind you in our world it is a token of respect."

"Really, why is that then?"

"It's symbolic of growth, usually friendship. Did she ask you to burn it by the way?"

"Er no, why should she have?"

"Probably it's different in your world but in our world fire is symbolic of cleansing so burnt hair is actually symbolic of pure friendship."

"Then I will do it straight away," Cula said and the hair was burned. The effects of this action was unseen by Cula but the trolls regained their reason. The ones that were captured were freed and the ones left deserted Gilda and headed to the land of ice. Gilda had been ignorant until it happened for her powers were nearly useless in Cula's cave.

"Yes she must be a real good friend to give you that," Dave said, "It is held in great esteem in our world second only to riddles."

"Riddles, funny you should say that she gave me three of them."

"Three," Dave said in pretend surprise, "Now that is an honour the greatest honour that you can give. And did you understand them?"

"Well I didn't try I just took it as a token of friendship."

"Oh, but as I said I am from a different world."

"So you think that I should have decoded them then?"

"Well in our world it is symbolic of growing mentally stronger together but I guess it is different here."

"No, no. Now that you have said that it does sound strangely familiar. Yes I think that she might have said it herself you see it was many years ago when she gave them to me and you know what time sometimes does to your memory."

"True."

"Well you sound like quite a wise man, you can give me a hand if you like."

"I must admit that I do like riddles but I am not sure as it might intrude on your friendship with Gilda."

"I'm not sure about that. Mind you it would depend on what the riddles actually say I would say."

"Oh, so you have never read them then?"

"A long time ago I'm afraid their contents have long since fell from memory."

"Well as I said I wouldn't really want to intrude."

"I'll read them later and see. Anyway you said that Sila saved your life, what's the story behind that?"

"I was in the world of fire on my way to see a friend of mine called Odo when I was attacked by a giant ant."

"A giant ant I did not realise there were giant ants there."

"Oh yes and not very friendly ones at that yes it was lucky that she came along when she did as I would not be here to tell my tale."

"It sounds it. So are the animals not friendly in her world. I thought that it was her job to look after it."

"Well she did I suppose," Dave said with a laugh, "After all she did kill it."

“True. No that was one of the orders from the Mother of all Things. She told us that we must keep the worlds pure and free from malice.”

“Really,” Dave said in surprise reasoning that she must be unaware of Gilda's actions. Her next sentence confirmed this, “I left that to Queen Gilda's care and she's done really well.”

“So it's a peaceful world?”

“Oh yes we never have trouble here. Haven't you seen much of it?”

“No, to tell you the truth I've not long got here. I came straight to see you so virtually everything is new to me.”

“I never knew. You must be a man of honour.”

“Well as I said she did save my life. Mind you imagine my surprise as finding out that I have been mentioned in legends.”

“Probably a case of mistaken identity you're definitely not how Gilda described you to me.”

“Maybe, it's a pretty common name in our world.”

“That would explain it. So do you think that you will like it here?”

“Yes, well except for one thing.”

“One thing?”

“As I said I am not from your world, I have to go back to mine occasionally to recharge.”

“Really, and what does that involve?”

“I just fall asleep. I have no control over it so it can be quite embarrassing and sometimes even dangerous.”

“Dangerous in what way?”

“Well imagine if it had happened in front of that giant ant what chance would I have?”

“True, you'll be safe here though as this is a peaceful world.”

“Good. It does frighten me sometimes.”

“And you don't have any idea of when it is likely to happen?”

“I have no idea of time here. Normally in my world I can gauge it but not here. The only warning I get is that I start to feel tired and then it is not long after it.”

“You are welcome to stop here if it happens here. You don't really want to be sleeping out in the mist anyway, it's not too healthy.”

“I thank you for your hospitality and gratefully accept it.”

“Besides I can read those riddles then you have definitely got me intrigued.”

“Me as well but I fear that all the talk about sleep has started to have an effect on me.”

“Sorry?”

“I'm afraid that I've started to feel a little tired now. I'm sorry but I have no control over it.”

“Don't worry, just sleep,” and Dave did just that.

Dave woke up and found that Jane had already left to take Mary to school. He made himself a cup of tea and waited her return. She was not too long; in fact she came back just as he was finishing his tea so he made himself another and one for her.

“Timed that right,” she said coming through the door, “So are you painting today then?”

“That's right; I'm not looking forward to it.”

“He's got some pads you know. It will make it a lot easier.”

“I've never used them. Are they any good then?”

“Oh yes. Oh and if you want to paint the inside there's some spare white gloss at my mum's and I know that Don has got some undercoat.”

“Well I didn't really want to be doing too much. I thought that I was supposed to be only helping him not doing it all.”

“He tries his best but he's getting on now.”

“He is a bit doddering now you mention it,” Dave said with a laugh, “You know I asked him to fetch me some screws and instead of taking the box which was at the other end of the boat he would rather make several journeys carrying a couple at a time.”

"They probably weigh too much for him to carry," Jane said with a laugh, "Anyway you're not going to mention his ex wife are you?"

"You mean that woman in the jumble sale. Well I was going to but now, well he's just a harmless old man I suppose."

"He's just deluding himself."

"Your turn with the urn then?" Dave said and Jane made some more tea. "There's no hurry," Dave said on receiving the cup, "I doubt if he will be working on the boat anyway."

"You don't think so?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do. If he's working on the boat I will paint the inside, how's that for a deal?"

"Sounds a pretty safe bet he wasn't working on it the last times we went round."

"I can't say fairer than that. I was hoping that he would stop sponging off you if I helped him but that hasn't seemed to work."

"Well he's desperate to start a new life so it's to be expected. Oh I gave him an old car radio by the way. He can have something to listen to now."

"I didn't know that you had one."

"Left over from my dad's car boot stock it's been lying around for years."

"Fair enough," Dave said and looked at his watch, "I suppose we had better get going then."

"Yes, see if he's made a start."

They drove the short distance to Don's and much to Dave's surprise he was on the boat working. He was not doing a lot but a promise was a promise so Dave ended up with extra work.

"Bad news about the paint," Don said on seeing them, "It will take a couple of days to get here as my mate has not got anything that colour at the moment."

"Well I'll give you a hand then. What er. exactly are you doing?"

"Just trying to fix this sink in place I can box it in then."

"Well I could do that if you like it won't take too long with the jigsaw."

"Would you?" Don said with relief, "I could sort out the cooker then as it needs a little doing to it."

"Yeah right," Dave said with a knowing smile. Jane left to go and see her mother and Don disappeared to the shed leaving Dave to it. He did not mind though for if the truth be known he liked woodwork and was happy to do it. He cut and fixed the plywood around the sink and boxed the rest of it in. After that he cut and fixed the plywood that was to go on in front of the two benches and the bench bases themselves. It had started to take shape by then and as he stood back to admire it Don came up with a cup of tea.

"You'll soon be sailing the seven seas," Dave said, "Are you looking forward to it?"

"Oh yes," Don said passing him the cup, "A life of leisure awaits."

"So do you know anyone where you intend to go?" Dave said and took a drink.

"I used to know someone but he's dead now but I'll quick make new friends."

"True, I would seriously recommend that you paint the deck though as it will make a better first impression."

"I haven't really got the money for it. I'm afraid that my finances aren't too healthy and I've still to pay for the fibre glass and special paint."

"How much are you talking about?"

"About £150 I've been lucky up till now as most of the wood was lying around the shed."

"You do know that the actual finishing is what costs the most. You're going to need beading to hide most of the gaps and architrave for the inside of the windows otherwise it will look like a rough bodge."

"I know. I'll have to find it from somewhere as it needs to be done."

"Well not being funny but couldn't you get it from your wife?"

"All my pension goes on the house and its upkeep I can't complain though as I live like a king."

"Maybe, but if you are moving to Wales you could really do with a steady income until you get on your feet."

“She'll still need it whether I'm there or not. Anyway I had better get back as I've still a lot to do,” and Don left Dave a little perplexed. He wondered why he was so reluctant to ask his wife for more money but it was none of his business he thought as he got back to work. Dave's next job was to block the gaps between the ceilings where the roofs sloped and the top of the walls. This was done by a triangular shaped piece of plywood cut down from 50mm in the middle to 10mm at both ends. He made four and when they were put in place they finished it off well. With a little bit of mastic the inside was ready for painting. He went down to the shed to where Don was tinkering with the cooker and said, “Have you got any undercoat?”

“Er yes, why?”

“I was going to paint the inside; it's ready for it now.”

“Really, that was quick,” and got the paint and a brush and followed Dave back to the boat.

“Very nice,” Don said, “Yes, it's definitely coming on.”

“And Jane said that she's got some white gloss at her mother's so there should be enough to do a proper job.”

“Good, it's certainly taking shape.”

“I would say that it needs three coats, that plywood is very absorbent.”

“I'll leave that in your capable hands. Are you ready for another cup of tea?”

“No, if I crack on I should get the first coat on today.”

“That sounds like a good idea and I will give Tim a bell tonight to try and hurry him along.”

“Yes you do that,” Dave said laughing quietly to himself. Don left Dave to carry on and the undercoat was quickly put on. It was pretty patchy in places but Dave was pleased with it reasoning that the next coat would make it a lot better. Don came up after he had finished and said, “Jane's phoned, she's on her way.”

“Well I've done for today. Hopefully I'm going to try and get two more coats on tomorrow.”

“Will there be enough drying time I thought that it took a few hours.”

“I'm hoping that the absorbent plywood will speed things up. Phone and let us know if Tim's coming tomorrow. I'll leave it a day if he is.”

“Sure.”

“Have you ever thought of lobster fishing as a side line? It doesn't do to keep all your eggs in one basket.”

“I'll give it some thought. I was also thinking of doing a taxi service to this nearby island.”

“Might work, what about going over to France to pick up tobacco?”

“I don't know about that and besides I wouldn't be able to navigate that far.”

“I thought that you would just hug the coast and cross over at Dover. You could even go over to Ireland by doing the same at Scotland.”

“Well I was actually thinking of going over to Ireland occasionally, I've a couple of friends over there.”

“Yes you could have quite a time with it,” Dave said with a laugh, “A real playboy's lifestyle. Travel the canals and inside waterways, you could go anywhere that you want.”

“It's worth thinking about.”

“Yes and looking at the progress we are making it won't be long either.”

“Yes,” Don said and went deep into thought.

“Well anyway here's Jane now. Give me a bell tonight if Tim is coming tomorrow otherwise I'll come over. Mind you I might come over anyway to see how it's done.”

“Fair enough,” Don said as Dave got into the car.

As they drove back Dave said, “He said he was going to give Tim a ring tonight.”

“I would have thought that he would have learned from the last time,” Jane said with a laugh.

“Well he does want to get a move on the insides about done and I've even give it an undercoat.”

“Sounds like its coming on well. We'll call in on my mum and pick the paint up.”

“Yes good idea, it's on the way.”

“Oh and Natty said she's got some perspex for him.”

“Really, what does she want for it?”

“Nothing.”

“It's not like her to give anything away,” Dave said in surprise.

“She's got no use for it. She bought it to do something and then changed her mind.”

“Seems like he's falling on his feet with the materials.”

“She's coming over tomorrow with it. She said that she would take it straight over to Don's.”

“He'll be pleased with that. Well unless he hasn't forgiven her for poisoning Steve against him.”

“He will deal with the devil if it was free,” Jane said with a laugh.

“So why did she turn against him then or have they never got on?”

“They've never really got on but I think it came to a head when she broke down in front of him.”

“Sorry?”

“It seems that her husband has been having an affair, well one or two by the sound of it. I don't suppose you would blame him as she's funny about sex, I don't think they've had it in years. Anyway in a moment of weakness she told him and I guess she regretted it later.”

“Well that might explain it. So she's frigid then, that better not run in the family.”

“Why would you have an affair if it did?”

“No, too much hassle,” Dave said with a laugh, “One's enough for me.”

“It had better be,” Jane said laughing.

“Too much at times,” Dave said still laughing, “So has she always been funny about sex?”

“Well they've got two kids. Maybe she thought that, that was expected though as she's big into all that society crap. Now there was an incident a long time ago but I was too young for as you know she is a lot older than me.”

“There's not many people you can say that about,” Dave said in a teasing manner.

“Watch it. I may be close to retirement but I can still pack a punch.”

“Yeah right. So what happened then?”

“From what I can remember she made up an allegation that two youths had raped her. No one believed her and I don't think that it ever got to court.”

“She must have always been nutty then. I thought that it came with age.”

“Well as I said I don't really know much about it.”

“So why does she put up with it, the affairs I mean. You wouldn't would you?”

“I wouldn't no. I think she's more concerned with her public image than anything else.”

“I didn't realise that she had one,” Dave said with a laugh. “I mean everyone hates her over here. Maybe she leads a double life, over there she's all sweetness and innocence and here, well the less said the better.”

“Maybe, Jane said laughing, “And perhaps she's clever over there as well.”

“I think you are entering the realms of fantasy with that one,” Dave said laughing.

“True, I'll just nip in and fetch the paint. You wait here or we'll be here all day. You know how my mam likes to talk you to death.”

“She's lonely that's all.”

Dave had been going round quite often of late to try and get her short term memory back. He reasoned that if he could unlock some of her long term memory it would sharpen her short term one a little. It did have some effect on her but the major effect was that she started doing more for herself. She would clean the house and take the dogs for a walk and even do a little weeding in the garden. Dave was pleased with her progress because he believed that she should have her independence and the only real way to do that would be to get rid of her sloth for she could do a lot more for herself if the truth be known. Yes one of Dave's sayings was that before you can stand on your own two feet you have to get up off your arse.

“All done,” Jane said coming back, “And Mary's at her dad's today so we can have a quiet night in.”

“Fair enough, shall I get in a bottle?”

"No don't bother, besides you will probably be working tomorrow as I can't really see Tim coming around. It sounded like he had a lot of work on."

"Fair enough it will save me a hangover."

"And some money."

"I'm unemployed; I have to watch every penny now you know."

"Oh right," Jane said and they made the short journey home. The rest of the evening was uneventful and they retired to bed at 10.30.

Dave awoke to find Cula waiting, "That was quick," she said, "I've only read one of them."

"And was it suitable?"

"It seemed to be," and passed Dave a piece of paper. He looked at it and read aloud,

**"You're never quite sure with me where you stand
For motive and reason's to me's underhand,
You're looking for purpose why don't you serve me
For discords my direction, my aim's misery."**

After he had finished he said, "So we have to work out what it actually is?"

"I would say so. Are you any good at this kind of thing?"

"I like trying to do them. I don't know if I'm any good though."

Meanwhile back in the land of ice the natives were getting restless. The trolls having literally come to their senses were feeling resentful.

"I say we march on her and take her apart for what she has done to us," one of them called Dreya said.

"She has put a barrier between the two lands," Colla said, "We have already tried."

"Maybe the barrier has been taken down," Bita said, "By the sound of it she's got other things on her mind."

"Then we shall march and find out," Dreya said, "Your friend might be in need of our help."

"There is that," Colla said, "I say we go to our kings and see what they have to say about it."

"Fair enough," Dreya said and they headed back towards Dine's camp where he was in a meeting with Ivan and Gona. He invited them in and the meeting continued.

"We are all agreed on a march," Dine said, "It's just a plan we are in need of."

"Do we really need one?" Dreya said, "Force of numbers should wipe them out."

"Cula the dragon," Gona said and it went quiet, "She is more than capable of destroying us all."

"Ah," Dreya said, "Then what about trapping her in her cave? If she can't get out she can't do us harm."

"Well there is that," Gona said, "We would just need a good strong net to cover the entrance."

"I can supply that," Dine said, "What about Gilda herself though. I have heard that she is invincible."

"We could hold her in chains for eternity," Ivan said, "And as for her hand maidens they can be held until we break their spells."

"That might be a problem," Gona said.

"Really?" Ivan said somewhat taken aback.

"Yes, they lie in Cula's cave."

"Oh."

"With Gilda out of the way I don't think these will be problems," Bita said, "Without their leader they will soon come to terms."

Gilda on the other hand saw things differently, "They intend to march then. Silka, I want you to go to Cula and tell her all that you have seen."

"By your command," Silka said and left the scene.

"Queba I will increase the spells power to make the border more secure but first I want you to sneak through and rescue Pina. I will give you immunity from the spell as I will to Pina so you will have no trouble getting back."

“By your command,” Queba said and also left.

As Gilda stood alone watching the plotters she said, “Curse them and that David Jessel. Cula will quickly finish them though, once I can get her away that is.”

Dave and Cula studied the verse and Dave said, “Discord is my direction, would that mean something that sows discord?”

“Maybe, or someone.”

“You think that it might be an actual person then?”

“Could be though thinking further about it no it can't be for I would have known someone like that but I can't bring one to mind.”

“Could it be lies then? I was thinking about the first line, you know not knowing where you stand.”

“It might tie in with the next line, being underhand.”

“True but I was thinking that the answer might lie a little deeper.”

“Really?”

“I can understand your motive for lying being underhand but the reason side does not quite add up.”

“It seems alright to me.”

“I don't think that reason means the same as motive in this sense otherwise it would just be repeating itself. I think it's more to do with the power of reasoning sort of the cause and not its effect.”

“Oh, so what causes lies then?”

As this was happening the undines and the trolls had got to the border only to find that it was blocked. They had not seen Queba go by for Gilda had given her, her cloak of invisibility though they did hear here the cackle of laughter as she passed.

“What was that?” Dreya said.

“Gilda taunting us,” Ivan said, “But she will pay for she cannot hold out for ever.”

“True,” Bita said, “And Dave must be weakening her for he has already broken one of her spells.”

“I hope he's alright,” Ivan said, “I feel bad about not being able to help him.”

“He'll do fine,” Bita said, “In fact he's doing very well already.”

Back in the cave Dave and Cula were making progress.

“Lies,” Dave said, “I'm not sure what actually causes them but it's usually done for self gain in some way.”

“True but for the cause you will have to go into the nature side of things.”

“Ah,” Dave said, “Deviousness.”

“Discord would fit into that and misery being its aim.”

Silka had just entered the cave as her spell was broken so she was left a little dazed and confused. She was no longer Gilda's hand maiden and all her memories about it were gone. She remembered that she had a message for Cula but its contents were a mystery.

On seeing Silka Cula said, “Come in Silka, this is an honour. I would like you to meet a friend of mine, Dave.”

Dave looked at her warily, not knowing that the spell had been broken but much to his surprise she said, “Pleased to meet you. Any friend of Cula's is a friend of mine.”

“So how can I help you?” Cula asked.

“You know I had something to tell you but it completely slipped my mind. Old age I guess.”

Gilda too, had felt the loss of the spell being broken and it had nearly caused her to collapse. She knew that she had lost one of her hand maidens because part of her had also died. Her thoughts went to Silka and her curses to Dave and the treacherous dragon.

“Never mind,” Cula said, “It must not have been important. Come and talk awhile, Dave's an interesting person. He's not from our world you know.”

“Really,” Silka said and then to Dave, “So where are you actually from then?”

“The material world.”

“Now that's a place my sisters and I have often talked about. We have heard that it is a strange place

where greed is the motivational force.”

“There are a lot of greedy people but not all men are like that. It just seems to be the ones with power.”

“Maybe it’s their greed that gives them the power,” Cula said, “I bet it would make for a strong driving force.”

“You know you are probably right,” Dave said, “Except that it goes under another name.”

“Really, what’s that?”

“Ambition it is actually considered quite a virtue in our world.”

“Sounds a bit topsy-turvy,” Silka said, “It would be hard to know where you actually stand. What about pride, is that considered a virtue too?”

“Yes I would say that it was, except they would say a strong sense of self worth.”

“Amazing,” Silka said, “They must be clever people in your world they have managed to justify the unjustifiable.”

“Well devious might be a more apt description,” Dave said.

“We have just been doing that,” Cula said and gave Silka the piece of paper. She read it and much to her surprise it ignited.

“What happened there?” Cula said.

“I don’t know,” Silka said, “It just turned to fire in my hands.”

“Strange,” Dave said though he guessed it meant that her spell was truly broken.

“Anyway,” Silka said, “What about gluttony, surely that’s considered a vice?”

“Some say it shows a taste for the finer things in life,” Dave said, “It used to be and still is in some places, considered as a sign of wealth and so emulated.”

“Well I never. I would not have believed it unless you told me that. So how did all this deviousness come to be?”

“Hard to say maybe it was from the restless mind that Man got after he had forsaken his purpose.”

“Man has forsook his purpose, when did that happen?”

“Long before I was born so I wouldn’t have a clue.”

“It must be a terrible place to live then.”

“For some, well no not just for some, for the ones that think they are doing well are only deluding themselves for when it comes down to the big picture they are truly lacking.”

“Do they know the big picture then?” Cula said.

“Oh no. when it comes to that sort of thing they are very, if not totally ignorant.”

“That would explain it then.”

Meanwhile back in the land of ice Queba had found Pina but as she was still in the pit and Queba had no rope she could not reach her. She had sneaked past the two guards alright but was reluctant to call her as it might have attracted their attention so she just waited around debating what to do. The rescue party itself was still debating what to do as the barrier was still up and impassable.

“This is no good,” Colla said, “We could be here forever and a day.”

“We’ll head back,” Dine said, “I’ll post a couple of guards to keep checking but that’s the best we can do at present,” and they headed for home.

Gilda had recovered from her loss and was debating with herself on new strategies to defeat Dave. Her power had diminished slightly and she was using most of it to keep the borders impassable so she was in a bit of a predicament. She could not divert the power as it would risk an invasion but she also could not do anything about Dave as the limited power she had left would not make much of an impression. It was a stalemate situation but Dave was not aware of this as he was deep in conversation in the cave.

“So,” he said to Silka, “What do you do then?”

“My purpose?” she said and thought awhile before saying, “I suppose you could say that I help Cula to regulate this world. Well me and my two sisters.”

“Regulate?”

"It is confusing I know. I am the understanding of this world's purpose. Pina is the will of the world and Queba is the knowing."

"What, like one great mind?"

"Yes that's right. Cula is mental consciousness and we were created to help her grow and give her direction. When we are all in balance the world is a healthier place."

"And what about Gilda, does she have a purpose?"

"She is the spirit of the world; well she will be when she is fully evolved."

"Oh and the undines and trolls?"

"The undines are the elemental spirit of water and the trolls; well they are symbolic of a common sense of purpose."

"Right, yes it all fits in nicely. And you said that Gilda was the spirit of the world. Is it your purpose to guide her?"

"That's right. Yes everything in this world is nicely balanced."

"So let me get this right your job is more of a teacher than a hand maiden."

"Handmaiden," Silka said in surprise, "Where ever did you get that idea?"

"It is common knowledge," Cula said slightly confused, "They call you the three hand maidens of Gilda."

"Well I don't know how that came to be. We are there to advise her so that she can grow. Handmaidens sound like we work for her as a servant of some kind."

"But you have called yourselves that on quite a few occasions," Cula said even more confused.

"Never to my knowledge no you must be mistaken."

"What's going on," Cula said, "Is this some kind of game you are playing?"

Dave thought it prudent to elaborate so said, "I am afraid that she has been spell bound up until recently."

"What?" both Cula and Silka said at the same time.

"It's true, that piece of paper we decoded was the spell. She has been held against her will by it."

"What," Cula said in disgust, "And I've been guarding it, what a fool I've been. So why did it ignite then?"

"Purified," Dave said, "Cleansed by fire."

"So I have been spell bound all the time and I did not know it. I, too am a fool."

"Don't be disheartened the trolls were also tricked. She's quite a lady that Gilda."

"She won't be when I get hold of her," Cula said, "She will be made to pay for this to think that I fell for her lies."

"She is paying already," Dave said, "For when that spell broke part of her died."

"So if we decode the other two she will be defeated," Cula said.

"Purified," Dave said correcting her, "Or evolved would be another word for it."

"We'll be doing her a favour then," Silka said, "I'm not sure if I like the sound of that after what she has done."

"You'll be releasing your sisters from their spells, some good will come out of it."

"There is that I suppose."

Tiredness had come over Dave by then for unbeknown to him Gilda had found enough power to send him to sleep. It was not a permanent sleep though for she did not have the strength for that. It was only a holding move to try and buy herself more time.

Dave woke up to find Jane was already up and dressed. She heard him stir so by the time he got down stairs she had a cup of tea waiting.

"Timed is perfect as usual," Dave said taking it off her.

"Yes you'll need all your strength for all the painting you'll be doing."

"It should be done today. Then he'll have to put his hand in his pocket to fork out for the beading."

"I don't think he's got much money."

"He never has. I suppose if push comes to shove I will get it."

“No you keep your hand in your pocket you've already done enough for him.”

“I was only joking. He'll have to fetch it soon though as we'll be ready to start fixing it by tomorrow.”

“Well I'm not doing much today I could always take him down to the builder's merchant.”

“I'll give it a quick measure up then and let you know what we actually need.”

“Sounds good, it won't be till dinner though as I've got to take my mam out.”

“There's no hurry and besides he might not have the money for it yet.”

“I'll ask him when I drop you off. Anyway have we time for another cuppa or are you heading straight off?”

“No there's plenty of time. I'll make it.”

“You're a gentleman,” Jane said passing him her empty cup.

“A fool by any other name,” Dave said taking it off her. As Dave made the tea he said, “Oh before I forget I'm going to take some of that black hammerite with me and give the anchor and rudder a paint.”

“Are you sure you'll have enough time to do that?”

“Should do,” Dave said and gave her, her cup. After they had finished the tea Dave fetched the paint and they were soon on their way to Don's. On arrival they found him with a can of cheap lager in his hand just standing about looking at the boat.

“Busy day ahead,” Dave said, not mentioning the drink.

“Yes,” Don said, “I've still got that cooker to sort out.”

“Tim not coming then?”

“Tomorrow.”

“I'll take you to get some beading today if you like.” Jane said.

“Sure,” Don said, “Well if you don't mind.”

“Not at all, I'll be back around dinner,” and left them to it. After she had gone Dave said, “I'll measure up and give you a list of what you will need. You can take it down with you.”

“Aren't you coming then?”

“Well I don't need to be there.”

“I'd rather you were, I don't want to bring back the wrong stuff.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and went down to the boat to measure up and start painting. As he was measuring up Don came down and Dave said, “I'll leave the architraves until the windows are in.”

“Good idea. I managed to get a few bolts from Harry so there should be enough.”

“About the architraves I was thinking of using some straight cut planed timber and drilling holes in it for the bolts so it will clamp itself.”

“Sound a good idea.”

“It will make it a lot easier to do and get over the problem of how to actually fit it in place.”

“Yes I can see that. I'm not sure if the bolts are actually long enough for it though.”

“Back to the drawing board then.”

“Sorry about that I'm afraid that I've got to take what I can get. Beggars can't be choosers.”

“You have got enough money for the beading haven't you?”

“Yes, no problem.”

“Well here's the list anyway. I thought we would use quadrant beading. Two sizes, the bigger ones for the insides of the ceilings and the smaller ones for the uprights.”

“Sure,” Don said not really interested and took the list. Dave got to work with the paint brush and after doing a section stopped to check it. It was a lot better than before but was still patchy in places though and so would need another coat. It went on at a good pace though so by mid morning he was finished. To give the paint a bit more drying time he decided to paint the anchor next. As he was doing that Don came down with a cup of tea. “It looks a lot better,” he said looking at the inside.

“Yes, it needs another coat to finish it off though.”

“Have you got enough paint?”

“Should have.”

“Well I've got a tin in the shed if you haven't. It's not gloss but it will do the job.”

“Save it for the deck, well if you change your mind about it that is.”

“Er yes,” Don said, telling Dave that he would not.

“It's up to you but as I said you want to make a good impression. The inside is starting to take shape now.”

“Well it does look good I'll give you that.”

“Wait until the beading and architrave are on and stained it will really look the business.”

“I suppose. Anyway I'll get back to the cooker and leave you to it.”

Dave painted the anchor and after he had finished it looked like it was a new one. He then turned his brush to the rudder and made a fair job of it. Jane came back just as he was finishing, “I'll go and give Don a shout we shouldn't be too long.”

“He wants me to come as well.”

“Really, why?”

“He thinks he'll get the wrong stuff,” Dave said with a laugh.

“Oh well,” Jane said shrugging her shoulders and went down to the shed to fetch him.

When they got to the builders merchant Dave counted out what he would need and worked out what it would cost. “About £12.50 I reckon Don,” Dave said to make sure that he had enough to cover it.

“Oh I did not realise it would cost that much.”

“What,” Dave said in surprise, “So how much have you actually got then?”

“£8.52.”

“Give it here I'll buy it.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, you can give me the rest when you've got it,” Dave said knowing that he would never see it again.

“That's very good of you,” Don said and gave him the money. Dave paid for the materials and they were soon on their way back.

“Oh Jack is supposed to be coming around later,” Don said as they were driving back.

“Who's Jack?” Dave said.

“He used to live in a house that my mother used to rent out,” Jane said, “Him, his brother and another fellow.”

“Oh.”

“Well he wasn't really supposed to be there,” Jane said, “He used to have to hide every time she went around to collect the rent it became a bit of a game really.”

“And your mother used to collect the rent,” Dave said, “That must have been quite a long time ago. So where's he living now?”

“In a care home,” Jane said and laughed before saying, “Though they don't like him drinking there so he comes up to see Don and has one there.”

“Yes,” Don said, “He never brings any though. He will say I brought you a drink but as it was such a hot day I ended up drinking it myself.”

“So he likes a drink then?” Dave said.

“Oh yes,” Don said, “All three of them did. I used to have many a session with them when I went around to collect the rent.”

On seeing that Dave was confused Jane said, “That was when it got a little too much for my mother.”

“Oh right, I was going to say.”

They pulled up at Don's and all got out. “I can't stop too long,” Jane said, “I promised to take my mother to the gardening centre.”

“I thought I had sorted out the garden.”

“She likes to have a cup of tea in the cafe there. There's a lot of elderly people get in there. Anyway

I'll get off now and pick you up a little later." Out of Don's earshot she said, "I'll tell you all about the house that Jack lived at then, you'll love it."

"See you later then," Dave said with a smile and gave her a kiss.

After she had left Don said, "I may as well get back to the cooker then."

"Is there much to do to it then?"

"A fair bit. In fact I'm thinking of using another one instead as I can't seem to get it right," and left Dave shaking his head in amazement.

After he had gone Dave got back to painting the inside of the cabin. He painted a section once more and stepped back to see how it looked. "That will do," he said aloud to himself pleased with the finish and relieved that it would not need another coat. The rest of the coating went on quickly and as the sun hit the inside of the cabin it lit up a treat.

Don was most impressed with it and so was Jane when she returned to pick him up. As they drove home Dave said, "Oh that Jack did not turn up."

"It's touch and go with him generally."

"You were going to tell me about when he lived at your mother's house?"

"Oh you would not have seen anything like it in your life. Dog muck everywhere, well I think it was dog, you could never be too sure with that shower."

"Really?"

"Yes, three alcoholics sharing the same house is asking for trouble I suppose though."

"But they paid the rent on time?"

"It wasn't really rent it was just a nominal sum. My mother was too soft with them. She should have made them keep the house clean. It got that bad that she could not go around anymore and so used to send Don instead."

"So it wasn't that it got too much for your mother then?"

"Well it was," Jane said with a laugh, "Although not in the sense that you mean."

"Oh right," Dave said laughing, "I see that Don is back on the booze again."

"That can he had this morning?" Jane said as they pulled into their drive way, "I noticed that myself. I wonder why that is then for he was supposed to be giving it up to start a fresh life."

"That's what I thought," Dave said as they both got out of the car, "Maybe it's just a little nervousness as his dreams are getting close to being turned into reality."

"Or maybe he's having second thoughts; it could be another case of the caravans."

"I hope not. I've put a lot of work into that boat and the old git owes me for the materials."

"Yes I saw that," Jane said laughing, "Fancy coming out with only £8."

"Yes and not only that it was all in ten and twenty pence pieces. What am I going to do with that lot?"

"Get a large whiskey bottle," Jane said laughing.

"Yeah right, and perhaps a full one so Don can drink himself to death with it."

"Arr, that's not nice," Jane said with a laugh, "Especially after he gave me a hand to clean up the house after they had gone. You should be ashamed of yourself."

"Was it much of a mess then?" Dave said laughing.

"You wouldn't believe it. The amount of crap that we took from the house, well it had to be seen. The smell of urine as well it must have taken weeks to air the place out."

"They didn't know where the toilet was then?"

"Oh yes, it was the carpets, their beds, in fact I would say that the whole house was a toilet to them."

"And Don used to go round the house drinking with them. He must have had a strong stomach."

"He was probably too drunk to notice," Jane said laughing, "No it must have taken six months to get the house back in shape as we had to do it all on the cheap."

"Didn't your mother give you any money towards it? I mean I take it that this was before the rest of the family grabbed it all."

“Not a penny. I had to get the walls re-plastered and quite a bit of building work besides.”

“Even on the cheap it must have cost.”

“Well the husband of one of the nurses I used to work with did it. It was a sort of a foreigner so it was cheaper than it would normally be.”

“So how much did you end up out of pocket?”

“A couple of thousand.”

“That's a heavy cost to bear.”

“I know. I wouldn't mind but the house is going to be left to Steve when my mother dies.”

“So did you send him the bill?”

“He said he would pay it but he wanted receipts for it. He knew damn well that there weren't any as it was mostly cash in hand.”

“Oh one of those people. Mind you looking at the state of him I would say that your mother would outlive him by many years so I wouldn't think he'll get any benefit from it.”

“I don't want the house don't get me wrong, I'm more than happy with what I've got already. But at the time, whilst I was doing it I mean, it was a struggle. Ah, it's all water under the bridge now so I don't worry about it.”

“It will be pretty easy to get hold of some receipts if it bothers you. I could write them up myself if you like.”

“It will only be another excuse, I've learned long ago to take anything he says with a pinch of salt.”

“Fair enough, so they made quite a mess of the place then, were there mice there?”

“No,” Jane said laughing, “The rats killed them, many a time I saw them running around with their little overalls on.”

“Sorry?”

“The house was too dirty even for them,” Jane said still laughing, “You had to wipe your feet when you left it.”

“Oh right.”

“Anyway enough of the house Don should be getting the perspex tonight and as Natty's here I won't have to see my mother tonight.”

“A quiet night in then Mary still at her father's?”

“Till tomorrow night and as you are not working tomorrow I'll treat you to a bottle tonight.”

“That's good of you but I don't really fancy a drink tonight. Get something for yourself though; it's good to wind down occasionally.”

“No I won't bother. I don't really like the idea of drinking on my own. I'll end up like Don if I'm not careful.”

“What sad and lonely,” Dave said with a laugh, “No I can't see you ever being lonely.”

“Just sad then that's very kind of you to say that. What do you want for your tea poison?”

“I thought that she was at your mother's tonight. You've not invited her around have you?”

“No she's banned. She used to come around at one time for my mother, when she was in the right frame of mind had banned her from her house. I was struggling to look after Mary and she just used to sit there and expect to be waited on hand and foot. The ungrateful bitch even told me to be quiet once as she wanted to watch some soap opera on the T.V.”

“Really,” Dave said with a laugh, “Well they say that you can't pick your family but I reckon that you must have done something really bad in your past life to end up with a family like yours.”

“And I'll be doing something really bad in this life the way they carry on.”

“It will be called justifiable homicide so I wouldn't worry too much about it. You might even get a service to the community award thinking about it.”

“I'll make the tea,” Jane said with a laugh and went to the kitchen.

Whilst she was in the kitchen the phone rang and Dave answered it, “It's your friend,” he said so Jane went to answer it. When she came back she said, “She wants me to give her a hand to clear some stuff out.”

The friend that Dave was talking about was the one that had got Jane to say that she was her Carer. "Do you think that she will finally get rid of it this time?" Dave said for she had a nasty habit of changing her mind after it had all been sorted out and wanting to keep it. "I hope so. The place could really do with sorting out. They have things from where their daughter was a baby and yet they still can't seem to let go." "I bet the place must be a mess." "Yes, I think that they are even proud of it. Her husband seems to take great delight in pointing out the mice to me." "I don't think that they are right in the head. I will say one thing though they are starting to waste a lot of your time." "I know but what can I do?" "Walk away." "I can't do that, I've promised them now." "You don't owe them anything. I reckon they conned you anyway." "Oh don't go on about it." "Alright I've said enough on the matter," and the subject changed. "Well you've got a lie in tomorrow." "I thought that I might go down and have a look at what he's doing. You never know I might do something similar myself one day." "There is that I suppose although I can't really ever see you needing that skill." "Who knows I might get a boat one day myself." "I didn't know that you were interested in it, you kept that quiet." "I'm a very mysterious man sometimes," Dave said with a laugh. "Don't I know it," Jane said laughing, "I can't work you out most of the time." "I like to keep my cards close to my chest. I mean you never know who might be looking." "So are you interested in the sea then?" "No, not really," Dave said laughing, "Well I don't actually know as I've never been on it." "Really," Jane said in surprise, "I thought that you would have been out deep sea fishing or something." "I used to fish in the canal when I was a kid but that was a long time ago. No I think that I would find it boring now. I don't know what they see in it. I mean it's not like they actually keep what they catch." "Don does. He used to bring us some back when he used to go." "Well it's not like Don to let anything get away. He might bring us some back when he gets settled." "If he ever goes I mean it seems to me that he's changing his mind." "Time will tell," Dave said and the conversation continued. The rest of the evening passed quickly and they both went to bed at 10.30.

Chapter 3.

Dave woke up to a surprised Cula, "I didn't realise that you had to sleep so often?"

"Well I don't usually, there's something strange going on here."

"It could be a sleeping spell although usually it would last a lot longer."

"I think that she had been weakened."

"Then we shall see if we can weaken her some more," Cula said and fetched the other two verses.

She gave one to Dave, who read it aloud,

"All is not what it seems when I'm on the prowl

I cloud your reason; dim your eyes for fair means or for foul,

I leave you veiled in mystery for things aren't how they look

All you have imagination, the one thing I never took."

"Well whatever it is it can be used for either good or bad purpose," Silka said.

“Really,” Cula said, “How do you work that out?”

“Dim your eyes for fair means or for foul.”

“Right, but dim your eyes?”

“That would be the same as all is not what it seems,” Dave said “And veiled in mystery as well. I think that it's talking about magik but I don't see how it would equate with either of your sisters.”

“Well I don't really know what my connection with deviousness is,” Silka said, “Maybe if we found that out it would give us a start.”

“Good idea,” Dave said, “You are the understanding if I remember right.”

“That's right but how does that equate?”

“How does understanding equate with deviousness,” Dave said and went deep into thought. After a while he said, “It can't.”

“Sorry?” Cula said.

“Surely if you had true understanding you could never be devious. It takes away your understanding.”

“Well it took away mine I suppose,” Silka said, “After all I had no will of my own.”

“No,” Dave said, “She replaced it with her deviousness.”

“And as it was part of her through me she lives. Well did anyway.”

“So why should deviousness take away our understanding?” Cula asked.

“It self-centres it,” Dave said, “That was why all your thoughts were on Gilda's welfare.”

“So understanding can't be self centred,” Cula said, “Is that what you are saying?”

“Yes, it only grows through understanding the big picture or your purpose in life. Self centredness feeds the ego so your understanding being conditioned to serve, serves that.”

“So the ego grows at the expense of your understanding,” Cula said, “Yes things are getting clearer.”

“Now you said that Gilda was the spirit of the world if I remember right,” Dave said, “Could you elaborate a little with that?”

“Yes sure,” Silka said, “She is the spiritual will while Pina is the physical. When evolved she will go to the Land of Spiritual Purpose.”

“Sorry?”

“The air world.”

The collective conscious,” Dave said on realisation, “But first she has to purify herself?”

“Yes, she has to evolve from an animal to spiritual being.”

“And deviousness would be one of the things she has to purge herself off?”

“That's right.”

“That would make it negative understanding but I still haven't grasped it yet,” Dave said and thought for a moment before he said, “Got it. Deviousness is putting your understanding to bad purpose therefore it is an obstacle to growth. It's nothing to do with understanding itself but comes from the will through its analytical powers.”

“Right,” Silka said, “And magik?”

“We'll have to define it first and then take it from there.”

“It's the harnessing of universal powers,” Cula said, “To either good or bad purpose.”

“And how is it actually done?”

“According to the verse through the imagination,” Silka said.

“Through the spirit,” Dave said, “That would explain Gilda's role in things. Clouds your reason was also there so that means it's to do with the will though I can't think how it would sap it.”

“Take over it,” Cula said correcting him.

“Ah,” Dave said, “An enlightened will is a will that serves it is not a will to be served.”

“Er yes?” Silka said.

“It serves universal laws,” Dave said elaborating, “Magik is getting the universe to serve you. It must be Pina then,” and with that the paper caught fire, “And that confirms it.”

Pina in the land of ice came to her senses and was surprised to find herself trapped in a hole. Queba had got a rope by then so she climbed out and said, "What is going on here?"

"Don't worry about it," Queba said, "They will pay dearly for this. Gilda will see to that."

"Gilda, what has she got to do with this?"

"What," Queba said in confusion, "We are her handmaidens she will look after us."

"Handmaidens since when?"

"Since always," Queba said confused by the change in her sister, "Now come quickly before the guards see us."

"Is this some sort of trick? You are not my sister, you can't be. Help, help," she shouted.

"You're mad. You want to stay here you are more than welcome," and ran off.

Gilda too had felt the change and knew that it meant she had lost her magik powers. She also knew that the trolls would be coming for her soon and with only her animal cunning left she would have no chance against them.

The guards at the border saw a flash and knew that the barrier was now lifted so made their way back to inform the others. All of this though went unnoticed in Cula's den.

"The last one then," Dave said and read aloud,

"Know me now for what I am, some might call it guile

I'll tie you up in little knots, my purpose is my style,

You'll never know where you are for that is how I work

So know me now and understand there's nowhere I won't lurk."

After he had finished he said, "Well it's definitely Queba but as for the verse it sounds like deviousness."

"I thought that myself," Cula said, "But it can't be twice can it?"

"No, well I don't think so anyway."

"Well if it's any help," Silka said "It goes to a different place."

"That's right," Dave said, "That would make it animal cunning," and with that the paper ignited.

Queba was running at the time and the shock to her system made her fall over. After she got up she went back to Pina and said, "What are we doing here?"

"I don't know," Pina said but Bita was there to enlighten them. He had seen what had happened and realised that the spell had been broken, "You were both enchanted."

"Enchanted," Pina said, "By who?"

"Gilda."

"What," Queba said, "Whatever for?"

"So that you would serve her I must see King Dine now and tell him that the spell has been broken. Come with me so he can see for himself."

"Sure," Pina said and they both followed him.

Gilda lay in suspended animation now for all her powers were gone though she had not fully made the transition as Dave had still a bit to travel.

Back in the cave Dave said, "So how does it equate with the other two?" and thought awhile, "I know that the Soul has to evolve out of it before you can turn spiritual, in fact it does actually hold you back once it has served its purpose."

"Served its purpose?" Cula said.

"You only really need it for basic survival. Once you evolve past that then it can be quite a hindrance."

"Oh, I did not realise."

Back at Dine's camp Bita and the two sisters arrived back at the same time as the border guards.

"So the border's down and two of her spells are broken," Dine said, "She is weak and vulnerable."

"And the dragon?" Gona said.

"Well Dave must have pacified her to get to the spells. I say we march," and the gathered trolls and undines cheered in agreement.

“And see how the ice is melting,” Bita said, “Progress indeed,” and they set on their way arriving quickly at the border.

Back in the cave Dave said, “So Gilda before she is spiritually reborn is in fact the ego. I should have guessed that really as I was told she was the drive for self preservation. Now to blend her into the world of water you would have animal cunning or self consciousness, magik of self delusion and deviousness or self centredness.”

With that Gilda metamorphosised and turned into a swan and flew off into another dimension. Ivan and Dine saw the change as they had just arrived in time.

“Whatever happened here?” Ivan said.

“I'm not sure,” Dine said, “All I know is that our troubles are over. Let's see if we can find Dave as he might be a little wiser.”

Back in the cave they were unaware that it was all over.

“So let me get this right,” Cula said, “The ego is comprised of three aspects?”

“Well not as such,” Dave said, “It's more of a catalyst to the aspects. Gilda was not the Understanding but she had an effect on it, the same as the Will and Soul.”

“Just think of her as self centredness,” Silka said coming to Dave's aid. “She made the Will, Understanding and Soul self centred.”

“Oh I see,” Cula said and her ears pricked up, “Some people are coming and quite a few by the sound of it.”

“That will be the trolls and the undines,” Dave said, “I had better go out and explain the situation,” and left the cave. He did not get very far before he saw them and told them what had happened. They in turn told him about Gilda so he knew that his job was done. Cula invited them all into her cave and it was spacious enough for them all to fit in.

“So a new world begins,” Dave said, “And did you notice that all the mist has disappeared?”

“Yes,” Bita said, “And the ice has virtually melted, it is indeed a new world.”

“And we have Dave to thank for it,” Dine said and turning to Dave, “What are your plans now?”

“With Cula's permission I would like to rest here and make the journey to the land of the giants refreshed.”

“You are welcome to stay for as long as you like,” Cula said, “But did you say that you intend to travel to the land of the giants?”

“Yes, that is my next stop.”

“No one from this world has ever been there. Why would you want to go there?”

“For mental growth is it a bad place?”

“Not really no it's just that it is a dangerous journey and to get into the world itself is virtually impossible as it is well guarded.”

“By giants?”

“No by a terrible creature called Dryden, half man and half beast with a little bit of malice thrown in for good measure.”

“Can he be defeated?”

“Only by wisdom, he asks three questions.”

“I know, I know and I die if I fail to answer them.”

“No, you just don't get in.”

“Oh and would you happen to know any of them?”

“Sorry.”

“I might be able to help you,” Gona said, “I believe that the first question was 'what's my name'.”

“Are you sure,” Dave said, “That's a bit to er obvious.”

“Well I didn't know until Cula mentioned it.”

“Oh sorry,” Dave said and turning to Cula, “How did you happen to know it then?”

“I was there when he was created. He was put in as a safeguard so that if one of the worlds got tainted it would not spread to the other one.”

“Oh right, so you don't really know if it's a bad place or not then.”

“Not really, it was good the last time that I heard but I thought this one was also so I would not really rely on my judgment.”

“Well she was devious,” Dave said, “I would not take it to heart.”

“No,” Gona said, “And besides she has gone now.”

“True,” Cula said, “Now the journey itself involves crossing dangerous swamps and areas of quick sand but I could save you a lot of trouble by flying you straight to Dryden.”

“That's very kinds of you but I would still need to know a little about the terrain as I still have to get back.”

“I could wait for you.”

“I don't know how long I will be there. Besides you are already doing me a big enough service in taking me.”

“Might I make a suggestion?” Ivan said.

“Sure.”

“I will wait for you and when you get back contact Cula. I can do it through the collective mind.”

“I did not realise,” Dave said, “It will mean waiting around for quite a long time though.”

“I was hoping to have persuaded you to let me go in by then.”

“I thought that you could not enter the land of the giants.”

“Only because it is guarded.”

“Oh, well you are more than welcome to come with me then. In fact I would prefer the company.”

“Then it's sorted.”

“Good. It sounds like I am going into a world I am completely ignorant of.”

“Well you know it's a place for mental growth,” Bita said.

“And I also know that this world had to be purified before I get in so maybe it is a good world then and I have nothing to worry about.”

“Maybe,” Cula said, “Keep that in your heart and you should be alright.”

“I'll bare that in mind,” Dave said and they talked some more until Dave got tired and fell to sleep. Dave awoke to find Jane up and waiting, “I've made you a cup of tea and then we best get off if you want to see Tim at work.”

“Sounds good to me,” Dave said and quickly got dressed and had his tea. They were soon at Don's where much to their surprise they found bad news waiting.

“I'm afraid he's been and gone,” Don said, “He's had to go back to get a job done.”

“Oh,” Dave said.

“He said that you could cut the holes out and fit the windows if you like. The perspex is here it just wants to be cut to size.”

“What, so what's the difference then?”

“Sorry?”

“Cut the holes out for the windows now. I could have made the shell with the holes already in and saved a lot of time and materials.”

“It's done now.”

“And as for putting the windows in before he fibre glasses it that's probably one of the most foolish ideas I've ever heard.”

“No it's not,” Don said coming to Tim's aid.

“They'll end up getting covered in that special paint; you'll never get it off again. It's just an accident waiting to happen.”

“Well maybe but I'll risk it.”

“Your boat so when's he actually planning to come around and do it?”

“It will be early next week.”

“Right,” Dave said with a smile.

“The paint still hasn't come yet you know. I don't know what he's playing at.”

“Never mind I'll cut the holes out then.”

“Right, I'll get the sizes that Tim gave me then.”

“Wouldn't you be better trying to work it out around the perspex?” Dave said in surprise.

“Not at all these are the sizes that I have to work to.”

“Whatever. If you haven't enough you'll always be able to get some more.”

“Well she gave me three good sheets I think that there should be more than enough,” and went back to the shed.

Dave shook his head in disbelief as he watched Don make his way to the shed. He was quickly coming to the conclusion that neither of them knew what they were doing and he was stuck in the middle trying to make a silk purse out of a pig's ear. “Ah well,” he said to himself, “Look at it philosophically they are a waste of time and space.”

Don returned with the sizes and a can of extra strong lager, “Jack left me this. It's the last but I'll make you a cup of tea if you like.”

“No thanks,” Dave said taking the list, I've not long had one,” and started to work out where they would go. There were eight in all. A square one at the back which he marked out first for it was the easiest and as the jigsaw was handy also cut it out. He did the front one next and also cut it out. This was the largest window and took up virtually all of the plywood so when it was cut the inside looked a lot lighter.

“It's starting to take shape now,” Don said, “You seem to be managing alright so I'll get back and carry on working on the cooker.”

“You still working on that?” Dave said in surprise.

“No it's a different one, that other one was too much hassle.”

“Oh,” Dave said smiling to himself as Don went back to the shed. He had a sneaking feeling that, that was where he kept his hoard of alcohol for no one would waste so much time on a cooker, but that was none of his business so he carried on with his work.

The last six windows were placed three either side the back four being square and the front two triangular. They were easily marked out for Dave used the walkway to measure to the bottom of the windows and soon they were also cut. Dave went back to the shed where he found Don looking sheepish, “All done,” he said.

“That was quick I'll give you a hand to carry the perspex down if you like,” and they took the three sheets to the boat. Now ideally there should have been an inch overlap all around to allow enough room for the bolts but if they would have done that there would not have been enough perspex so a compromise was in order. Now as luck would have it one of the sheets was only ½ inch less than the width of four of the windows so Dave managed to get three windows out of it with just three saw cuts. The other windows were not so easy and it was quite a task to get them to fit. Eventually with a little jiggery pokery Dave had all eight windows roughly to size and so placed them underneath all of their prospective openings.

“Now,” Dave said, “I know that you are not going to take my advice about putting in the windows but all I will say is keep the bolts away from the corners as it will make my life a lot easier.”

“Er sure, why is that then?”

“I've got to cut out mitres there. It will be a lot harder with bolts in the way.”

“Oh right, yes I'll make sure of that.”

“I think we'll be virtually finished by the time it is fibre glassed there's not much left to do.”

“There's quite a lot actually. I've got to sort out the cooker, the water pump, fit a splitter, no there's loads left.”

“They're only little jobs aren't they?” Dave said in surprise.

“Well I wouldn't say that I haven't got the splitter yet and then Harry said that he would put it on as he was an engineer.”

“Oh right, so you are not doing it yourself then.”

“Oh no it's well beyond my means. No, Harry is the man for the job.”

“Well all I've got to do is to bead the inside and that's the woodwork done.”

“Great, yes it's certainly taking shape.”

“And how are your plans coming on? Are you any further forward?”

“I'll just turn up and take it as it comes it doesn't do to get too bogged down in detail.”

“Really,” Dave said in surprise, “That's a bit risky isn't it? What about if you go down and nobody likes you?”

“Everyone likes me.”

“Yes, you're a stranger and some might see you as a threat.”

“Threat, what me?”

“Competition. You want to go deep sea fishing, how many of them make a living doing the same?”

“Well that idea's fell from grace since the last time we spoke about it. No I won't be doing it, well only friends.”

“Why's that then?”

“You need a license and special equipment.”

“Sorry?”

“Ship to shore radio and quite a bit of technical gear.”

“Oh, so what are you going to do now?”

“I was thinking of using it as a sort of taxi service. There's a place called Shell Island, maybe there or just up and down the coast.”

“Would there be much demand for that sort of thing, enough to make a living I mean?”

“I could supplement it with a bit of gardening, a bit of D.I.Y as well as I'm quite good at that.”

“Really, and do you reckon you could get enough work to get by?”

“I won't really know until I get there but I'm hoping that there will be enough.”

“They'll be a very clicky band you know. You know what those fisher folk can be like.”

“I have heard.”

“Yes it might be a good idea to make a good impression.”

“I'm not painting it white.”

“No I wasn't on about that although it would be a good idea as you want to make your boat look its best. I mean you don't want them thinking that you are just an old scrounger do you?”

“What?” Don said as the remark had hit home, “Why do you say that?”

“You turn up with a boat that looks a mess and they won't think that you are a man of substance. No you'll leave a bad impression with them and not get off to a good start.”

“So what's your idea of making a good impression then?” Don said, not liking Dave's logic though seeing the truth in it.

“Bring a couple of bottles of whiskey with you. Invite the neighbours around for a drink and who knows you might find some good contacts.”

“That's not a bad idea; yes I can see that working. Daisy's pleased with the progress on the boat by the way.”

“Really,” Dave said in surprise as it was not like Don's wife to take an interest in what he did.

“Yes she said that it's coming on a treat, she's well happy.”

“Er good,” Dave said not really knowing what else to say. Jane drove up around then and pulling up by the boat she said, “If really looks the part with the windows cut out. Yes, it shouldn't be too long.”

“That's what I said,” Dave said, “Don still thinks that there's a lot to do yet though.”

“Really?” Jane said.

“Well not that much I suppose,” Don said, “It's just getting it all done that will take the time.”

“Oh right,” Jane said not understanding.

“Anyway,” Dave said, “I'll come around tomorrow and make a start on the beading.”

“Saturday?” Don said.

“Yes, there's not much to do so I'll rush to get it out of the way.”

“Well that's dedication.”

As Dave and Jane drove off Jane said, “You don't usually like working weekends you must like doing it.”

“Oh no I just want to get it out of the way and put it down to experience.”

“It's not that bad surely?”

“Worse. He doesn't do too much and the little that he does do needs to be done again. However is he going to manage when he goes over to Wales?”

“Well the stuff that you have done looks good that's all that really matters at the end of the day.”

“I suppose so though it seems a shame that it's wasted. You know what; I don't think he'll ever go.”

“I got that feeling myself,” Jane said with a laugh.

“It turns out that he won't be able to make a living out of fishing now; he hasn't got the money needed.”

“For what?”

“Ship to shore radio, navigation equipment, a license for a start.”

“That sounds expensive, so what's he going to do for a living then?”

“Gardening, D.I.Y. oh and a taxi service. Yes quite a collection.”

“He'll be back home quite quickly then,” Jane said laughing.

“Yes, I feel like I've wasted my time.”

“No, don't say that. What you have done is good, that's all that matters.”

“Well it will be over soon though God knows what he's going to do with it when he finishes it.”

“Probably sell it then.”

“If he makes a profit I will want paying,” Dave said and laughed before he said, “Mind you I can't really see it myself. I don't know much about prices but I would say he paid well over the odds.”

“Really?”

“Yes, no I would say he would be very lucky just to get his money back.”

“Oh, and what about the loan that he took out for it, he will never pay it back.”

“That's his problem. I'll just be glad to see the back of it that's all.”

“So you won't be taking up boat building as a hobby then?” Jane said with a laugh.

“Oh I don't mind the work I quite enjoy it in fact, it's just the situation that's all.”

“Well I suppose it must be quite soul destroying especially as he hasn't really got enough money to do a decent job.”

“I know, though the tragedy is that we are not talking about a lot of money only a few quid.”

“He's heading for quite a fall,” Jane said as they pulled onto their driveway.

“True,” Dave said as he got out.

“I can't stop too long I promised I would give Louise a hand to sort some stuff out,” (Mary's friend's mother)

“Do you think that she will actually get around to throwing it out this time?”

“Who knows? Anyway I'll make us something to eat, you must be hungry.”

“A little.”

Jane made the tea and afterwards went to Louise's where she was to meet Mary. Dave just sat at home and thought about the boat. He had pretty mixed feelings on the matter as although he did like doing it he was starting to feel that it was a bit of a waste of time. His thoughts drifted onto Don himself and he realised how little he actually knew about him. He had only met him a few times before they had embarked on the project and from what he had seen of him he seemed a genuine man. Time and association though had altered his perception of him and he was starting to think of him in a very negative light. The ringing phone knocked him of his thought train and he got up to answer it. “Alright John,” Dave said after finding out who it was, “How's it going?”

“Sound, are you busy at the moment?”

“Well I'm not working. I'm giving some divvy a hand to do a boat but I reckon there's only a few days left.”

“Oh, no I'll soon be ready to start work on the attic I was wondering if you were still interested in giving me a hand?”

“Sure, when are we talking about?”

“I was hoping to start next weekend. Would that be alright for you?”

“Oh yes I'll be finished long before then.”

“Great, there is one thing though.”

“What's that then?”

“I've got six R.S.J.'s to bring up. I was hoping to get them up before the weekend so I can have them all ready.”

“Sure, when were you thinking of actually doing it then?”

“Whenever is convenient for you.”

“Tonight?”

“Really, I'll pick you up then. What times best for you?”

“Now if you want I'm doing nothing else.”

“I'll be about 20 minutes and hung up.

True to his word John picked him up on time and as they drove to the house he said, “I intend to do a couple of hours after work each day as there is a hell of a lot to do.”

“Do you want me to come over?”

“No just the weekends would be more than enough.”

“Well the offers there.”

“Thanks anyway. I want to put them roughly in place and bolt them together. Would that be alright?”

“Yes sure,” Dave said as they pulled up outside John's house.

“Do you want a cup of tea before you start?” John said.

“No, we'll crack straight on if you don't mind. We can have one later.”

“Sure,” John said and took him into the back garden where six white painted joists lay waiting.

“Here we go. I reckon it will be a job and a half to get it through the hatch.”

“There's only one way to find out,” Dave said and they both picked one of the joists up. It was not that heavy really and it was soon placed on the landing near the hatch. Five more joists later they were ready to start. Dave got into the attic and John passed the first one up. It went up quite easily and soon they were all in place and bolted together. Over a cup of tea John said, “Thanks for that I don't know what I would have done otherwise.”

“No problem.”

“I'll level them up and have them bedded before the weekend.”

“Well it's still early.”

“I've got to get the laser of Frank from work first. It will be easy to do then.”

“Fair enough.”

“I'll drop you back if you like then,” John said and finished his tea. They were soon back and Dave said goodbye before going in. He told Jane about what he had been up to and she said, “You're taking a lot on aren't you? You are planning on finishing the boat I take it.”

“Oh yes I won't be making a proper start until next Saturday. That should give me more than enough time.”

“Oh he phoned whilst you were out. He's going Saturday.”

“What, will it be ready by then?”

“He says so.”

“If he had any sense he would have left it till the spring, what's he playing at?”

“I don't know. I don't think he could last a winter out there.”

“Well I reckon four days will see me done and as for Tim, well I wouldn't have a clue.”

“Eight days isn't a long time. Ah well I guess he knows what he's doing.”

“Yeah right,” Dave said with a laugh, “Up until recently I got that impression that the idea has fell

from favour and now all of a sudden he wants to go straight away.”

“It's nearly done now,” Jane said, “So tell me about this loft conversion, is it going to be a big one?”

“I'll say, we had to bolt three joists together to span it.”

“What twice?”

“That's right, how did you know that?”

“You said six girders.”

“Oh right. I'll tell you what though; if he goes as quickly as he does at work he will be soon done.”

“A quick worker then.”

“Yes, it will make a change.”

They talked some more until retiring to bed at 10.30.

Dave woke up to find that most of the trolls and undines had left.

“So you are back,” Cula said, “Looking forward to it?”

“A little nervous but I'll be alright.”

“Good, shall we get straight off?”

“Sounds good,” Dave said and both he and Ivan got straight on. They were soon in the sky and crossing the swampy grassland. In no time at all Cula had dropped them off saying, “Give Dryden my regards,” before taking off again.

Dave and Ivan made the short journey to where Dryden was standing guard in front of a mountain pass.

“You have no place here,” he said, “This is the entrance to the land of the giants.”

“I seek entrance,” Dave said.

“Then you must first prove your worth. No one can enter here unproven.”

“I understand, what is it I must do?”

“You must answer three questions. Failure to do so negates entrance.”

“Very well, what is your first question?”

“What is my name?”

“You are Dryden guardian of the gateway.”

“Good, and the second question. What is your name?”

“Mine, er David Jessel.”

“Good, and finally what is your friend's name?”

“Ivan,” Ivan said.

“Good, you may enter.”

“What,” Dave said, “Is that it?”

“You have been given the answers that I have been told were correct. No other answers would have done.”

“Really,” Dave said in surprise, “So only we could have got in?”

“Anyone could have as long as they gave the right answer.”

“Oh, so what happens now?”

“Sorry?”

“You are not going to explode or anything like that are you? All the others did.”

“Oh no,” Dryden said with a laugh, “I am to take you to see Dinta of the giants and guide you both around the world. My purpose is served so after that I am free.”

“Were you waiting there for long?”

“It seemed an eternity but it is over now. So follow me and our journey can begin.” Dryden took them through the pass and they entered a lush green valley that had a river running through it. In the distance they saw a cluster of half timbered houses and Dryden said, “That is Dinta's camp. He is a wise man so take heed of what he has to say.”

“I'll bare that in mind,” Dave said. “So is this a good world then or is there anything I should watch out for?”

“Only your arrogance.”

“Sorry?”

“It can manifest in this world.”

“Really, so what does it er look like?”

“It's your arrogance, only you can actually see it.”

“I don't like the sound of that. And the others that live here, do they have the same problem?”

“No they have dealt with theirs. Anyway be humble we are here now.”

The entered the encampment and much to their surprise there was nobody there.

“They must be out visiting,” Dryden said, “They pick their moments don't they?”

“Oh well,” Dave said, “Do you think that they will be long?”

“Might be. Well get comfortable and I will tell you a little about the spiritual and natural laws.”

“Er sure,” Dave said settling down. He did not like to tell him that he had already covered them as it would have been bad manners.

“Now this is the Land of Relative Definition so we will be covering them in some depth to give you a better understanding.”

“Oh,” Dave said picking up, “Sounds good.”

“I thought that you would like it. So first then we'll go over the eight natural laws and explain how through self consciousness they developed into character flaws.”

“That sounds interesting.”

“Now I am guessing that you already know the natural laws am I right?”

“Yes.”

“So I'll just go straight in. we'll begin with the main law which is?”

“To evolve to one's purpose.”

“Good, and how would that actually fit in with self consciousness?”

“I don't think that it could. If anything self consciousness stops you from evolving to your purpose.”

“Excellent. Self consciousness is the spirit without purpose. It stops you from achieving your purpose by self centring it as opposed to serving it.”

“So instead of serving it, it wants to be served.”

“That's right, and do you know how it came to be?”

“I have heard that is it the basic survival drive, self preservation sort of thing.”

“Not strictly true it is actually the evolution of that. When Man evolved free will he got the power of discernment so he looked more deeply into things. From this he developed self awareness and became conscious of his self though only on a shallow level as he is still evolving.”

“Right, yes I can see that.”

“Good, now the natural laws, well the seven that are left. We'll cover them next.”

“And these equate with the seven deadly sins?”

“That's right. Give me one of them and I will try and show you how they evolved.”

“Fair enough. Each organism is adapted to the best of its ability to survive in the climate around it.”

“A nice one to start on now originally to survive the changes in season's Man had to migrate to avoid the cold weather as he evolved though he took to wearing the skins of other animals to keep warm and also developed fire to use as heat for his own personal warmth. He did not need to migrate anymore and from that he developed sloth.”

“Yes I could see that happening.”

“Good, another?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Each organism to be adapted to the best of its ability to survive in the habitat around it.”

“Right, this is actually linked to the last one.”

“Really in what way?”

“With Man migrating he did not really leave much of a mark on the landscape and also being nomadic by nature possessions were actually a handicap so he could only really take what he needed as anything surplus would also have to be carried.”

“Yes I can see that though I'm guessing that all would change when he stayed put.”

“That's right. Now instead of just surviving in the habitat he wanted to excel in it. He could now judge himself more on what he had as opposed to what he knew. Not only that he wanted to leave his mark on the landscape and basically, well he got avaricious.”

“I can see that as a breeding ground but how did it actually come to be? What I mean is what made him take more than he needed in the first place?”

“A good question why did his wants take over his needs? Maybe when he evolved out of basic survival he had a lot more time to spare and a restless mind to pacify. You see a downside of having discernment is that if you don't use it to good purpose it can leave you mentally restless. Some might use its power to the pursuit of gathering possessions and get a shallow sort of gratification from it but as it is only shallow it does not last long and so need replenishing.”

“More possessions?”

“That's right so basically he used his mind to the wrong purpose, one that was centred around shallow self fulfillment.”

“Right, so he tried to take comfort in material relief and this is how avarice came to be.”

“Good, next?”

“Each organism is to be adapted to the best of its ability to survive in the social climate around it.”

“Now avarice needs a gauge and that is envy.”

“Sorry? I don't really see how that equates.”

“It's alright having possessions but from an avaricious point of view its motivational force is to have more than your peers for that is how it gauges its success.”

“Right, but wouldn't that actually be pride?”

“At first sight but to want more than your peers you have to first think that they have more than you and don't forget that however much you do manage to acquire there will always be someone with more.”

“Oh of course it's sort of keeping up with the Jones thing.”

“Sorry?”

“It's a saying from our world. Basically if your neighbour has something you want it.”

“Oh right. Yes that's right except that you want something better.”

“True. So to survive in a modern social climate you have to be envious.”

“Not strictly true. To excel in a modern social climate you have to be envious.”

“Sorry. I can see that.”

“Good. Have you another one?”

“Sure, each organism is to be adapted to the best of its ability to find its niche in the eco system.”

“A lateral one, what do you think it is?”

“I'm not sure. Out of the four that's left to choose from I don't think any of them would fit.”

“Well to truly find your niche in the eco system you must only take you fill. It is a finely balanced system that does not allow for gluttony.”

“Right I can see that. Why do people get gluttonous then?”

“They hunger for the taste and not the substance itself. Its shallow sensory pleasure, no more.”

“Oh, it's quite a big problem in our world at the moment.”

“Boredom is usually a spur. Lack of purpose again I am afraid.”

“Well there isn't much direction at the moment. Most of the symbols of establishment seem to have fallen from grace.”

“Really, why is that then?”

“People are getting a bit more knowledgeable I guess.”

“Sorry. I thought that lack of direction would make them ignorant if anything.”

“About certain things but with the advent of greater communications it's demystified the symbols somewhat. Before they were held up as paragons of virtue, now it seems that they are no better, well probably worse than us.”

“You'll have to give me an example of that as I would like to know where you are coming from.”

“Right,” Dave said and thought awhile before he said, “Well up until fairly recently we gave lawyers, doctors, government ministers and such a god-like sort of quality now though lawyers are perceived as avaricious, doctors arrogant and incompetent and ministers greedy, lecherous and well a myriad of vices.”

“I thought that they always were,” Dryden said with a laugh.

“Probably but up until recently they had managed to hide it.”

“And when these symbols fall from people's esteem what do you think will happen?”

“Decadence I guess.”

“It's happened before and no doubt will happen again. So have you got another?”

“Yes, that every organism to be adapted to the best of its ability to attract a mate.”

“Right, now incorporated in this is the sexual drive for reproduction or lechery.”

“How would you actually define lechery then? I mean is it going off with other people's partners or just an excessive drive for sex.”

“An excessive drive for sex and if you want to be strict about it, it's actually having sex when your partner isn't ready to conceive or to put it bluntly when she isn't on heat.”

“Really, ah.”

“There are worse sins. Not many left now.”

“True, each organism to be adapted to the best of its ability to give its offspring the best chance of survival that it can.”

“Would you like to guess at this one?”

“I would say anger, like a mother defending its young sort of thing.”

“And would you like to have another guess?” Dryden said with a laugh.

“Oh, pride?”

“Good.”

“How does that work then?”

“It's a matter of pride to give your children the best start in life. You try and put them through the best schools and in a lot of cases you live your life through your children. They become the purpose that you serve. Pride becomes the spur to this purpose.”

“Oh yes, like a mother putting her children on stage for that had once been her ambition.”

“Well I'll have to take you word on that and so finally.”

“That each organism is to be adapted to the best of its ability to defend itself from a prey's point of view and hunt from a predators.”

“Or anger because that what ignites the adrenalin.”

“Right, I can see that.”

“So as man evolved then so did the character flaws. Without a true purpose to serve he created his own, country, town, city basically the immediate society around him.”

“Wasn't that a good thing though? I mean we are talking about service to mankind at the end of the day.”

“Well it would have been but his ignorance of the spiritual laws meant that his service to some men was actually detrimental to others. He developed an elitist attitude and as other groups of men did the same conflict became inevitable.”

“War.”

“That's right. Land domination and people subjugation were the main spurs, though pride did have a major part to play for to actually try and justify their actions to themselves they had to put on a superior air.”

“Sorry? I was up with you until then.”

“To try and prove to themselves that they were doing it for the other peoples good. Show them a better way of living their life kind of thing.”

“Civilising them, that still goes on I'm afraid.”

“That's because they are still greedy. You would have thought that they would have come up with some more imaginative excuses by now though.”

“Arrogance I'm afraid. I think they underestimate our intelligence that's all.”

“Well there is that but arrogance can cloud their judgment that much that they actually believe it themselves.”

“Really, I never knew that.”

“Oh yes, it stops them from seeing the real big picture and makes them very selective with the information that is given to them.”

“And not only that they become very selective with the information that they give to you.”

“You'll find that in all walks of life I'm afraid, they like to keep you in the dark.”

“Funny you should say that I used to know someone that worked with metal.”

“A sword-smith?”

“No,” Dave said with a laugh, “We have evolved past that sort of thing. Well anyway he knew one of the managers where he worked as a friend and so was privileged to hear information that the other workers did not.”

“Right.”

“It turns out that the firm had more than enough work, in fact too much. They never told the workers that though, no according to the management they were struggling for work and there could be redundancies in the pipeline.”

“Really, so why would they do that then?”

“Keep them in fear I suppose, it would stop them asking for more money.”

“Well fear is a major part of man control though I never realised it had evolved to such an extent. No in the old days it was fear of an enemy that might be intending to attack you.”

“Oh they still use that one; it's a major part of their reasoning.”

“Lack of imagination again I guess,” Dryden said with a laugh, “No they used to keep you in control through fear and ignorance, it sounds like things haven't changed radically, only evolved.”

“True, you were going to tell me more about the spiritual laws?”

“Well they are not back yet so I might as well. First things first, do you know what they are?”

“Er yes, they are the laws of Self Regulation, Consequences, Poetic Justice, Equality, Humility and Love.”

“Good, now the laws are actually divided into two sets of three and symbolised by two triangles, one the right way up and the other inverted. They are placed on each other in the form of a star.”

“Right, a six pointed star.”

“That's right. Now the top part says that creation regulates itself and the other two points of the triangle are the laws in which it works to do this. The first one would be the Law of Consequences, the actions of one lifetime reflecting into the next. The second being the Law of Poetic Justice which is the actions and reactions happening in the same lifetime.”

“Right, and why is it formulated that way, with creation at the top I mean?”

“Because it comes from above, it's an outside influence as opposed to the other triangle which comes from within.”

“Oh, but I thought that it could work through actions of others.”

“It can although they are still outside influences by the fact that they are not directly under your control. They are in the sense that they are reactions to your actions but the reactions don't come from you if you see what I mean.”

“Right, well I think so anyway and the other triangle?”

“The bottom part would be the Law of Humility. The reason for this is because you can't get to the other two without it.”

“Right, so why is that then?”

“Pride blocks the channel; it stops you from believing the Law of Equality for a start.”

“Oh yes, and what about the Law of Love then, can it stop you from receiving the Holy Spirit?”

“Yes, didn't you know that self righteousness is its own reward?”

“True, I should have realised that.”

“Now to explain a little better humility is selflessness. You have no ego and so have a direct link to your Soul. This gives you a thing call soul consciousness so you become aware of not only your Soul but the fact that everyone has the same. Basically you start seeing yourself in others, an evolved Self being, a Soul, so in your eyes everyone is equal. You are all evolving souls on the path of light.”

“Right, and the Law of Love?”

“With your ego gone self righteousness cannot exist. Without self righteousness your Soul can transform itself through the Holy Spirit.”

Dave got distracted at that by a fleeting shadow that darted from behind one of the dwellings and ran behind another.

“Are they back?” he said.

“Sorry?”

“Dinta and his kin?”

“Er no, why do you say that?”

“I just saw something dart behind one of the buildings.”

“What did it look like?”

“I'm not sure, it was only a shadow and it moved too quickly.”

“And did you see anything Ivan?”

“No,” Ivan said, “I wasn't looking in that direction though.”

“Well she's early. I don't like the sound of that as it means she could grow very strong.”

“Sorry?”

“Your arrogance, we've only just covered the laws and she's made her appearance.”

“Oh,” Dave said not liking the sound of that, “So how can I actually deal with it?”

“Recognising can control it to some extent but it's not the final answer.”

“Right and what's the final answer?”

“I'm afraid that you will have to find that one out yourself.”

“How would I do that then?”

“You must come to terms with it. Find out what it actually is and what it wants from you.”

“Right,” Dave said and got up, “There is no time like the present I guess.” He made his way to where the shadow had headed for and found it waiting, “What do you want from me?” he said without fear.

“Your life,” the shadow answered, also without fear.

Dave was somewhat taken aback by that but quickly recovered and said, “And how do you actually plan on taking my life as you have no real form?”

“I don't need it. By the time I have finished with you, you will crave death.”

“What take my own life you mean?”

“That's right, by the time I have done that will be your sweetest option.”

“I doubt it. Nothing that you could do to me could make me crave perdition.”

“Oh,” the shadow self said taken aback by that for it did not realise that Dave actually knew that.

“So anything you do will fall down to nothing so I'll ask you again, what do you want from me?”

“Oh I still want you life it's just that I will go about it another way.”

“To what purpose, you don't think that you will be able to take over do you?”

“That is my purpose, my reason to be if you like.”

“You know that you can only take over if I let you and the chances of that, well they are not likely are they?”

“We'll see.”

“I think that you are dreaming. Now I know that you are my arrogance so that gives me an advantage.”

The shadow flickered a little at that and this inspired Dave to further investigation, "I also know that I can control you a little through recognition though I cannot defeat you that way."

"Then you are lost," the shadow said taking strength from Dave's last statement.

"Not necessarily. Now I was told that I must come to terms with you."

"And the chances of that," the shadow said in a mocking tone.

"My thoughts exactly so I got to thinking that if recognition can control you understanding can defeat you."

"Rather a wild guess," the shadow said but Dave detected a note of nervousness in its voice.

"I wouldn't say that, quite logical in fact. No if I was to wager my life on it I would say that it was a safe bet."

"Well you would, wouldn't you but it sounds to me like you are clutching at straws."

"Maybe but I think I am right except for one thing. I should have said wager your life on it."

"Oh."

"I would say that you are pride," Dave said and watched it flicker once again.

"I'm still here."

"That's because I have not quite gone deep enough. You see I have already defeated pride in the earth realms."

"And once it's defeated it's gone, so where does that leave you?"

"In the realms of water and pride of a different kind, spiritual pride."

With that the shadow disappeared and Dave went back to Ivan and Dryden."

"How did you get on?" Dryden said.

"It's gone. I don't think it will be bothering me again."

"That was quick, how did you manage it?"

"Just a little understanding."

"So you came to terms with it," Dryden said with a laugh.

"Sorry?"

"Isn't that another expression for understanding?"

"Oh, suppose that it is."

"Anyway I was talking to Ivan and he tells me that as you are not from our world you have to sleep."

"That's right."

"Well in this land you will find that time seems to go a lot faster."

"Right, why is that then?"

"It's quite a fast vibration. That's to help the knowledge sink in to speed your mental growth. You sort of lose the contemplation time for that is done by another aspect of yourself in another dimension."

"Right, well I think so anyway."

"You might know it better as the voice within."

"Oh yes, so what world does he inhabit?"

"The world of fire, you might know him better as Odo."

"Odo, I should have guessed."

"Well anyway you will feel tired a lot more often and the distance between each time will seem quicker than normal. So when you feel tired just go to sleep we will understand."

"Well fair enough," and they talked some more until Dave did just that.

Chapter 4.

Dave woke up strangely elated. He was actually looking forward to working on the boat that day yet he was not sure why that should be. Jane was already up and on hearing him stir made them both a cup of tea.

"Thanks," Dave said when he went downstairs, "A good day today and then there shouldn't be too

many left.”

“You're in a good mood,” Jane said in surprise.

“Nearly done now and then I'll start that loft conversion.”

“You like doing things like that don't you?”

“Yes, I find it very interesting.”

“Will it take long?”

“A few weekends John will be doing most of the work I'll only really be labouring for him. Anyway I suppose we had better see what the old man has done.”

“Have another cup of tea first. I'm guessing that he hasn't really done anything.”

“Oh I'm not sure. If he wants to be away by next Saturday I'll bet he'll be hard at it.”

“Do you think so?”

“Well relatively hard at it,” Dave said with a laugh, “You can only do what your capabilities dictate after all.”

“True,” Jane said with a laugh, “Speaking of capabilities isn't it your turn to make the tea?”

“Alright, I should have guessed there would be a catch,” and made them both a cup of tea.

After they had finished the tea they made the short journey to Don's where Dave was proved right for he was actually working on it. He had already put the cooker in and against Dave's judgment fitted one of the windows.

“I see you have started on the windows,” Dave said.

“Yes, Daisy gave me a hand, she could not stop too long though as she had to go out to get the shopping.”

“Never mind,” Dave said with a laugh but on closer inspection his humour changed somewhat,

“You've put the bolts right in the corner, how am I supposed to fit the architraves now?”

“Well I decided not to bother with the architraves in the end. I couldn't really afford it anyway.”

“Fair enough, less work for me to do I suppose.”

“Yes and time is running out as well.”

“Oh yes, Jane told me that you plan to go on Saturday.”

“That's right, the tide should be just right. I've checked it in my book.”

“Anyway I had better be off,” Jane said, “I promised that I would take my mother to a jumble sale,” and left them to it.

After she had gone Dave said, “I guess I had better give you a hand with the rest of the windows then.”

“Would you, we had quite a struggle.”

“There's a certain way of doing it.”

“Really, what's that then?”

“Drill two holes first, clamp them in place and drill out the rest of them.”

“Oh right, I'll try that then.”

Dave placed the window over the opening and Don drilled the first hole. He started to drill the next hole adjacent to it but Dave stopped him saying, “Not there, you want to drill it diagonally opposite to give you a better spread.”

“Oh,” Don said and did that. Next he got one of the bolts and tried to fit it in the hole which proved quite a struggle for he had used the same size bit as the bolt.

“You are going to want a slightly bigger drill bit,” Dave said on seeing this, “Have you got one?”

“Yes, there should be one in the shed,” and left Dave to put the bolts in. After he returned he drilled the rest of the holes then took the perspex off to smear the edges with silicon to make it water tight before putting it back and tightening the bolts.

“That was quick,” Don said after they had finished, “It took us a lot longer.”

“Struggling to put the bolts in I bet,” Dave said with a laugh, “No you don't want to make life too difficult for yourself. It just needed a little common sense that's all.”

“Right,” Don said not quite knowing how to take the last comment. They put the next window in

place and Don drilled two holes diagonally opposite to each other. He put the two bolts in without the nuts so the windows had quite a bit of play in them. "See," Don said, "That's what happens when you use too big a drill bit, the window's too loose. How am I going to make sure that I get the other holes in the right place?"

"Put the nuts on and tighten them up like I told you."

"Oh," Don said sheepishly and did just that. The window was finally in place so the process started again.

"So do you think you will be ready by Saturday," Dave said, "I mean it's going to be pushing it."

"I will have to be. Tim's going to make me a door but he won't have time to fit it so I will do that when I get there."

"And is he still coming Monday?"

"Oh yes definitely. Hopefully it will be done in a day. That's including fetching the materials as well."

"Must be a quick worker anyway there's another window done."

"They're going on very quickly; anyway do you want a cup of tea?"

"Sure," Dave said and carried on whilst Don went back to the house to make it. After a while Don returned with a can of lager and gave Dave his tea.

"Jack came around again," he said in needless justification, "My missus has banned him from the house so we had to go to the shed."

"Oh," Dave said not really knowing what else to say.

"Yes, I can't really blame her mind; he can be a bit loud when he's had a drink."

"You'll not have to worry about all that soon you'll be your own man. Will he be coming down to visit you?"

"I doubt it; he can't afford it for a start. No it will be a new life with new friends."

"A new beginning," Dave said with a smile, "You do intend to send us back some fish now and again?"

"Of course, you've been a great help. No without you I wouldn't have got this far."

"Right, so we'll be alright for fish then. Anyway I'll carry on with the windows, any luck with the splitter by the way?"

"I'm getting it Monday. Harry's picking it up from the caravan shop, £40. He should also be putting it on straight away."

"Quite a busy day then," Dave said as he tried another window out for size, "What with Tim also coming."

"Another £150 there, yes it soon goes."

"Well its progress, any luck with the paint?"

"It's coming tonight. He phoned me up to say that he's got it."

"Sound, I'll paint it tomorrow then so it should be dry by Monday."

"You working Sunday as well then?"

"Yes, get it over and done with. I'm starting a new job next weekend so I'm pushing to get it finished."

"Oh right, who are you going to be working for?"

"Just a mate, I'm giving him a hand to convert his loft. It's going to be a Christmas present for his daughter."

"There's only about six weeks till Christmas that will take some doing."

"He'll be doing it during the week after he's finished work. No he doesn't hang around John."

"Anyway will you be alright on your own. I've got a couple of things to do around the house."

"Yeah sure, I'll give you a shout if I need anything," and Don left him to it. It was mid afternoon by the time Dave had finished the windows so with the little time he had left he started the beading.

Now I mentioned earlier that there were two types of beading so I had better elaborate on their actual usage. The larger quadrant beading was to go around the edges of the ceiling to hide any gaps

and give it a better finish. The smaller quadrant was to go either side of the 2x1 that Dave had used for the skeleton for cosmetic reasons. He had also found some small rectangular beading in Don's shed that was ideal for covering gaps so he was pretty well catered for. Don came out with a cup of tea for him. "I thought that you could use this," and passed Dave the cup, "I've done all I've got to do around the house so if you don't need anything I'll have a look at the radio that Jane gave me." "I should be alright I'm just beading around the ceilings. Jane should be coming soon though so I won't be doing much more."

"Well it certainly looks the part now that the windows are in. Yes, Tim will be pleased."

"Oh right," Dave said with an air of indifference, "I just hope he's careful when he does it."

"He's a boat builder; he knows what he's doing."

"We'll see," Dave said and fixed the first length of beading in place.

"You know that just finishes it nicely," Don said, "I thought that it would be a waste of money at first but looking at it now I think that it was needed."

"It's the finishing touches that make the boat. Once it's stained it will look even better."

"Well I've got some teak in the shed. That should go quite well with the white."

"That will save me bringing mine then," Dave said as he marked another piece for cutting.

"And I've been thinking a little bit more about the architrave."

"You haven't changed your mind have you?"

"Sort off. I haven't got the money for it now but when things pick up I might get some and put it on myself."

"Fair enough I'll leave you enough room when I bead it then."

"Yes it doesn't really do to scrimp, I'm not saving much and it does spoil the finish."

"There is that," Dave said as he cut the length.

"Who knows I might even paint the deck as well. Once I've settled in I mean."

"Well you've got the paint," Dave said as he fixed the beading in place, "Just take it with you so you know where it is when it's needed."

Dave marked and cut another piece and that too was put in place.

"Yes I'll do that. It will look really good when it's done. You'll have to come over and we'll go fishing some time."

"I'll bare that in mind," Dave said marking out another length.

"Do you like fishing then?"

"Me, no," Dave said as he cut it to size, "I don't think that I have the patience."

"Oh you'll soon get into it. Some people find it quite therapeutic in fact."

"I used to fish when I was younger," Dave said fixing the bead in place, "Only on the canal and only with a piece of wood and a line and hook that I borrowed."

"No this is a lot different," Don said as Dave marked out another length of beading.

"It's all fishing to me," Dave said and cut the length that he and marked.

"But you will come over won't you though?"

"Yeah sure, it would make for a nice holiday."

"Good, I'll take you around the harbour, you'll enjoy it."

"Yes I'm looking forward to it," Dave said fixing the bead in place, "I've never been in a boat before."

"Really that surprises me. I thought that you would have been well traveled."

"Me," Dave said as he marked another length, "What makes you think that?"

"Well you seem quite learned."

"I was on the dole for quite a long time," Dave said as he cut it to size, "There was nothing much to do only read."

"Oh, so you've never been abroad then?"

"A couple of times," Dave said fixing the beading in place, "I went by plane though."

"I'll let you finish off then," Don said and went back to the shed. Dave finished the beading on the

ceiling and went on to bead around the sink and along the front where there was a gap between the slanting front and ledge. He was pleased with it once it was done and he was also pleased with the fact he had just enough. He then went on and cut and fixed the rectangular pieces as cover moulds finishing just in time to see Jane pull up,

"Now that does look the part," she said as she got out of the car, "Not much to do now either."

"I'll paint it tomorrow."

"Has the paint actually come then?"

"Tonight. The man says he's got it though it's just a matter of dropping it off."

"Wait and see then," Jane said with a laugh.

"I could always finish off the beading if it doesn't come and once its stained I'll be done."

"Are you still going around on Monday?"

"Doubt it. Harry is supposed to be putting the splitter on as well so there'll be quite a crowd."

"You could always see how he's done it once it's finished."

"True, anyway we had better get back I suppose," and they both said goodbye to Don and made the short distance to drop the car off and then walked home. They had not long got in when the phone rang. "That will be Tracy I bet," Jane said going to answer it, "She always phones up to let me know what she got at the jumble sale."

Tracy was one of the friends that Jane used to go out with. She used to make a living buying things at jumble sales and selling them again at car boot sales. It was Jane that had actually got her into car boot sales though Jane later lost interest and Tracy took to it with vengeance. She liked to phone Jane up to tell her of the bargains she had got and the expected profits they would hopefully make. When Jane came back she said, "She's fell out with Terry again and this time for good."

"Oh right," Dave said not taking much notice as it was quite a regular occurrence.

"Yes, she says that he's too selfish."

"What," Dave said nearly spilling his tea, "Talk about pot calling the kettle black?"

"Yes I know," Jane said with a laugh.

It might be a good idea to explain the situation so you might get a better understanding. Tracy was 52 and Terry 26, two years younger than her son. They first met when Terry's brother thought that it might be a good idea for Terry to lose his virginity as sitting around playing computer games was Terry's normal leisure activity when not working. Terry was a shy retiring sort, a little retarded if the truth be known, and his brother thought that it might make a man of him so fixed him up with the girl he thought most likely to oblige hardly thinking that he would actually fall in love with her. Now Tracy was a manipulative woman and Terry was not her first meal ticket. Soon she had him doing her garden and all the jobs around the house. She also had him taking her on holidays and basically spending all his wages on household goods to furnish her now well maintained house. Terry's parents were not too pleased about this as she did not even leave him enough to pay his board and constant arguments with him ensued. He could not even take solace in sex for not long after they met she put a ban on it because she had a bad back, which was probably true as she was grossly overweight. She had even banned him from the king size bed that he had bought her relegating him to sleep on a single bed at the foot of hers. Yes Mills and Boon life certainly was not.

"So what happened then?" Dave said.

"Well she got him to get her an exercise bike to try and lose weight and he was trying to take it upstairs."

"What on his own, I've heard that they are heavy. Didn't her lad give him a hand?"

"No he was just standing there watching. Anyway she didn't think that he was doing it right and told him as much. He put his fist up to her and she felt threatened and told him to get out of the house."

"She felt threatened by Terry," Dave said with a laugh, "That's like a cat feeling threatened by a mouse."

"I know," Jane said laughing, "She'll probably make it up by tomorrow for she'll need a hand loading up for the car boot sales."

“And the divvy will probably do it.”

“I just hope that he doesn't break anything like the last time.”

“Sorry?”

“He broke a tea pot when he was unloading the car for her last week. It only cost her 10p but she reckoned that she would have got a fiver for it and charged him accordingly.”

“You're joking. You mean to say that she charged him after he helped her?”

“Not just helped her, they went down in his car and so used his petrol.”

“And she doesn't give him petrol money?”

“What do you think,” Jane said with a laugh, “This is Tracy we are talking about.”

“He should count himself lucky and never go back and if I were his parents I would put a restraining order on her.”

“He'll be back in a couple of days and all will be forgiven,” Jane said and the subject changed. Mary got picked up from her fathers and the rest of the evening went fairly quickly until they retired to bed at 10.30.

Dave woke up to find Dryden and Ivan deep in conversation. On seeing him awake Dryden said,

“He's a very interesting man your friend Ivan. He was telling me when he used to walk your world.”

“Really,” Dave said and turning to Ivan, “You never told me anything about that.”

“We haven't really had the time to talk, what with Queen Gilda and everything.”

“True, so what was it like?”

“Peaceful at first, then we met another type of man, one better armed and more aggressive.”

“Us you mean?”

“No, you are actually a mixture of us and them.”

“Really, how did that come to be?”

“Basically they killed all the males and raped all the females and the rest is history.”

“That sounds brutal.”

“They were brutal times; evolution means nothing when aggression is about.”

“You were more evolved?”

“We were more spiritual; we had access to the collective mind.”

“Sorry, I remember you mentioning that before but what with one thing and another I never got around to asking about it.”

“It takes a few different forms. Telepathy is one and also an inner knowing.”

“An inner knowing, do you mean the voice within?”

“That's right, you know about that?”

“I've heard it.”

“Then you must be pretty evolved yourself. Mind you thinking about it you would not have got this far if you weren't.”

“Well it did save me a few times I must admit.”

“Anyway we'll talk some more later I've a feeling that your lessons are ready to begin.”

“Well Dinta has not returned yet,” Dryden said, “So I thought I would talk a little more about the character flaws.”

“Right, well I know how they came to be so that's a pretty good start.”

“Good, and do you also know that they have positive equivalents?”

“Er, no.”

“You might better know them as virtues.”

“Well I've heard of them. I don't know much about them. Faith, hope and charity I think.”

“Well that's three of them,” Dryden said with a laugh, “I don't suppose that you would know their opposite numbers?”

“Well charity could be avarice, giving it away as opposed to hoarding it.”

“That's one but I'll tell you what we'll take them one at a time as it will make it easier to define them.”

“Well I won't argue with that.”

“Alright,” Dryden said with a laugh, “First we have gluttony, any ideas on that one?”

“Hang on I might actually know this, is it temperance?”

“That's right although you are not quite out of the woods yet.”

“Sorry?”

“Why is it temperance when surely the opposite of gluttony is starvation?”

“I'm not sure. I mean thinking about it, it should be shouldn't it.”

“Well think some more then,” Dryden said laughing.

Dave thought awhile but could not come up with anything so Dryden thought it prudent to enlighten him, “When we are talking about positive and negative mental attributes these are cause factors. Gluttony causes you to overeat and temperance to take no more than your needs.”

“I thought that temperance was abstinence. There used to be a thing in our world called the temperance movement and their member abstained from drinking.”

“Then it should have been called the abstinence movement. No gluttony is excess and temperance is balance. Starvation is also excess but under a different form.”

“Like excess temperance,” Dave said with a laugh.

“Ah there's many a true word spoken in jest. So would you like another one?”

“Yes sure.”

“Anger.”

“Calmness,” Dave said just guessing really.

“Sort of,” Dryden said much to his surprise, “But think of another word for it.”

“Patience but I can't really see how it fits in.”

“Anger generally comes about through being impatient in situations; another word for it could be frustration.”

“Oh right, is that why they say count to ten if you feel that you are losing your temper?”

“Do they, I never knew. No generally speaking just by the fact that you recognise you are losing your temper is enough to control it. If you had patience you would never actually get to the stage of losing your temper.”

“Oh right, yes I can see that. So you can't actually have anger if you are patient.”

“That's right, just as you can't have gluttony if you have temperance, one negates the other.”

“Got it.”

“You want another one then?”

“Sure, they seem quite easy.”

“This one will get you then, lechery.”

“Er temperance, no we've already had that one.”

“Tricky eh?”

“Chastity then, no that's another form of abstinence.”

“I don't think that you'll get it.”

“Wait a minute I think I might know this one. Lechery negates understanding which is your faith.”

“Good, very good in fact. We'll come back to understanding a little later but we'll talk about faith a little more.”

“Fair enough, so what do you actually want to know?”

“Have this one on me. A derivative of faith is faithfulness or loyalty to a cause, your faith being your cause or the purpose that you serve.”

“Your partner,” Dave said on recognition, “And so going off with someone else would be unfaithfulness which generally has a motivational force in lechery.”

“Good and what are your views on unfaithfulness in other people?”

“I suppose it's none of my business but I see it as a character flaw so if a friend was unfaithful to his partner I would be a little wary of his loyalty as a friend.”

“There is that and you are wise in saying that it is none of your business, always remember never

judge only counsel and you won't go far wrong.”

“I'll bare that in mind.”

“Good and the next one is avarice which you have already said is charity so we'll go onto the next one if you like.”

“Yes, sure, there can't be many more to go.”

“Sloth, any ideas?”

“Fortitude,” Dave said after a few moments thought.

“Nothing to say on that one really this one should get you though, envy.”

“Envy, I haven't a clue.”

“You have already mentioned it,” Dryden said encouraging him.

Dave thought awhile and said, “Hope.”

“That's right.”

“I can't see how it equates.”

“Well if you have hope you do not envy anyone,” Dryden said with a laugh, “No you would be better off thinking of hopelessness.”

“I'm still none the wiser.”

“When you are in hopeless situations you tend to look to others in comparison and generally speaking you perceive them to be better off and envy comes to be. With hope however you tend to stay focused on that hope so your mind does not drift off for comparisons.”

“Yes, I see.”

“And finally pride, any ideas?”

“Humility,” Dave said straight away.

“Good, now we have mentioned positive and negative mental attributes but the next question is attributes of what?”

Dave thought awhile before he said, “The seven spirits of God?”

“Excellent, how did you know that?”

“Just a guess really something about the number seven I suppose.”

“And do you know what the seven spirits actually are or is that too much to ask?”

“Yes, life, love, understanding, discernment, wisdom, knowing and purpose.”

“Right, so we'll take them in reverse order then. I will give you the first and show you how they equate with each other so you will see where I'm coming from.”

“That sounds good, it does sound very confusing.”

“Think of them as triads and you won't go far wrong, neutral, positive and negative, the spirits being neutral.”

“Right, well I think so anyway.”

“It will become clearer as we go along,” Dryden said with a laugh, “So first we have the spirit of purpose, its negative aspect is pride and positive humility. So pride negates purpose which is your humility.”

“Oh just like I did with lechery.”

“That's right, so could you elaborate a little on purpose then?”

“Sure, pride wants serving when your purpose is to serve and humility is selflessness when you are just your purpose for you lead a life of service to others.”

“Good but you could take the relationship between purpose and humility by saying that purpose strengthens your humility if you see what I mean.”

“Right but you also have to actually have humility to achieve your purpose if I remember rightly.”

“That's true. Once you lose your pride you get humility and from this you get your purpose which as it grows strengthens your humility.”

“Got it.”

“So next on the list would be knowing any idea of what its attributes would be?”

“I'm guessing envy and hope but that's only because it's the next one on the list.”

“Well you were right but for the wrong reason. So envy negates knowing which is your hope. Does that make things a little clearer?”

“Not really,” Dave admitted.

“Well when it says knowing think of it as an inner knowing.”

“The voice within,” Dave said none the wiser, “Right.”

“Well that's what gives you your direction.”

“Right,” Dave said still confused.

“That is your hope.”

“What?” Dave said in surprise.

“Your direction that is your hope.”

“Really?”

“Well what did you think hope was if not direction then?”

“Er wishful thinking I suppose. Sort of I hope it's a nice day tomorrow sort of thing.”

“Seriously,” Dryden said laughing, “No it's your hope for salvation that we are talking about. Your inner knowing shows you how to get it.”

“I did not realise that. Mind you it would fit in with what you said about keeping your mind focused I suppose.”

“When you have direction it's like your own personal covenant, it takes over your life and your mind thinks of virtually nothing else.”

“Right and how does envy actually negate it then?”

“It involves looking within when you have envy that involves looking outwards, its self consciousness as opposed to soul consciousness.”

“I think I understand that. So is envy a form of self consciousness as well as pride then?”

“They all are. Negative is self consciousness, positive is soul consciousness and the spirit is spiritual consciousness.”

“Right, yes I understand a little better now.”

“Good, so are you ready for the next one?”

“Sure.”

“Wisdom.”

“Ah I'm guessing that, that's sloth and fortitude but that's about it.”

“Well equate them and see if it gets a little clearer.”

“Sloth negates wisdom which is your fortitude. I can sort of understand wisdom giving you fortitude because it strengthens your mind but sloth, well unless its saying that you can't get wisdom without hard work I'm afraid I'm lost.”

“You're close, very close. To get wisdom does take a lot of mental effort which to someone with sloth is too much hard work.”

“You know thinking about it I've done something similar to this before though it was talking about light if I remember correctly.”

“Which is wisdom.”

“Of course, I should have realised.”

“So next one then, discernment, any ideas?”

“I'm guessing avarice and charity because when man got free will he also got avaricious.”

“Good, so avarice negates discernment which is your charity, can you elaborate?”

“So get true discernment you have to see the big picture whilst avarice only sees the shell. When you do actually see the big picture you realise that your motivational force should be self less acts and so become more charitable.”

“That's right, understanding?”

“Lechery negates understanding which is your faith, I know that one.”

“Then you should be able to elaborate,” Dryden said with a laugh.

“Lechery only sees the shell. To get true understanding you have to learn to look beyond and this is

what strengthens your faith.”

“Good, your faith being?”

“Your understanding.”

“Excellent, only two left so love then, anger and patience.”

“Anger negates love which is your patience. I'm not really sure on this one. I can see how anger and patience equate but I don't quite know how it fits in with love.”

“Love is patient understanding if that helps.”

“Oh right, so anger negates love because it takes away your patience which affects your understanding.”

“Good, finally life and gluttony and temperance.”

“Gluttony negates life which is your temperance. This life we are talking about, is it a spiritual one by any chance?”

“That's right.”

Well gluttony breaks the Law of Humility and you can't really lead a spiritual life unless you are humble.”

“True though there is a little more than that for gluttony actually involves craving Earthly pleasures.”

“Yes, I can see that.”

“So that's the spirits and how they equate. Well Dinta hasn't come back yet and I'm guessing that you'll be tired soon so I won't go too deeply into anything we'll just chat a while and see what comes up.”

“Well I won't argue with that and I do feel a little tired already so I guess we won't be chatting long.”

“It's surprising how quick a day goes here,” Dryden said with a laugh, “Incidentally do you know that these character flaws we have been doing are personified by demons in your world.”

“No, I have heard them called the seven deadly sins but that was about it.”

“And what are your views on demons?”

“I don't believe in them really, which is strange as I have met Narda and all her handmaidens.”

“You must have perceived them as demons then?”

“Well not really no they did not come across as what we were brought up to believe what demons were.”

“Which was?”

“Evil creatures servants of the devil.”

“The devil?”

“Evil personified, the prince of darkness.”

“And this devil, what was its purpose?”

“To trap you into relinquishing your Soul so that when you die you would have to go to his domain, hell, where you would be tortured by his demons for eternity.”

“Quite a character then,” Dryden said with a laugh, “Oh by the way you do know that you will have to meet Narda again don't you?”

“I thought that I had killed her.”

“Only in the earth world she still lives in the air world.”

“Really, how can that be?”

“She is a different form of anger in the world of air.”

“Ah spiritual anger like my arrogance was my spiritual pride you mean?”

“That's right, well knowing will give you quite an advantage over her.”

“And I have to kill her again?”

“No, just come to terms with her.”

“Like I did with my arrogance?”

“No, make her see the light.”

“Right, well I think so anyway.”

“You'll know when the time comes. So demons then, what they really are, are tempters but I am guessing that you have covered that already.”

“Sort of, though I'm not sure if they were called demons, just character flaws I think.”

“Well we'll personify them for you, it will pass a little time and who knows it might come in handy some day.”

“Right,” Dave said with a laugh because he could never see it as useful.

“We'll start with pride then. Now he was known by demonologists as Lucifer.”

“I have heard that name before but what is a demonologist?”

“Someone who studies demons,” Dryden said with a laugh.

“I didn't even know that people did.”

“See you learn something every day,” Dryden said still laughing, “Anyway you also have envy which is personified by Leviathan, sloth which is personified by Belphegor, avarice, Mammon, lechery, Asmodus, anger, Satan and finally gluttony or Beelzebub.”

“I've only heard of a couple of them others; maybe I should study it then.”

“That's all you really need to know about them.”

With that tiredness came over Dave and he felt himself lose consciousness. He woke up to find that Jane was still asleep so he went downstairs and brought her back a cup of tea before waking her up.

“Busy day,” he said as he kissed her.

“You're not going today are you?” she said still half asleep, “It's Sunday.”

“Got to be done I'm afraid, there's painting on the menu.”

“He probably hasn't got it yet,” she said waking a little more, “You know how often people let him down.”

“Well there's other stuff I could be doing. You don't have to drop me off, don't worry I'll go down on my bike.”

“If you don't mind.”

“I was going down on the bike anyway,” Dave said with a laugh, “You haven't got the car.”

“Oh right, it's at Louise's.”

“I'll see you later,” Dave said laughing and kissed her goodbye. He made the short distance to Don's where much to his surprise the paint had arrived.

“He dropped it off this morning,” Don said smelling strongly of drink, “He's not long left actually.”

“I timed it right then,” Dave said as he got off his bike.

“Jane not with you today?”

“No she's borrowed the car to someone and she doesn't like the idea of going on the back of a bike.”

“She's got a good heart, mind you there's a lot of people that would take advantage of that.”

“Don't I know it,” Dave said wondering if he was deluding himself in thinking that he was not in the equation, “Anyway Jane said that you had some pads.”

“That's right they are in the shed. They save a lot of time I can tell you.”

“And are you giving me a hand?”

“Oh no I can't miss the racing I'll fetch the paint and pads though.”

“Very kind of you,” Dave said through clenched teeth.

Don was fairly quickly back so Dave got started. Much to his surprise the pads made the job a lot easier but as it was a 21 foot long boat he still had his work cut out. He could only use the pads on the top half of the boat as well for the bottom half was a lot more inaccessible. Dave had to scramble underneath on his back and paint it with a brush so as you can imagine it was quite a messy job.

Dave started painting at the back and when he had finished he stood back to see how it looked. “Not bad,” he said aloud for it looked pretty good, “Yes, it will do.”

“Have you stopped already?” Don said making his way up to Dave with a cup of tea in his hand.

“Just seeing how it looks,” Dave said taking the cup of him.

"Well it certainly makes a difference, yes it's definitely the right colour."
 "You know wasn't sure when you first said it but looking at it, yes it will do."
 "It will certainly make a splash when it gets to Wales."
 "Yes and in less than a week. Is Tim definitely coming tomorrow?"
 "He said so."
 "And he'll be pushing it to get it done in a day. Well so I am guessing as I don't really know much about it."
 "Oh he's a good worker. Yes it should be no problem. Anyway I've fixed the radio so I'll have something to listen to and I've got some books to read. Daisy's going to sort me out some tins so I'll have something to eat."
 "You won't starve then," Dave said with a laugh.
 "No, it should tide me over until I sort out a gardening job or two."
 "Will you have enough room to bring your tools with you? It looks a bit cramped in the cabin."
 "I'll pack it away somehow. So what are you going to do about the painting anyway?"
 "Sorry?"
 "Well you won't be able to carry on with it tomorrow there will be too many people working on it. Are you going to leave it till Tuesday?"
 "I'm hoping to get it finished today actually."
 "What," Don said with a laugh, "No chance."
 "We'll see. Then it should be nice and dry by tomorrow."
 "Well I won't hold my breath I've seen how much you have to do."
 "It will be done."
 "I won't stand in your way then," and left him to it.
 Dave started at the back end of the boat and painted the top half of roughly a third of the left hand side. The pads meant that the job was done in next to no time as was the same distance on the right hand side. He could reach the bottom half quite easily without having to crawl along on his back and even cover most of that area with the pad. He stopped for a break after that and as luck would have it Don came out with a cup of tea.
 "You got through that quickly," he said passing Dave his cup.
 "It gets more difficult now but hopefully it will all be done today."
 "Well you are well on target I didn't expect you to cover nearly this much. Jane phoned, she's on her way. Well in about an hour as she's stopping off to see her mother for a while."
 "Right, mind you there's not a lot for her to do when she gets here."
 "Ah she likes to see how it's coming on though. She said that she would come down with me and Tim on Saturday by the way."
 "Did she that's news to me."
 "Yes to see me off, sort off and Daisy has booked a holiday for next week too."
 "Oh, and when was this then?"
 "A few weeks ago her and our daughter Anne are going over to Wales."
 "And that's why you were in a hurry to get it done," Dave said upon realisation.
 "No it's just that the tide was right then, about six in the morning."
 "Yeah right," Dave said not believing him.
 "It's true; you've got to be careful about things like that."
 "Sure Don. You know at one time I thought you were changing your mind about going."
 "Really, well I've got to admit that the thought had crossed my mind when I found out about all the equipment I would need to make a living from fishing."
 "Well maybe if you save enough from your gardening jobs you could get it bit by bit and do it later."
 "I've started to price it up and I don't think I'll be living that long."
 "That expensive?"

“Afraid so, we're talking of a few thousand and I think the jobs I get will barely keep me going, saving won't really be an option.”

“Well who knows what luck will bring. You could always sell your share of the house you know.”

“What?”

“Yes there are companies that will buy it.”

“And what about Daisy though?”

“They can't do anything with it whilst she is alive and after she is dead, well it won't matter.”

“We were planning on leaving it to Anne.”

“I'm guessing that you would just leave Daisy's half to Anne,” Dave said with a laugh, “I don't think that they would be able to do anything about it.”

“They probably wouldn't want to pay me much; no it wouldn't be worth it.”

“Better than nothing but it's your choice.”

“I suppose I could give them a ring though I can't really see anything coming from it.”

“It's only the price of a phone call.”

“True,” Don said, “Anyway I will let you get on with it,” and left Dave with a smile on his face as he thought about the arguments that would ensue.

Dave started on the next section and made good progress. It was not long before Don was out again, “I've been thinking a bit more about that idea of yours.”

“Really?” Dave said pretending to be disinterested.

“Yes, it's not a bad idea and I can actually see it working.”

“I've heard a lot of people do it. It's mainly people without children though. I can see their point, you spend 25 years paying a mortgage and then you die, what's the purpose?”

“There is that, it's just dead money at the end of the day.”

“In more ways than one,” Dave said with a laugh.

“Yes well,” Don said not liking the morbidity of the subject, “No it is good to utilise your assets when you are alive.”

“Very true.”

“There is just one thing though.”

“What's that?”

“How will I sell it to Daisy?”

“I thought that it was the building company you sold it to,” Dave said pretending to be confused.

“No I meant the idea.”

“Oh er, do you need to. I mean it's not like you need her permission at the end of the day.”

“Well there is that but if I could get her to like the idea then it would save me a lot of hassle.”

Dave pretended to think a while and said, “Tell her that you will pay half the mortgage off. That should reduce the mortgage payment by quite a lot and give her a lot more usable income.”

“Now that's not a bad idea. I could actually see her going for that.”

“Leave it a few days first though. Something like that has to be fixed in your mind.”

“Yes it will give me time to work out my strategy. Do you want another cup of tea by the way?”

“Sure,” Dave said, not used to being offered so many.

“I won't be long,” Don said and went back into the house.

Dave carried on with the painting and got the top half of the middle section done before Don's return.

“I take my hat off to you,” Don said almost fawning, “You'll be easily finished today.”

“Well the bottom half will take the time. I'll do the whole of it next and then finish the top.”

Don passed him his cup of tea and said, “Yes that's not a bad idea about the house. How much do you think I would get for it?”

“I wouldn't have a clue. I'm not sure how it works I just saw an advert in the paper.”

“And you've still got it, the paper I mean?”

“You know I think that I still might have it. It will take me a couple of days to hunt it out but I

wasn't planning on coming around tomorrow so I'll bring it Tuesday."

"Great. I'll study it a bit and if it sounds good I'll show it to Daisy."

"Good idea that will show her that it's a bona fide company. Yes she should be impressed with that."

"My thoughts exactly yes you have done me a good turn with that and no mistake. I was a little worried about how to finance myself if the truth be known. I mean it's alright talking about gardening jobs and all that but it's actually getting them that matters."

"True," Dave said with a smile, "It does not do to count your chickens before they hatch."

"Very wise a lot of what you said sank in as well. No once I get over to Wales and get the money from the house I will do it up properly. I've been scrimping well too much with it but that will change."

"Good, it's always good to make a good impression."

"Yes I can see that now and with what I get from the house I will probably never have to work again."

"It should be a fair few thousand. As I said I know very little about it but your house wasn't cheap and that's bound to be reflected in the offer."

"Yes," Don said and Dave would swear later that the pupils of his eyes had turned to pound signs, "Anyway I had best leave you to it as you still have a lot to be going on with."

"True," Dave said and watched him make his way back to the house trying hard to conceal his laughter. After he had gone Dave got down to the job in hand and though it was a lot slower than the pads he covered it reasonably quickly. He had virtually finished the bottom half when he heard a familiar voice, "It looks a lot better and look at the amount you have done. Did Don give you a hand with it?"

"No," Dave said with a laugh, "He's too busy counting pound signs," and told Jane about the house.

"Well that's not a bad idea. It will put him back on his feet and even give him money to start a new life with."

"Oh it's a good idea," Dave said laughing, "But can you really see Daisy going for it?"

"Not really no so why did you suggest it then?"

"To give them something to talk about," Dave said laughing, "Or should I say row."

"Oh right," Jane said not liking Dave's sense of humour.

Dave finished the bottom and got out from under the boat, "What time are you picking the car up at?"

"About five," Jane said and looked at her watch, "Not too long from now actually."

"Well as soon as I'm finished I'll get off and see you at home. I should not be too long now."

"Sure, shall I see if Don's got the kettle on?"

"Don't mention anything about selling the house."

"I wouldn't be so cruel," Jane said and left him to it.

Dave carried on with the work and had actually finished it by the time Don and Jane returned.

"He'll have to get an electric kettle," Jane said, "It seems to take forever with that old whistling one."

"It won't be my problem soon," Don said with a laugh.

"I've got an old one at home if it's any good to you," Jane said.

"No I'll be able to get a new one soon. So the boats all painted up and looking like a new pin. I will definitely paint the deck when I have the time. It's a shame that I can't do it before I go."

"As long as it gets done it doesn't matter when," Dave said, "And besides it will give you something to do when you get there."

"True. Yes it gets fibre glassed tomorrow and the electric should also be sorted. I've fitted the water pump by the way, it just wants connected up."

"Really," Dave said, "When did you do that?"

"This morning before you arrived yes I don't hang around when I get going."

"Speaking of getting going," Jane said, "I had better get off and pick up the car."
 "I'll give you 10 minutes," Dave said, "And then I'll see you at home."
 "Fair enough," Jane said and left them to it.
 After she had gone Don said, "Yes she's quite a girl, do anything for anyone."
 "That's Jane, though I don't like this thing she's getting involved in."
 "Well it's a job at the end of the day and it pays pretty good, £150 a week I've heard."
 "Oh no, they keep that and give her £40."
 "What?" Don said in surprise, "I thought that she was getting a Carer's wage."
 "No," Dave said with a laugh, "Only on paper."
 "That's daft. That's like getting a job and giving back two thirds of my wages every week."
 "Try telling her that, all she sees is that she's getting £40 a week for leaving her car there one night and going up for a few hours during the week."
 "Will she be taxed on that?"
 "You know I'm not sure because you are right in what you are saying, it is a wage and not an allowance."
 "She wants to look a bit more deeply into that, it could back fire on her."
 "You can't tell her anything sometimes and believe me I've tried. Anyway I'll get off and see you on Tuesday."
 "Sure, thanks for what you have done on the boat by the way and don't forget the newspaper."
 "I won't," Dave said and rode off.
 On arrival home he found Jane already waiting, "I can't stop too long," she said, "I've got to pick Mary up. Kettle's on so the tea shouldn't be too long."
 "Sound," Dave said and went on to tell her about the conversation with Don.
 "Oh they'll sort all that out don't worry. If it's taxed it won't be much as I don't earn that much."
 "Well I've told you anyway. So a couple more days on the boat and I'm about done."
 "Good, anyway I had better get off and pick her up. I will see you later."
 They returned not long afterwards and nothing of any note happened the rest of the day. They went to bed at around 10.30.
 Dave awoke to find Dryden and Ivan deep in conversation. On seeing him awake though Dryden said, "Did you know that before old man met with Ivan's kind they used to live in caves?"
 "Well I knew they used to live in caves."
 "They couldn't make shelters. Ivan's kind could."
 "Really, they could make bricks?"
 "No," Ivan said, "They were just timber frames covered with animal skins but they served their purpose."
 "Oh, anything else?"
 "Well we showed them how to make their cloths warmer and also introduced them to more advanced and varied tools."
 "Oh right, so they benefited quite a lot then."
 "Yes," Dryden said, "They could actually survive in the ice lands then. Anyway Dinta had not arrived but we will continue if you like."
 "Sure, what are we talking about now then?"
 "I thought I might talk a little about the spiritual gifts."
 "Spiritual gifts?"
 "Yes, what enlightenment brings you."
 "Fair enough, I've never heard this before."
 "Well you have probably covered some of them already, there are thirteen altogether."
 "Sounds like quite a lot of things to go through."
 "They are quite easily covered. Anyway the first gift I would like to talk about is a balanced mind."
 "That's the Will and Self isn't it?"

“That's right but also the Spirit and Soul. Now a balanced mind is an imaginative mind and looks at things differently to an unbalanced mind.”

“It's not clouded by negative emotions?”

“Basically but also it looks to the greater good in any given situation.”

“Right and it tends to think more positively if I remember correctly.”

“Good, anyway a balanced mind gives you the second gift for it opens up an access channel to the divine.”

“Oh,” Dave said on realisation, “That's why you seem to know all things spiritually.”

“That's right; this is done through the Spirit to the Soul as they are now in balance.”

“Got it.”

“Now another spiritual gift is dream interpretation, the importance of this cannot be underestimated for by understanding them you grow in awareness.”

“I'm starting to realise that.”

“Good, next we have astral traveling but as you are doing it now you should know all about it.”

“Well I have covered it a little; the gift was always there it's just you get more conscious of it.”

“Right, next we have the ability to speak on many levels and this basically means knowing many different schools of thought. You get this from having an imaginative mind.”

“Yes for cross referencing is a big part of the development isn't it?”

“That's right. I've told you that you have probably covered most of this before so it should come quite easily. Another gift you will receive is divine guidance which means that you will seem to know the right things to do and say.”

“I've sort of noticed that. Even when I think I'm doing wrong when I look more deeply into it, it seems I wasn't.”

“Good, though don't get too complacent as you might lose the gift.”

“I'll bare that in mind.”

“You'll also get protection from the elements, a very useful gift especially when you are astral traveling.”

“So you mean to say that all these dark forces I've met didn't really have a chance?”

“You would have never met them until you were ready to. They are not really out to harm you just there for you to evolve past.”

“Oh right. I wished I had known that earlier it would have saved me a lot of stress.”

“It doesn't do to get too complacent, I mentioned that earlier.”

“That's right.”

“So anyway the next gift is a self of understanding. This comes about after a shift in consciousness after your old self dies.”

“Right, when you become your purpose.”

“Good. Now I've mentioned an access channel to the divine and from it you know all things spiritually. This is through another gift, which is a self of knowing.”

“Oh I did not realise, well unless the Self in this case is actually the Soul.”

“In all cases the Self becomes the Soul, that's what happens when the old self dies.”

“Right I should have realised. Water and Fire turn to Air so all that's left is Air and Earth.”

“Or to put it another way three becomes one although the Air element remains to guide you.”

“Yes.”

“Not many left now.”

“I hope not. Daft as it sounds I'm starting to get a little tired now.”

“You've covered a lot of ground so it's to be expected. We'll soon be through though.”

“I hope so.”

“Knowledge of the divine is another gift, this feeds your Soul and from it, it grows. The thing that administers it is called the divine spirit and is actually two gifts in one. These are a self of love and a self of wisdom and basically are your soul's water and food.”

“Right, we did something similar in another of the worlds.”

“Well finally you have a thing called a pure aura. It’s an effect more than a gift. You have purified your Self and so give off an uplifting presence.”

Right,” Dave said, “Just in time,” and fell asleep.

Chapter 5.

Monday passed uneventfully with only two things of note happening. Dave found the newspaper and told Jane about Daisy and Anne's intended trip to Wales. The tale picks up on Tuesday with Dave and Jane arriving on site to a disappointed Don.

“Look at the finish,” Don said showing them the fibre glass, “I thought it would be a lot better.”

Dave looked and sure enough it was a mess. “Daisy's gone up the wall. She says that a child could have done a better job.”

“Well I've got to admit I thought it would be a lot better than this. Wasn't the paint supposed to give it a smooth finish?”

“That's what I was told but obviously not. He put one layer of fibre glass on it and one top coat of paint.” (Incidentally I was working on a brewery refurbishment later and the walls were treated in a similar process. The painters though put two layers of fibre glass and three coats of paint on it. I told them about the boat and they were both surprised and amused.)

“You might be able to get it looking better.”

“How?”

“Fill the indentations with body filler and give it a coat of gloss when it’s dry. That's the best suggestion I've got I'm afraid.”

“Well maybe one day, I just couldn't be bothered with it at the moment. I mean look at it, Daisy's right.”

“Did you get the splitter by the way?” Dave said changing the subject for he saw how actually disappointed Don was.

“Oh yes, that's turned up.”

“And did he have time to fit it?”

“Yes it's on,” Don said still despondent, “It makes you laugh though doesn't it?”

“Sorry?”

“You were on about how the little finishes make the boat and then he comes and does a job like this. It seems strong enough don't get me wrong but look at it.”

“It might look different when you've filled and painted it.”

“And I thought that he knew what he was doing. He even scraped some of that painting you did with the ladder.”

“You can touch it up again, don't worry about it.”

“Ah well, anyway I've got a few things to do so do you mind if I leave you to it,” and left them to it. After he had gone Jane said, “He's not too happy about Tim's work is he?”

“I couldn't really blame him. I thought it would be a lot smoother myself.”

“And would the filler idea work?”

“I'm not sure. I don't really know how it will react with the salt water but it’s the best idea I've got, well apart from rip it up and start again.”

“He'll never do that.”

“No, anyway are you going to give me a hand with the beading?”

“Er sure, what do you want me to do?”

“Not a lot,” Dave said with a laugh, “Just keep me company really.”

“Well I can do that.”

Dave was going to bead the uprights and also the top of the walls on the underside of the ceiling where the larger quadrant beading was topside. This meant he would be mitering but as he had a mitre block it was not a problem. The bottom of the uprights did not need mitering as they would be

hidden by the benches. The first section was quickly done and as Dave stood back to check it Jane said, "It certainly looks the part."

"Yes, he'll have no complaints with this."

"True, I'd better get off and see my mum anyway. I'll pick you up later," and left him to it.

Dave carried on with the beading and it was not long before he was joined by Don, "Jane gone then?"

"She had to see her mother."

"Oh, did you get the newspaper by the way?"

"Sure," Dave said and gave it to him.

"You know," Don said after he had read it, "This sounds very interesting, I think it's a good idea."

"Well I've heard that quite a few people do it nowadays, anyway you'll do what's right for you."

"You're quite a learned person really," Don said out of the blue.

"Well the more I know the more I realise how little I actually know."

"Very true, anyway do you mind if I keep it?"

"No help yourself I've done with it now."

"Cheers," Don said and took it back with him to the shed.

Dave carried on with the beading and had it finished in a couple of hours. Reluctant to actually start staining it he looked around the boat and just fixed anything that wanted fixing. By the time Jane had arrived he had finished off all the little jobs so all that was left was the staining.

"That looks good," she said peering in, "That beading really finishes it off."

"You timed that right I've finished everything but the staining. I'm going to leave that till tomorrow."

"And then the boat is finished?"

"Well my part of the bargain. I'll be honest with you I'll be glad to see the back of it."

"Yes I noticed that you started to lose interest in it near the end."

"If he'd have come and fibre glassed it when he said that he would and I saw the state it was in I don't think I would have continued working on it. It was just lucky it was so close to the end that's all"

"Well I would have thought that it would have been a better finish but it's all done now so don't worry about it."

"True, I'll gather my tools and we'll head for home then," and did just that.

At home Jane made them both a cup of tea and said, "Oh I was thinking about what you said the other day."

"Sorry?"

"About the situation with Louise."

"Oh right, the fraud you mean."

"Well it's not really fraud. I mean I do the work and I would be more than willing to stop over on Saturday."

"No I meant defrauding you out of your wages," Dave said with a laugh.

"Well it's canceled now. I phoned them up today and sorted it out."

"Good on you," Dave said and 'About time' under his breath.

"So I've got a little more time to spend on my mother."

"Well there is that."

"It's all sorted now anyway. Oh and Tracy phoned up and they're back together again. She said that he had apologised to her and that he did not know what had come over him and it was probably all the stress at work."

"He's a gardener."

"Well no, there's talk of people being laid off and as he's not been there that long he thinks that he's first on the list."

"She'll be happy with that. What's going to keep her in the lifestyle that she's accustomed to?"

“Keep this to yourself but she told me that she would finish with him if he lost his job.”

“What, really?”

“That's what she said.”

“You've got some strange mates.”

“She's always been self centred. Do you think that he'll get his money back for the holiday that he booked if she does finish with him?”

“I doubt it,” Dave said with a laugh, “Where are they supposed to be going anyway?”

“Spain. Mind you he finds out about the job on Friday so you'll know for sure if they're still going then.”

“What a way to live your life, I hope that you never get like that.”

“I wouldn't dare,” Jane said laughing and the conversation changed. Mary arrived back from school later and nothing of any note happened the rest of the evening. They retired to bed at 10.30 and Dave fell quickly to sleep.

Dave woke up to an excited Dryden.” Dinta's on his way. One of his kin came whilst you were out. He's gone off to tell him of your arrival.”

“Right, will he be long?”

“Not really but don't worry you won't be bored.”

“More lessons you mean?”

“Afraid so, life and love or how to purge yourself of your anger and pride.”

“Now that would be worth knowing.”

“Well I'm glad it's caught your interest as you'll pick it up a lot better. Now before we actually begin I would like to talk about the triad of purpose.”

“Another triad?”

“We like to teach in triads. So the triad of purpose then, what actually is it?”

“Love, pride and anger.”

“Good, and their relationship to each other?”

Dave thought a while and said, “Pride is self love and anger is spurned or misguided love.”

“Excellent. So this will tell you how to get rid of your pride and anger, spiritually speaking.”

“Right, so how does it work then?”

“It works on levels of attainment. Eleven for each of them and a mergence at the twelfth step.”

“Er right.”

“It will become much clearer as we go along.”

“Well I hope so.”

“Now these levels of attainment are actually realisations, grasped concepts if you like.”

“Oh right, I think I can understand it a little better now.”

“Good, so we'll start with the first one then, life. This is a guide as to how to lose your anger.”

“That will prove useful,” Dave said thinking about his impending meeting with Narda.

“True, now anything beyond reality seen has to be rationalised, would you say that, that was true?”

“Yes, pretty obvious.”

“Good, now this rationalising is done through the reasoning of thoughts and coherence of various facts. These are philosophical facts though which are generally others reasoned thoughts.”

“So nothing concrete then?”

“Concrete?” Dryden said not knowing what it was.

“Solid.”

“They are solid to the people using them,” Dryden said not really liking being side tracked,

“Anyway the process I have been telling you about is called logic and this is what builds your faith or understanding.”

“Right so what about blind faith then?”

“Blind faith?”

“Your faith in the words without actually understanding them.”

"If your faith is your understanding and you do not understand it how can it be faith, what sort of double talk is that?"

"Oh," Dave said duly chastised.

"So anyway," Dryden went on unperturbed, "Faith is built on logic that is your first step on the ladder, **logic is the ultimate in faith.**"

"Fair enough, so what's next?"

"Now this logic I've mentioned not only is it your power of reason, it is there for a reason. Would you know what that reason is?"

"To build up your faith?"

"Well yes there is that but it is also there to give you hope, which is?"

"Your hope for salvation?"

"Or in other words your direction in life. Now without this direction your life is empty for it creates a void. Why is that then?"

Dave thought awhile and said, "Is it something to do with evolving to your purpose?"

"Something but I'm afraid that a little more elaboration is needed if you want to grasp it."

Dave thought some more and said, "It's something to do with the Soul. Does it grow through having this direction?"

"It does but at this stage of development it might be better thinking of it as a self as it hasn't evolved yet."

"Oh right, so a self is an unenlightened soul. I should have realised that."

"Right, so without this direction your self is empty which brings us to the second step **without direction you are void.**"

"Oh, that came quickly around."

"They are quite easy points to reach although some of them take a lot more understanding than others."

"I'll bare that in mind."

"Now a self that is void is also a self that has no purpose. Why would that be?"

"I suppose it is because it is its purpose to evolve so without this direction it has no purpose."

"Good, now if the self had a purpose what would it be filled with?"

"Knowledge of this purpose?"

"In other words?"

Dave thought awhile and said, "Love."

"Right, now the self that has no purpose, what is it filled with?"

"Well it's a void I suppose so it would be empty."

"Not true."

Dave thought awhile and said, "Well it must be anger then for this is all about getting rid of it."

"Good, by hook or by crook you'll get there in the end. Anger is the self without purpose where pride is the spirit without purpose. I'll talk a little about that before we go onto the next point."

"Sure, I'm listening."

"Right," Dryden said with a laugh, "Now to separate love from anger just remember that love pulls you to creation and anger pulls you to destruction."

"Alright. So why does it actually want to do that, anger I mean?"

"It doesn't actually want to do it that's just an effect of it actions. It's a defensive mechanism that you have not quite evolved away from that's all."

"Sorry?"

"In basic survival it was a spur, a necessary evil if you like. As Man evolved out of basic survival he was supposed to take up his purpose and his anger would have gone away naturally."

"Oh right but I can see a downside to that."

"There are probably one or two," Dryden said with a laugh, "So which one did you have in mind?"

"Well Ivan would be a good example. The less evolved would be more aggressive and so wipe out

the more spiritually minded.”

“I think that the men who wiped us out were still on the basic survival stage,” Ivan said agreeing with Dave's theory, “In fact it was probably us with our new ideas that took them out of it.”

“Yes there's a lot of truth in what you say Ivan,” Dryden said, “And Dave does have a point for it can still happen afterwards and is probably still happening to this day.”

“Well yes,” Dave said, “It was not that long ago when the Native Americans were virtually wiped out and they were a very spiritual people who had learned to live with the land.”

“Really, what happened there then?”

“Another branch of the family came along and basically they had a different outlook on life. They were more technically advanced and had superior weaponry and thought themselves superior though civilised was the word they used. Well they drove the natives from the more fertile land and just left them to die in poverty massacring any that tried to stand up for themselves.”

“Sounds like quite a barbarous people, what happened to them in the end?”

“Well they're ruling the world.”

“Oh, mind you it's happened before.”

“Oh yes, history is riddled with it.”

“And did they have any spiritual consciousness at all or were they completely ignorant?”

“They believed in God, well some of them believed in gods, the earlier societies I'm talking about.”

“And did they follow the blind faith that you mentioned earlier?”

“Well yes. I suppose if they had understood the word they would have done things differently.”

“True, so you have just proved the point.”

“Me, how?”

“**A self without purpose is the domain of anger** for it sounds to me that these gods they believed in were gods of anger.”

“Oh right, yes I can see that. Yet they say that their God is a god of love.”

“Well they would but actions speak louder than words.”

“And this blind faith, do you think it came about through deliberate action?”

“Sorry?”

“Well I've been thinking, a self without purpose is a self that lives in ignorance, one that is easily manipulated. Blind faith keeps people ignorant so I was wondering if it was created for that purpose.”

“No I think it was just a by-product. I would say that the people who brought it to be knew no better.”

“So they were ignorant too,” Dave said upon realisation.

“Not as and they thought that they weren't but they were. No they did realise that the people who were ignorant were more easily manipulated though but I'm guessing that they did not have the depth of understanding to know why.”

“Right, so why are they easily manipulated then?”

“Because they know no better,” Dryden said with a laugh.

“What,” Dave said in surprise, “Is that it?”

“No,” Dryden said still laughing, “Man by nature is conditioned to serve. The most ignorant served their perceived betters so they became their truth and anything that was told by them was perceived as Gospel.”

“Ours is not to reason why kind of thing. So what about the er more enlightened ones?”

“They served their gods little realising that their gods were anger so basically they served their selves but in an unenlightened way.”

“Oh right. So as they did have a perceived purpose it was the wrong one so it didn't count so they still have a self without purpose.”

“That's right and it was definitely the domain of anger as seen by their actions.”

“True.”

“Now I don't know if you know this but if you serve love then it fills you with love.”

“Yes, through the divine spirit.”

“Well it's also the case that if you serve anger then it fills you with anger so it might be a good idea to find out what it actually is so you'll be better equipped to deal with it.”

“I won't argue with that after all I've been known to lose my temper occasionally.”

“Ah experience, that will make it a lot easier.”

“Good,” Dave said with a laugh, “I'm all for making life easier for myself.”

“That's the spirit,” Dryden said laughing, “Sloth I think. Anyway can you remember back to when you last lost your temper and remember the reason for it?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “I think it was with Jane for letting people take advantage of her.”

“And what was the reason for it?”

“For letting people take advantage of her,” Dave repeated.

“Well thinking about it logically every act of kindness that she does takes her closer to her purpose so you should actually be trying to encourage her. These people that you consider are taking advantage might actually be doing her a favour.”

“Well I could look at it that way I suppose.”

“So that means that the problem goes a little deeper. Now every time you do someone a good deed if you looked at it from a negative point of view you could say that they were taking advantage of you. Now I know you to be a good natured, open handed man so I would say that the people you are talking about make quite a habit of it.”

“They don't just take the piss they also take the bladder.”

“Which must be quite Soul destroying for Jane.”

“Well she doesn't say so but it reflects in her moods.”

“And would I be right in saying that you have told her to be a little more discerning in her deeds?”

“Constantly,” Dave said with a laugh, “A little too often perhaps.”

“And she carries on regardless just getting into one mess after another when if she would have listened to you in the first place it would never have happened.”

“Too true.”

“And that is the basis of your anger and the next step on the ladder, **anger is the height of frustration.**”

“Oh so I'm not angry that she gets herself into the situations its more that I'm frustrated that she does not take my advice. You know that makes it a little easier to swallow.”

“Good and hopefully now you will be able to hold your temper better as it does no one any good.”

“True, if anything it's been pretty detrimental.”

“Well with understanding that should go a long way. Now you do know that eventually she will wise up and become a lot more discerning?”

“I suppose so. I think that deep down she knows she has to change for its actually affecting her quite badly.”

“Now knowing that why do you still get angry when she gets taken in again?”

“You know I'm not sure about that for you are right in what you say, she will wise up, it's only a matter of time.”

“So what do you think is making you like that? Something must be affecting you.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Impatience I guess.”

“Good, so what is impatience then?”

“Frustration I guess, wanting to get things done before they are ready.”

“You are half right with frustration but what is the state of mind that causes it?”

“I'm not sure, er impatience?”

“What about despair? You see no way out and this brings about frustration causing you to be impatient.”

“Yes I can see that.”

“Good because that's the next step on the ladder, **impatience-frustration in despair.**”

“Right.”

“And this leads quickly to the next point, **anger-impatience at its height.** It is only your impatience that's making you angry. Keep that in mind and you should control it on a deeper level.”

“I'll try because I can see the truth in what you say.”

“Now we glanced on direction a little earlier. I would like to elaborate a little more to build up your understanding.”

“I won't argue with that, all advice will be gratefully accepted.”

“Now the actual point is **direction is the purpose of life** and that direction is done through enlightenment. This light not only gives you your direction it makes you more aware, not only of your surroundings but also of things beyond the naked eye. It is your purpose to evolve to your purpose through this light so its importance cannot be underestimated.”

“Yes, I'm starting to see that.”

“Good, grasp that point well for this light transcends life itself.”

“Sorry?”

“You may reincarnate many times before you achieve your purpose. The only thing that survives each life is the light for it is the soul's evolution.”

“Oh right.”

“Now this light had a byproduct. In the same way that fire gives off heat light gives love.”

“Yes, I think I've heard that mentioned.”

“Good but now it's a deeper level of understanding. This love is actually your mind's life which brings us to the next step and that is that **love is the heart beat of life.** With this love inside your Self you have no room for anger and not only that it is actually your Soul's essence so the more of it you have the stronger it becomes.”

“Right, it's very important to your evolution then.”

“It is your evolution. Only a few left now.”

“And Dinta still hasn't returned.”

“Well he wants to hurry up otherwise you will miss him.”

“Oh no I'll wait. I'm in no hurry at all.”

“You'll soon have all the knowledge and after that you will be finished with our world for a while.”

“What,” Dave said in surprise, “So how much is there actually left to know then?”

“Just this and the next section.”

“About getting rid of your pride you mean?”

“That's right. After that everything is covered for this world so you'll go onto the air world.”

“Do you know much about it?”

“Not really. Only that it's called the Land of Spiritual Purpose and it is divided into two lands.”

“And these lands, do you know what they are?”

“Sure, they are the land of the star elves and the land of the higher gods.”

“Oh, and these star elves, do you know much about them?”

“Nothing but don't worry you'll find out about them soon enough.”

“True, and Narda, which of the lands does she live in?”

“I don't think either,” Dryden said with a laugh, “She's a world to herself.”

“That sounds like it's going to be an interesting world.”

“Well we'll clear up these last few points before you get too tired.”

“I won't argue with that,” Dave said yawning.

“Right, have you ever heard the expression know thy self?”

“Yes I think so something to do with philosophy if I remember correctly.”

“Love of wisdom. Anyway to know thy self is what we have actually been trying to do for it gives you a better understanding.”

“Right, your Self being your Soul.”

“That's right and there is only one way you can actually do this, which is?”
 Dave thought awhile and said, “Is it to look within?”
 “Good, the next step on the ladder, **to know thy self is to look within.**”
 “Oh, that was quickly done.”
 “Just mopping up now really. Now also another effect of looking in is what?”
 “Getting rid of your anger?”
 “Good but you want to go a little deeper than that to get a better understanding.”
 Dave thought awhile before he said, “You get to know your purpose?”
 “Correct the next step on the ladder is **to look within is to know thy purpose** so only one more left to go.”
 “I'm pleased about that,” Dave said yawning again.
 “Not long now. Now when you look within you know your purpose why is that?”
 “I'm not sure. The only thing I can really think of is that your Self is your purpose but that doesn't sound quite right.”
 “Why not?”
 “You mean that it is. I thought that your purpose lay in helping others.”
 “It does but it's also an aspect of yourself that you serve, remember the Law of Love.”
 “So you mean that your Self is the purpose that you serve?”
 “That's right and our final point **to know thy self is to know thy purpose.** All done, we'll do the other one when you have had a rest,” and they talked a little more until Dave fell asleep.
 Dave woke up to find that Jane had left to take Mary to school so he got up and made himself a cup of tea. As he sat there drinking it a verse came to his head so he thought he would write it down to put with his small collection. It was only a four liner and it seemed a little pretentious to give it a title but he did anyway. He called it **Solitary Confinement** and it went like this,
Where is my little spider, is he coming out to play
Where is my little spider, I've not seen him all day,
I never saw him yesterday much to my bleak sorrow
But hopefully if he's alright I might see him tomorrow.
 Nice isn't it? Anyway Jane returned from the school run and said, “They asked me to leave the car for one last time this weekend.”
 “Really, and I trust you told them where to get off.”
 “No, I said that I would. I won't be here anyway.”
 “What?” Dave said pleading ignorance.
 “No I promised to go down to Wales with Don to give him a send off so I won't need the car.”
 “Fair enough, how long before he's back do you think?”
 “I wouldn't like to say,” Jane said with a laugh, “He'll probably come back with Daisy.”
 “About a week then,” Dave said laughing, “Well it won't take me long to finish today so the boat will be as ready as it ever will be.”
 “Do you think he'll ever get round to finishing it off himself?”
 “Doubt it. To tell you the truth if he does come back with Daisy I can't see him ever going back to the boat, well unless some sucker takes him.”
 “Don't look at me; this is definitely the last time. As far as I'm concerned all the stuff we have done for him has more than made up for what he has done for my mother.”
 “Good I'm glad to hear it. Then it looks like the boat will be stuck in Wales for good then.”
 “It would be a shame.”
 “Not really, let's be honest it was a slip shod job. I ought to tell him that if anyone asks I had nothing to do with the construction.”
 “Why, you did a good job?”
 “Half a job, anyway it will all be over by today so I'll not moan about it. I'll leave it until a little later though as it should only take me a couple of hours.”

“Sure. Mind you I can't stop too long as I've got to nip over and keep an eye on my mother.”

“You can drop me off then if you want. I can walk back when I'm finished.”

“Fair enough, we'll have a cup of tea first though eh.”

“I won't argue with that,” Dave said and put the kettle on. After they drank the tea Jane dropped Dave off and it was not long before he was joined by Don. “I know where there's another boat,” he said almost beaming.

“You've already got one.”

“I know but this one's going for next to nothing. The bloke just wants it out the way.”

“Oh, so where is it then?”

“Now that I can't say,” Don said mysteriously much to Dave's disinterest.

“Right, what are you planning to do with it then?”

“Do it up and sell it I guess. That should pay off the loan I took for this one so I'll be quids in.”

“Well you know what you're doing.”

“Unless of course it's a better boat then I'll sell this one and do the same.”

“Do you think you'll get much for this one then?” Dave said in surprise.

“Well I was hoping about five grand. That was before I saw the state of the fibre glass. I reckon that must have knocked a couple of hundred of it.”

“And the rest,” Dave said with a laugh.

“What?” Don said genuinely shocked.

“I think that you paid well over the odds in the first place and this work that you've had done has probably actually devalued it.”

“No way,” Don said not even thinking of contemplating it, “You don't know anything about prices.”

“Have it your own way but when you come to sell it you'll see who is right.”

“No,” Don said putting a mental block on it, “I will get four and a half grand for it at least.”

“If you finish off the work that wants doing to it you might, if you found the right person get you money back. I mean the money that you paid for the boat and not the loan money.”

“Well the trailer will make a profit anyway.”

“I doubt it. I think you will probably lose a couple of hundred quid on it.”

“Oh and you know about trailer prices as well,” Don said in a mocking voice.

“Only what I read in auto mart. Oh and that your trailer was made to pull a boat and cannot really be adapted to do anything else so you are limiting your market.”

“Yes but it's still a pretty big market,” Don said dismissively, “And besides when I get the money for the house all this will be hypothetical.”

“True. And you could even start up boat restoration when you've got some money behind you.”

“Well I have been giving the matter some thought recently. I could make a comfortable living doing it. It sure beats the hell out of the few quid I'll get for gardening.”

“Oh yes, and living near the sea you'll have a ready market for your goods.”

“True. I don't even need to sell them.”

“Sorry?”

“I could just hire them out to the holiday makers. That should give me a regular income.”

“Yes the world is definitely a brighter place when you have money. It opens up a lot more opportunity.”

“I definitely agree with that. I can see myself with a fleet of boats. I even know where there's another one going cheap.”

“See three already.”

“That's almost a navy,” Don said with a laugh, “Anyway I'll make you a cup of tea if you like.”

“Sure and I'll make a start on the staining.”

“It's all finished then isn't it?”

“Yes a couple of hours should do it. So this other boat anyway, does it need much work on it?”

“Just a clean-up and an engine.”

“Sounds like a bargain then,” Dave said as Don went off to make him a cup of tea. Dave started to stain the beading using an artist's paint brush for he found it easier. He had covered a fair bit before Don arrived back with the tea. “Yes it looks the business,” Don said as he looked at the beading, “Definitely finishes it off.”

“Gives a nice two tone doesn't it.”

“Yes I think that I'll have to employ you when I get set up.”

“I'll look forward to it,” Dave said laughing to himself.

“Well you're a good worker you deserve a chance. No when I've made my first million I'll remember you.”

“Right,” Dave said laughing, “I'll hold you to that.”

“No I'm serious. Credit where credits due if it was not for you I would not have got half as far.”

Dave was tempted to say that if it was not for him he would have got nowhere but played him along instead, “Well you were the ideas man. Without your vision this would have come to nothing.”

“There is that,” Don said not realising that he was being wound up, “But what's the point of having all these ideas without the work to turn them into reality.”

“True, true. You know I've been thinking more about this selling your share of the house idea.”

“You have?”

“Yes, now you have a good purpose to put the money to, it might be a good idea to make your approach to Daisy.”

“You think so?”

“Oh yes. She'll know you want it for investment purposes and so are not going to piss it up the wall.”

“You might be right.”

“I mean let's be honest you could really do with getting the all clear before you go away.”

“Well I would like to know where I stand. Yes I'll see her tonight about it.”

“Get her a bottle of wine and use your charm. Not that you'll need it as the idea stands up on its own merit but it is good to get her in the mood.”

“Very true, yes it will be like the old days.”

“And then you'll have a bit of cash behind you and your life can begin again.”

“Yes. You know I've still got a drop of whiskey left. I ought to fetch it down, celebrate the end of the boat renovation kind of thing.”

“Why not, and the beginning of a new life I'll just finish this off.”

Don went back to fetch the glasses and bottle and by the time he got back Dave was finished. He poured them both a drink and said, “So here's to a bright new future, health, wealth and happiness.”

“My thoughts exactly it's just a shame that I had not come across that newspaper article earlier.”

“Really, why is that then?”

“Well we could have done a better job on this boat for a start. You would have gone down to Wales quite the man.”

“No use crying over spilt milk,” Don said and then laughed before saying, “Only whiskey. I'll tell you one thing though; I won't be employing that Tim again. What a waste of time he turned out to be.”

“Well I wasn't going to say anything.”

“You don't need to Daisy said it all. A child could have done a better job than he did. No as soon as he has dropped me off in Wales I want nothing more to do with him.”

“Have you got enough money for petrol?”

“Just about but there's no point worrying over money as I'll soon be rolling in it.”

“True,” Dave said smiling to himself, “Very true.”

“Yes this time next year as the wise man said,” and poured them both another measure, “Here's to then,” and took a good drink from it. The bottle was soon finished and Dave left the site a little drunk. He walked the short distance home imagining the scene. Don freshly injected with Dutch

courage broaching the subject of the house sale. He laughed out loud much to the horror of an elderly couple that he had just over taken. He was still laughing as he arrived back home but mentioned nothing about it to Jane knowing that she did not share the same dark humour that he did. He went to bed for a couple of hours just to sleep it off and awoke with a blinding head ache. "You were overdoing it a bit weren't you?" Jane said on seeing him come down, "Where have you been, the pub?"

"No, Don gave me some whiskey."

"Behave it's me you're talking to."

"No seriously, to celebrate the boat being finished and to toast his new life in Wales."

"A short lived toast then," Jane said with a laugh.

"Oh he said that he might be able to get a hold of another boat by the way."

"Really? So what's he going to do with two boats then?"

"Sell one to pay off the loan he said."

"Well it might work. That would save him a lot of stress."

"True," Dave said and then laughed before he said, "Well if he gets the right money for it that is."

"The other one might be worth more. Does it need much work doing to it?"

"Just a clean-up and an engine."

"Well that's scuppered that idea. He's got no money to buy a new engine for a start."

"He'll have to take a loss on the other one then. One thing's for sure though, he can't keep two boats running."

"True. I could see this boat might back fire on him," and the conversation continued. Little happened the rest of the evening and Dave retired to bed at 10.30.

Dave woke up to find Ivan and Dryden still talking. On seeing them he said, "Dinta not here yet?"

"He's on his way," Dryden said, "We won't start yet, we'll just talk awhile and see if he arrives."

"Fair enough, anything in particular?"

"Life in general will do. So how do you find people, generally I mean?"

"If you are fair with them they are usually fair with you. You get the odd ones but it is that rare they stand out."

"So from your personal experience you find that they usually are quite genuine."

"Yes I would say so."

"And what about Jane, would you say that her personal experience was similar to yours?"

"No in fact quite the opposite."

"Sorry?"

"The genuine ones are the ones that stand out. I've never met so many leeches."

"So why should that be then? Why should your life experience be completely different to hers?"

"You know I don't know really. I've never give it much thought which is strange really when you think about it."

"A point that deserves contemplation."

"Well yes," Dave said and thought a while before he said, "Do you think it is because I set boundaries?"

"You will have to elaborate on that for me."

"I set standards, levels of behaviour that I find acceptable."

"So you sort of draw a line that no one can cross."

"Yes but it's not a solid line as you have to take outside influences into it."

"You have to be a bit discerning you mean?"

"Yes, do you think that's it for I remember someone, Cula I think saying that she had to build up her powers of discernment?"

"Well there is that but I would also say that she needs to set boundaries as well. Do you know why?"

"Personally I think that I've got more control over my life since I set these boundaries whether it's

true or not I'm not sure though it seems to work for me.”

“No it's true. It does give you a certain amount of control but it also lets others know where you stand.”

“Right.”

“Not only that but I'm willing to wager that these people have long since fell from grace because you would not tolerate it.”

“Well true I have shown a few of them the door in my time.”

“And Jane hasn't. That is why they have accumulated to such a degree.”

“Yes when you put it like that I can see where you're coming from.”

“Now when you have control over your life through setting these boundaries you know where you stand and others know where they stand with you. Leave your life up in the air and you will quickly come across people who will try and control it.”

“Very true.”

“Right, I suppose the next thing to talk about is how to make a good impression.”

“I've been on about that earlier,” Dave said and told him about Don and the boat.

“And this is one of Jane's friends?” Dryden said after he had finished.

“How did you know?” Dave said with a laugh.

“Sort of educated guess,” Dryden said laughing, “But you were right to try and get the boat to the best of its potential.”

“Well I thought so. First impressions generally last a long time.”

“Yes, it also shows that you don't put up with second best.”

“I suppose it does.”

“Now also to make a good impression you sometimes have to go that one step further. If a friend wants you to fix a door and you see that the window needs some attention fix that as well.”

“Really?”

“Yes you'll be surprised at the outcome. It has to be experienced to be believed so try it and see.”

“I think I will.”

“Another thing to remember when you do someone a good turn and they want to do one back let them.”

“I do actually have trouble with that daft as it sounds. I don't like people doing things for me.”

“That's your self reliance talking. Now there is a reason for doing this could you tell me what it is?”

“To make them feel better about themselves?”

“That's right. I know that it's only their pride talking but if you don't it could quickly turn to envy and they may even turn against you.”

“Oh, I did not realise.”

“Yes and not only that you are encouraging them to do a self less act and so evolve closer to their purpose.”

“You mean I might actually be hampering them. I did not realise.”

“Remember that you lead best by example and words are not enough sometimes. These are the things that leave good impressions.”

“I'll bare that in mind, anymore?”

“Sure, never talk bad about anyone because it will always come back to you and not only that it leaves a bad impression with the people you are actually talking to.”

“Why is that then?”

“Well if you are talking about someone behind their back like that surely the next logical step would be that they think you would be talking about them in the same way at a future time.”

“Oh yes, I suppose so.”

“Good and finally never get into an argument with a fool as anyone listening in will soon not know which one is which.”

“Really,” Dave said with a laugh, “So why is that then for I thought a fool would be easily put in his

place?”

“You would think so but you'll find the reality of the situation is different. If they can't see reason they side track you with inane comment and frustrate you making you angry and thus descending to their level.”

“Oh right.”

“If you do get involved take a backward step and keep an eye on the big picture. You'll find it a lot easier then.”

“I'll bare that in mind.”

“Well he's not back yet so we'll make a start. The first thing I would like to talk about is emotional thought but before I begin I would like you to tell me what it is.”

“I've never heard of it before,” Dave said and thought a while, “Is it thought that comes from the emotions?”

“Well yes but give me a few examples so I know that you have fully grasped it.”

“Thoughts that come from envy, pride and that.”

“Yes but I'm looking for actual examples.”

Dave thought a while and said, “Nationalistic thoughts I suppose, that would be pride in your country. Envyng people for what they have would be another one and lecherous thoughts I suppose.”

“That should be enough. So basically what are they in essence?”

“I'm not sure, negative thought waves?”

“Close, I'll give you this one. It's actually surplus mental energy.”

“Sorry?”

“Mental energy diverted from your purpose. If you haven't one it's surplus and if you have it does not exist.”

“Oh right.”

“And that is the first step on the ladder; **emotional thought is surplus mental energy.**”

“Fair enough.”

“This emotional thought, do you know where it actually comes from?”

“Not really, your emotions?”

“And where do they come from?”

“Your Self, self consciousness.”

“That's right. So self consciousness then, what is it the domain of?”

“Pride,” Dave said straight away.

“Why is that then?”

“Because self consciousness feeds it.”

“Very good so that's the second part covered then. **Self consciousness is the domain of pride.** So we have mentioned pride a few times before but do you know what it actually is?”

“A strong sense of self worth?”

“Try again,” Dryden said with a laugh, “I'm looking for what it is in essence so you'll have to go a little deeper.”

Dave thought a while and said, “The only thing I can equate it with would be vanity but I can't really see it being that.”

“Why not?”

“Well it's more to do with preening and such. You know looking at the mirror too long too often.”

“Well that's physical vanity but there are other types as well.”

Dave thought a while and said, “Is it mental vanity?”

“That's right. Now mental vanity is pride in its highest sense so the third point is **Pride is the height of vanity.**”

“Mental vanity. You know I have never thought of it in that light before.”

“Yes it's quite an eye opener isn't it? Pride covers a wide spectrum right up from arrogance down to

paranoia.”

“Paranoia, what has that got to do with pride?”

“Well its negative self consciousness as opposed to vanity which is positive.”

“Oh right, when you put it like that I suppose. So if you get rid of your pride does it mean that your paranoia also goes?”

“That's right,” Dryden said and laughed before he said, “If you want to define paranoia just think when the imagination fell out with the intellect she started seeing people behind his back.”

“Yes,” Dave said with a laugh, “I like that although part of it has left me confused.”

“Really, which part?”

“Well he and she.”

“The intellect comes from the masculine side and the imagination the feminine just other names for positive and negative.”

Oh right, and the negative is the bad side?”

“Well they both are initially but as you evolve and purge yourself they take on a new meaning. Negative becomes balance to positive for it's the understanding to positives wisdom.”

“Yes, that makes sense.”

“So **pride is paranoia at its height**, another point has been covered.”

“It quickly goes. It looks like I might end up missing Dinta.”

“You can see him later. You have opened up this world now and so can come back at any time.”

“Well true,” Dave said picking up, “I've never seen a giant before.”

“I'm sure you have they are just big men after all. Dinta is only about 7 feet they still exist in your world.”

“So how did they come to exist in fairy tales? Mind you they were a hundred feet tall then.”

“What, a hundred feet, now that's a vivid imagination. I have heard of things getting exaggerated but that's ridiculous.”

“But they must have been significantly taller. I mean you said that Dinta was only 7ft, hardly the basis of a story.”

“They were taller when the Earth was more fertile.”

“Before the floods?”

“That's right but you were only talking about 11 or 12 feet.”

“Well that would definitely stand out.”

“Not really. Everyone was the same size so it was normal.”

“Oh, so I will never know then.”

“Sometimes nature throws out freaks. Maybe a very tall man was born say 8ft, he would stand out.”

“There is that though legends talk of a race of very tall men.”

“Remnants of folk memory don't forget that they didn't just suddenly shrink, they had to evolve and that takes time.”

“True.”

“And maybe these fairy tales were just stories built around these folk memories.”

“That could explain it.”

“Anyway back to paranoia. For a change I will tell you the next point and you tell me how to get there.”

“Alright,” Dave said a little reluctant, “I'll give it a go.”

“It's not that bad,” Dryden said encouraging him, “The point is **paranoia-the height of vanity.**”

“You have to be vain to be paranoid,” Dave said just guessing really as he did not have a clue.

“Well you do so it was a good guess but tell me why you have to be vain.”

“I don't know. You were right it was just a guess.”

“Guess again then,” Dryden said with a laugh, “Who knows you might get lucky.”

Dave thought awhile before he said, “Well paranoia is the feeling that everyone is out to get you isn't it?”

“That's right.”

“So what makes you so special that everyone wants to harm you? You have got to think that you stand out in a crowd for that.”

“Good, it wasn't too difficult was it?”

“No pretty easy really.”

“Right, so you know what paranoia is, what about vanity then?”

“Excessive preening?”

“You're very close actually, Dryden said with a laugh, “What do you do when you preen yourself?”

“Comb your hair and stuff?” Dave said none the wiser.

“No, go deeper.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Love yourself?”

“Right but in a certain way.”

“Self consciously as opposed to soul conscious love which comes from acts of service.”

“Good and another point gone. **Vanity is self conscious love.**”

“Right, not many left.”

“Only five, we mentioned soul conscious love so I'll talk a little about that next.”

“Be my guest just let me know when you have finished.”

“Will do,” Dryden said laughing, “Well soul conscious love not only feeds your Soul it also gives you a spiritual lift.”

“Yes I have actually felt it and it is very uplifting.”

“Wisdom through experience, the best teacher, now this lift is basically an injection of new life so from it you get mentally stronger and more aware. On another level it also gives you emotional strength for mentally speaking it is your heart's life also. The next step thus is **love is the beating of a heart.**”

“Yes it was a heart-felt lift and I did feel mentally stronger afterwards.”

“Good, now around about this stage of your development you have got rid of your pride so have only one more hurdle, which is?”

“Anger?”

“Well it's more to do with perceptions of God. A god of anger or a god of love. Anger, an aloof man in Heaven or love something that's inside you.”

“Got it so the next point would be **God is love** then?”

“That's right. You also start questioning the nature of God and why it exists.”

“I thought that, that would have happened before then. Isn't it the spur to your evolution after all?”

“It is and so you would have questioned its nature and reason for existence but not from this perspective.”

“Oh, which perspective?”

“As something that's inside you. Realisation comes with the point **God exists to serve a purpose.** God being your spiritual will undergoing transformation.”

“Yes the purpose being selflessness which is obtained by service.”

“Good, which leads quickly to the next point **The purpose of God is the purpose to serve.** When you make the conscious decision to lead a self less life.”

“Right, last one then.”

“You realise that God is actually your Self and grows through service for this gives it love or **To love thy self is to love thy God.**”

“Right, all done then?”

“Not quite. We have the mergence when life and love become one.”

“Oh sorry.”

“Not to worry. This is **to know thy self is to love thy God** and is the meeting of knowledge of the divine with service to the divine, the wisdom and experience if you like.”

“Right,” Dave said and tiredness came over him, “And just in time,” before he fell to sleep.

Epilogue (or should that be ship's log.)

Don made the trip to Wales where the natives did not prove friendly so he did not get the open armed welcome he was expecting. His seamanship capability was also put into question when he rammed the boat into a wall by accident and he gave the expectant crowd the impression that he did not know what he was doing.

He returned home with Daisy the following week as predicted and told Jane that the Harbour Master had banned him saying he was too old and he did not want the responsibility of looking after him. He also could not afford the cost of mooring so the boat had been relegated to a boat yard which proved cheaper.

Unperturbed Don picked up the other boat and brought it back to the allotment. He then put the first boat on the internet attracting the attention of someone who lived in the far north of Scotland though it would be quite a while before he could get down to see it. Don made another trip to Wales to check on the boat with Daisy actually driving him though tragedy was to strike just as they were heading for home. The engine over heated and so they had to be brought back by a recovery vehicle the cost of which Dave never found out though he did find out that the car cost £900 to repair. Jane also took him to Wales once more for with the advent of torrential rain the boat needed to be pumped out. This caused slight damage to the cabin interior though nothing of any real note.

The prospective buyer did come down to Don's eventually during a particularly bad snow storm only to find that Don was drunk, celebrating his potential sale. He was supposed to stop the night but seeing this wanted to go straight there. It had been arranged that he would take Don's other boat with them so they had to load it up first. They got as far as Shrewsbury but the conditions proved too bad so the man paid for a hotel for them. The next morning they arrived only to be told by the Harbour Master that the boat yard owner was on holiday and so would not be opening the yard until the following Monday. They left the boat there and the man returned to Scotland where he declined his offer so leaving Don with two boats in Wales. He managed to get someone to fetch the original one back and re advertised it with no one interested enough to make an offer. Time marched by and the boat in Wales gathers dust and with the ground rent running out will soon be gathering bills. Don's only real hope is to sell the original boat but as he has ripped out the cooker and sink for the other one the chances are, well watch this space.

Part 4

The Land of Spiritual Purpose

**She leaves me there without a clue
Yet taunts me when I'm feeling blue,
She'll drive me mad before she's through
Pray tell me lady who are you.**

Chapter 1.

Saturday soon came around and John picked Dave up at 9 a.m. to start the job.

“So what's on the agenda for today?” Dave asked as they drove along.

“I thought that we might put a window in to let in some light.”

“Sure, so how many windows are you actually putting in?”

“Well three, two small ones, one of which I've already done and a large one that can open up as a fire escape.”

“There will be plenty of light then. Mind you it will be a fair sized room when it finished.”

“The biggest one in the house,” John said as they pulled up. They both got out the car and went to the shed where they fetched the windows out.

“These look expensive,” Dave said as they carried them back to the house.

“They would have been but I got them from a bloke on the cheap.”

“Oh right.”

“No it's not like that,” John said with a laugh, “He was going to do a conversion of his own but the idea fell from grace and so he had these and some insulation going cheap.”

“Sounds like you fell on your feet then,” Dave said as they climbed the stairs. He saw 8 sheets of chip board leaning against the wall and said, “And the chip board as well?”

“No I pinched that from work,” John said with a laugh, “End of job leftovers; they always seem to order too much.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and John climbed the step ladder and got into the loft. Dave passed the windows and chip board up and then joined him. He saw that John had not been idle for he had joisted out about a third of the floor space.

“We'll lay the boarding out to give us something to walk on,” John said, “It will be a lot easier than walking on bare joists.”

“And safer,” Dave said as they lay the boarding out. After they had finished Dave said, “So whereabouts do you want this window putting?”

John showed him the place and said, “We'll have to cut out one of the rafters for the window's too wide. Oh and also put a couple of rafters alongside the two outside rafters to give it extra support.”

“Really, does it need it?”

“Well I don't think so but building regulations say otherwise. It will be keeping the building inspector happy.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and they got to work taking off the tiles. The first few were fairly difficult for they had to pull them through from the inside but after they had made a hole the rest came quite easily. Once the tiles were off John cut the roofing slats where the tiles had been and cut the header joist to size. With that done they propped the rafter up and cut it so the window could fit in. The header joints and parallel joists were soon fixed as John had a nail gun.

“Cup of tea?” John said after they were finished.

“Yeah go on then,” Dave said and they both went down to the kitchen. As they drank the tea John said, “It's coming on well.”

“True, there's some dust though.”

“Years of it,” John said with a laugh, “I think I've already had a stomach full of it.”

“And do you think we'll get it done before Christmas?”

“I'm hoping. I'll get a few hours in most nights to help it on the way.”

“Yes I saw that you've made some progress. You've come on well with the joists.”

“I had a good start. Get this window and fire escape in this weekend and I'll be happy.”

“Should do the windows nearly done already.”

“Oh no,” John said with a laugh, “Half of those tiles will have to be cut.”

“What?”

“Once the windows in we'll have to tile back up to it we've got to make it water tight.”

“And will that take long?”

"It will with the grinder that I've got," John said and finished his tea, "Anyway we'll crack on if you like."

"Sounds good," Dave said and followed him back up.

The window frame was fixed in place by screwing four brackets to the joists and as it came already fitted with the flashing it was only a matter of tiling up to it.

"We would be better cutting them in the garden," John said, "I'll just measure up first," and he called out the sizes to Dave who wrote them down. John was right in the fact that it took some time in cutting and by the time it was done it had started to get dark.

"I'll just fit them in and we'll put the glass in and call it a day at that,"

"Yes sure. I don't mind working later though. You've got some lights I see."

"No it will keep. We've done a good start and tomorrow if you're up for it we'll do the other."

"Yes why not," Dave said and they headed back to the loft. The tiles were soon in place and the window fitted and Dave back home telling Jane of his adventure. She too had a tale to tell as she had not long returned from Wales but as we have glanced on it in the back section of the last tale I will not dwell on it.

The rest of the evening passed fairly quickly until they went to bed at 10.30.

Dave woke up in an unfamiliar town. He was lost and alone although there were plenty of people about. He just walked aimlessly hoping to see someone he recognised or even a friendly face but they all seemed aloof and so he found no comfort there. A bright flash accompanied by a loud bang made him look to the sky just in time for him to see another. Again and again it happened and he stood there and watched captivated by the sight where everyone else had run for cover. After a while the barrage stopped and people came out and carried on their way as if nothing had happened. This intrigued Dave so he stopped one of them and said, "You don't see meteor showers like that very often."

"Meteor showers," the man said looking at him strangely, "Are you mad or have you just woke up?"

"What? Dave said somewhat taken aback by his answer.

"That is Narda recharging the world," the man said as if Dave should have known that.

"I am not from your world; you'll have to excuse me for my ignorance."

"You must be mad. There are no other worlds," and walked off.

Dave just stood there not really knowing what to do but a figure called him over from the shadows of a nearby alley way. It was a young woman and she said, "I couldn't help over hearing your conversation, are you really from another world?"

"Er yes," Dave said sheepishly for he was wary of her reaction.

"I too come from another world. I am Gilda."

"Gilda? From the water world?"

"That I don't know I just know that I am not from this world and it is a strange and unfriendly place."

"Do you know much about this place?"

"Only what I've heard. They worship a supernatural creature called Narda. She feeds them in return."

"Feeds them, do you mean that meteor shower?"

"No that just recharges the world. You will see soon enough for it is time," and pointed to the sky.

Dave looked into the dark cloudy sky and much to his surprise he saw strange aircraft emerge. They hovered for a while before dropping crates which were soon prised open by the expectant crowds. After they had done their work they disappeared back into the clouds.

"They come at the same time every day," Gilda said.

"That's a strange sort of existence. Where does the food actually come from?"

"I have heard talk of a place they call the countryside. It is supposed to be a barbaric place full of strange war like creatures. They say that the food comes from there."

“Then that is where I shall go.”

“They say that it is a dangerous place.”

“Well they would wouldn't they. It sounds like Narda is holding these people through fear.”

“May I go with you then? This place is a dark soul less place, I am sure the countryside must be better.”

“You are more than welcome,” Dave said and they set off walking down the crowded street. As they walked along Dave said, “Did you over hear anything else that might prove useful?”

“Only that the place is surrounded by walls to keep the savages out. They don't seem to talk here much I'm afraid.”

“Or to keep the inhabitants in,” Dave said with a laugh only to be confronted by an irate bystander, “That is blasphemy, dare you laugh in Narda's presence?”

“What, where is she?”

“She is everywhere and knows everything.”

“Then she must know that I am sorry,” Dave said and tried to walk off but the man would not be appeased.

“You compound blasphemy with impudence, the Council of Elders will hear of this.”

“Yes whatever,” Dave said and brushed him aside. They walked on some more and heard the man shouting for help so thought it prudent to walk faster and then break out into a run. By the time that they stopped for breath the town walls were in their sight so they waited awhile debating on their next move.

“Those walls are pretty high,” Dave said, “And I am guessing that all the entrances will be guarded.”

“I would say so. That leaves us with a problem then.”

“We'll walk around a little and check the entrances. I'm guessing they are guarded but hopefully we might get lucky.”

They skirted around the walls and soon came to an unguarded, bolted side door which was quickly opened and then the countryside began.

It was a fertile land with lush green grass and in the distance they saw leafy trees which they quickly headed to, to get under cover. Once there they heard a noise and saw a figure quickly dart from behind one of the trees and run away from them.

“Wait,” Dave called, “We mean you no harm,” and they ran after it calling it to stop but to no avail. Eventually they lost sight of it and stopped by a stream to catch their breath.

“Fast little thing wasn't it,” Gilda said.

“Yes, it's a shame that we could not catch up with it, it could have proved helpful.”

“You didn't tell me your name by the way.”

“Oh it's Dave, David Jessel.”

With that a figure made its way from behind a shrub and said, “Are you David Jessel?”

“Er that's right,” Dave said looking at the strange translucent winged man who was the size of an elf.

“I am Unga of the sylphs. We have been expecting you. I am sorry that I ran away but I thought you were from the city.”

“That is where I found myself. It is a strange unfriendly place.”

“They are bad people; they serve Narda and follow her path. Cruel heartless beasts, their armies ravage the land and steal our food.”

“Are there many of you?”

“Not many sylphs but quite a few renegades.”

“Renegades?”

“Those who have left the city because they can't bare to be under Narda's rule yet for all their running away they are still slaves.”

“Really, why is that?”

“Her minions come and take the food they grow. They leave them just enough to survive so basically they toil for Narda. In fact they are worse off than those in the city.”

“And they tolerate this?”

“They have no choice. Her power comes from the skies and cannot be beaten.”

“And where does she live then?”

“Above the skies she has never actually been here to the best of my knowledge but legend says that she lives in a great castle that just floats in the air. Anyway I will take you to King Ilka and he will tell you what's expected of you.”

“Expected of me?”

“Your purpose for being here this is the Land of Spiritual Purpose after all.”

“Oh, so you have a plan to deal with Narda already?”

“I guess we must have. Anyway you would be better off talking to him,” and took them through a small wood until they came to a large cave. “We are here, you will soon know,” and led them through a long, twisting passageway until they entered a large cavern. A sylph came over on seeing them, “I am Ilka, we have been told of your coming and everything has been prepared.”

“This is all news to me,” Dave said, “What do you mean?”

“The ship that was captured is ready and we have gathered the essence of the lotus for legends say that, that is the only thing that will kill her.”

“Kill her. I was under the impression that I was here to enlighten her.”

“Enlighten her,” Ilka said, “No, that is not what our legends say.”

“Really, what do they actually say then?”

“You will travel to her domain and kill her with love. Hence the essence of the lotus for that is love.”

“I think that there has been a misunderstanding, well more than one. For a start love is the essence of everything, not just the lotus blossom.”

“So anything will poison her then?”

“No I'm talking about meta physical love, light.”

“Well how will that kill her? Actions speak louder than words with Narda.”

“I'm not here to kill her as such. I'm here to purify her.”

“She is pure, pure evil.”

“So what actually were your plans then? After Narda's death I mean.”

“Invade the city and reclaim our land.”

“And the people that dwell there?”

“Kill them; they would quickly do the same to us after all.”

“I doubt it. I think that without Narda's influence they would be a lot different.”

“It's too ingrained in their nature now. I fear that you are too nice and innocent for what is expected of you.”

“I am afraid that your perception of what is expected of me is wrong. Narda is anger and that is what makes her stronger. Your own anger adds to her strength and whilst you have it in your hearts she lives within you.”

“What, what is this?”

“Truth, you have misread the legends that's all love kills anger not people. Only anger kills people.”

“So are you trying to tell me that Narda's essence is love that does not equate.”

“Not to you but it's true. She's just misguided that's all.”

“That's all. It has cost us many lives and left some people in virtual starvation.”

“And do you intend to make matters worse by adding to the list?”

“If need be for once the bad are dead then surely the good will triumph?”

“How can good triumph by being bad that's irrational. No I'm afraid that your logic is misguided and always will be when you have anger in your heart.”

Ilka could see the logic in Dave's words but could not see past the frustration of the situation he was

in. "You talk sense," he said, "But this is a reality of non sense. Surely the ends justify the means?"
"Good cannot come out of bad no matter how you try and justify it. As you have the capability of being bad so too the people you are set on killing have the capability of being good."

"I am not a bad person," Ilka protested.

"You are a person capable of both good and bad actions. I am not here to judge whether you are a good or bad person for that is a matter of personal perception. Tell me something, the people of the city; do they perceive themselves to be bad?"

"I don't know that, I cannot speak for them."

"Well what do you imagine they will say?" Dave said not wanting to be put off.

"Good, I suppose."

"And they perceived you to be bad. Barbaric savages I think they called you. So who has right on their side?"

"We have, they are the aggressors we just want to live in peace."

"Yet they believe that they have right on their side and could probably come up with reasons for it. Incidentally it is not them that steal your food for they daren't leave the city. Fear is their captor, fear of you."

"It is stolen on their behalf, they must share the blame."

"The only thing you can blame them for is ignorance; they are misguided that's all. They are under Narda's spell and once that is broken they will be no longer under it. Their essence is love the same as yours."

"So they are not our enemies it is just Narda and her minions."

"The situation is not as bad as you perceive it to be. Once Narda is off the scene they will be your friends."

"Well that doesn't sound as daunting although I can't see Narda changing her ways."

"Time will tell on that one. For the moment just remember that the people of the city are not your enemies and lose your anger towards them. That will be your first step in defeating Narda."

"I will bare that in mind and tell that to my people," and it was duly done.

"Just a little fear of the unknown," Dave said to Gilda after Ilka had left, "It won't weaken Narda much but I guess she will feel a twinge."

"Well it's a start I guess. You know your name is not unfamiliar to me, have we met before?"

"No," Dave said with a smile, "Well not face to face," and told her about her time as Queen Gilda of the land of mist.

"Was I like that? I must have been a bad person. Was I sent to this world as a punishment then?"

"No, not at all I am guessing that you were sent here to help me to purify it so you could evolve closer to your purpose."

"My purpose?"

"Now that I do not know."

Meanwhile in a castle in the sky the spreading word did not go unnoticed by Narda. Although she did not have access to the cave and so knew nothing of Dave's presence she had noticed an upsurge of love and grew weaker from it. As she looked down on the world she said to Seri, one of her hand maidens, "What is going on here?"

"It appears that they are losing their hatred for the people of the city Great Queen."

"I know that," Narda said angrily, "I can see that for myself. I want to know why."

"Maybe it is because you have not agitated them for a while."

"You know I think that you are right. It does not do to let them get too settled," and ordered ships to devastate the land. After they came back she noticed that it did not have the desired effect, "I don't like the sound of this. They are not blaming the people of the city for this they are blaming me."

"Well you did send them Great Queen," Seri said more than a little confused.

"Fool, I know that. You are missing the point."

"The point Great Queen?"

“They are starting to get a deeper understanding. Their consciousness is shifting slightly. Something must be causing it and I don't know what it is.”

“Their legends talk of a mortal.”

“Superstition,” Narda said with a mocking laugh, “They do not exist. They are just figments of an over active imagination.”

“Yes Great Queen,” Seri said duly chastened.

“No, if they don't hate the people of the city that is because they have no reason to. We will just have to find them a reason that's all. I will recharge the city and over fill it with anger and I want you to visit the Council of the Elders and tell them to attack the people of the country.”

“Yes Great Queen,” Seri said and the meteor showers began in earnest. Whilst the shower continued the Council of Elders were having their weekly meeting discussing points of ritual observation. Ding was in the chair, “I say we are lapsing. I noticed one or two smiles at the last service.”

“That is nothing,” Tinu said, “I have heard tell that someone actually laughed openly in the street today, whatever next?”

“Yes I heard the same. This should be stamped on and stamped on quickly. There seems to be no respect for Narda nowadays and I for one will not tolerate it. You know that when this man was confronted not only did he not show remorse for his actions he actually mocked her.”

“Who is this man of which you speak,” Silma said, “He must be brought before us and made accountable for his actions. An example is needed otherwise who knows where it will end.”

“He was a stranger,” Tinu said, “That's what I was told anyway.”

“Ah,” Ding said, “So he is not from the city, that would explain everything. How dare these savages enter into our homes and openly mock what we hold dear to.”

“Yes,” Tinu said, “It is time they were dealt with; we have lived in fear of them for too long now.”

“I say we gather up our best men and go out and decimate them,” Gosla said, “If it has got to the stage that they openly walk down our streets you can guarantee that it won't be too long before they come and attack us in our beds.”

“I advise caution,” Satama said, “We are not ready for war at the moment.”

“That sounds like a coward talking,” Ding said, “Yet I know you not to be one.”

“I will prove myself again when the time is right but for now I say double our guard at the gates and begin training our men. We will soon be ready and when we are we will kill every man, woman and child so they won't be around to bother us again.”

“Wise words and well spoken,” Ding said, “We will make ready for war.”

Back in Narda's castle she was not happy as Seri was finding out, “What is this,” she barked angrily, “I send you on a mission and that's the best you can do. I don't want talk and training I want war. They are more than prepared as it is.”

“I'm afraid that we might have overdone the fear factor. They over estimate the others power.”

“Fotu will answer for that,” Narda said and called her to her presence. A nervous Fotu made her approach.

“You have done your job well,” Narda said, “Too well in fact. I should be pleased with that but circumstances have changed. Your presence is too strong and so I want you to relax your hold a little.”

“Yes Great Queen. It shall be done according to your will,” and left the scene.

Back in the city the arduous training was taking its toll.

“Do we really need to go through all this,” Kidu said “I mean they are not super human so why should we be?”

“It must be done,” Satama said, “But I can see your point.”

“Couldn't we just ask Narda to sort them out,” Silma said, “Surely that's more her department?”

“We could ask her I suppose,” Ding said, “She is better equipped for it after all.”

“Yes,” Silma said, “We'll go to the temple immediately,” and they duly obeyed.

Generally speaking Narda was pleased to get adoration but not on this occasion. "Must I do everything myself?" she snapped, "Fotu you have eased off too much. Now they have no fear of me and think that I should work for them. This is not good, not good at all."

"I'm sorry Great Queen but these things are hard to balance."

"I don't want excuses I want action. Look," she said calming down slightly, "Just get the balance right and let me know when you are done."

"Yes Great Queen. I can see a problem arising though if I might make so bold."

"Problem, another problem?"

"Yes Great Queen. They have asked for your help and if you do not answer them they will think that you have forsaken them."

"Let them," Narda said angrily, "What do I care?"

"They might look elsewhere."

"Oh, I see your point."

"That will never happen Great Queen," Seri said, "For it is you that feeds them. All you would have to do is with draw their food supply, starvation would drive them back."

"Not necessarily," Fotu said, "That could seriously back fire on us."

"How," Seri snapped, not like being rebuked in Narda's presence.

"It could drive them into the countryside."

"To war, that is what we want fool."

"It won't be war, not if they have forsaken our Great Queen. They could end up as friends."

"Yes I see," Narda said, "A very dangerous step. It is lucky that you have pointed it out to me. No the food supply will continue for the time being."

"And their plea for help?" Fotu said.

"They have put me in a tricky situation," Narda said, "If I do anything it could actually weaken me."

"It could Great Queen?" Fotu said.

"Yes, who would grow the food for a start and don't forget that with every death there is one less vehicle for hate. No I might have been a little rash, the city and countryside must remain apart."

"Then may I make a suggestion Great Queen?"

"Your advice has not been at fault so far."

"Drug their food. Make them forget that it ever happened. I will increase the fear factor once more."

"Good, excellent in fact and I will desist in recharging for a while to let things settle."

All this went unknown by Dave who was busy enlightening the sylphs, "I generally find that laughter is the best medicine," he said to a captive crowd, "It helps to pacify your own anger but also it can be used as a weapon against anger."

"Really," Ilka said in surprise, "Why is that then?"

"Anger has no sense of humour and hates being ridiculed. It is an affront to its perceived sense of honour. Makes a few jokes at Narda's expense and she will soon lose her cool."

"Jokes?"

"It might be easier just to tell you one," Dave said and thought for a while before he said, "Why does Narda live in the sky?"

"I don't know she always has."

"No," Dave said laughing, "Because hot air rises."

"What, I don't understand."

"No," Dave said with a smile, "But Narda will."

"Well she's one up on me."

"Love is the air that you breathe whilst anger is just hot air," Dave said explaining it, "Hot air weighs less than cold and so rises above it."

"Oh, so that's a joke then?"

"Not a good one, well by the sound of your reaction but I guarantee that Narda's will be different."

Just say it out loud and make sure that you laugh loudly and it will soon get back to her.”

“Er sure,” Ilka said not convinced.

“I’ll try and think of some better ones,” Dave said on seeing his reaction and thought some more. After awhile he said, “Narda is that stupid that she thinks a temper tantrum is reasoning power.”

“Er right, I think that two should be enough for now. And these are what you call jokes then?”

“Well obviously not. They are things that are supposed to make you laugh. You know what laughing is?”

“Yes it’s that funny noise you make, sort of ha, ha, ha.”

“That’s right but you’ll have to be a little more convincing than that.”

“I’m afraid that this is all new to me.”

“I had better come up with a funny joke then it looks like I’ve got to teach you how to laugh.” Dave thought a while but tiredness quickly came over him and all he could say was, “I’m sorry,” before he fell to sleep.

Dave awoke at around 8.30 and was picked up by John at nine. The day itself was pretty much the same as the last so I will not bore you with the details suffice to say that by the end of it the fire escape was installed. Dave retired to bed at 10.30p.m.

Dave awoke to find the sylphs all laughing.

“What’s the matter?” he said half dazed.

“It was that noise you were making,” Ilka said still laughing, “We’ve never heard anything like it.”

“Oh I must snore then,” Dave said upon realisation.

“What actually happened? You just collapsed and it was like you went into suspended animation.”

“It’s called sleeping, that’s when I go back to my own world.”

“Oh, so why do you have to do that then?”

“Well that’s where I live. This is a world I can only visit.”

“Right.”

“So at least you know how to laugh now, something good had come from it.”

“True, though I have been giving the matter some thought whilst you were away.”

“You have?” Dave said not knowing where he was heading.

“I can see that it might upset Narda but to what purpose as she gets stronger through anger?”

“Normally yes but anger when faced with laughter proves itself futile.”

“I don’t know about that I can see it actually provoking her. Well unless that is what you actually want to do.”

“When she is angry she is irrational and makes hasty decisions so the angrier she is the weaker, mentally speaking, she is.”

“Oh, what are your plans then?”

“I haven’t made any as such I thought that I would just go with the flow and give a little nudge now and again.”

“I don’t like the sound of that. It sounds pretty fool hardy in fact.”

“It has to be I’m afraid. I don’t know anything about her so I have to work in ignorance until I do.”

“Well we’ll start the ball rolling then,” Ilka said and with the other sylphs went out and started to make jokes.

It soon got back to Narda who was to put it mildly not too pleased.

“They openly mock me,” she snapped to a nervous handmaiden, “Laugh at me, for that they will surely pay.”

“Tell me your command Great Queen,” Rind said.

“I want to know what’s going on. Why would they openly disrespect me, are they trying to provoke me?”

“It sounds like it Great Queen but to what purpose I don’t know.”

“Only their death can come out of this, surely they know that?”

“Not wanting to speak out of place Great Queen but it seems they have lost their fear of you.”

“My thoughts exactly so the next question is why should that be?”

“The only thing I can think of is that they're being guided but that would mean venturing into the natural.”

“That's not just clutching at straws that's clutching at straws blind folded. No there must be a super natural reason for it and I mean to find it. Call Fotu and Seri,” and it was duly done.

“Right,” Narda said after they were all gathered, “Something is going on and we will not rest until we find out. Now Rind has suggested that they are being guided and I can see the truth in that. I don't want any suggestions of mortals or other natural phenomena so what are we left with?”

“Nothing from this world Great Queen,” Fotu said, “It must be coming from another world.”

“Not the gods,” Seri said, “They are not allowed to interfere with the workings of this world.”

“I was thinking of the other worlds,” Fotu said.

“Fairies,” Narda said and went deep into thought, “No they would not dare,” and thought some more, “I will contact my cousin,” and went to a small pool that had been made for that purpose. Ben who was at the other end was shocked to see her, “Narda, I thought you were dead.”

“What?” Narda snapped, “What is going on?”

“Who are you?” Ben said for he was just as confused, “You cannot be Narda, well unless you are talking from the underworld.”

Narda walked away from the pool at that and said to the gathered handmaidens, “It appears that my cousin is dead.”

“How Great Queen?” Seri said.

“Now that I don't know and I don't think that, that imbecile gnome will tell me, he seems to think that I'm in the underworld.”

“May I try Great Queen?” Fotu said, “I will trick it out of him.”

“Very well,” Narda said and Fotu went to the pool.

“Who are you,” Ben said, “What is going on?”

“I am Calif, one of the guardians of the underworld. Narda escaped for a while, it seems she was trying to contact home.”

“A lot of good that will do there is nothing here for her now.”

“There isn't?”

“No our world has been purified of her influence; the dark side is no more.”

“Really, how did that come to be?”

“David Jessel,” Ben said and looking at her strangely, “But you should know that.”

“I do now,” Fotu said and walked away from the pool. Narda had heard the conversation but was not convinced, “He is just a fantasist David Jessel does not exist. No he's probably stolen the looking glass that's all.”

“He seemed pretty convinced of Narda's death,” Fotu said.

“Are you suggesting that mortals exist?” Narda said with a laugh.

“No Great Queen merely that Narda must be dead, I don't know how it came to be just that it is.”

“She is invincible,” Narda said not wanting to accept it, “No he must have stolen the mirror, that's the only explanation for it, David Jessel indeed, he's probably drunk on milk.”

“Yes Great Queen.”

“I will say one thing though her hold on the world must be weakening. No one would have dared to steal her mirror before. Maybe it was the fairies then.”

“May I make a suggestion then Great Queen?” Seri said.

“Well up to now they have not been much good but desperate times and all that. Go ahead.”

“Send a raiding party and grab one of them. We will soon find out what's going on.”

“Yes, a good idea. Call forth The Seven,” and her seven headed body guard came forward. He was told his purpose and that he should take two minions with him for the sylphs, who were noted for their speed, would be too quick to be caught by him.

Dave who was still in the cave whilst this was going on was being warned of their approach. “They

mean to capture a sylph and find out what's going on," his inner voice said, "They are pretty much in the dark as you might imagine."

"They don't know that I am here then?" Dave said in surprise.

"Narda doesn't believe that you exist and as long as she doesn't you'll have the advantage."

"Not long then," Dave said with a laugh, "Well if the raiding party does its job."

"That's up to you. It's the caves they will be heading for as they know them to be the sylphs' home. Might I suggest that you trap them? Who knows you might be able to get one of them to talk. Not The Seven but one of the minions' maybe."

"So what is this seven then?"

"Narda's personal body-guard a seven headed monster renowned for its tenacity as a warrior. You'll get no joy from him as his purpose is to serve her."

"And what is he symbolic of?"

"He is a creation of Narda; he is not a symbol as such."

"And these minions?"

"Without actually seeing them I cannot be sure. Anyway there are nets to the back of the cave; they should do for the purpose."

Dave gathered the nets and when the sylphs came back told them of their impending visit. They lay in wait and soon had three captives. As Dave looked at the minions he said, "They seem strange creatures. How do they see properly with only one eye?"

"Oh they generally do alright," Ilka said, "Shall I tie them up?"

"Good idea and keep them apart, we'll get more sense out of them."

When this was done Dave first went to The Seven, "You will be sorely missed by Narda."

"Not for long. As soon as she finds out I am here she will rescue me."

"Maybe, so what brings you here?"

"That is no concern of yours, who are you anyway?"

"You know me from your legends. I am David Jessel."

"No, you do not exist. Who are you really?"

"I have told you who I am. You have been sent here to try and find out what has been going on."

"Ah."

"So let me enlighten you. I am here to purify this world."

"We are many and you but one," The Seven said with a sneer, "Don't expect help from the sylphs and you won't be disappointed."

"I'll bare that in mind and you said that you are many."

"Countless."

"I doubt that. In fact I would go as far as to say that without you Narda is nothing."

"She can survive without me. Everyone is expendable, even you."

"Maybe though I am not the one being held captive with the threat of demise hanging over me."

"I do not fear death. Your threats have no impact on me."

"Oh it's not a threat. I am afraid it's not prudent to have you going back to Narda."

"What are you trying to say?"

"I will leave you to think about it," Dave said and went off to see if one of the minions would be a little more forthcoming.

"You are indeed a strange creature," Dave said, "Are you a creation of Narda's?"

"I am what I am."

"You don't know then?"

"I know alright. You might have captured me but you'll get no more out of me."

"Oh I don't need to. The Seven has proved most helpful. I was just interested in what you actually were that's all."

"Then ask The Seven," the minion said not believing him.

"Maybe I will," Dave said and left the minion to try the same trick on the other one.

"I don't believe you," the minion said but Dave detected a hint of nervousness in his voice so thought it wise to persevere.

"That's irrelevant to me. No my concern is what I'm going to do with you now."

"Me?" the minion said in a marked nervous tone.

"Yes, you are surplus to our requirements and we don't carry passengers."

"Wait. I might know something they have missed."

"I doubt it," Dave said and pretended to think awhile before he said, "Well you might be of help."

"Anything."

"I want to confirm that what they have said is true. I want you to tell me of her strength."

"She has three handmaidens. Fotu Rind and Seri. 21 other minions besides us and that's it."

"Right I will not forget this. Now these minions, are they creations of Narda?"

"No they are the remnants of an earlier race of Man."

"Really, there used to be a race of one eyed men?"

"We evolved that way. Originally we had two eyes but it was our custom to pull one of them out."

"What, why ever would you want to do that?"

"We are an austere people who have no time for Earthly things. We took out our right eyes to symbolise this."

"How does that equate?"

"We used to believe that the right eye symbolised the Earthly side and the left the spiritual. The right eye was plucked from birth and over generations we evolved to being born with just one eye."

"Oh and was there any truth in this belief?"

"I doubt it."

"Sounds like a painful mistake to make. Well you have proved useful to me so tell me something."

"Anything, well if I know it anyway."

"Should I let you go would you go back to Narda?"

"I could never. She probably knows of my treachery already."

"Then you are welcome to stay with us. What do I call you by the way?" and with that, much to Dave's horror it disappeared.

"Recognition must be its downfall," the voice within said.

"I haven't got a clue. He said that they were descended from an old race of Man."

"Probably was but afterwards they must have evolved into symbols."

"Then I'm guessing that I have to defeat them. Though as to what they are actually symbolic of, well where would you begin?"

"Their number would be a good place to start."

"He said that there were 23 of them altogether. I can't really see any connection though."

"What about 11 and 11 and 1, doesn't that add up to 23?"

"Well yes," Dave said not seeing what he was getting at.

"Emotional thought it surplus mental energy."

"Oh steps to losing your pride and anger."

"It sounds like it although we haven't quite equated it yet."

"Sorry?"

"Well you only asked him his name. You didn't actually work out what it was."

"Oh right you mean that I didn't realise what step he was."

"Yes, you had to work out what Gilda's handmaidens were to actually defeat them."

"I see you point though I'm none the wiser."

"It might be a good idea to see what you can get out of the other one."

"I'll try though I don't think he'll be forthcoming."

They made their way to the other minion who was more than just a little nervous, "You killed him haven't you. I can feel his loss."

"It was accidental."

“You can't kill a minion by accident we are supposed to be invincible. Narda said that she would make it that way.”

“Obviously she must have got it wrong.”

“No,” the minion said dismissively, “It was fool proof.”

“I only asked his name, hardly fool proof.”

“There was more to it than that.”

“That's all that happened.”

“No,” the minion said and said no more.

Dave went off to be alone with his self and said, “I didn't think that he would be forthcoming.”

“On the contrary I would say that he was quite enlightening.”

“Really, I missed it if he was.”

“Well you know that it was more than just asking its name, you also know that whatever the answer is it's going to be complicated.”

“Really, how do you work that out?”

“Both Narda and her minion thought it was fool proof.”

“Oh right, that's me out then.”

“Now I wouldn't say that you were a fool,” the voice said with a laugh, “Can you remember the circumstances around you asking its name?”

“I said he was welcome to stay with us.”

“An emotional thought, well unless there was a reason behind it.”

“Only that he would not be able to go back as Narda would know of his treachery.”

“An emotional reason not a rational one.”

“Sorry?”

“You didn't want to see him come to harm. A natural reaction but an emotional reason none the less.”

“And a rational one?”

“A rational thought would be to kill him one less enemy and no chance of him turning against you.”

“Oh.”

“Don't dishearten your reaction came from love and so was the right one.”

“And love is an emotion?”

“That's right but it's also a spark to the other emotions.”

“It is?”

“Sure, gluttony is love of food or drink, lechery is love of sex, avarice is love of money, pride is love of self, anger, misguided love, sloth is love of inactivity and envy love of others possessions.”

“I never knew.”

“So you had an emotional thought when you asked its name.”

“Right. That could be complicated then for not only do I have to do it in character there are 23 to choose from.”

“Well 22 but I would say that it's not that complicated. I'm guessing that as the minions all look the same you would take it one step at a time.”

“Sorry?”

“Well the next point is self consciousness is the domain of pride. Ask the next one in a self conscious manner. If it works you know I'm right.”

“And if it doesn't?”

“It doesn't bare thinking about.”

They went to see the minion who had took on a more defiant air, “You got lucky that's all. I don't know how but I know it won't happen again.”

“Yes I think you are probably right,” Dave said sheepishly with his head to the ground, “But what it is, is I was sort of wondering if you would tell me your name,” and with that the minion disappeared.

Now the second minion as was the first minion's loss was not only felt by the other minions but by Narda herself. "What is this," she said clutching her heart for the second time, "What is going on? Am I alone here?"

"No Great Queen," Fotu said coming to her aid. She helped to steady a shaken Narda who after getting her strength back severely rebuked her. "Never, ever put your hand on a royal patron," she snapped, "Many have died for less than that."

"I'm sorry Great Queen," Fotu said falling to her knees, "Please forgive me."

"Only once," Narda said and Fotu got gingerly on her feet. "Two minions are dead," Narda continued, "I would say that The Seven has failed in his task."

"I thought that the minions were invincible?"

"So did I. The protection that I gave them was fool proof yet someone must have worked it out."

"Protection?"

"Well you may as well know now. It must have been broken so there's no harm in saying."

"Great Queen," Fotu said trying to hide her impatience.

"When I came to this world I was given it freely. Only one proviso and that was that I was only borrowing it until the real owner came along."

"David Jessel?" Fotu said venturing a guess.

"Yes, well that's what they said anyway. They also said that he probably wouldn't turn up so I came to the conclusion that it was just an idle threat to keep me on my toes."

"And now?"

"I don't know. I've been dismissing his existence for so long that it has become ingrained in my psyche. Yet someone has cracked the secret of the minions, someone has captured The Seven."

"It does look that way but they are only minions at the end of the day couldn't you create some more?"

"It's a lot more complicated than that. Each dead minion is a step to my demise."

"What?" Fotu said that surprised that she forgot her protocol.

"Yes it was sort of a safe guard in case I changed my mind about handing over power. The only way he can get to me is by my minions and your deaths."

"That will never happen, not whilst I have a breath in my body."

"I am afraid that your breath is mine as are your two sisters and all the minions."

"And The Seven?"

"Yes, and if it is David Jessel then we are destined to fall."

"I have heard the legends but until it actually happens destiny can be altered."

"There is that, then our best plan would be a quick raid and a slow death."

"Can he be killed?"

"Well legend says that he is mortal."

"Then it shall be done," Fotu said cheering up, "May I suggest sending three minions to capture him?"

"Three would be the right number, easy to hide but as for capturing him, no he would be better dead for whilst he lives he will always be a threat."

"By your command," Fotu said and left the scene.

Dave in the meantime was talking to The Seven, "So you have 23 minions and 3 handmaidens. Narda is nothing without you."

"I don't know where you got that information but you are wrong."

"Oh that's right 21 minions as two have already fallen."

"Liar, they are indestructible."

"No not at all. Now if they can be beaten then so can you."

"Why don't you untie me and see?"

"Dave," Dave's inner voice said, "Three minions are on their way to try and kill you. I would suggest that you take evasive action."

"I won't argue with that," Dave said and walked out to calls of "What about me coward come back."

Dave gathered three nets, four sylphs and a strong heart and went out of the cave and became inconspicuous along with the sylphs. Within a few minutes three figures made their way through the undergrowth heading towards the caves.

"We will not be forgotten for this," the first one said in just above a whisper, "We will be known as the ones that saved Narda by defeating a legend."

"It won't do us any good," the second one said, "We'll still be treated the same w.." He was brought to the ground by a net. The same fate happened to his friends before they could react.

"We'll get them back to the caves quickly," Dave said and it was duly done. Once there Dave had them put in different parts and saw them one at a time.

The first one was a little nervous, "What are you going to do?"

"Me, I've not decided yet. You came here to kill me didn't you?"

"I had no choice in the matter."

"Oh I understand. It's nothing personal as you must realise my actions won't be personal."

"Oh," the minion said understanding.

"What's the third step," Dave said quietly to himself.

"Pride is the height of vanity."

"What is to happen to me?" the minion said not liking the silence.

"Who are you to ask that of me?" Dave said and the minion disappeared.

"Good," the voice said, "Not bad at all. Now the next one is, pride is paranoia at its height."

"Right," Dave said and went to the next minion who had felt his friend's loss and so was very wary.

"No," he said on seeing Dave, "I had no control over my actions."

"I understand. You are just an extension of Narda's will, a mere bystander to the actions around you."

"Well er yes."

"Besides everyone is out to get me so what's one amongst many."

"Er if you say so," the minion said not really knowing what else to say.

"Yes just tell me your name so I can add it to my list," and with that the minion disappeared.

"You're getting better," the voice said, "Try this one next, paranoia is the height of vanity."

"Will do," Dave said and went to the last minion.

"You are here to kill me," the last minion said, "Well I deserve it I suppose. I did come here to do the same to you."

"You were only obeying orders."

"You mean that you are not here to kill me?"

"Now I never said that," Dave said with a smile, "No I'm just saying that I know your motives and I understand them."

"That's er very kind of you; you know that it was not personal."

"Oh yes. I'm a legend and so things like this are bound to happen."

"Er right."

"So although it was not personal when you came here to kill me it was personal by the fact that you had a name to go on."

"Well yes, if you put it that way."

"And you do know that if you would have succeeded you too, would have been a legend."

"Hypothetical now."

"I'm that famous that even an attempt on my life would be recorded for prosperity. So tell me, for the sake of future story tellers, what is your name?" and the minion disappeared.

Narda had felt their deaths in rapid succession and it had caused her great pain. "This is no good," she said, "They fall quickly to this man."

"There must be a way," Fotu said, "He must have a weakness."

“Not according to the legends.”

“Desperate times call for desperate measures.”

“You have something in mind?”

“A little job for Rind maybe I would send her to stir up the city elders against this man.”

“To what purpose?”

“Let them kill him. Has he not already blasphemed and disrespected you?”

“Well true but that's not enough to sign his death warrant.”

“He has come to rule your world, what greater crime against Narda can there be?”

“You are right. Yes and get them to wipe out the sylphs as well for harbouring him.”

“It shall be done,” Fotu said and left.

Dave in the meantime was renewing his conversation with The Seven.

“So you come back then,” The Seven said, “You mentioned something about untying me?”

“I never, that would be a foolish thing to do.”

“You realise your limitations then.”

“No it's not that. Why let you go only to have to catch you again.”

“Who said I was going to run?”

“You'll not get the chance. You were captured so easily that you must not be as good as you think you are. Now another three minions have fallen.”

“Lies. More lies.”

“They were sent under cover to kill me. It seems that Narda is getting desperate.”

“I don't believe you. Narda could swat you like a fly any time that she wanted to.”

“We'll see, anyway I grow tired of your company so I will give you a little time to yourself.

Hopefully you might start to see reason.”

“Reason, not from a madman that is too much of a coward to confront me face to face release me and we'll see how long you last.”

“Behave, what have you got to offer me to make it worth my while?”

“What isn't combat enough of a challenge as it is?”

“I've got you already. I need an incentive. Think about it and give me an answer on my return,” and left The Seven to find a comfortable spot before falling asleep.

Chapter 2.

The following week went pretty quickly with only one thing of note actually happening. Jane's brother Steve finally got around to seeing a specialist only to find out that he had Motor Neuron's disease. Jane never knew at this stage for he had withheld it from her and though her sister Natalie knew she never mentioned it for she had an ignorance is bliss attitude to life.

The weekend duly came and Dave found himself back at John's who had proved himself to be very industrious. He had cleared all the old toys and bric-a-brac and stacked the waste material and debris so it was easier to get around.

“So what's on the agenda this weekend?” Dave said as he looked around.

“I thought we would start putting the rafter supports in. then we can open it up properly.” The roof itself was of the old common rafter design and was only braced in three places by two pieces of wood in an upside down 'T' shape.

“It will save scrambling around,” Dave said, “What do you want me to do then?”

“You could start putting the fibre glass behind them if you like. I'll set up the laser and get the first one cut.”

Dave quickly got to work stuffing the fibre glass between the joists behind where the supports would be and soon he had half a side done. By then John was ready to start fixing the supports so he gave Dave the one he had made to use as a template. As Dave was using a snip saw he quickly amassed a pile of them so John could make a start. Dave then went back to fibre glassing although this time the other side and by the time that side was finished John was ready for some more

supports. Dave cut another pile and said, "Do you want me to make a start on getting rid of some of this rubbish?"

"Well if you don't mind. You can stack the tiles on the patio if you like."

"Sure," Dave said and started bringing them down from the attic and stacking them on the landing. Eventually they were all on the landing so he started taking them to the back garden and stacking them in rows. By the time he had finished John had done half of one side so Dave fibre glassed in front of him for the rest of the day and by the end of it one side was done.

As they sat drinking tea afterwards John said, "We can start taking off the old supports tomorrow, well if you are still alright in coming."

"Sure, it's quite enjoyable really."

"Good, it's starting to take shape now."

"You still think that it will be done in time?"

"It will be hard going but I hope so. Once it's supported I can get to work on the floors and then it will really start to take shape. Any luck on the work front?"

"I'm er not actually looking just yet. I'll leave it a while and live off my savings for a bit."

"Lucky for some."

"It's not what you earn but what you spend."

"Well maybe but surely you get bored not working?"

"Sometimes I've got to admit. I suppose I could really do with a hobby to pass the time."

"A hobby what like stamp collecting?"

"No," Dave said with a laugh, "I couldn't really see me doing that."

"What like then?"

"I don't know. Something creative, painting maybe."

"Painting," John said in surprise, "Have you ever done any?"

"Not since school and from what I remember I wasn't that good so maybe not painting then."

"What about writing?"

"I've done a couple of poems now that you've mentioned it. I can't really find a use for them though. Anyway we'll have to wait and see with that," and finished his tea before being dropped off home.

The rest of the day went pretty quiet until he went to bed at 10.30.

Dave woke up to find he was being studied by a group of sylphs.

"You didn't make that noise this time," Ilka said with a heavy air of disappointment.

"It's not every time. So did anything happen whilst I was out?"

"No it's been pretty quiet, nothing at all in fact."

The city elders would have disagreed with that though for their meeting was anything but quiet.

Gosla who had seen Rind in a vision was in the chair. "It is true," he protested, "I have seen Rind herself."

"And what would she want with you?" Silma said, "There are far more worthy people than you."

"Like you, you mean?"

"Why not I am a lot more learned."

"Only in your mind everyone else knows different."

"Order, order," Ding said, "I would have thought that what she had to say was more important than who she said it to."

"Well if it's true," Silma said.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Gosla said, "Are you calling me a liar?"

"I would only be repeating a well known fact."

All this was being watched in disbelief by both Narda and Rind.

"My future's in jeopardy but all they do is fight amongst themselves," Narda said, "You must go down again and see them all together."

"Yes Great Queen," Rind said and disappeared.

Back at the meeting Gosla was not too happy, "No one has ever called me a l..."

With that Rind appeared, "You fight like children when Narda's very future is threatened. What is wrong with you?"

"Well he called me a liar," Gosla said.

"I am proof that you are not. Now I will tell everyone what I've told you so there will be no mistake in the matter. Within this world walks a mortal man. His name is David Jessel."

"Legends have spoken of him," Ding said interrupting her.

"Well this is not a legend this is reality," Rind said angrily, not liking being interrupted; "Now it is known that he has taken up with the sylphs and they shelter him whilst he is making his mischief. Narda is not happy about this and wants both him and the sylphs destroyed."

"Very well Great Rind," Ding said, "But may I be permitted to ask a question of you?"

"Fair enough, just as long as it is not a foolish one that's all."

"Narda is far stronger than us. Why does she send us to do her work?"

"You are right in what you say she could easily overpower him but she chooses to test your loyalty to her. What's the matter, don't you want the honour?"

"Oh it's not that. The legends say that whoever kills him is cursed to a painful end."

"Mere stories it is only Narda that can curse."

"Well David Jessel is reality. Who is to say that the rest of the story isn't?"

"I am but if it will make you feel easier there is a way around it."

"There is?"

"Send people that are expendable. Do I have to work everything out for you?"

"No Great Rind I think we have just the people we need."

"Good," Rind said and disappeared.

After she had gone Gosla said, "You said you had some people in mind?"

"Yes, the outcasts. I am willing to wager that the offer of freedom will make them most amenable."

"Is that wise surely when they leave the city they will have their freedom anyway?"

"They don't want that sort of freedom. No that would be too much like hard work, they would have to find their own food for a start."

The city was divided into three castes, the elders, the brethren and the outcasts. The elders were the spiritual leaders, only six in number but they held all the power and made not only the ritual decisions but also the administrative. The brethren were the citizens and the outcasts the brethren who had transgressed Narda's law and so lost their rights. They were not slaves as such but they did supply the manual labour. Most of the renegades were outcasts that had escaped although the outcasts were still a sizable group as fear of the unknown kept most of them in their place. Ditzza, their spokesman was quickly summoned and told of the offer.

"Freedom," Ditzza said, "That's not freedom that's a sure way to a painful end."

"They're only legends," Ding said, "Stories for children that's all. No, we are grown men now and have put such stories out of our heads."

"You do it then."

"I am offering you freedom and shelter."

"What?" Gosla said, "This is not part of the deal. They are outcasts, condemned to live on the streets. It is not within your power to forgive them, that is Narda's place and don't forget it."

"I am sure that Narda will be grateful when you succeed," Ding said and dismissed Ditzza to think about it. After he had gone he turned on Gosla.

"What do you mean interrupting me when I'm negotiating," he snapped.

"You cannot offer him shelter that is beyond your power."

"Fool, what I offer him and what he actually gets are two different things. Now in future keep silent otherwise you will ruin things."

Ditzza returned after a few minutes and said, "I have thought over what you have said but before I put it to my people I would like to know a couple of things."

"Very well," Ding said.

“You mentioned shelter. Does that hold true because freedom without shelter is not freedom at all.”

“Yes, that is on offer.”

“Good, and the second thing is, this offer, is it open to all of the outcasts?”

“Only the ones that make the journey we have not the accommodation for you all.”

“I see and how many of us would you need?”

“Four of five. Sneak in, do your work and come back out again. The sylphs will be no match for you so I wouldn't worry about them.”

“I will see what they have to say,” Ditz said and left the meeting.

After he had gone Ding said, “Sorted, Dave Jessel will be no more.”

“And then,” Gosla said, “What about your promise?”

“There's not a lot they can do about it when we change our minds. They are just outcasts at the end of the day.”

“True I suppose though I was thinking that a little safeguard may be in order.”

“A safeguard?”

“I would suggest that we ambush them on their return. None of the brethren need ever hear the name David Jessel.”

“It will save us a lot of trouble,” Ding said and thought awhile before he said, “Yes we will deal with the matter personally, are we all agreed?” and they all nodded.

Dave meanwhile was talking to himself, “So these steps, could we actually destroy Narda this way?”

“Well enlighten her though I suppose it's the same thing.”

“I can't really see her risking any more of her minions on us. Do you think it would be a good idea to make a raid?”

“Tread carefully then and don't stay too long.”

“Oh no I won't be hanging around er. how do you operate her ships though?”

“Just think of the destination and it will take you there,” and they went to the craft that The Seven had come down on. They were soon passing through the clouds and mooring close to Narda's castle. It was a great stone grey structure that stood on an island that hovered in the sky. As they got out they quickly hid and waited to see if there was anyone around.

“Vanity is self conscious love,” the voice said as a minion came into view.

He was checking the ships and was surprised to find that there was one extra. As he started to make his way back to tell Narda Dave pounced on him and held him firmly to the floor.

“What is this,” the minion said, “Who are you?”

“You know who I am, everyone knows who I am. The question is who are you?” and with that the minion disappeared.

His death was quickly felt by Narda, “Rind did I not tell you to confine the minions to the castle?”

“They are Great Queen,”

“Then he has come, another minion has fallen.”

“That will be his downfall Great Queen; I will search the place and leave no stone unturned until I find him.”

“Very well take three minions with you and tell Fotu and Seri to do the same.”

Dave meanwhile had sneaked into the castle and was looking around for his next victim.

“Love is the beating of a heart,” the voice said, “There is one behind the door to your left.”

“Hiding?”

“No, working.”

Dave opened the door slightly and peering in saw that the minion had his back turned on him so Dave quickly over powered him. “You dare enter Narda's castle, you will pay dearly for that.”

“Now there's no need to be like that I've come here to help you but first you must tell me who you are,” and with that the minion disappeared.

“Not bad,” the voice said, “The next one is God is love but you are getting close to overstaying your

welcome. Narda has search parties out already.”

“Right and are they close?”

“Not yet but they are heading your way.”

“I’ll bare that in mind.”

“Something you might like to know, the machine that controls the meteor showers is in the next room.”

“Well it’s interesting but I don’t really want to be pumping any more anger into the world.”

“Set if for love and then I suggest we head for home as they are getting a little too close for comfort.” Dave did as he was told and they were soon back amongst the sylphs.

Narda had felt the pain but Dave’s escape had been seen by Fotu who was not quite close enough to stop him so she was relieved he was gone. She called the handmaidens together and revenge was on her mind.

“Why hasn’t the city marched yet?” she demanded to know, “Fotu, have you increased the anger charge?”

“No Great Queen,” she said sheepishly, “You told me to stop it until things settled a little.”

“Then do it straight away and Fotu double the intensity to make up for lost time.”

“Yes Great Queen,” Fotu said and left.

“Right,” Narda said turning to the other two, “They have two of our ships maybe three and can come and go as they please. Seri I want you to send four minions to find them and bring them back.”

“Is that wise Great Queen?” Rind said.

“Necessity dictates I’m afraid. Without ships they are stranded and so at our mercy speaking of which I want you to go back to the elders and hurry them along.”

“Yes Great Queen,” and disappeared.

Meanwhile at the meeting the elders were having a change of heart. “Should we really be getting involved,” Kidu said, “I mean let’s be honest the legends say that he is a good man and good will come of it.”

“I have heard that,” Tinu said, “Though I dare say that Narda will not agree.”

“Maybe if she got to know him it would be different,” Silma said and with that Ditzza returned,

“Quite a storm out there, bad news I’m afraid. I have talked to my people and they want no part in it.”

“Well I can’t say that I blame them,” Ding said, “Besides we are having a change of heart.”

“You are?”

“Yes, we think that if Narda was to get to know this man she might actually grow to like him. The legends say that he is a good man who has our welfare at heart, the same as Narda so they have a mutual interest.”

“There is that and I’m sure that my people would fetch him back on the understanding that no harm would come to him.”

“That goes without saying.”

At Narda’s castle Rind returned after only a second, “It’s no good Great Queen I cannot get through there is too much love in the air.”

“What, this cannot be.”

“It’s true Great Queen; they are actually talking about bringing him back and arranging a meeting between you.”

“Have they lost their minds?” Narda said and thought awhile, “He’s tampered with the machine. Fotu check it out.”

She soon returned and said, “He had altered the motivational force, it had been rectified now.”

“Good, we will wait for the minions return before I make any new plans.”

The minions had already landed and were scouting the area little realising they were being watched.

“This is no good,” the first one said, “They could be hidden anywhere.”

"It's like looking for a needle in a haystack," the second one said, "Well three."
 "That third one went missing ages ago," the first one said, "We'll never find it."
 "We only really have a chance if we split up," a third one said.
 "What," the first one said, "That's suicide."
 "We don't have much choice. We'll be here for ever more and don't forget that the longer we are down here the more chance of us getting caught."
 "Oh," the first one said and they duly split up. Dave picked his target and followed it at a safe distance awaiting his chance.
 Meanwhile back at the elders' meeting things were carrying on.
 "Then I will go and tell my people," Ditz said and left the assembly.
 After he had gone Ding said, "What have I just done and more to the point what came over me to do it?"
 "I don't know," Tinu said, "But I know that Narda will not be too pleased to hear that we are courting her enemy."
 "My thoughts exactly, why ever did we think that she would?"
 "All is not lost," Gosla said, "The ambush can still go ahead, there will just be one extra that's all."
 "And the threat of retribution," Ding said, "That still hangs over who actually kills him."
 "That cannot be helped and besides what about Narda's wrath, surely that is more tangible?"
 "Yes I see your point we have no choice."
 Back in the countryside the minion that Dave had in his sights had found one of the ships. He was about to climb in when Dave made his presence felt. "Do you need a hand," he said walking up to him.
 "What?" the minion said surprised at his approach.
 "Taking the ship back to Narda, that's what you are here for isn't it?"
 "Well yes but why should you want to help me with it?"
 "That's what I'm here for, to help others."
 "Really, that's unusual."
 "Not to me."
 "You're that David Jessel aren't you?"
 "That's right."
 "I've heard that you are a bad man so why would you want to help me when you have it in your mind that you are going to destroy Narda?"
 "Maybe I've been misunderstood. As for destroying Narda I'm actually here to help her."
 "That cannot be. That is not what the legends say."
 "This is reality. No I am here to help Narda to evolve to her real purpose."
 "So why is she frightened of you. She has it in her mind that you are out to kill her."
 "Not at all, well only with kindness."
 "What?"
 "It doesn't matter," Dave said with a laugh, "No it was just a misunderstanding that came about through misreading the legends. I am only here for good. So anyway I don't really like talking to strangers, what's your name?" and the minion disappeared.
 "There's another one fairly close by," the voice said, "Go to your right and I will guide you to him."
 "Okay," Dave said and did as he was told.
 The voice guided him until the minion came in sight and said, "God exists to serve a purpose."
 The minion had sensed the loss and was looking nervously around when Dave made his approach,
 "Are you lost?" Dave said trying to knock him off his guard.
 "That's no concern of yours," the minion said looking at Dave in a strange and guarded manner.
 "Is it not a good thing to help a stranger in trouble?" Dave said still keeping his friendly manner.
 "Who said that I was in trouble?"
 "That distressed look that you had when I first saw you."

"I know who you are so you can't fool me. I also know that you have just killed a friend and have my death as your next trophy."

"Sorry?"

"You have killed a friend and I am next on the list. Do I need to make it any simpler than that?"

"Well the offer is there anyway," Dave said and made as if to go.

"Wait, where are you going?"

"To find another cause I suppose."

"What is this some sort of trick?"

"Not at all."

"You are David Jessel aren't you?"

"Er yes."

"Yet you are not out to do me harm?"

"I don't know where you got that from, what reason would I have?"

"I don't know what's on your mind."

"Well rest assured that I am not here to do you harm. Only good can come out our meeting. So what are you actually looking for?"

"A ship actually," the minion said not quite sure of Dave's motives.

"Really, it's funny you should say that I've not long walked past one. I'll take you to it if you like."

"Er sure, this is not some sort of trap is it?"

"No although I must warn you that you might be in danger."

"I thought so," the minion said looking at Dave in a suspicious manner.

"Oh not by me there's a terrible monster here that dislikes your kind. A seven headed creature."

"The Seven, never, he is an ally."

"I've seen him kill two of your kind already. Not far from where I'm taking you in fact."

"No chance."

"I can only tell you what I saw, oh and what I heard."

"What you heard?"

"He said that you were all traitors to Narda."

"Traitors, no that cannot be."

"That's what I heard. All minions are traitors and not fit to serve Narda."

"What," the minion said and thought awhile before he said, "I've heard him say that we are not fit to serve Narda on many occasions."

"You don't get on then?"

"Not really."

"But killing you, that's a bit drastic isn't it?"

"Foolish too we know his weakness."

"I heard that he was indestructible, surely he has no weaknesses?"

"Oh he's one and should he come across me he'll quickly come unstuck."

"Well I'm glad to hear it but where does that leave me?"

"You?"

"Yes, what if he has been listening and knows that I have warned you."

"Really," the minion said and looked around nervously, "Do you think so?"

"In this sort of terrain he could be only a few yards away and still we would not know it."

"There is that but if this is a trick I could be sending The Seven to his death."

"Then I must take my chances I guess. Anyway here is the ship I was talking about."

"Well it certainly the ship they came down in," the minion said and looked around for any sign of The Seven, "I will tell Narda of your help and what you said about The Seven."

"That's very kind of you and I will tell my friends of your friendliness. Oh by the way what's your name?" and with that the minion disappeared.

"So he must have a weakness," the voice said, "You came close to getting it out of him as well."

“Shame that.”

“You might get lucky with the next one. Go straight ahead and I will guide you to him and remember that the purpose of God is the purpose to serve.”

In Narda's castle she had another palpitation, “He's getting closer but now he has shown himself I know what my enemy looks like.”

“Then he will soon be no more,” Rind said, “And the people of the city are on the way as we speak, it will be very soon indeed.”

“Let's hope so. Once he is defeated I can put it all behind me and return to normal.”

“What are your plans Great Queen?” Fotu said, “Well if you don't mind me asking.”

“I haven't made any as yet. This threat that has hung over me for so long has restricted my actions. It would be pointless moulding this world in my image if it's to be taken off me.”

“But that threat will soon be no more,” Rind said.

“When it is over then I will plan.”

Dave meanwhile had the minion in sight. He was searching amongst a cluster of hills though looking nervously around and very much on his guard.

“Hello,” Dave said as he made his approach, “That's not your ship I've just come past is it?”

“What, what is this?”

“Ship your ship down by the large glade.”

“Keep away from me,” the minion said backing off, “I don't know what your game is but I'll have no part in it,” and went to make a run for it. Dave saw this and so quickly wrestled him to the ground.

“This is not a safe place,” he said, “Not for you anyway. Your former ally has turned against you and is killing you off.”

“Liar, let me go.”

“I'm trying to help you; The Seven has turned against you.”

“Never, this is some sort of trick.”

“Deceit is not my purpose,” and on seeing that he was getting nowhere, “What's your name?”

“Oh well,” the voice said, “It can't be helped. The last one is not too far from here. To love thy self is to love thy God. Don't be too concerned about The Seven, we know he has a weakness that will do for a start.”

“Fair enough just point me in the right direction.”

“To your left,” the voice said with a laugh and they headed that way.

The last minion was more than a little nervous; he was scared rigid in fact. He had felt the other three's demise and knew that he was on his own. He trembled as Dave made his approach.

“Don't harm me,” the minion said, “I will tell you anything you want to know.”

“The Seven,” Dave said thinking he would try his luck, “How do you defeat him?”

“The Seven, no I will tell you anything but that.”

“That's all I want to know.”

“No, never.”

“Then you are no good to me.”

“Oh,” the minion said nervously, “So what is going to happen to me?”

“From me nothing my intentions are not to harm you.”

“What about the other three I know for a fact that they are dead.”

“Maybe but not by my hands I am not here to kill for that is not my purpose.”

“Well someone has and I can't see it being the sylphs.”

“They are a peaceful people. No your enemy is a lot closer to home.”

“Closer to home?”

“You would not believe me if I told you so I'm afraid that I will have to let you find out for yourself,” and made as if to go.

“Wait, who is it?”

"I cannot say, he could be listening to us as we speak. I don't think that he would like me tipping you off."

"Are you talking about The Seven?" the minion said in just above a whisper.

"That I cannot say all I can tell you is that he is supposed to be invincible so neither of us would stand a chance."

"If it is who I said it was then he has a weakness," the minion said looking around.

"Then if it is who you said it was you are safe in knowing it though as for me, well I can't see him having a weakness myself."

"But he has, all you have to do is say a phrase."

"What?"

"I don't know how it works but I can assure you it works, Narda had told me that herself."

"Why would she give you information that could bring about her bodyguard's demise, that doesn't make sense?"

"She trusts no one. She thought that if she told everyone The Seven's weakness he would not turn on us."

"Well I can sort of see the logic though what of Narda herself? Did she tell you of her weakness?"

"She has none; well that's what she told me."

"Oh right but I can't really see how a simple phrase, any phrase?"

"No, only one."

"Well even so."

"It's true just say it in front of him and he will fall."

"And this phrase?"

"Well I can't tell you that for obvious reasons but rest assured if it's true I will be safe from him."

"As long as you are happy but what about me? If he's found out that I've tipped you off I won't be safe."

"I'm sorry there's not a lot I can do about it. I can't tell you as if this is just a trick I will be condemning The Seven."

"I understand," Dave said and the start of an idea came into his head. "I will leave you in peace," and headed back to the caves leaving a bemused minion in his wake. On arriving at the caves Dave went straight to see The Seven, "You are free to return to Narda."

"What is that it?"

"Yes I've got all the information that I need to know. You are no use to me."

"So you are just letting me go," The Seven said still unsure.

"Yes but don't come back down here again because if you do I will kill you."

"That's well beyond your limited abilities," The seven said with a sneer.

"It's just a phrase," Dave said with a smile, "Now the minions here have decided to stay for they no longer want to serve Narda. They now fall under my protection so if any of them come to harm I will hold you personally responsible."

"What do you mean under your protection?"

"They are now living with us. Now you may go but heed these words well, never come back again."

After The Seven had left Ilka said, "Is that wise?"

"Wait and see," Dave said and they both followed him at a safe distance. Very soon a paranoid Seven came across an equally paranoid minion.

"Keep away from me," the minion said, "I have heard about you."

"And I have heard about you traitor."

"Don't come any closer I warn you."

The Seven came closer, his anger was carrying him. He wanted to show Dave what he thought of his warning and no other thought occupied his mind. The minion just saw that his death was approaching and rapid action was called for. He shouted, "Spiritual wisdom and understanding through love and light," and The Seven ignited to a piercing scream.

"I won't be a moment," Dave said and rushed to the minion, "Are you alright I heard the noise."

"You were right. He's lost his mind."

"Who has?"

"The Seven he came at me as if to kill me. I had no choice."

"So he is dead," Dave said in false surprise.

"It had to be."

"But what now Narda must surely know of your actions."

"I don't know."

"You are welcome to stay here."

"I don't have much choice."

"It's not that bad we are a very loving people. So anyway, what's your name?"

After the minion disappeared Dave and Ilka went back to the caves to see an evolved Gilda. "I don't know what happened," she said, "But everything has just been revealed to me."

"Really, when was that then?"

"Not that long ago. Things have been coming to me in dribs and drabs but all of a sudden it just flooded in."

"Things?"

"About my purpose I am to go and live in the land of the gods," and with that she disappeared.

"So what was all that about?" Ilka said.

"I haven't got a clue," Dave said but his voice was there to guide him, "She has just evolved out of spiritual pride. Those minions were her steps."

"Oh," Dave said quietly, "And The Seven?"

"That was her shadow self, you first met it in the land of giants."

"So I didn't actually kill it then?"

"Yes but only in that world. Anyway there is a delegation from the city on the way to see you."

"Do they mean harm?"

"They don't but in their ignorance they may lead you to harm if you are not careful. Get some sleep now as you'll have enough time."

Dave made his excuses to Ilka and found a quiet place and fell quickly to sleep.

Dave woke up and was duly picked up by John, "I thought that we would do something else today if you don't mind."

"Er sure, what did you have in mind?"

"I thought that we would make a start on the floors. I've got some wire mesh that we can staple to the joists for the fibre glass to fit in."

"Right."

"First we will joist up the other wall," John said as they pulled up outside his house, "I've got some in the garden so it's only a matter of fetching it up."

They carried up some joists and started cutting them to length on the snip saw. John started setting them in place and Dave cutting shorter lengths to be used as spacers. The joist above the entrance trap was not fixed and they also left a space for where the new entrance was going to be and by mid afternoon it was done. Next Dave started stapling the wire mesh to the joists and John followed him putting the fibre glass in place. They were about half way across by the time they were finished. As they sat drinking tea John said, "I'll be finished it by next weekend."

"Oh right, so why the change of plan then?"

"Give me something to do during the week."

"Well not that much surely?"

"Oh yes, we've hardly started yet."

"Really?" Dave said in surprise.

"I've got to put joist hangers on all the joists around the new opening and also plywood pieces to be fixed between the new joists and original ones."

“Oh I did not realise.”

“Anyway I'll drop you off if you like. Are you still alright for next weekend?”

“Sure, I'm looking forward to it.”

John dropped Dave off and the rest of the day proved uneventful until he went to bed at 10.30.

Dave woke up to an agitated Ilka, “There's a delegation from the city to see you. I don't trust them; do you want me to send them away?”

“No it's alright,” Dave said getting up, “I'll see them.”

Ilka took him to the front of the caves where four men were waiting for him. “Are you David Jessel?” the tallest one said.

“That's right.”

“My name is Ditzza, I am of the outcasts and this is Enid, Cuda and Seeka.”

“The outcasts, so you are not from the city?”

“We are, well only by the fact that, that is where we try and find shelter.”

“Er right, so how is it that you find yourselves as outcasts then?”

“By our actions against Narda we have been stripped of our citizenship.”

“Your actions?”

“They say that we were disrespectful in our service to her. They even accused me of laughing would you believe?”

“Really,” Dave said with a smile, “And did you?”

“I wouldn't dare. No it was just a misunderstanding that's all.”

“And you have come to see me?”

“Yes, if it be your will I would like you to come back with us and see the elders.”

“To what purpose?”

“So that they can see that you are a good man and that Narda has nothing to fear from you.”

“And that is all they want from me?”

“That is what they say. They have given me their personal assurance that you will not come to harm.”

“You trust them to make good their assurance, they have no other motive?”

“In truth I am not sure for originally they wanted us to assassinate you.”

“And you didn't want to?”

“Legends say that whoever harms you will come to a painful end. I'm guessing that, that was why they were reluctant to do it themselves and so wanted us.”

“So this could actually be a trap?”

“If so then not of our making and we vow to defend you and keep you from harm.”

“I would not go,” Ilka said, “Though they mean well they are outcasts and no disrespect to them but powerless in city life.”

“It is true what your friend say,” Ditzza said, “And if you did not want to come I would understand.”

“I can't really see any useful purpose coming out of it,” Dave said.

“If they come around to your way of thinking you could rule this world,” Ditzza said, “They are the ones that hold the power.”

“I have come here for a reason. I have no desire to rule this world of any other.”

“You are not here to rule this world then?” Ditzza said in surprise.

“No merely to purify it.”

“And what does that involve, well if you don't mind me asking that is?”

“Enlightening Narda, hopefully she will see the error of her ways.”

“And you mentioned other worlds? We were always told there was only one world.”

“No, there are many worlds.”

“And have you been to them?”

“All but one the land of the gods.”

“The land of the gods, I thought that was Narda's world.”

“No she lives in a castle above the clouds.”

“So I have heard, have you ever been there?”

“Once although not for long you are welcome to stop and talk as you are friends but as for the elders, well I have seen city life and it is not to my taste.”

“It might be a good idea to go with them,” the voice said, “You are going to have to win them around eventually. Might I suggest you avoid the elders and go straight for the outcasts?”

“Wouldn't it be safer to get them to come here?” Dave said quietly.

“You could do I suppose, yes it would be a better alternative.”

“I tell you what,” Dave said to Ditzza, “You, along with any of the outcasts are most welcome to come here. Tell your elders that I have no wish to see them nor any designs to rule their world be careful though for I fear they mean to ambush you on your return.”

“Really?”

“Maybe if I'm not with you they will change their minds but I caution you to tread carefully and keep your eyes well open.”

“I'll bare that in mind and if the truth be known I had a small inkling that something like this would happen. I could never see them letting us have our freedom for a start. I will tell them what you said and also inform the other outcasts of their welcome here.”

“Good, then hopefully I will see you again shortly,” and they left leaving Dave alone with Ilka.

“These outcasts,” Dave said, “Are there many of them?”

“Not the last time I heard. A lot of them turn into renegades so every new one that comes along tells us of their numbers.”

“So why would the elders have designs on my life?”

“They would see you as a threat to their power I suppose. The legends say that after Narda is defeated you will rule the world.”

“Who comes up with these stories? They're not doing me any favours I can tell you.”

“Well maybe they will listen to the outcasts?”

“We will have to wait and see with that one.”

Meanwhile Ditzza and his friends had come across Ding and the rest of the elders not far from the city gates.

“Well where is he?” Ding said looking around.

“He doesn't want to come,” Ditzza said.

“What?” Ding said in surprise.

“He says that he has no intentions of ruling your world and he doesn't want to see you as he can see nothing good coming from it.”

“How dare he, who does he think he is?”

“David Jessel,” Ditzza said with a smile.

“We offer him our friendship and he mocks us for it. He will pay dearly for this. You will go back and finish the job we first asked you to.”

“Not me no I have seen this man and have no quarrel with him. He is a good man with no malice in his heart. I have promised him my protection.”

“Then you have backed the wrong side, Narda will not be pleased.”

“He means her only well. He has told me that himself.”

“Then you are a fool for he is a liar, he means to kill her.”

“He is not a liar but you are.”

“What how dare you?”

“You dare me. You tell me that you mean him no harm yet lie in wait to ambush him.”

“Ambush him; is that what you think we are here for?”

“I can see no other reason.”

“We merely came out to greet him. Sure it is not often that you meet a legend.”

“Really,” Ditzza said not believing him but pretending that he did.

“Yes this is just a misunderstanding. If he doesn't want to meet us then fair enough. Hopefully he will change his mind and honour us with his presence but in the meantime, well we will just wait and see.”

They all went back to the city being watched by an angry Narda, “Look at them,” she hissed to her handmaidens, “My world is falling apart and still they act like children.”

“I don't think they realise the seriousness of the situation,” Fotu said, “And the legends talking of a violent death to the perpetrators is proving quite a handicap.”

“Yes,” Narda said going deep into thought, “Quite a handicap.” after a while she said, “The only thing I can think of is to turn it into a blessing.”

“Sorry Great Queen?” Fotu said.

“I will visit them myself. Tell them that the curse does not exist and whoever brings me David Jessel's head will be from that day forward sole ruler of the city the greatest of the elders.”

“That is indeed a great honour Great Queen though not wanting to throw caution at you; it is wise to let one man get too powerful?”

“What I promise and what he gets are not necessary the same thing,” Narda said with a cackled laugh, “The legends say that he won't be around for too long afterwards anyway.”

“I apologise Great Queen, your wisdom surpasses us all.”

“I am not that wise Fotu. I have lost half my forces and still this mortal lives if he carries on I will have scant resources to control this world.”

“He will soon be gone Great Queen,” Fotu said, surprised at her reaction, “And may I make a suggestion that might ease your plight?”

“You may, your judgment has been pretty sound up till now.”

“There are too many mouths to feed now. The outcasts have proved themselves to be unworthy of your kindness. They have even vowed to protect this man.”

“Yes I know of their treachery and I will tell the elders to wipe them out after they have finished their main job. The sylphs too, they will not go unpunished.”

Ditza had returned to the rest of the outcasts and was telling them of their meeting, “He is an interesting man,” he said to a captive audience, “He talks of other worlds and has even been to Narda's.”

“But will he lead us?” a large man at the front said.

“He has not come here for war Galu; he is a man of peace.”

“Then he is not good to us. In fact he could even be a danger.”

“A danger, never.”

“Not directly I'll admit but through him I can see the elders turning against us and seeing us as the enemy within. These aren't good times for us.”

“I have promised him our protection maybe that was a little hasty.”

“If he doesn't intend to help us to get out freedom it was. The sheltered ones hate us as it is. Push them too far and I can see bloodshed.”

“If it comes we will be ready. In the meantime I would suggest that you go and have a talk to him and see what he has to say.”

“Well there's nothing to lose I suppose,” Galu said and it was agreed that the outcasts would start visiting Dave.

The elders were having a meeting of their own. Tinu was in the chair, “Still this man lives. We should have killed him ourselves when we were out of the city.”

“And be condemned to a painful death,” Ding said, “What madness has befallen you?”

“That is just a story, Rind has told us that herself. No it is not stories you fear but outcasts.”

“I fear no one,” Ding said angrily.

“Just stories then,” Tinu said unperturbed. With that Narda appeared, “There speaks a true leader,” The elders, recognising her fell to their knees, “And that is what we need at the moment, someone who is not afraid of stories, the imaginings of fools.”

“Then they are not true Great Narda?” Ding said.

“Fool,” Narda snapped, “You have already been told that. No they are just stories put in place to frighten the weak minded and soft hearted. Now I have asked something of you and you seem reluctant to do it so I will bring to you a new offer. Whichever one of you brings me this false seers head will have total power over this world and be only answerable to me.”

“That is truly a noble offer Great Narda,” Ding said.

“One which I doubt you will be up to. You have shown me nothing but fear and incompetence. You, as with the others are welcome to try though. Now also whoever triumphs will have a little job to do for me. I have noticed the outcasts’ treachery and it displeases me. They eat my food yet openly mock me. That is now to come to an end. They are to be destroyed, every last one of them. Only the brethren can now live in the city and only the brethren will be fed by me. Once this is done I will inform you of our next move. I will say no more until then,” and disappeared.

After she had gone Tinu said, “See it was only a story. We have listened to you long enough and you have proved yourself to be useless.”

“What do you mean?” Ding said, “I have guided you well.”

“You have not. No it is time for a change and I for one will welcome it.”

“You presume too much. Who is to say that I will not be the one that takes David Jessel's head to Narda?”

“Well,” Gosla said, “Instead of just talking about it we should be making plans.”

“Making plans?” Ding said.

“The honour can only go to one of us.”

“Oh, so what do you suggest?”

“Draws lots, the winner gets first chance.”

“That sounds fair,” Tinu said and it was duly done. Kidu won the honour and they accompanied him to the city walls. “I do this for the good of the people and for Narda herself,” he said making his goodbye speech. He got no further though for part of the city wall behind him collapsed and crushed him to death.

“See,” Ding said, “It is cursed.”

“Only by idle outcasts,” Tinu said, “It is long known that these walls are badly in need of repair. We will get them to do it before we kill them.”

“So what happens now?” Gosla said.

“Go back and draw more lots I guess,” Tinu said and they all headed back to the meeting place. Narda watched all this in horror, “More obstacles. How much time do these people actually think I have?”

“We cannot have control over accidents Great Queen,” Seri said.

“Accidents,” Narda said with a laugh, “Do you think that, that was an accident?”

“Well yes Great Queen,” Seri said somewhat taken aback by her reaction.

“Then you have a lot to learn and we have a new problem to deal with.”

“We have Great Queen?”

“It seems that the Balancer is now not content with waiting until this Jessel dies it is actually protecting him.”

“That cannot be Great Queen it can only react to actions.”

“That's what I thought but it seems I was wrong.”

“Time will tell on that one Great Queen,” Fotu said, “See how the next one fares before making judgment.”

“Well yes, maybe I am being a little hasty.”

The elders had returned to the temple and new lots were drawn. Satama was elected, “So it seems that I have the honour. I have given the matter some thought incidentally and Kidu's demise has played on my mind somewhat.”

“Are you renouncing your claim?” Ding said in surprise.

“No, we all know that his death was an accident those walls have been perilous for a long time. In fact I am surprised that it has not happened before.”

“Then what?” Ding said.

“If you'll allow me to finish now Kidu's accident was just that but not one of us is immune from accidents and not only that this David Jessel might actually have guards.”

“And you point?” Ding said.

“I say that we all go together. I'm going to need you all to watch my back. I also say that we should elect a second should any accident befall me.”

“Well that sounds fair enough,” Gosla said, “Quite wise in fact,” and Silma was duly elected as second.

Dave meanwhile was in conversation with some of the outcasts.

“So you say that you are not here to make war,” Galu said, “What actually are you here for then?”

“To bring peace.”

“But you can only get peace through war surely? History has proved that.”

“If that was the case we would have peace now. No you don't get peace by war, you get it by understanding.”

“Sorry, understanding?”

“Understanding that you are all the same underneath so when you hurt others you actually harm yourself.”

“You'll have to elaborate on that I'm afraid, it sounds completely beyond me.”

“Sure, within us all there is a thing called love that is our essence, our Self if you like. Our actions dictate its growth in a positive sense so when you love others you love your Self and that is how it grows.”

“Love others?”

“Put others before yourself a selfless act is an act of love.”

“Oh right.”

“Now should your actions be negative they will have a detrimental effect on your Soul. They will not diminish its growth as such but they leave a nasty mark which will affect its purity and so stunt its growth. If you can truly understand that then not only will you find peace but also inner peace.”

“Inner peace?”

“Peace of mind. When you have it you will truly know that you are blessed.”

“You have given us much to think about. Maybe I have been a little distracted recently.”

Meanwhile back at the meeting of the elders their planning was going on in earnest, “We have nothing to fear from the sylphs themselves,” Tinu said, “Though that might be a different story for the renegades.”

“Yes,” Gosla said, “Their hatred for us is well known and their numbers are many.”

“I would suggest we sneak out of the city without ceremony,” Silma said, “And be careful of the walls.”

“Sneak out,” Ding said with contempt, “We are elders we don't sneak anywhere.”

“It is your lack of judgment that has got us into this mess,” Tinu said sharply rebuking him, “We sneak out for we don't trust the outcasts. They could warn him off or even worse inform the renegades who then could lie in wait for us.”

“Oh,” Ding said duly chastened.

“Now we know he is at the sylphs' caves,” Silma said, “It is only a short journey away so if we stick to the cover we could be quickly there and back.”

“True,” Satama said, “One thing though.”

“Yes?”

“It is me that has been elected to kill him. Now in situations like this things don't always go to plan.”

“Meaning?” Tinu said.

“In the heat of the moment someone else might kill him.”

“Oh yes,” Tinu said, “It could happen.”

“Well where would that leave me? I have been chosen and if through no fault of my own someone else achieves my objective does it mean that I lose the leadership?”

“That would be a choice for Narda alone to make,” Tinu said.

“So the election was a bit of a pointless exercise?”

“Not necessarily,” Silma said, “I for one vow not to kill this man but should I come across him, capture him and bring him to you.”

“You are a good friend Silma and I will not forget that when I uphold my destiny.”

“Very well,” Gosla said, “I vow the same,” and the rest of the elders followed suit although it was noted that Ding did it begrudgingly.

Dave in the meantime had a different audience and was talking on a different subject, “Without purpose you are nothing but emptiness inside. You were created for a purpose by a purpose to uphold a purpose.”

“You talk a lot of purpose and hold great stock by it,” Cuda said, “Yet we have never really come across it in our world. Why is that if you don't mind me asking?”

“I cannot speak for your world, well except one thing. Your purpose in this world is to serve Narda, which is a false purpose as she is anger incarnate.”

“We do not serve Narda but I take your point. So this purpose thing that you talk about, there is more than one?”

“Yes there are three, love, pride and anger. Pride is self love when you only serve your selfishness. Anger is misguided love when you serve the wrong purpose and love is the right purpose to serve.”

“But who is to say which one is the right purpose? Surely what's right for one can be detrimental to another?”

“The right purpose works for the greater good. Uphold it and what might at first seem detrimental when you look at it more closely and see it in its true light will actually be beneficial.”

“Not being funny but I can't see it myself.”

“Give me an example of what you perceive as detrimental.”

“Well take us as an example. We are outcasts and suffer humiliation virtually every day, surely that cannot be a good thing?”

“That is more to do with the actions of people serving the wrong purpose but good does come out of it.”

“It does?” Cuda said in surprise.

“Humiliation helps to diminish pride. It is not a good example as I said because it comes from the actions of people serving the wrong purpose but knowing that should help your life go a little more smoothly.”

“I'll bare that in mind though I don't know if it will help me with my life.”

“Knowing it should make you more mentally stronger to deal with it. You no longer walk in ignorance which is mental weakness.”

“Oh I will have to see about that. Anyway you have given me a lot to think about but we had better get back before we are missed,” and they left Dave alone with Ilka.

“Are there many more?” Dave said.

“There can't be. Mind you I didn't think that there would be this many.”

“I'm starting to get a little tired now.”

“Get some sleep then, I will ask them to wait. You are never out for that long anyway.”

“Well if you don't mind,” Dave said and found himself a comfortable place.

Chapter 3.

The week passed fairly quickly with nothing of note happening. Don returned with Daisy although never informed Jane. It was only by chance that she saw him with his son in law towing a different

boat back to the allotment. She told Dave who was not really interested for by this time he was starting to see him not only as a waste of time but also a devious contemptible character.

Saturday duly came and John picked Dave up to carry on working on the loft. Much to Dave's surprise John had been true to his word and the floor was finished. Dave cut some more supports so John could get started and then began taking the scraps of spare wood to the shed to be stored for John's fire. Soon John had reached the first of the original braces so that was cut off and cut up to join the rest of the wood. By mid day the second one had been reached so that went the same way. Late afternoon saw the last one being done so they started to cut and fix struts for across the top so the plaster boards had somewhere to be fixed to. By the end of the day this was completed and as they sat and drank a cup of tea John was more than pleased, "It should be plain sailing from now on. I thought that we would cut the entrance tomorrow and maybe if we have enough time batten out the two brick walls."

"Sounds good, and the stairs, have you ordered it yet?"

"No I'm going to make it myself. That will give me something to do next week."

"Really, that's taking a lot on."

"It shouldn't be too difficult. Do you mind if I drop you straight back only I've got the electrician coming around in a bit?"

"Sure, so you'll soon be wired up."

"Well he's only looking at it tonight. I said that I would do most of it myself to cut the expense down."

"Can you do electrics then?" Dave asked in surprise.

"It's only a matter of putting the wires in. I'll get him to do me a rough diagram so I can have them in place for him. He will only have to put the fittings in and connect them up."

"Well it sounds easy," Dave said and finished his drink. John dropped Dave back and the rest of the evening went quickly before he went to bed at 10.30.

Dave woke up to a warning. "A party is heading over to try and do you harm," the voice said, "Send the sylphs into hiding, it is time to make our move."

"Our move?"

"It is time to take the fight to Narda. She will not be expecting us now."

"Fair enough," Dave said and warned the sylphs of the impending threat.

As this was happening the elders with swords in their hands were sneaking out of one of the side doors. Once clear of the city Ding said, "I've been thinking about that vow we made earlier."

"You have?" Satama said looking at him suspiciously.

"Yes, who are we to go against what has been ordained by Narda. You don't get to be leader by drawing lots that is foolish. No you get to be leader by actions and actions alone."

"What is this?" Satama said angrily, "You can't change the plans halfway through."

"He does have a point," Silma said coming to Ding's aid, "And if it was ordained by Narda then who are we to change it and pick our own leader?"

"Would you have said the same if you were the one that was chosen?"

"Yes,"

"I doubt it," Satama said in a mocking tone.

"I was chosen second yet I choose to renounce my claim for I believe that it goes against Narda's will. I have just as much to lose as you by doing it."

"You haven't, second is second and there are no city walls out here so the chances of you becoming first, well they are non-existent."

"There are many other different types of accident."

"Is that some sort of threat?"

"I know of your prowess with the sword yet I also know that if you go against Narda's will you will die for I have right on my side."

"You know that I'm a far superior swordsman than you. I caution you to hold your tongue."

“Whilst I walk by Narda's side I have no fear. I demand you renounce your claim or suffer the consequences.”

“Never,” Satama said and they started to fight. Satama was indeed a better swordsman but Silma's anger carried the day. He did not win unscathed though for in Satama's dying throes he managed to plunge his sword into Silma's stomach. As Silma lay dying he said, “I guess my conviction was not strong enough,” and passed his last breath. The remaining three carried on their way with nothing spoken between them.

Narda on the other hand had quite a lot to say, “To think that I have put my trust in these fools. See how they fight amongst each other. I only hope that this is not the curse in action.”

“Surely not Great Queen,” Seri said, “These are merely the actions of greedy men with power on their mind.”

“Well maybe but all I do know is where once there were six now there are only three and they are barely out of the city. This does not sound good, not good at all.”

As this was happening Dave had landed at Narda's castle and was hiding just outside awaiting his first victim.

“Logic is the ultimate in faith,” the voice said, “There will be one coming out to check the ships shortly.”

“Fair enough and these handmaidens, how am I to deal with them?”

“I am guessing that their fate is interlinked with that of the minions.”

“Sorry?”

“Well that's the consensus of opinion anyway.”

“What?”

“Didn't you know I am part of a greater mind, a collective of minds if you like? No mind can know everything but between us we can give a pretty good guess.”

“So what do you know about the handmaidens then?”

“They are aspects of Narda, three of them in number Fotu or fear of the unknown, Seri or self righteousness and Rind or righteous indignation. Now our guess is that you take out four minions and a handmaiden will fall. We will let you know when we know for sure.”

“Er thanks.”

“He's coming now,” the voice said and sure enough a minion appeared. He made his way around each ship in turn and stopped at the one that Dave had arrived in. He studied it awhile as if not sure and turned to go back to the castle but Dave blocked his path. “Now I don't think that it is wise to let you go back to the castle. Logic dictates that as you have seen my ship you will inform Narda of my presence here. Not a move I would like you to make, by the way what's your name?”

Both Narda and Fotu felt the minion's loss. “He is here again,” Narda said through her pain.

“I too have felt the pain Great Queen, why is that?”

“Ah there is something that I neglected to tell you.”

“Yes?”

“As my essence lies within you so too, does yours lie within four of the minions. As you were created from me they were created from you.”

“So I am not invincible then, you told me that I was.”

“You are, like me, in the sense that you can't be defeated head on. Indirectly though it is a different story. The minions' fate are directly related to our own.”

“Then his death must surely come quickly. I will gather the forces and after securing the ships hunt high and low for him. He will not escape this time.”

“You are indeed the greatest of my handmaidens; I put my trust and faith in you.”

The elders on the other hand were lacking in the trust department. They had reached the cave and after finding it empty went back out to lay in wait.

“Someone must have warned them,” Tinu said angrily, “They must have seen us leave the city.”

“That is impossible,” Ding said.

“Have you a better idea?” Tinu snapped.

“Right, that is the last time that you will disrespect me.”

“Disrespect you, you incompetent, back stabbing coward. You think that you deserve respect. It was you that caused the deaths of Satama and Silma.”

“What?”

“You heard, if it wasn't for you then they would still be with us.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Don't try and wriggle out of it, it was you that broke the vow we made and encouraged Silma.”

“Now hold on, Silma has a mind of his own.”

“Your fancy words won't save you now,” Tinu said and plunged his sword into Ding's heart.

“He was just a coward,” Tinu said after the deed was done, “Narda said that herself.”

“I won't argue with that,” Gosla said, “Though I hope it stops there for I am no coward.”

“I have the utmost respect for you but that Ding has done nothing but lead us to wrong.”

“Then the quest is still on.”

“We may as well wait here as he is bound to return. Then he is ours.”

Dave himself was making progress. He had entered the castle and hid just in time to watch four minions rush to guard the ships.

“They know you are here and have blocked your retreat,” the voice said.

“That's to be expected,” Dave said quietly.

“The rest have gathered in one group and are systematically going through the castle. The next step is without direction you are void, though whether you get to use it.”

“Time will tell,” Dave said quietly, “And I have plenty of it.”

Ding's death had not gone unnoticed by Narda. With all her minions and two of her handmaidens on patrol she only had Rind for company. “Still they fight like children what is it with them?”

“I think that there always has been animosity between Ding and Tinu Great Queen. They both crave the power.”

“And now they are but two. This David Jessel must be protected.”

“Maybe but I would say that the hatred between the two elders existed well before his arrival and it was only a matter of time before it surfaced.”

“Why now though? It's the same as the city walls, they could have collapsed at any time but why at that particular moment?”

“Well if it's any help Great Queen it was through Ding's actions that both Silma and Satama lost their lives. His death was only a reaction to it for Tinu held him accountable.”

“Yes you are right, so it was only natural justice at work, nothing to do with David Jessel. And the walls too, now that we have isolated the other deaths their collapse has no significance.”

“So this David Jessel will fall without consequence and now that we have him trapped here he will fall quickly.”

“Yes he's going nowhere, well only to his demise.”

Dave though saw things differently. As he waited he thought he would move things on and so a diversion was needed. He set the charge machine at love, activated it at full power and hid a safe distance to see what would happen next. It was not long before three minions rushed in from outside the castle to see who had activated it and Dave sneaked back outside once more. On seeing the lone minion Dave said, “Excuse me I'm lost, what's your name?” before hiding in one of the ships.

Fotu felt the pain as she searched the Great Hall and it nearly brought her to her knees.

“What's the matter?” Seri said on seeing this and Fotu told her what Narda had said.

“So if he kills another two then you will be dead. That is not good news.”

“You too are cursed, the same as Rind.”

“What?” Seri said in shock and started looking even harder.

The minions too had felt the loss and not thinking that it was their friend outside rushed to find Fotu and the others to see if they needed help.

“Fools,” Fotu said, “Get back to your posts.”

“Wouldn't it be better if they stayed with us?” Seri said, “After all there is safety in numbers.”

“Well he does seem to be picking off the stragglers,” Fotu said and thought awhile before saying, “We will split the forces. You take half of the minions and search the upper floor and I will carry on downstairs. Make sure that no one leaves each others' sight and we should be alright.”

“But what about strength in numbers?” Seri protested.

“You will have five minions. Surely that is enough strength; after all he is only one man.”

“Well if you are sure,” Seri said and took her minions upstairs. After she had gone Fotu said, “Well his last attack was outside the castle walls so we can safely assume that he is in the castle itself now. Only a fool would hang around the scene of the crime. Did you turn the machine off?”

“No great Fotu,” the nearest minion said, “We are not permitted to touch it.”

“Then I will go and do it myself. You carry on with the search.”

“Is that wise Great Fotu, don't you want us to go with you?”

“I am invincible, I have nothing to fear,” and left them to carry on with their search.

Dave in the meantime was getting impatient, “What's keeping them?” he said quietly.

“They think that you are now in the castle. They reason that only a fool would hang around the scene afterwards.”

“Ah, so I am wasting my time here.”

“Looks like it. Fotu is on the way to switch off the machine. It might be a good idea to restrain her as it could panic the rest of the party into hasty action.”

“How many are with her?”

“She comes alone. She leaves a party of five in the Great Hall. They will soon wonder where she has gone.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and climbed out of the ship. The voice told him where there was some rope and soon he was waiting in the room for her. It was not long before she made her entrance.

“Must I do everything for myself around here?” she muttered darkly to herself, “I don't know why I.. What is this?” and was quickly brought to ground, “You'll pay dearly for this,” she snapped angrily, “And I for one will be the first in line when it comes to your retribution.”

Dave tied her up and bundled her outside. He hid her in one of the ships and waited to see what the outcome of his abduction would be.

It was not long before his absence was missed. “What's keeping her?” one of the minions said.

“She is taking her time,” another one said in agreement.

“Shall we go and look for her?”

“No, that would be more than our lives are worth. She has told us to search the place and I for one am not going against her orders.”

“Tricky that. If she is in trouble and does need our help she will not be too pleased with us.”

“True, but if she's not she will not be too happy that we have given up the search to waste time bothering her.”

“Quite a dilemma,” the first one said and thought awhile before he said, “I will take one of the others with me so that our search need not be hindered.”

“Is that wise?”

“He can only take us one at a time.”

“Well if you are sure,” the second minion said as he watched the two minions go.

“Two are on the way,” the voice said to Dave, “A self that has no purpose is the domain of anger and anger is the height of frustration.”

“Is it wise to take them both on together?”

“If need be. It would be a lot easier if they split up though.”

The minions had made their way to the charging machine and were surprised to find no trace of Fotu.

“She must be here,” one said, “There is nowhere else she could have gone.”

"Maybe outside. Wait here in case she comes back and I will go and see for myself."

"No, we will both go together or not at all."

"I won't be too long and someone has to be here in case."

"Well don't be too long then," the first one said as he watched him go to his death.

"Now's your chance," the voice said as the minion came through the gates. Dave quickly approached him and said in an angry voice, "Who are you?"

Fotu screamed in pain and the other minion on hearing this and feeling the loss rushed out without thinking. He was quickly confronted by an angry Dave, "Who are you?" and with that not only did the minion disappear Fotu ignited in flames.

"Looks like we were right," the voice said afterwards.

Narda felt the pain and it was greater than she had ever felt it before. She fell to her knees and gasped for breath. Rind tried to help her back on her feet but was quickly thrown off, "Leave me fool, Fotu is no more. The only handmaiden worth anything is now no more."

Rind said nothing but started to ponder if she was to be next. The remaining three minions in the Great Hall had also felt the two minions' loss and were nervous to say the least.

"We know where he is now," one of the braver ones said, "We don't need to look."

"We have been told to search the Great Hall," another said, "Fotu will not be pleased if we leave our post."

"Who is to say that she is still alive?"

"She is invincible," the third one said, "Nothing can harm her. No, I say we wait here."

"But we know where he is," the first one protested.

"Then let him come to us."

Narda by now had composed herself and revenge was on her mind, "It is time that we got rid of him once and for all. He has been alive for too long. Surely the castle must have been covered by now. Rind I want you to call everyone back."

Now near the cave of the sylphs the remaining elders had gone back in as the sound of voices had put them on alert. Six outcasts had come, looking for Dave and were surprised to find that no one was about.

"He must be somewhere," Enid said, "It's not that long since Cuda saw him."

"Are you sure this is the right place?" one called Eta said.

"I have guided quite a few parties here already. This is definitely the right place."

"I suppose we had better wait then," Eta said and they made themselves comfortable.

Back inside the caves Gosla and Tinu had overheard them, "Outcasts," Gosla said, "And quite a few by the sound of it."

"They have vowed to protect this David Jessel. This could leave us in quite a predicament if they find us here."

"Hopefully they will go soon," Gosla said and nervously they waited.

In the castle Narda had gathered her depleted forces and was shouting the odds, "What is it with you? You let a single man come here and do all this damage. I would expect something like this from the fools in the city but you, no. Where was the last time that he struck?"

"The charging machine room Great Queen," one of the minions said.

"And why didn't you rush over to catch him?" Narda said angrily.

"We were ordered to search the Great Hall."

"Even though you knew where he was, what kind of stupidity was that?"

"Great Fotu would not have liked it if we would have left our posts."

"Great Fotu as you call her is no more. She might still have been here if you would have used your initiative."

"No more, I thought that she was invincible."

"You dare question me yet you won't question your orders. Now listen and listen well for all our lives depend on it. I want you to get rid of this man for once and for all. Not only that I want two

minions with me all times and two minions guarding the ships should we need to leave in a hurry.”

“That sounds a bit drastic Great Queen,” Seri said in surprise, “Surely he is just one man.”

“He has done enough damage,” Narda said angrily, “If he does much more I intend to take all the ships and leave him stranded here. If he wants my world so much let him have it. I will move to the city and rule from there.”

“And the elders Great Queen?” Seri said.

“They have proved themselves to be worthless. You will get rid of the final two.”

“Yes Great Queen,” Seri said.

Back in the cave self righteousness was at work.

“I think we should head back to the city after these outcasts have gone.” Tinu said, “We could try again later.”

“You may come and go as you please.”

“What is this,” Tinu said and then realization hit him, “You are hoping that I will go and leave you all the glory aren't you?”

“Nothing could be further from my mind I'm merely saying that we have come this far we should stay on until the job is done.”

“You did not say that, you wanted me to go and leave you all the glory.”

“You must have misunderstood me.”

“Your words were perfectly clear and my understanding is not at fault and to say otherwise would be an insult to my intelligence.”

“I know what I said and I know what I meant. If you presume to tell me otherwise we will end up falling out.”

“Well maybe it's time we did for there can only be one leader and let's be honest either of us are more than capable of destroying this man. It would be an insult to us to say that he needed two of us.”

“I see your point and as we are the last of the elders and no more are to be elected it needs to be sorted. When one of us gets to rule what is to happen to the other one? Surely he is not to be expected to stand idle and as for going back just to be called one of the common brethren, well it's not even worth thinking about.”

“No we are more than men and worth more than that. I say we should fight it out first, winner takes all and the loser, well he will be dead so it matters not.”

“Then,” Gosla said taking his stance, “May the winner find his true desire,” and they started to fight. The noise of the clashing swords soon caught the attention of the outcasts outside and before long they had an audience. They were concentrating too much to notice and continued at a rapid pace with neither of them having a distinct advantage. Eventually though Gosla fell and Tinu with only a flesh wound to his shoulder and still unaware that he was being watched said, “Now David Jessel is mine.”

On hearing this the outcasts fell on him and his quickly battered body soon uttered its last breath. None of this was seen by Narda though for although her handmaidens could work in the caves she could not see what was going on. She was too busy making plans to move to the city anyway for the idea of leaving Dave stranded in the castle was really starting to appeal to her.

“Right,” she said to a captive audience, “From now on we will do things properly. We will enslave both the outcasts and renegades and they will grow the food. I will train a force of the brethren to keep them in place and also another force to keep order and make sure that the other brethren don't fall off path. There will be no more elders; the minions will take their place. They will be accountable to the handmaidens who in turn will be accountable to me. Any questions?”

“And if David Jessel falls?” Seri said.

“The plan will still be on. I grow tired of being a virtual prisoner in this castle. In fact I say that after we have gone we should use this place to house the more rebellious of the slaves as it will prove very austere to them.”

“So do we really need to hunt Jessel down?”

“If we can find him all well and good if not, well he’ll soon be in company with the other prisoners and all his talk will be worthless as he will no longer be a threat.”

“Then shall I start to organize our move?”

“Yes why not. Take four minions with you. Rind, go with two others and guard the ships. I want to have one last look around the place so I know what I won’t be missing. Oh and Seri, anything that you can’t take with you burn. When we leave this place I don’t want anything left here that will make the prisoners lives in anyway comfortable.”

“It shall be done Great Queen,” Seri said and left to start packing.

Dave meanwhile was in the Great Hall when the voice informed him of the new turn of events. “So she means to leave me up here. This sounds like a very tricky situation.”

“If you are not careful I would suggest a hasty retreat but even that could have a downside.”

“It could?”

“If she moves down to the city she will have the brethren behind her. You will never get to her.”

“Then she must be finished here though I don’t quite know how as she seems to have herself well covered.”

“Yes we are going to have to split them up somehow. Your next step is impatience-frustration at its height. Keep that in mind just in case.”

Meanwhile the move was coming on a pace. As Dave watched they started piling everything that the ships could not carry in the middle of the Great Hall. Much to Dave’s surprise Seri left one as guard so he made his approach, “Right I haven’t the time to mess around, what’s your name?”

“Good,” the voice said, “Anger- impatience at its height next. Now hide as they are making their way back.”

Seri felt the pain and ordered the minions back to the hall. Narda also felt the pain and so joined her, “He must be around here,” she said, “Rind has his escape blocked so he is going nowhere.”

They made a quick search but after awhile Narda said, “Leave him, he’s just holding up the move. Get back to work and Seri be as quick as you can.”

“Yes Great Queen,” and the work continued.

As Dave watched the voice said, “Go to the landing strip. One of the minions has been sent to warn Narda of the loss of one of the ships. It appears that they loaded too much weight into it and it broke the landing wheels.”

Dave made his way outside and soon came face to face with a frightened minion. “What is your name?” Dave barked and the minion was no more. “Direction is the purpose of life,” the voice said as he quickly carried on his way. Once out side he saw Rind and another minion trying to unload the craft.

“Get a move on,” Rind said as the pain had made the minion stop a while, “If this is not emptied by the time that Narda gets here we will both suffer.”

“Make it quick,” the voice said, “Seri and her minions are coming this way.”

“Hello,” Dave said to the startled pair, “I’m looking for something, that’s right, your name,” and ran back once more into the castle leaving Rind looking at where the minion once was. Seri felt the loss for it nearly brought her to her knees. She knew that one more minion and she too would be dead.

She ran to the landing strip only to see a bemused Rind. “Where is he?” Seri shouted.

“He’s gone,” was all that Rind could say.

“Gone, gone where?” Seri said shaking her.

“I don’t know he just disappeared.”

“Not the minion fool, David Jessel.”

“He ran back into the castle, you must have come past him.”

Narda had joined them by then. “Two more lost,” she said with more than a hint of anger, “We are rapidly running out. We have barely enough to make out retreat,” and looking at the collapsed ship, “What happened?”

“It was over loaded Great Queen,” Rind said and Narda went over to take a closer look.

“We don’t want half of this,” she said looking through the load, “Seri take the bare minimum and no more. No, don’t take anything as the city will provide it all.”

“Yes Great Queen.”

“Now the only thing that I want from the castle is the charging machine. Everything else put into piles and burn.”

“Yes Great Queen.”

“Before you do that there is a little matter of the ship.”

“The ship?”

“It may be damaged but it is repairable.”

“Have we the time Great Queen?”

“Not us fool I’m talking about David Jessel. I want it thrown off the island along with all the other rubbish you saw fit to put in it.”

“Yes Great Queen,” Seri said and it was duly done. After she had finished Narda said, “I will wait here with Rind, you will take the minions and room by room put all the things that might prove useful to the next inhabitants into the centre and burn them. Start at the top and work your way down and Seri, time is off the essence.”

“Yes Great Queen,” Seri said and left.

“We will fetch the charging machine whilst she does that,” Narda said and they did just that.

Dave was back in the Great Hall when the voice told him what was happening, “It’s your best chance yet. Remember love is the heart beat of life. One more minion and Seri will be no more so the minions will be leaderless for a while.”

“Right,” Dave said and made his way upstairs.

Seri was getting impatient knowing that another minion’s death would also be her own. She was anxious to get the job done quickly and leave the castle. “Come on, get a move on. Time is of the essence,” she barked but there were that many minions they were getting in each other’s way. “This is no good,” she said, “Right two to a room and we’ll quickly get finished.” They divided into three groups and Dave quickly seized the chance. He rushed into the room that Seri and the lone minion were at work and said, “Need a hand, I’m Dave by the way. What’s your name?” the minion disappeared and Seri ignited.

“Quick next door,” the voice said, “To know thy self is to look within and to look within is to know thy purpose.”

Dave rushed in to two startled minions, “I’m Dave, who are you?” he said and one disappeared,

“My name is my purpose,” he continued, “What’s yours?” and the room was empty.

Narda had felt the losses and their rapid succession brought her to her knees. Rind too, had also felt two of the losses and the pain left her doubled up.

“Final two,” the voice said, “To know thy self is to know thy purpose and to know thy self is to love Thy God.”

Dave quickly left the room but much to his horror found the minions escaping. He ran after them but they proved fairly agile and though he managed to keep them in his sight he could not keep up with them. As he followed them down the stairs he shouted, “I know who I am and I know what I’m here for but who are you?” and one of the minions disappeared. This spurred the last one on to run even quicker and soon he was at the Great Hall. Dave was close to giving up and tiredness was creeping up on him. With his last breath he shouted, “I am love, who are you?” and as he fell to sleep he watched the final minion disappear.

Dave awoke at 9.00 looking forward to a hard day’s work. As John drove him up to his house he found out that he was not to be disappointed. “He did me the diagram,” John said, “So if we’ve got the time I wouldn’t mind putting in the wires today.”

“Sure, well if we’ve got the time.”

“It needs to be done before we put the plaster board up anyway.”

“True, is there much to do?”

“Lights, sockets and a smoke alarm,” John said as they pulled up outside his house.

“Quite a bit then,” Dave said as they got out the car.

“We’ll sort the opening out, that’s the first thing on the list.”

They went up the stairs and into the attic and started knocking the ceiling out where the entrance was going to go. It came down quickly though the debris that fell had to be seen to be believed.

Dave started to clear it and leave it in a pile in the garden as John cut the joists. After John had finished he said, “I’ll batten out the far wall if you want to carry on.”

“Sure, I’ve got plenty to go at.”

“Well if you need a hand give us a shout. I won’t be able to do the other wall until I put the landing in sometime next week.”

“You’re taking a lot on, what with making the stairs as well.”

“Well I’ll get as much as I can done anyway,” John said and started fixing battens.

It took another two hours for Dave to clear the debris and sweep up the dust and when he was finished they stopped for a cup of tea.

“So how are you getting on?” Dave asked.

“Walls done and so are the lights.”

“Really?” Dave said in surprise.

“Yes it’s coming on well. You did well getting rid of all that waste.”

“I was surprised at how much there actually was. Have you seen the pile outside?”

John looked out the window and said, “That is quite a pile. I’ll have to get a mini skip to get rid of it all. I bet it took some shifting.”

“Well I reckon I’ve picked up a few blisters.”

“I’ll bet,” John said with a laugh, “I’ll also bet that you are glad to see it shifted.”

“I won’t argue. Any chance of another cup of tea as I think I’ve swallowed most of that dust.”

“It saves shifting it I suppose,” John said laughing and put the kettle on, “So any further forward with the writing?”

“Writing? Oh no I’ve never give it much thought to tell you the truth.”

“Too busy?”

“Busy doing nothing,” Dave said with a laugh as John handed him his tea.

“When you are ready, you’ll start. It’s getting a little dark now so if you want to leave the wiring I’ll understand.”

“Oh no, it won’t take long will it?”

“About half an hour.”

“Then we’ll get it out of the way,” Dave said and quickly finished his tea. They went back to the attic and sure enough John was right. Well 10 minutes out as it took 40 minutes. Dave was dropped home and tiredness made him go to bed at 10.00.

Dave woke to find Narda looking over him. Quickly he got to his feet expecting trouble but much to his surprise she said, “It’s your world now and you are welcome to it.”

“What, I don’t want it.”

“So what was all this for. Everyone is dead.”

“Well you tell me it was you who caused it.”

“I thought that you had come to rule my world, that’s what the legends say.”

“No I only came to purify it.”

“I know what that means; you are talking about my death aren’t you?”

“You already are. No, I’m actually talking about your re-birth. But first tell me something, why didn’t you escape?”

“There was no point, without my handmaidens I am nothing.”

“They were just aspects of yourself that you had to get rid of. Now they are gone you can rebuild your Self through light.”

“To what purpose?”
 “So you can rule the world properly.”
 “I was doing alright, well until you came along anyway.”
 “Quite a sizable part of the population would disagree with that. The renegades for a start.”
 “If they don’t know when they are well off then what am I supposed to do about it?”
 “It was your guidance that was at fault not their judgment.”
 “Guidance, my purpose was not to guide but to rule.”
 “Well that was your first mistake then for to rule is to guide.”
 “Sorry, that does not make sense.”
 “Then let me enlighten you. You were put here to try and guide others to achieve their purpose. No more, no less. Ruling in the sense that you mean has no relevance to this. It came about through ignorance and self consciousness and is actually detrimental to your evolution and it brings inequality into being.”
 “Surely some people are more deserving than others? I mean take the outcasts as an example. They do nothing to add to the city only eat the food that I provide.”
 “They have no purpose. Where was your guidance and as for doing nothing they probably work the hardest for they do the manual labour.”
 “They are not fit for a purpose. They do all the heavy work for that is all they are capable of.”
 “I have talked with many of these outcasts and they are very capable and as for manual work you seem to have a low opinion of it, why is that?”
 “It is the work of animals it is not for the intelligent.”
 “It keeps you physically fit and well grounded and as for intelligence, well that is there to promote your spiritual growth not for material gain.”
 “Spiritual growth?”
 “That’s what you were put here for. How else do you think that you evolve to your purpose?”
 “Well all this is pretty new to me.”
 “Yet you live in the Land of Spiritual Purpose, “Dave said in surprise, “How is it new to you?”
 “Well that’s only moral judgment isn’t it? That’s what I thought anyway.”
 “Moral judgments?”
 “You know how to live your life kind of thing.”
 “You might develop your Self to some extent with that but you don’t really evolve to your full potential.”
 “So what’s it all about then, life I mean?”
 “Do you want the long answer,” Dave said with a laugh.
 “Yes sure.”
 “Purification of the soul and expansion of the spiritual consciousness to achieve our purpose and be at one with the universe, our purpose being our divinity and the universe our balance.”
 “What?”
 “Basically cleanse your Soul and expand your Spirit.”
 “And how do you actually go about doing this?”
 “Through light.”
 “You have mentioned light before, what is it?”
 “Knowledge of Self and knowledge of purpose through service to others has a major part to play as it promotes selflessness, a major spur to enlightenment.”
 “So instead of being served I should have actually been serving quite a turn around.”
 “That was your self-consciousness at work. Now that you have lost it you should see things a little differently.”
 “Well if what you are saying is true it does seem that I have been looking at things wrongly.”
 “We all make mistakes that’s the only way we can grow.”
 “And now?”

“Sorry?”

“What is to happen to me?”

“You are to guide your world I suppose.”

“But I don’t know how. I thought that I did but I was wrong.”

“Keep an open heart and you will find the answer. Don’t forget that everyone is an individual with the potential for full growth and always work for the greater good.”

“I’ll try and bare that in mind.”

“Then you won’t go far wrong. Also I would leave this castle as it makes you too aloof from what’s really happening.”

“The thought of leaving had occurred to me I must admit.”

“Well now is a good a time as any. I will take you to see King Ilka of the sylphs and then you can take it from there.”

They got into one of the ships and were soon landing near the caves. Dave looked into the sky and saw that the dark clouds were lightening. He waited a while to take in the sight and watched the clouds thin out and dissipate until all that was left was the moon. The ship had disappeared by then so for Narda there was no going back. Dave introduced her to Ilka who initially was wary but soon came around to her and the story continued although not in this book.

Dave meanwhile after he had made the introductions and smoothed the way walked out into the wilderness to be alone with his Self.

“What now?” he said.

“Leave them to it your job is done now.”

“And me?”

“The final world, the land of the gods.”

“Is there anything I need to know?”

“Plenty,” the voice said laughing, “But that will be revealed when you get there.”

“And how do I actually get there?”

“You’ll just wake up there after the next time that you go back to your world.”

“But I don’t feel tired.”

“There are still a few things left to clear first,” the voice said mysteriously.

“Really, what like?”

“You have still yet to purge your Self of all your material desire for a start.”

“Oh,” Dave said in surprise, “I thought that I already had.”

“No, you have yet to visit the Cave of Self Determination.”

“Self determination?”

“Yes, that’s where you make the conscious decision or determine the life that you want to lead. It is the final choice of purpose.”

“What, do you mean love, anger and pride?”

“That’s right. Intellectual, pride, spiritual negative, anger and spiritual positive, love. Only one of them will get you to your divinity.”

“Spiritual positive or love. Do I really need to go through this cave, I thought that I had already got rid of my pride and anger and chosen love.”

“It will just be a formality then,” the voice said with a laugh, “No I think you will find it a little more complicated than that.”

“So what can I expect then?”

“I’m afraid that it will be a case of wait and see with that. You see it varies with each person.”

“Oh, and is this cave far?”

“Not far. Keep straight on and I will tell you when we get there.”

After a while the voice said, “We are here now,” and Dave saw some steps leading down into darkness, “Now before you get to your purpose you will have to go through **Despair.**”

“What?” Dave said in surprise.

“Just walk down the steps you’ll find out what I mean.”

With more than a little trepidation Dave took the first step and started his descent. Soon he was in total darkness and then a slow dark voice started to recite a verse,

**“Oh woe to me a child of time
Waiting for the darkest crime,
That brings me on to God knows where
That right my friend I’ve found despair.**

**I have no meaning in my life
Just restlessness and constant strife,
Frustrations come to rule my day
With anger there to light the way.**

**Day after day I fall to woe
It holds me tight, won’t let me go,
Fate just seems to me a foe
I have no hope in which to sow.**

**I need something to pass my time
To tell me that my life is fine,
To occupy this restless mind
And take away this mortal bind.**

**But as to what I’m in the dark
And have to face conditions stark,
Into a life that’s void of care
No ambition just despair.”**

Dave reached the bottom of the steps and found himself in a dim lit cavern. “So what happens now?” he said.

“Just keep walking,” the voice said and Dave did as he was told. As he walked forward the voice came back,

**“Roll your dice for your destiny; pick a purpose and wait and see,
Take your life in that direction making sure it’s the right selection,
First there’s pride but that’s a loss then anger comes and you get cross,
Love’s the last but not the least for with this inside you will always feast.”**

With the voice finishing Dave came to a door, “Go on through,” his inner voice said, “You’ll be safe.”

Dave opened the door and entered into a large square room where he came face to face with what can only be described as a goddess.

“I have been expecting you,” she said, “My name is Tara and I am here to grant your every desire.”

“And which purpose are you?”

“Now that would be telling,” the woman said with an enchanting smile, “And besides it’s not what I am but what I have to offer that really matters.”

“Well if you say so. So what do you actually have to offer then?”

“Anything you desire.”

“Desires are fleeting things can you grant me what I need?”

“I should think so. I can grant anything so tell me what you need.”

“Well there is one thing that I do need and I mean really need for it will make my life complete.”

“Anything just name it.”

“Humility,” Dave said with a laugh.

“Get out,” the woman said angrily and Dave did as he was bid.
 “How did you know that she was pride?” the voice said.
 “She was offering desires; the only thing that they sate is pride.”
 “Good, walk on and you will soon come to another door.”
 Dave did as he was told and soon enough came to another door. He entered into a similar room, the only thing different was the woman.
 “Ah David Jessel long have I been expecting you. My name is Sara and I am here to help your cause.”
 “My cause? I did not realize that I had one.”
 “We all have a cause after all that is our reason to be.”
 “My purpose,” Dave said upon realization.
 “You may call it what you like but whatever you do call it I am here to help you achieve it.”
 “So you are here to help me achieve selflessness?” Dave said warming to her.
 “If that is your cause with me behind you, you will achieve it.”
 “Then you sound like the right purpose and though I have yet to see another one I think that it will be just a formality.”
 “Then I will await your return,” the woman said as Dave went back out again.
 “So what do you think then?” Dave said, “She sounds like the one to me.”
 “You have one more yet to see. I would withhold your judgment until then.”
 “That’s just a formality. No I reckon I’ve already found her.”
 “Don’t be too hasty,” the voice said as they came to a door.
 “Well I’ll go through the motions I suppose,” Dave said as he entered. He found himself in a similar room with a different woman.
 “So you have arrived at last,” the woman said, “My name is Lara and I am here to help you achieve your purpose.”
 “What?” Dave said in surprise, “That’s just what the other woman said.”
 “I do not speak for others that is not really my way.”
 “Oh,” Dave said confused now as he had, had it firmly fixed in his mind that it was Sara.
 “Not so easy is it?” the voice said.
 “What do I do now?”
 “Go back to the other one and get her to elaborate a little more.” The voice said, “You are going to need some more understanding.”
 “You will have to excuse me for a minute,” Dave said to Lara, “I will not be long.”
 “Be my guest,” and Dave went out the door. It was not long before he was back with Sara.
 “That was quick,” she said, “Are you honouring me with your presence?”
 “I’m afraid that I’ve got a few more questions yet.”
 “Oh, so it was not just a formality then?”
 “I thought it was but it seems that the other one was saying the same as you.”
 “Well you can’t have us both, it’s one or the other I’m afraid.”
 “Then these questions should settle it.”
 “Go ahead.”
 “How would you actually help me to achieve my purpose?”
 “However you would want me to.”
 “Could you be a little more specific? Do you know what my purpose actually is for a start?”
 “To achieve selflessness, that’s what you told me anyway.”
 “And how would you help me to achieve it?”
 “I would give you the strength for the austerity that you would need to achieve it. With me by your side you would understand that hunger takes you closer to where you want to be.”
 “Do you advocate a life of austerity then?”
 “Well that is what is needed isn’t it? After all to lead a selfless life you must not crave Earthly

desires like food and shelter.”

“What about my Earthly needs?”

“Needs, desires, what are they but the same thing. To achieve true selflessness surely you have no Earthly needs.”

“Right,” Dave said going into thought before he said, “And what are your views on people that cannot lead the life that we have been talking about?”

“They are worthless and not deserving of my respect.”

“That does not sound very tolerant are you sure that what you say is what you believe?”

“I stand by my words. To achieve your purpose is not an easy thing to do. No it is not for the weak willed and faint hearted.”

“I am neither yet I would say that if you were the purpose I chose I would not be up to following it.”

“I’m sure you would. You would not have got to the cave otherwise.”

“Well I wouldn’t want to then for it sounds to me that you are anger. Self righteousness has no place in my heart.”

“Maybe I was wrong then, you are not fit to carry my name.”

“I wouldn’t want it,” Dave said as he shut the door on his way out.

“All was not what it seemed,” the voice said, “But never mind there is always Lara.”

“She must be love, that’s the only one that’s left.”

They walked through the door where much to Dave’s surprise he found the room was empty.

“So where is she?” Dave said.

“She lives within you now.”

“What happens now then?”

“Just go through the door ahead of you and climb the stairs, you are but **Three Steps to Heaven.**”

Dave went through the door and started to climb. It was not long before he heard another voice,

**“Intelligence is the ability to be
Clairvoyance is the ability to see,
Which of these hold the key
When it comes to immortality?”**

**An easy question at first thought
When you utilize what you’ve been taught,
But if its real wisdom that is sort
Things aren’t quite as they’re purport.**

**Logic states that you must die
Here ends the play I tell no lie,
You rot away, no reason why
You change to worm food, my oh my.**

**But I’m afraid you’re wrong my learned friend
For death you see is not the end,
It’s just a stage that you transcend
To re-incarnate and to mend.**

**Learn that well for it’s the truth
Though logic states that you need proof,
Though finding it might prove aloof
But not to me I’m a cunning youth.**

I could spiritualise until I'm pissed
But still the point on you'd be missed,
So what I'll say and don't feel dissed
Go and see a specialist.

A hypnotist is what you need
He'll regress you back, alter your creed,
And so your imagination can really feed
He'll make a tape of the deed.

So listen then experience
Then see if logic can recompense,
Meditate if you feel tense
Until all that's left is common sense.

Content in the fact that you live on
The first step now has just been won,
But please don't think your job is done
For we need to carry on.

You're now clairvoyant in a way
But logic still must come to play,
You need to reason why you're fey
And why your body does decay.

So why should you fall down to age
Why has time become your cage?
Logic states that time's a gauge
So instead I think I'll see a sage.

You see time for all is not the same
Some age quickly, stress they blame,
Now I'm not here to fan that flame
No my point is logic's shame.

So anyway I saw this seer
And I must admit he quenched my fear,
For to his wisdom I held on dear
He sort of made things pretty clear,

"Son," he said, "You need a quest
Spiritual would be the best,
It keeps you young I do not jest
Go spread the word, be my guest.

But first you've got to know the word
Understanding is your gird,
Don't just recite what you've heard
That's for parrots, it's absurd.

**No understanding is the key
That's what makes divinity,
It feeds the Soul and sets it free
From the chains we call mortality.**

**Study hard and get some light
I mean contemplate not just recite,
For its warmth is its might
It will lift your Spirit out of sight.**

**Not just that though you need a goal
A selfless person must be your role,
The ego see, bad for the soul
Its selfish nature takes its toll.**

**Acts of love, straight from the heart
And a spiritual life becomes your art,
Try is out, well make a start
It will keep you young, now we must part."**

**So he left for he'd had his say
And a spiritual life became my way,
I check for signs of body decay
But up till now it's been okay.**

**Step two done, we'll get analytical
Though I guess to me it's hypothetical,
I don't fell fey, only retinal
And though time will tell, I'm prophetic.**

**Step three comes and heaven's here
Fate's on your side and brings you cheer,
You health improves and you lack fear
Hell is gone so shed no tear."**

Dave reached the top of the stairs and ended up back outside where tiredness quickly took him.

Chapter 4.

The rest of the week passed fairly quickly and soon Saturday arrived. Dave was picked up at 9 and as he was drove to John's he said, "Did you manage to do the stairs?"

"And the landing. I've only put the chipboard floor on loosely there though but it's safe to walk on."

"You must have been busy."

"You don't know the half of it," John said with a laugh, "I've battened out the other wall and started insulating and plaster boarding out."

"Really," Dave said in surprise, "Where ever did you find the time to get all that lot done?"

"I've been working until 11 at night. Its half killed me but it was worth it."

"Ah dedication," Dave said with a laugh.

"Well it's getting a little too close now. I didn't think that we would make it otherwise."

"You must be tired though?"

"Walking dead," John said with a laugh. They pulled up outside his house and went to have a look

at his handiwork.

"I'm impressed," Dave said, "You certainly haven't been idle."

About a third of the room had been boarded out and John had done the bottom part up to the sloping roof.

"Well that was pretty easy," John said, "It worked out the width of a board and the boards just spanned out right. The only cutting I had to do was the holes for the sockets."

"It's definitely starting to look like a room now. We'll soon have it in shape."

They tried the first piece up against the slope and although it was the right length the width needed cutting. This was quickly done and soon it was in place. The next piece was the same as was the third but they made good progress and by dinner a complete side was done. They stopped for a cup of tea then before carrying on with gusto. The whole room was done by late afternoon.

"We'll call it a day if you like," John said.

"I'm in no hurry. Jane will be at her mother's till quite late."

"We could smooth the angles then if you like."

"Sorry?"

"You know, where the plasterboard meets at angles where the sloping wall hits the vertical."

"Oh right, it will make it easier to put the top coat on I suppose."

"That's right. If we put it on now we can start plastering tomorrow."

"Fair enough," Dave said and they got to work on it. Dave made John a mix and then started taping where the plasterboard joined. It was late evening by the time John had finished and Dave had covered half the room by then. Dave was dropped back and virtually went straight to bed.

Dave found himself in the grounds of a castle. "So you have finally made it," a woman's voice said from behind him and he turned around to see Gilda, "What kept you?"

"Sorry, I didn't realize that you had been waiting."

"Well you are here now and that's the main thing," Gilda said and laughed.

"So where actually are we?"

"This is the Castle of Wonders in the land of the gods my new home. Why don't you let me show you around?"

"Well if you don't mind. So er what actually happens here then?"

"Originally it was here to help Man achieve his purpose but now, well it's more to do with trying to sort out the mess he's making of the world."

"So they are kept pretty busy then," Dave said with a laugh.

"Oh yes, would you like to see them at work?"

"Sure," Dave said and she took him into the castle itself to a large room that led off from the Great Hall. Dave entered and saw six large men dressed as knights and sitting around a large oak table.

"This is David Jessel," Gilda said introducing him to them, "He is new to the world."

"Ah the man himself," the one closest to him said, "I am Tuba and these are Canta, Sila, Dumas, Cantony and Sega. We have watched your progress well and see that you are a good man."

"Er thanks," Dave said not really knowing what else to say.

"It's a shame that they are not all like you. Take this one that we are dealing with at the moment. Rather than deal with the tests we have set him he tries to run away and creates problems for his Self in the process. Now normally we are not too bothered about this for although he can run he can't hide from these problems and eventually he will have to deal with them in either this life or the next. Now I say normally but his attempts to run away are causing others problems and so he's adding to his woes."

"Right, so what sort of problems are we actually talking about?"

"Wasting others time is the major one."

"Really, not being funny but I can't see that as a major crime."

"Time is a precious thing. Either it can be used on more deserving causes or dealing with the tests that we also set them. It's not to be wasted trying to help others to avoid the tests."

“Oh I see. So how would you actually deal with someone like that?”

“Well each situation is different I would have to talk about that particular person.”

“Sure, I understand.”

“Well sit down,” Tuba said with a laugh, “And we’ll make a start.”

“Er sure. So it’s not a confidential thing then?”

“No it’s a test your final one in fact.”

“What?”

“We want you to take on the case. We’re testing your judgment.”

“Oh, and what happens if I fail?”

“You cannot move on to your next stage. You would have to go back and reassess your Self that’s all.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said and sat down.

“So this man then. His actually test was to come to terms with his gluttony.”

“He ate too much then,” Dave said thinking that he understood.

“No drank. Mind you don’t you consider beer as a foodstuff nowadays?”

“I don’t know,” Dave said with a laugh, “But if that’s the case I was right then.”

“Well it was whiskey but we don’t want to split hairs,” Tuba said with a laugh, “So basically to put it in layman’s terms he had a drink problem. This is quite a common thing that comes about from either not having a purpose or following the wrong one but I digress. Now from this gluttony he developed sloth and became content with only doing half a job which itself became an obstacle in dealing with his gluttony and escalated his problems even more.”

“So one can lead to another then this sounds like it’s going to be complicated.”

“So anyway to actually deal with this gluttony he needed a purpose to replace it so we lined him one up. He took to it well for a while but sloth came to play and he was soon back to his old ways so another purpose was needed.”

“Could you elaborate on that?”

“Sure. The purpose we gave him was to help to get an elderly neighbour back on her feet. She just needed good company to give her mental stimulation that was all, good sober company that is.”

“So he used to turn up drunk then?”

“No get drunk when he was actually there. The temptation proved a little too strong for him.”

“Temptation?”

“She always had whiskey around the place. Sounds like an accident to happen but it was a necessary evil for by rejecting it, it would strengthen his resolve.”

“Oh right, but he didn’t.”

“No, in fact it became his reason for coming around in the end so the purpose got tainted. Finally her son came around early one morning and found him drunk so threw him out which is just as well for he was actually becoming quite detrimental to the woman’s growth.”

“This sounds familiar.”

“Anyway,” Tuba continued, “By then he had made that purpose his life so without it there was a void. He became restless and in need of a new purpose or a new life if you like. He had reasoned that it was the drinking that had made him lose his purpose and so vowed to himself that his next life would not include it. Not only that he wanted a completely new life away from what he perceived had caused his drink problem, the environment.”

“Very familiar.”

“Now to actually achieve this,” Tuba carried on, “Would mean he needed somewhere to live and his desperate financial situation meant it wasn’t going to be a thatched cottage with a rose garden. No, his first idea was a caravan.”

“Hang on for a moment. May I ask who this man is?”

“Sure, Don Silcox.”

“What, scrounging Don.”

"I believe that he is called that."

"And I am supposed to be judging him. That's hardly fair as I have an emotional attachment to the case. I wasted ten days doing up his boat."

"That is what you are actually judging him on. We are just giving you a grounding to help you make your decision."

"I'm not sure about this. My judgment will be clouded."

"Then you will fail the test but hear me out first and maybe you'll be objective instead of subjective."

"Well I will give it a go."

"Well he got a caravan and you know the rest. Now we are only actually asking you to judge him on his actions to you for he has already been judged on his other actions."

"Really, and may I ask the outcome of this judgment?"

"Looking for hints are you," Tuba said with a laugh, "Fair enough then. Let's just say that he was found lacking. He failed virtually every test that we set him."

"Tests?"

"Yes, we were testing his sloth for he would need to defeat it to have any chance of beating his gluttony."

"Would this be his inability to finish a job by any chance?"

"That's right, you remembered."

"Well it sort of took on new meaning when I found out who it was."

"Now these tests are put in to strengthen his resolve as I have said so with every test that he passed he would be a little less slothful and so stronger to keep his gluttony in check. A downside to this was that every time he failed he would weaken his resolve. This is not our doing as we only set the tests. It's just a natural reaction."

"Yes I can see that. It's all to do with will power isn't it, the more you use it the stronger it gets so by definition the less you use it the weaker it gets."

"Good, now not only would failure weaken his resolve it would also mean that he would have to pay a forfeit."

"A forfeit?"

"What you sow so shall you reap or in Don's case if you do half a job someone else will do half a job for you. Hopefully this would get him to realize that half a job was not good enough so by the time he took the next test he would be a little wiser."

"Oh, so it wasn't vindictiveness then."

"Oh no, he isn't really a bad man, it is just that his circumstances made him desperate. So the first test he failed was looking after Jane's mother and its balance was that his first attempt at a new life would fail."

"The caravan," Dave said upon realization.

"That's right."

"Was there any significance in the fact that the first caravan fell through?"

"Yes that was the actual attempt to clear the debt. He should have been alright with the second."

"Oh, so it wasn't the whole idea that was destined to fall then?"

"We are not that cruel," Tuba said with a laugh, "These are only minor transgressions after all. No one little mistake only requires one little rectification."

"I thought that looking after Jane's mother would be considered quite major?"

"He was only helping to give Jane a break. No the main players in that game are being judged by others for our only concern is you really."

"Oh right, so what went wrong with the second one then?"

"Bad planning and diverting people from their true purpose he thought that he could just turn up and be welcomed with open arms."

"Well I don't think that he learned much from that one," Dave said with a laugh, "I sort of got the

impression that he was expecting the same.”

“It takes some people a few times before it sinks in. Basically when he got Jane to drive him to Wales he wasted the opportunity of looking for places and just saw it as a holiday. He was there to actually lay the foundations for the next life and if he would have done he would not have wasted Jane’s time for it would have been a creative decision.”

“Oh right, I just thought that he wasted her time full stop.”

“It goes deeper than that. Time is only wasted when it is put to destructive purpose.”

“Well I don’t know about that.”

“If it’s not creative then it’s destructive you do know what time actually is don’t you?”

“Er no,” Dave said sheepishly, “Well I’m guessing not in the sense that you mean.”

“Evolution to purpose that is what it is in essence. Now time as you know is forward motion and so when you live there you have to go forwards. Forwards to your purpose that is and the only way of doing this is through creative manifestation now if these time manifestations are not creative they are wasted opportunities and so actually destructive, both in the sense of the limited time you have and disrupting the flow.”

“Sorry?”

“The flow of life have you noticed that for some things go to plan a lot better? That is because they have got into the flow of life, the tide if you like wasting time goes against the flow of life and so causes ripples.”

“Oh right, and these ripples would be problems?”

“Problems for yourself and stress, so back to the judgment then by the fact that he wasted the opportunity it condemned the next to failure. He just turned up with the caravan hoping to quickly find a place and was just as quickly disappointed.”

“Oh yes.”

“Wasting another of Jane’s days that could have been spent with her mother though some good did come out of it. It was around about then he activated his abstention plan and found his sea legs.”

“Where these related?”

“Yes, up until then he had only been thinking about giving up the whiskey as reflected in the fact he was only thinking of moving really with no actual plan as such. When he stopped the drinking we gave him a purpose and that was deep sea fishing, something that he really enjoyed. You see we are also fighting his gluttony and fighting on two fronts gets complicated sometimes.”

“So it seems. How do you manage to put it all together?”

“Each to our own each one takes a different aspect and judges accordingly. Now the next test was the boat itself and the type of things he would need to have and know to start this new life. He did no initial groundwork at all so laid no foundations once again.”

“Initial ground work?”

“How much money was he going to need, would he need a license, mooring fees, that kind of thing.”

“Half a job again,” Dave said with a smile.

“As emphasized by the exploding tyres,” Tuba said with a laugh, “Bad foundations. Anyway these were just minor tests, the big one was yet to come and that was painting the boat.”

“That’s right he only wanted to paint the hull and not the deck.”

“And got half a job of fibre glassing in return but it was a milestone test as well. He knew that he needed to paint it all. It would have been symbolic of a completely new life and no going back to the old one that was going to purify him of his gluttony as symbolized by the deck.”

“The deck, how would that equate?”

“That’s his foundation. What he stands on if you like, his Self. Where once it was pure it had been tainted by gluttony which had become his driving force so stained or yellowed it if you like.”

“Oh and the deck was actually yellowed. How deep does this actually go?”

“To the core, no if he’d have painted the deck it would have meant that he would have conquered

the drink problem for up until then he had been off it.”

“Oh right, and I think that he did start drinking around then.”

“He also started losing interest in the boat itself, the final straw being its poor finish. He had started to get a little understanding as well which did not help.”

“Sorry?”

“What sort of money was actually involved, reality hit home. Now gluttony back in control he still had sloth to deal with. He could have made the fibre glassed work look a lot better and also have you finish the inside better. This was basically his last chance of redemption for although he had started to drink he could have stopped. His failure to rectify this was the final test so then came the punishment.”

“The punishment?”

“We gave him another boat.”

“I don’t understand. That sounds more like a reward to me.”

“Instead of one lot of problems he now has two, twice as much stress. Keep an eye on the situation and you’ll see who is right. So that’s the grounding then. You are to judge him on those ten days he wasted.”

“Well I’m not sure. It seems to me like he is suffering enough.”

“Right answer, wrong reason though you have got it in your mind that he has wasted your time which is not the case.”

“It isn’t?”

“Not at all for when all is said and done you were doing something creative alright it was handicapped so you could not take it to its full potential but it was creative nevertheless.”

“I suppose I did like doing it.”

“Then it wasn’t wasted and as for judgment that’s not our place here really. We just react to actions there is no judgment involved.”

“So what about the punishment then?”

“It wasn’t a punishment really it was symbolic of another try. It only became a punishment by the fact he now had two half finished boats. He was actually supposed to have the first one done to a good standard so he could sell it to pay off the loan.”

“So he just got it to sell it again that does not sound right.”

“He was actually just destined to have the second boat it was only his impatience that got him the first one. He should have waited and found out what was actually involved and by then the second boat would have been ready. You see the man is his own worst enemy.”

“So it seems. No I think I will hold judgment from now on, I didn’t realize there was so much involved.”

“We’ve only gave you half the angles,” Tuba said with a laugh, “It’s too much for one that’s why there are six of us. No you were wise not to judge.”

“As a matter of interest and I know it’s none of my business really but what will happen eventually?”

“He’ll die,” Tuba said with a laugh, “No I don’t really know for sure. We’ll keep throwing him life lines and he’ll keep using them to hang himself I suppose. One day though he might see reason but until that day comes, well who am I to judge?”

“Oh right, now these tests are mainly for Self development aren’t they?”

“In his case but there are tests for spiritual expansion it’s just that we don’t get much chance to use them.”

“And what do these involve?”

“Mental tests mainly. Understanding symbols, spiritual wisdom, that kind of thing.”

“Oh right, and did you say that I had passed?”

“That’s right, you can now move onto the next stage, loving spiritual wisdom.”

“I’ve never heard of that, what is it?”

“A deeper understanding of the word, basically it’s light at its purest.”

“That sounds interesting, what does it actually involve then?”

“Not really our department I’m afraid, we’re just admin. No you want sails, second on your left.”

“Sales, does that mean I have to buy it?”

“No sails,” Tuba said with a laugh, “Think of boats and I hope that doesn’t bring back bad memories.”

“Sails, how does that equate?”

“Guides the purpose it’s a spiritual will in essence. Loving spiritual wisdom is what it’s actually made of.”

“Oh right,” Dave said and after saying his goodbyes both he and Gilda left the room.

“That was interesting,” Gilda said.

“Very enlightening I did not realize how much actually went into it.”

“Yes it’s surprising. It will make me think twice I can tell you.”

“Me too so what is loving spiritual wisdom then?”

“I don’t know, this is all new to me.”

“So what have you been doing here then?”

“Waiting for you.”

“All this time I did not realize.”

“It wasn’t that long. Just enough time to look around the place really. Anyway we’re here so we’ll soon find out.” They walked into a similar sized room but this only had one man in it an elderly man who introduced himself as Cuda before he said, “So you are here to get a deeper understanding of **the word** then?”

“That’s right, well if it’s alright with you.”

“**Spiritual wisdom through love seeing knowing transformation** and there you have it, a deeper understanding of the word.”

“Sorry?” Dave said more than a little confused.

“Every letter is a word and so the word becomes a phrase. For sake of simplicity we will call it the long hand version. Spiritual wisdom is TH, through is E, love is W, seeing O, knowing R and transformation D.”

“Oh, and what does this actually mean then?”

“You tell me.”

“Me, I wouldn’t have a clue.”

“What is spiritual wisdom for a start?”

“Wisdom understood I think.”

“Good, and what does wisdom do?”

“Help you mentally grow?”

“Sort of it actually transforms the will, we call this the knowing transformation and understanding is also called love so when you understand wisdom love sees knowing transformation and from this you get spiritual wisdom.”

“Amazing, and do all words have this power?”

“Oh yes,” Cuda said and handed him a piece of paper that read, “**To face your fears is the road to understanding-**

Wisdom

Seeing the word

- 1. God’s will through blessing (seeing loving knowing).**
- 2. The word through God’s knowing understood (blessed with understanding)**
- 3. Spiritual wisdom through knowing (seeing God’s transformation)**
- 4. Wisdom (seeing loving light transformation) through knowing.**

Understanding wisdom God’s light transformation blessed.”

Dave read it and said, “And all this comes from one sentence. So er what does it actually mean?”

"I'll do this one then," Cuda said with a laugh.

"Fair enough," Dave said with more than a hint of relief.

"You can do the other," Cuda said putting a dampener on it, "What it is basically saying is that through seeing the word or enlightenment you get God's will blessing yours, this is called loving knowing, God being love so it is actually knowledge of the divine. This is what gives you a loving will which is in essence what God's will actually is. Now you actually get enlightenment through understanding this knowledge which is called being blessed with understanding. You are enlightened to some extent by knowing it but understanding it gives you a deeper meaning and you derive more benefit from it. If light is knowledge then understanding would be the light's heat. The third point spiritual wisdom through knowing. Now I mentioned knowing transformation before."

"That's right, in the word."

"Well another name for this is God's transformation. Through this transformation you get to know things from a spiritual perspective of life and not only that you seem to know all things spiritual."

"Is this what they call an inner knowing?"

"An inner spiritual knowing the fourth point wisdom through knowing is actually the inner knowing. This is got through seeing loving light transformation which basically means that your Understanding has merged with your Will through transformation and this is what gives you that inner knowing."

"Right."

"So finally understanding wisdom God's transformation blessed not much to say on this one except that blessed means blessed with understanding. It's not really a point as such it is more of a foot note. So from enlightenment you get a loving will, a deeper understanding of life, a spiritual perspective on life and an inner knowing. So your turn now," and gave Dave a piece of paper that read, "**My tenderness how I miss your sweet caress.**

Life blesses wisdom through light transformation and knowing light (through understanding) spiritual understanding sees love. Blessed with life (blessed with understanding) blessed understanding sees loving knowing. Understanding (seeing the word) wisdom, will of God's (known through understanding) understanding."

Dave read it and much to his surprise he vaguely understood it, "I think that it's saying that through enlightenment wisdom comes to life and understanding this wisdom gives you spiritual understanding which I am guessing is wisdom's life."

"That's right it is only by understanding wisdom that it is injected with life."

"Right the second part is saying that by understanding wisdom the Will and Understanding merge and finally you end up with a will of God's understanding."

"Well it's a bit basic but it will do. The first one was the wisdom or what enlightenment actually gets you and the second was the understanding or how it works. That will be it for the time being as you are getting tired."

"What?" Dave said, "How did..." and fell asleep.

Dave got up at 8.30 knowing that John was coming at 9. Jane had already left for a car boot sale and Mary was at her father's so he had the house to himself. He made himself a cup of tea and just pondered on life in general really.

Nothing much came out of it only a poem called **16 Lines**. Do you want to hear it? Fair enough, you are going to anyway.

**"16 lines is not a lot, to express myself in just a jot,
Thoughts and feelings at a pace, so much baggage in a little case,
So many words in a little time and to make it worse it has to rhyme,
What a task to undertake, I hope it's not a big mistake,**

**Well here goes I'd better start, here it comes straight from the heart.
The world we know is full of hate; it seems so strong it won't abate,
Selfishness is all the rage and greed abounds at the highest wage.
We eat too much whilst others starve, come to wealth an unequal carve,**

**Power just deludes our leaders, come to love they're callous bleeders.
They take to it for personal gain caring not it causes pain,
Many die from their hate as they sit around and pontificate.
Calling God to make just their cause caring not that they break His laws,**

**Thinking that we're naïve and what they say we believe.
Arrogance clouds their purpose and come to it they have a surplus,
Thinking they're above it all, they're immune and will never fall
But I've got news, a nasty chime; just like this poem they're out of time."**

Dave was picked up around 9 and as they drove to John's house he said, "So a hard day ahead of us. Have you done any plastering before?"

"Afraid not. I've done a bit of mixing but that's it."

"Shame that. I hate it but it's got to be done I suppose."

"Do you think that we'll get it done today?"

"No chance. I don't even think that a proper plasterer could let alone me. No you need strong arms for this job I can tell you. When I plastered the landing it seemed to take forever as I had to keep stopping as my arms grew too tired."

"I don't like the sound of that," Dave said as they pulled up outside John's house.

"Well it's got to be done I suppose," John said and they both got out the car, "The electrician's coming around Wednesday so it should be wired up by next weekend."

"And the plastering?"

"I'll give it my best shot." They made their way up to the loft and Dave quickly made a mix. The plaster went on surprisingly easy so Dave was soon mixing another load. John stopped to admire his handiwork and said, "I must have got better then."

"And quicker," Dave said and they continued. By the end of the day they were both tired though they had made a good impression on the room by way of compensation.

"Well," John said as they drank their tea afterwards, "I should easily have it finished by next weekend hopefully by mid week so I can paint it at the weekend."

"Will you need a hand?"

"Well if you don't mind. You have done more than enough already so I'm a bit embarrassed at asking."

"Not at all, once it's painted that's it."

"Well I've got to fit the carpet and assemble some flat pack furniture but a good weekend will see the job finished."

"Sounds good to me."

"And just in time as well Christmas will soon be upon us."

"I bet you'll be glad to see it done."

"You don't know the half of it. It's been work, work, work for the last few weeks. No it's not a job that I would like to take on again I can tell you."

"So you've never thought of trying to make a living from it?"

"Well I did work for a company that converted lofts. Not for long but long enough to get a bit of a grounding in it. The money wasn't much good and it was a very messy job so we soon parted company if you see what I mean," and laughed.

John dropped Dave back and tiredness saw him go early to bed.

Dave woke up to a surprised Cuda, "I thought that you would be out for a lot longer than that."

“Guess I can’t keep away,” Dave said with a laugh.

“You must have liked school then. So how is your memory? What does enlightenment actually give you?”

Dave thought for a while before he said, “A loving will, a deeper understanding of life, a spiritual perspective on life and an inner knowing.”

“Good,” Cuda said and passed him a piece of paper, “I would like to go back for a while and dwell on that.”

“Well sure, be my guest.”

“Now the first thing it gave you was God’s will through blessing. Would you say that, that was the same as the will blessed with spirit sees light?”

“Well the will blessed with spirit would be God’s will I suppose and they were both done through a blessing so yes, why not. What does sees light mean though?”

“You were in the dark up until then,” Cuda said with a laugh, “No, when you are on the path of light you are the light for you are the one being enlightened.”

“Oh right. Well then yes I would say that they were the same thing only worded differently.”

“Right and would you say that the word through God’s knowing understood is the same as the word blessed with understanding sees light?”

“Yes, God’s knowing understood would be His understanding.”

“Good, and would you say that spiritual wisdom through knowing would be the same as the spirit blessed with transformation transforms through work and God’s purpose?”

“I’m not sure about that one.”

“What about the brackets, seeing God’s transformation. Does that make any difference?”

“Well yes, God’s transformation transforms you through work and His purpose so that would be the transformation that blesses the spirit though I’m lost after that.”

“Well what do you think that spirit will be and don’t forget that there are seven to choose from.”

“Oh right, I would say that it would be knowing then.”

“Good and spiritual wisdom is the transforming agent, this is what gives you the spiritual perspective and transforms you through God’s purpose.”

“Yes, I can see it now.”

“And finally wisdom (seeing loving light transformation) through knowing. Would you say that, that was the same as through love the spiritual word knows God’s wisdom through understanding?”

“Yes, the loving light transformation is done through the loving spiritual word. Knowing it in the deeper sense that is understanding it, is knowing God’s wisdom.”

“Good, so the phrases I’ve just given you as the comparisons, do you know what they are short hand?”

“I wouldn’t have a clue. This is all new to me.”

“The will blessed with spirit sees light is Gihon, the word blessed with understanding sees light is Pison. The spirit blessed with transformation transforms through work and God’s purpose is Hiddekel and finally through love the spiritual word knows God’s wisdom through understanding is Euphrates. The last two can actually be read as one when the E turns into through”

“Oh right,” Dave said not understanding.

“Do you know what they are?”

“Er no, well isn’t Euphrates a river?”

“They all are. Now all these phrases come about through transformation (through light) which is enlightenment’s nature and essence. Through transformation (through light) is Eden. Are you any the wiser?”

“Are they the rivers that come out of Eden?”

“Good, now you perceive that you have wasted ten days with Don’s boat.”

“Well I’m not so sure now. I mean I did enjoy it really I suppose.”

“Fair enough I was going to give you six of them back that was all.”

“Sorry?”

“The Six Days of Creation in Genesis. You have just had the first.”

“Really?”

“And God said let there be light and there was light. Enlightenment and what you get from it. Now would I be right in thinking that you do not know much about Genesis?”

“Well I don’t think that I have ever read it,” Dave admitted.

“This might prove a little difficult then. Have you access to this book?”

“I think there might be a Bible around the house.”

“I would read it when you get the chance you’d get a better idea of what I’m talking about.”

“Sure, next time that I go home.”

“Good, now these days are actually markers, chapter headings if you like. They lead to hidden information. The first day was enlightenment and what you get from it. This was hidden in Eden and the rivers that emerged from it. The message is hidden is their names.”

“Right.”

“Now the next day God divided the waters. The ones above from the ones below, this was done by putting a firmament between them.”

“A firmament?”

“An expanse of sky which he called heaven.”

“Does it exist then?”

“Spirit through God’s love and light. It’s actually talking about the evolution of Self and Spirit. God’s love is the Self and His light the Spirit. From these you get both your Will and Understanding or in other words consciousness. Now your Self lies below it and your Spirit above. Your Will evolves to spirit and your understanding of self evolves to Self and the second day explains how it’s done. The evolution of Will is hidden in the genealogy of Cain or will (God blessed with light) and the evolution of Understanding is done through the genealogy of Seth or understanding (through spiritual wisdom). We will do Cain first and see how you get on with it.”

“Sure, er is this difficult then?”

“Pretty hard going but not difficult there’s a lot of begetting about.”

“Sorry?”

“Through Cain’s wife he begat Enoch who begat Irad. Now he begat Mehujael who begat Methusael who begat Lamech. Basically what it’d saying is **will (God’s blessed with light) - through light seeing spiritual will you get a blessed knowing of God’s transformation. From this the will gets its life through spiritual love (blessed by God through God’s purpose) from which you get a life of spiritual wisdom and loving understanding of God (through God’s purpose) which gives you God’s purpose (God’s life through spiritual will).** Now this is quite legible but to make it easier you have to take out the supplements.”

“The supplements?”

“The bracketed pieces on the paper I gave you. Once done you get, will- through light seeing spiritual will you get a blessed knowing of God’s transformation. From this the will gets its life through spiritual love from which you get a life of spiritual wisdom and loving understanding of God which gives you God’s purpose.”

“Yes that’s a lot better.”

“Good. Now Lamech had two wives Adah who bore him Jabal and Jubal and Zillah who gave him Tubal-Cain and Naamah. So **God’s purpose married to God transformed to God’s spirit gives you two blessings, (blessed by God) self of God (God’s purpose) and a blessed loving self of God (God’s purpose). The first being its essence and the second its nature. Now God’s purpose married to a mind blessed with God’s purpose (spirit of God’s purpose) gives you a wisdom loving self of God, (God’s purpose), will of God (blessed with light) and the light of God, God’s life, God’s spirit.** So putting all that together gives you?”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Will- through light seeing spiritual will you get a blessed knowing

of God's transformation. From this the will gets its life through spiritual love from which you get a life of spiritual wisdom and loving understanding of God which gives you God's purpose. Now God's purpose married to God transformed to God's spirit gives you a self of God and a blessed loving self. God's purpose married to a mind blessed with God's purpose gives you a wisdom loving self of God and the light of God, God's life and God's spirit."

"So to put it in layman's terms Spiritual Will is a will of spiritual wisdom and by knowing, it transforms itself. This is done through spiritual love which is the Will's life. Now the spirit that transforms the Will and feeds its life with spiritual love is called the Holy Spirit. This is what gives you spiritual wisdom and an understanding of what God actually is and from this you get God's purpose which married to a Spiritual Self gives you a self of God and a loving self, in other words an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve. Now God's purpose married to a mind blessed with God's purpose gives you a wisdom loving self which is a Self that seeks knowledge instead of Earthly desire, the light of God or knowledge of the divine to feed the Self, a life of God which is a self less life and God's spirit, the Holy Spirit. And that basically is the evolution of Will through grace. Grace being the transformation of the Holy Spirit."

"Right, so there is a lot in this and all from a few names."

"Yes we've barely scratched the surface."

"Something to look forward to then you were right about it being hard going. Do we have to do that with all of them?"

"Oh no you won't be here for that long. Now the next section deals with the genealogy of Seth though it started at Adam and includes the ages. This was actually used to date the world up till fairly recently which meant that people thought the Earth was only a few thousand years old."

"Oh yes, I think that some people still actually think that. So what do they actually signify?"

"Nothing really, well only that we used to live a lot longer before the flood."

"That's right, the soil wasn't it?"

"Well that and many had achieved their purpose and so lived longer. So anyway we'll do this as we did with Cain and afterwards I promise that it will get easier."

"I hope so."

"Honest," Cuda said with a laugh, "So Adam begat Seth who begat Enos who begat Cainan who begat Mahalaleel who begat Jared who begat Enoch who begat Methuselah who begat Lamech who begat Noah who begat Shem, Ham and Japheth."

"Right, definitely a lot of begetting."

"And the long handed version. **God's transformation to God's life gives you understanding (through spiritual wisdom)- through light seeing understanding you get a will of God blessed with light(God's light) from which you get a life of God, the spirit of God, God's purpose, God (God's purpose) and through God's purpose you get blessed with God's knowing through transformation through light seeing spiritual will which gives you life through spiritual wisdom and loving understanding through God's purpose (God's spirit) which gives you God's purpose, God's life and spiritual will from which light sees God's spirit and this gives you spiritual understanding through life, the spirit of God's life and you are blessed with God's spiritual word through spiritual wisdom.** So take the brackets off."

Dave thought awhile and said, "God's transformation to God's life gives you understanding -through light seeing understanding you get a will of God blessed with light from which you get a life of God, the spirit of God, God's purpose, God and through God's purpose you get blessed with God's knowing through transformation through light seeing spiritual will which gives you life through spiritual wisdom and loving understanding through God's purpose which gives you God's purpose, God's life and spiritual will from which light sees God's spirit and this gives you spiritual understanding through life, the spirit of God's life and you are blessed with God's spiritual word through spiritual wisdom."

"Good, so putting it in layman's terms through understanding spiritual wisdom you get a will of

God from which you start to lead a selfless life, receive the Holy Spirit, find your purpose and basically become part of God because you have become God's will. Now through doing God's purpose you get to know God through the transformation of the Holy Spirit which is actually God's spiritual will from which you get spiritual wisdom and understanding of God from which you get God's purpose, a selfless life and God's spiritual will. From this you get to see God's spirit which is God's blessing and from this you get spiritual understanding, a spiritual life and are basically blessed by his word."

"Right, so day three?"

"Not quite, you see there is actually another level to it."

"What, seriously?"

"Yes, quite a complicated book that Genesis. Now as it is about the evolution of understanding it takes you through the levels."

"In the names?"

"That's right. It starts with God's transformation of Ad and then goes to level one with Am or God's life. From that it goes to level two with understanding with the supplement through spiritual wisdom and light as it has no real will of its own but follows natural laws which is spiritual wisdom and light or Sethen, the little understanding it got from wisdom. Now God's transformation is actually evolution and being a mind it evolves through understanding, the more it understands the more it grows in awareness until it gets strong enough to go to level three or seeing understanding, will of God (blessed with light). It develops a will of its own, now in short hand that Oscaim and with three comes four, you get the spirit of wisdom, God's light or An. Now level five is all about man's journey through life, his evolution from will to spirit. Mah or life of God's spirit. His evolution of Self to its God-head or A and his quest to find his purpose or L. with all this achieved he becomes God (God's purpose) Al or in other words an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve. Now through God's purpose Eel he is blessed with God's knowing and transformed through (Jarade). God's knowing being a mixture of God's wisdom and understanding it's talking about level six. Level seven, light seeing spiritual will (Noch) is when your old self dies and you meet your maker, your Spiritual Will, now reborn which joins the collective conscious from where you get life through spiritual wisdom and loving understanding through God's purpose and finally the spirit of knowing one of God's spirits."

"Methuselah."

"You're picking it up well. Now level nine is God's purpose which is actually God's life through spiritual will (Lamech) and with three to chose from your journey hasn't ended. Pick love and you get to ten or light sees God's spirit you being the light and God's spirit, loving spiritual wisdom."

"So this is God's spirit?"

"Yes that's right. This is the essence of your being."

"And how does that actually work then?"

"Knowledge is the mind's food. It grows through understanding it, the deeper the understanding the stronger the mind gets."

"No," Dave said with a laugh, "I mean how are the words God's spirit?"

"Oh, well if God is an enlightened soul his spirit must be the enlightenment, the more aware of it the stronger it gets. This is light at its purest and you have evolved enough to understand it. Your Soul though has always understood it for it was created from it. You see in your essence you are your purpose, enlightenment is actually a re-awakening."

"Oh right."

"Now I have left the offspring of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth. These are the grass, herbs and fruit mentioned in the third day. Basically their genealogies talk of the benefits that you get from each."

"More names?"

"Yes but not for you," Cuda said with a laugh, "I will just give you the long handed version."

“Well fair enough,” Dave said and got settled.

“Japheth, **blessed by God’s spiritual word (through spiritual wisdom)**. Now from this **your will sees life through knowing, you get a life of God’s will (seeing will), a life of God transformed by God’s blessing(blessed by God’s love), God’s light, a wisdom loving self (of God and God’s purpose), life and spiritual understanding through spiritual will and wisdom blessed with (knowing God’s) understanding.**

From the will seeing life through knowing you get God’s spiritual understanding, work and light (God’s mind) and knowing blesses the spiritual word(God’s spiritual wisdom) and you get wisdom seeing will of God knowing life of God’s spirit.

From being blessed by God’s love (God’s light) you get (through God’s purpose blessing spiritual understanding) God’s spirit, the wisdom of God knows spiritual understanding (blessed spiritual understanding). Work blesses wisdom; wisdom blesses life and transforms seeing the transformation of God’s light (blessing life). Your turn.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “From being blessed with God’s spiritual word your will sees life through knowing, you get a life of God’s will, a life of God transformed by God’s blessing, God’s light, a wisdom loving self, life and spiritual understanding through spiritual will and wisdom blessed with understanding.

From the will seeing life through knowing you get God’s spiritual understanding, work and light and knowing blesses the spiritual word. You get wisdom seeing will of God knowing life of God’s spirit.

From being blessed by God’s love you get God’s spirit and the wisdom of God knows spiritual understanding. Work blesses wisdom, wisdom blesses life and transforms seeing the transformation of God’s light.”

“Good,” Cuda said and before Dave’s eyes started to get a little younger, “I won’t simplify it anymore for you should have grown enough to understand it by now.”

“Is it me or have you just got younger?”

Cuda smiled and said, “It must be working then.”

“Sorry?”

“The more you grow in understanding the younger I become when you have finally understood I will look like you.”

“Really?”

“Yes, so that’s Japheth then. He is the fruit in day three as to be blessed by God’s spiritual word is the fruit of enlightenment. Next we have Ham; the grass for the spirit of God’s life is a spiritual life, the mind’s basic food.”

“Right.”

“So what do you actually get from a spiritual life then?”

“Well you tell me,” Dave said with a laugh.

“I was going to. **You get a will of loving spiritual understanding, a life blessed with the mind knowing God’s (blessed life) spiritual word (loving wisdom) and a will of God (light of God and God’s light).**

From a will of loving spiritual understanding you get understanding through a self of God and the spirit of God’s love blesses God’s purpose (God’s spirit), understanding God’s self (wisdom of God’s spirit) a knowing of God (God’s life) through God’s spirit and understanding God’s self, wisdom through spiritual will (God’s spirit) and light blesses a life of knowing seeing transformation.

From knowing God (God’s life) and God’s spirit you get spiritual understanding through self of God and transformed through the transformation of God’s light.

From a life blessed with the mind knowing God (blessed life) you get God’s purpose’s loving transformation blessing life, God’s light(God’s life blessing life), God’s purpose through the spirit of God’s self blessing life, light of God’s spiritual word of wisdom (loving spirit blessing

life), the word (God's spiritual wisdom) knowing loving understanding blessing life, a will of God understanding God's purpose (loving spirit blessing life) out of which the spiritual word blessed with God's purpose (Blessed understanding wisdom) blesses life and the will of God's spiritual word (wisdom seeing knowing) blesses life.

From a will of God (light of God, God's light) you get understanding (blessed with transformation seeing light), and you get the spirit through spiritual wisdom quite a long passage but see what you can make of it."

Dave thought a while and said, "From the spirit of God's life you get a will of loving spiritual understanding, a life blessed with the mind knowing God's blessed life, the spiritual word and a will of God.

From a will of loving spiritual understanding you get understanding though a self of God and the spirit of God's love blesses God's purpose, understanding God's self a knowing of God through God's spirit and understanding God's self, wisdom through spiritual will and light blesses a life of knowing.

From a life blessed with the mind knowing God you get God's purpose's loving transformation blessing life, God's light, God's purpose through the spirit of God's self blessing life, light of God's spiritual word of wisdom, the word knowing loving understanding blessing life and you get a will of God understanding God's purpose out of which the spiritual word blessed with God's purpose blesses life and the will of God's word blesses life.

From a will of God you get understanding and the spirit through spiritual wisdom."

"Good, not bad at all in fact. Now finally we have Shem or spiritual understanding through life, the herbs or what gives your life its taste. Now the genealogy of Shem is actually repeated twice, each one slightly different. We will do the first to finish of the third day."

"Sure, and the second?"

"We will cover that in day four. Anyway **from spiritual understanding through life you get through God's purpose, God's life, God's understanding (spiritual understanding), loving knowing and God knowing the spiritual word, God's insight (God's transformation), you also get God's purpose's loving transformation and God knowing God's life.**

From God knowing God's life you get a loving mind, a spiritual loving purpose, will through spiritual wisdom (through knowing) and a life of spiritual understanding.

From God knowing the spiritual word, God's insight (God's transformation) you get to understand God, God's purpose (God's spirit) from which you get a self through knowing.

From a self through knowing you get the word through God's purpose and will and blessed seeing works of wisdom (God's light).

From being blessed seeing works of wisdom (God's light) you get God's (God's purpose) life seeing transformation (God's transformation), you get spiritual understanding through God's purpose through the spiritual word, you get the spirit of God's mind (God's knowing life), God's love through spiritual wisdom and blessed through knowing God's spirit, you get the spirit of God's transformation (seeing knowing), God's life and a loving mind of God (God's purpose). Transformation blesses work of God's purpose (God's spirit) and seeing self of God (God's purpose) God self blesses life, (God through God's purpose) and spiritual understanding through a self of God seeing the spiritual word (blessed with knowing) the spirit of God's love blesses God's purpose (God's spirit) and blessed seeing self (God's self). Quite a mine-field there but see how you get on with it."

Dave thought awhile and said, "From spiritual understanding through life you get through God's purpose, God's life, God's understanding, loving knowing and God knowing the spiritual word God's insight, you also get God's purpose's loving transformation and God knowing God's life. From God knowing God's life you get a loving mind, a spiritual loving purpose, will through spiritual wisdom and a life of spiritual understanding.

From God knowing the spiritual word, God's insight, you get to understand God, God's purpose

from which you get a self through knowing.

From a self through knowing you get the word through God's purpose and will and blessed seeing works of wisdom.

From being blessed seeing works of wisdom you get God's life seeing transformation. You get spiritual understanding through God's purpose through the spiritual word, you get the spirit of God's mind, God's love through spiritual wisdom and blessed through knowing God's spirit you get the spirit of God's transformation, God's life and a loving mind of God, transformation blesses work of God's purpose and seeing self of God, God's self blesses life and spiritual understanding through a self of God, seeing the spiritual word God's love blesses God's purpose and you are blessed seeing self."

"Good, any questions?"

"That was quite a passage there must have been some very long names in it."

"Some of the sentences overlap the names. I will just have a quick glance over it and see if there is anything that needs elaboration."

"Sure, will this take long?"

"Not long. You must be getting tired now so I'll make it as quick as I can."

"Thanks."

"Will see life through knowing?"

"That's when you seem to know all things spiritual."

"Good," Cuda said and carried on. Eventually he said, "God's light and the light of God?"

"Light of God is knowledge of the divine and God's light is divine knowledge."

"And the difference?"

"The first is God's nature and the second is His essence."

"Good, though it might be a good idea not to personalize God."

"Sorry?"

"It is not a him or a her it stands for will seeing transformation that would make it an it."

"Oh, sorry but it just seems to slip out. I guess it must be my upbringing."

"I understand. I've probably said it myself a few times," and got younger once again. Where once he was grey now flecks of black hair started to make their appearance and the once wizened face lost some of its lines.

"You've done it again. Got younger I mean."

"As you grow in understanding," Cuda said and carried on, "God, God's purpose?"

"I was a little confused about that."

"That's an enlightened self. It's both God, its essence and God's purpose, its nature."

"Oh right, like an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve you mean."

"Yes that's right. You have covered the first three days now. That is only the first ten chapters so there is still quite a bit to go."

"How many chapters are there?"

"Fifty so quite a bit to go."

"I think that I had better read Genesis it sounds like I need to."

"It will make things easier for you. Anyway I will see you when you get back," and Dave fell to sleep.

Chapter 5.

The following week saw Dave take to Genesis with gusto much to Jane's surprise as she thought he was turning religious. He found it hard going if the truth be known but he did grow in understanding of it a little so it was not wasted.

Saturday morning saw John picking him up and as they drove to John's house Dave said, "So how did you get on with the plastering?"

"Finished Thursday I couldn't do much on Wednesday as the electrician was there."

“Oh and is he done now?”

“Yes it looks pretty good as well. I skirted it out and put the architraves on Friday so there’s just the door to fit.”

“Right, well I could do the cutting in whilst you do that.”

“Sound, I’m going to try and get two coats on today if I can.”

“Should do. Have you got a roller?”

“Two.”

“Then it should be pretty easy.”

“Well I’m hoping we might get time to paint the skirting boards as well. They came ready painted but they will need a top coat of gloss.”

“We’ll see,” Dave said as they pulled up outside John’s house. John got straight to work on the door which only really wanted hanging as it was already fitted and Dave started cutting in. There was not really much cutting in to so by the time John had finished they were ready to roll. With both of them doing it the first coat was done by dinner so they stopped for a cup of tea.

“Not bad going,” John said. “And the second coat should take less time.”

“How long will it take to dry?”

“Most of it’s probably dry already I reckon we could go straight in and do the parts we did first, by the time that’s done the rest should be dry.”

“Will I need to cut it in again?”

“No we will probably be alright. Just roll up as close as we can.”

“Well I won’t argue with that,” Dave said and finished his tea. They got back to work and soon the second coat was on and the room looked a lot better.

“Not bad,” John said, “And we still have plenty of time. I’ll get the gloss out,” and soon all the woodwork was glossed. They finished early evening so Dave was dropped off a lot earlier than usual much to Jane’s surprise, “Have you finished already?”

“The painting. Not a lot more we can do until it dries.”

“That’s done then isn’t it, isn’t the painting generally the last job?”

“The rooms finished. I said I would give John a hand to make some flat pack furniture and fit the carpet tomorrow though. After that we’re finished.”

“So what next then?”

“I don’t know. Anything you want doing around the house?”

“Not really.”

“Well I’ll find something to do, you know me.” The conversation continued until they went to bed at 10.30.

Dave woke up to an even younger Cuda who said, “Quick recap then. Day one is enlightenment and what it gives you. Day two is the evolution of Will and Self and day three the benefits of reaching level ten and what they give you. So day two finishes on Noah and day three starts with Noah and his children. So what do you get from being blessed seeing God’s spirit?”

“Spiritual understanding of life, a spiritual life and being blessed with God’s spiritual word.”

“Good, now the first two you do have to a certain degree before level ten, your understanding comes to fruition at level ten that’s all.”

“Oh right, and you said that Shem was repeated on day four?”

“That’s right, well a slightly different version.”

“How would that tally with day four, it was just talking about the stars and moon I think?”

“So you did manage to read it, good this should be a lot easier then.”

“I’m not sure about that I’ve seen how many names there actually are.”

“Quite a lot to go at so the stars and the moon then, what do they produce?”

“Er light?”

“It’s talking about enlightenment and what actually is enlightenment but spiritual understanding. Now you have got to level ten you can’t climb higher but you can go deeper.”

“Sorry?”

“Imagine a ball of light four steps wide. You are ten steps away from it. These ten steps are the first ten levels of understanding, step eleven takes you deeper into the light and twelve to the core.”

“Right.”

“It’s actually a cleansing process, the light is healing. Anyway day four is basically an expansion of day one symbolized by the fact that it is an expansion of part of the third day.”

“I see and this has ages as well.”

“That’s right and did you notice that they died a lot younger than before the flood?”

“Er not really,” Dave said sheepishly.

“Never mind,” Cuda said with a laugh, “So day four is the genealogy from Seth to Abram, the benefits of enlightenment only this time expanded a little more.”

“And this is level eleven then?”

“No you are still on ten we have hardly started yet.”

“Oh.”

“So the same as before then I will read it out long hand and you take out the supplements.”

“Fair enough,” Dave said not really looking forward to it.

“From spiritual understanding through life you get God’s knowing, the spiritual word, God’s insight and God’s transformation, notice any difference?”

“Yes you said it differently to before. It was God knowing the spiritual word, God’s insight (God’s transformation).

“That’s right. Through knowing the spiritual word the Self gets insight through transformation by the Holy Spirit on day four though you have to read it differently.”

“This is complicated.”

“Patience is its own reward,” Cuda said by way of comfort, “So as I said before spiritual understanding is enlightenment or Eden. God’s knowing is the will blessed with spirit seeing light, the spirit being the spirit of knowing or Gihon.”

“Really,” Dave said for it had caught his attention.

“Yes, through love the spiritual word knows God’s wisdom through understanding or Euphrates, God’s insight is the word blessed with understanding seeing light, the word being wisdom and the spiritual word wisdom with the understanding or Pison and finally God’s transformation or the spirit blessed with transformation transforms through work and God’s purpose or Hiddekel.”

“Amazing.”

“Now from all that you get to understand God (God’s purpose), God’s spirit. God (God’s purpose) is the Self and God’s spirit is the Will. We will actually start from there. **So from understanding God’s self and spirit you get a self through knowing which gives you the word and God’s purpose (through will) which in turn gives you knowing through love. Now this gives you understanding (through knowing loving will) from which the light of God’s spirit sees knowing from which you get wisdom through knowing God’s spirit. Now from this God’s self knows God’s life, the light of God’s spirit sees knowing and the spirit of God knows God’s life. Your turn.**”

“Well there’s not really a lot I can do with it, it’s pretty legible. I would say that there were only a couple of brackets there.”

“Some are easier than others. Well instead to test your understanding why don’t you put it in layman’s terms.”

“Sure. From understanding God and God’s spirit you get a Self that knows things in the spiritual sense. From this knowing you get the word and a selfless life which gives you a loving purpose as opposed to anger or pride from which you get your understanding. Now from this understanding you receive the Holy Spirit from which you get wisdom. From this wisdom your evolved Self knows life, you know spiritual wisdom which is the light of God’s life and you lead a more spiritual life.”

“Good, that’s about it for day four except to say that Abram is Shem, Nahor is Japheth and Haran is Ham making Terah Noah.”

“Right, so it’s just repeating itself really.”

“Expanding so onto day five then, the creatures of the air and the creature of the sea, any ideas?”

“Me, no I wouldn’t know where to start.”

“It’s easy, elemental in fact.”

“The elements?”

“Air and Water, Spirit and Self, Air being your Will and Water your Self. Well it’s actually Fire and Water.”

“I thought that Water was your Will?”

“Oh it is but not your Spiritual Will. Your Self is actually both your Will and Understanding that’s why when it’s evolved it becomes God (God’s purpose).”

“Oh right.”

“So day five is actually an expansion of day two the evolution of Will which is the genealogy from Nahor to Rebekah and the evolution of Self which is the sons of Abraham and Keturah. You’ll find them in chapters 22 and 25.”

“Right, halfway there then.”

“Yes we’re getting close though the final day is a right one.”

“Something to look forward to but as it’s the last day it won’t be such an ordeal.”

“Good, we will do them one at a time like we did with Cain and Seth. That should make it a little easier.”

“Sounds good to me.”

“Good, so the light of God’s spirit seeing knowing married to a life blessed with God’s purpose (will of God’s spirit) gives you a spiritual loving mind, a self loving mind, work and life of love through God’s purpose (which gives you God knowing God’s life), a spiritual will through understanding (through transformation) and the spirit of God’s mind seeing the word blessed with God’s purpose transformed to God’s spiritual understanding and blessed with the blessed transformation to God’s purpose, (God’s spiritual word) and a self through spiritual wisdom(love through God’s purpose).

The light of God’s spirit seeing knowing married to knowing through loving life of God’s spirit gives you wisdom through self of God’s spirit(God’s life), spiritual wisdom(God’s spirit), God’s spiritual understanding and a life of God, God’s spiritual will(God’s spirit). The last section was the offspring of Nahor and his concubine, the first the offspring of Nahor and his wife Milcah. Rebekah was their granddaughter, the daughter of Bethuel so from a self through spiritual wisdom (love through God’s purpose) you get knowing through self and work of God’s spirit. I interrupted it just to break your concentration and moved it around to make it more difficult.”

“Thanks, any reason?”

“Boredom I guess,” Cuda said with a laugh, “No, just testing your memory.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “The light of God’s spirit seeing knowing married to a life blessed with God’s purpose gives you a spiritual loving mind, a self loving mind, work and life of love through God’s purpose (which gives you God knowing God’s life), a spiritual will through understanding, the spirit of God’s mind seeing the word blessed with God’s purpose transformed to God’s spiritual understanding and blessed with the blessed transformation to God’s purpose and a self through spiritual wisdom.

From a self through spiritual wisdom you get knowing through self and work of God’s spirit. The light of God’s spirit seeing knowing married to knowing through loving life of God’s spirit gives you wisdom through self of God’s spirit, will of God’s spirit, spiritual wisdom, God’s spiritual understanding, a life of God and God’s spiritual will.”

“Good, excellent in fact,” and with that got a little younger, “Any questions?”

“Not really, well only one.”

“Go on.”

“The light of God’s spirit seeing knowing I can’t really see how it equates with the will in Cain, well unless the Holy Spirit is actually your Spiritual Will.”

“Well there’s your answer and Abraham in the next section is God’s self knows God’s spirit (God’s life). God’s self being understanding through spiritual wisdom or Seth.”

“Right, yes it makes sense.”

“Good, so back to Abraham then. **God’s self knows God’s spirit (God’s life) married to work and loving wisdom (knowing God’s spirit) gives you a mind blessed with knowing God’s light, blessed seeing work spiritual understanding of God’s light (life through transformation to God’s light), life blessed with transformation (blessed by God’s light), blessed with spiritual understanding, self of God’s work and spiritual understanding of God’s spirit.**

From blessed seeing work (Spiritual understanding of God’s light) you get spiritual understanding through self of God transformed through transformation to God’s light from which you get God’s understanding (spiritual understanding), loving knowing blesses life through God’s purpose, through wisdom, loving spiritual understanding blesses life and God’s purpose through loving life (life blesses life).

From life blessed with transformation (blessed by God’s light) you get through the spiritual word, God’s spirit and the spiritual word through knowing (spirit of God’s light seeing spiritual will), God’s self blessed with transformation to God’s spirit and through God’s purpose transformed to God, God’s spirit. See how you get on with that.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “God’s self knows God’s spirit married to work and loving wisdom gives you a mind blessed with knowing God’s light, blessed seeing work spiritual understanding of God’s light, life blessed with transformation, blessed with spiritual understanding, self of God’s work and spiritual understanding of God’s spirit.

From blessed seeing work you get spiritual understanding through self of God transformed through transformation to God’s light from which you get God’s understanding, loving knowing blesses life through God’s purpose through loving life.

From life blessed with transformation you get through the spiritual word, God’s spirit and the spiritual word through knowing, God’s self blessed with transformation to God’s spirit and through God’s purpose transformed to God, God’s spirit.”

“Very good, any questions?”

“Not really.”

“Then that’s day five covered. Now day six sees the advent of Man. Not straight away though for he has to climb the levels of understanding as symbolized by his 12 sons.”

“Jacob?”

“Initially,” Cuda said with a laugh, “It stands for blessed by God’s will seeing self, the stronger the will the higher the level. No, Man only came to be with Israel or blessed understanding (knowing God through God’s purpose) and part three tells of the blessings it brings.”

“And part two is the levels of understanding?”

“Yes but as it is an expansion of day three it also holds a message.”

“Oh right, and part one?”

“The generations of Ishmael, blessed with spiritual understanding life of God through God’s purpose or spiritual understanding through life.”

“Shem, I thought that Japheth was first.”

“No I only read it out first. It’s actually Shem Ham and Japheth.”

“Oh, so how does it actually equate with day six then?”

“I’m glad you asked me that. Spiritual understanding, what is it in essence?”

“Love?”

“No, it’s the mind’s life. And God said let the Earth bring forth the living creature.”

“Oh right, and Ham?”

“Spirit of God’s life, now this spirit comes over in 12 strengths.”

“The levels of understanding.”

“That’s right, and God said let us make Man in our own image.”

“Right, that just leaves Japheth.”

“Blessed by God’s spiritual word, and God blessed them. Now when Man got dominion over the animals it meant that he had received all the spiritual gifts mentioned in the hidden passages and recorded once again in Jacob’s grand children.”

“Amazing.”

“I’m glad you liked it, we’ll start with the generations of Ishmael then.”

“Fair enough.”

“So blessed with spiritual understanding(life of God through God’s purpose) you get light through self of God(blessed seeing spiritual wisdom), work and transformation to God’s (knowing God transformation) self through God’s purpose and life blesses self understanding God’s life(life blessed with spiritual understanding), life of God transformed to loving life of God’s spirit(life of God’s understanding), understanding God spirit of God transforms to God’s knowing wisdom through life of God(blessed through wisdom, loving knowing), light of God’s spiritual word blessed with spiritual understanding and work through transformation through (life of) God’s spirit. See what you can do with all that.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Blessed with spiritual understanding you get light through self of God, work and transformation to God’s self through God’s purpose and life blesses self understanding God’s life, life of God transformed to loving life of God’s spirit, understanding God spirit of God transforms to God’s knowing wisdom through life of God, light of God’s spiritual word blessed with spiritual understanding and work through transformation to God’s spirit.”

“Good, any questions?”

“No it seemed pretty straight forward.”

“Good, we’ll go straight onto the sons of Jacob then.”

“Fair enough, not long to go then.”

“There will be a few small things after we have done the genealogies but nothing too taxing.”

“Right, after you.”

“Thank you. **So blessed with God’s will seeing self married to God’s purpose through God’s spirit gives you knowing through loving self(through light), understanding blesses life through seeing light, God’s purpose through love(blessed), blessed with loving transformation to God’s spirit, blessed with understanding(understanding God’s spiritual will)God’s knowing, mind through self of love, God’s purpose (blessed with life).**

From being blessed with God’s will seeing self and knowing God’s spiritual will through God’s purpose you get blessed seeing understanding through the spiritual word and a self(through light) blessed by God’s life (blessed light).

Being blessed with God’s will seeing self and a self blessed with God’s purpose(spirit of God’s spirit) gives you the transformation of God’s light and the light of God’s spiritual word and wisdom of God(God’s purpose) blessed.

Being blessed with God’s will seeing self and a mind blessed with God’s purpose(the word of God’s spirit) gives you a will of God’s transformation and God’s spiritual understanding(through knowing). Over to you.”

Dave thought awhile and said, “Being blessed with God’s will seeing self married to God’s purpose through God’s spirit gives you knowing through loving self, understanding blesses life through seeing light, God’s purpose through love, blessed with loving transformation to God’s spirit, blessed with understanding God’s knowing, mind and self of love, God’s purpose.

From being blessed with God’s will seeing self and knowing God’s spiritual will through God’s purpose you get blessed seeing understanding through the spiritual word and a self blessed by

God's life.

Being blessed with God's will seeing self and a self blessed with God's purpose gives you the transformation of God's light and the light of God's spiritual word and wisdom of God (God's purpose) blessed..

Being blessed with God's will seeing self and a mind blessed with God's purpose gives you a will of God's transformation and God's spiritual understanding."

"Very good, as I said earlier they are also the levels of understanding but we won't go into it now as time forbids it."

"Straight on then."

"Quite a lot to go at I'm afraid. We will start at Chapter 46 verse 9."

"Right."

"So from knowing through loving self(through light) you get the spirit of God's light seeing spiritual will, the spiritual word of God's(God's purpose)(God's purpose- love)spirit though a mind of knowing(seeing light)and a will of God knowing life is blessed.

From understanding blessing life through seeing light you get blessed with God's life (love through God's purpose), blessed with God's life(blessed with light) seeing spirit of God's transformation and blessed with God's spiritual will(blessed with light) the mind sees spirit of God's knowing and spiritual understanding of God's love(God's purpose).

From God's purpose through love (blessed) you get a will through knowing spiritual understanding (seeing light), work seeing spirit of God's spiritual wisdom and life through knowing (God's knowing blessed).

From being blessed with loving transformation to God's spirit you get through knowing seeing light, God's light, spiritual understanding through God's purpose (God's spirit) and the spiritual word of God's knowing through mind.

From being blessed with understanding(understanding God's spiritual will)God's knowing you get the wisdom of God (God's purpose), God's spiritual word of love (loving God's spirit), a blessed seeing of self and spiritual understanding blesses life of knowing(seeing light).

From a mind through self of love, God's purpose blesses life you get understanding through knowing (through transformation) through God's purpose seeing light (blessed by God's spirit) and through God's purpose.

From a will of God transformed you get a mind blessed with the spiritual word(blessed seeing light), the spirit of God's will,(will blessed spiritual understanding) loving light blessed through mind (self seeing light) and through knowing blessed with God's knowing(seeing transformation blessed) and God's knowing through God's purpose blessed.

From God's spiritual understanding(through knowing)you get blessed with a blessed life(light of God's spirit) and blessed with spiritual understanding(loving God's spirit), blessed with understanding love(blessed)self through knowing(blessed by God's spirit)and understanding through knowing God's spirit.

From a self through knowing (blessed by God's spirit) you get a spirit and self through knowing and a life of God, God's purpose (spiritual will blessed through God's purpose).

From being blessed seeing understanding through the spiritual word you get a life of God's light, God's understanding(understanding through spirit)and through the spiritual word know God's blessed life.

From a self through light blessed by God's life (blessed light) you get a self through God's purpose(God's spirit), a self through spiritual will through knowing, God's spiritual understanding(self through God's purpose), will through knowing God, light of God, God's life(God's light) and through the spirit blessed with knowing (seeing spiritual understanding) the living loving word(the word blesses light), spiritual loving word(the word blesses light) and God's knowing transformation.

From the transformation of God's light you get the spirit of love (spiritual understanding

bleses life).

From the light of God's spiritual word(wisdom of God, God's purpose) blessed you get blessed with the spirit of God's mind and through God's purpose a will of loving light blessed (blessed through the mind through knowing) and spiritual understanding blesses God's purpose (God's purpose through life). Quite a list but see what you can make of it."

Dave thought awhile and said, " From knowing through loving self you get the spirit of God's light seeing spiritual will, the spiritual word of God's(God's purpose) spirit though a mind of knowing and a will of God knowing life is blessed.

From understanding blessing life through seeing light you get blessed with God's life, blessed with God's life seeing spirit of God's transformation and blessed with God's spiritual will the mind sees spirit of God's knowing and spiritual understanding of God's love.

From God's purpose through love you get a will through knowing spiritual understanding, work seeing spirit of God's spiritual wisdom and life through knowing.

From being blessed with loving transformation to God's spirit you get through knowing seeing light, God's light, spiritual understanding through God's purpose and the spiritual word of God's knowing through mind.

From being blessed with understanding God's knowing you get the wisdom of God (God's purpose), God's spiritual word of love, a blessed seeing of self and spiritual understanding blesses life of knowing.

From a mind through self of love, God's purpose blesses life you get understanding through knowing through God's purpose seeing light and through God's purpose.

From a will of God transformed you get a mind blessed with the spiritual word, the spirit of God's will, loving light blessed through mind and through knowing blessed with God's knowing and God's knowing through God's purpose blessed.

From God's spiritual understanding you get blessed with a blessed life and blessed with spiritual understanding, blessed with understanding love self through knowing and understanding through knowing God's spirit.

From a self through knowing you get a spirit and self through knowing and a life of God, God's purpose.

From being blessed seeing understanding through the spiritual word you get a life of God's light, God's understanding and through the spiritual word know God's blessed life.

From a self through light blessed by God's life you get a self through God's purpose, a self through spiritual will through knowing, God's spiritual understanding, will through knowing God, light of God, God's life and through the spirit blessed with knowing the living loving word, spiritual loving work and God's knowing transformation.

From the transformation of God's light you get the spirit of love.

From the light of God's spiritual word blessed you get blessed with the spirit of God's mind and through God's purpose a will of loving light blessed and spiritual understanding blesses God's purpose."

"Very good," Cuda said and got a lot younger. Not a grey hair adorned his head and though his face still showed the ravages of time it was nowhere near as pronounced as it was before, "So that is the Six Days of Creation but after all that I guess you must be tired," and with that Dave fell asleep. Dave awoke feeling almost elated. It was his last day and he was anxious to see it done just to see what it was going to look like. John picked him up at 9.30 and he was in the same mind.

"I swept it all out late last night. We can go straight in with the carpet."

"Good, and is there much furniture to make?"

"A bed, two chest of drawers and two bedside cabinets we also have to move the television and two sofas up so it should be quite an interesting day." They pulled up outside John's house and had a quick cup of tea before moving the carpet up to the loft. After a couple of hours it was fitted and the off-cuts were saved to use on the stair treads. Next they moved the television which proved to be

quite a job as it was very heavy and then the sofas which although lighter proved more awkward. After that they brought up the boxes that the flat pack furniture were in and then had a cup of tea.

“Not long now,” Dave said, “It’s starting to look quite a home from home.”

“Yes put a sink and shower in there and it could be self contained.”

“Are you good at making flat pack furniture?”

“Yes it’s pretty straight forward. I don’t know how people manage to mess it up.”

“Lack of practical ability I suppose. Do you think that’s why they developed taste?”

“Sorry?”

“To compensate for their lack of practical ability.”

“Oh, I never really gave it much thought but from personal experience I would say that you are probably right. Most of the people I know who go on about taste seem lacking in practicality.”

“It wasn’t a big thing it was just something I noticed myself.”

“There might be a job in the New Year if you are interested.”

“Really, doing what?”

“A refurbishment at a brewery it’s with the same company that you’ve worked with before and it’s only down the road. I only heard about it on Friday. I should have told you yesterday but to tell you the truth I forgot.”

“Well I wasn’t really looking for work at the moment but if it’s local. How long do you think it will be for?”

“About 10 weeks they reckon the jobs been going since October.”

“Yes, why not then.”

John gave him a phone number and said, “His names Brendan, give him a bell tomorrow at 11, that will give me enough time to see him and smooth the way.”

“Will do,” Dave said and put the number away, “So I suppose we had better crack on then.”

The furniture did not take that long to make and the cardboard it came with was folded up and took downstairs. By late afternoon it was all finished and Dave was back home with Jane.

“So you may be starting work soon,” she said after he had told her.

“It won’t be to the New Year. It’s a shame really as I was thinking of writing a book.”

“Really, you kept that quiet.”

“Well it wasn’t a major thought more of a fancy. I guess I won’t have time now.”

“You said that the job was only for 10 weeks, why not do it after?”

“Yes, and the job won’t be for a couple more weeks so I could make a start and see how I get on. If it’s no good I’ll just bin it and no one would be any the wiser.”

“Well there is that I suppose,” Jane said with a laugh, “So what’s it going to be about then?”

“I’ve not really decided yet. I’m still on the earliest stage.”

“Oh, it sounds like you have a long way to travel then.”

“True,” Dave said with a laugh, “But there’s plenty of time yet. No it’s just that the idea appeals to me.”

“Well you have been writing poetry it’s the next logical step. What about a book of poetry?”

“I’ll give it some thought,” Dave said and the conversation ended. They went to bed at 10.30 and Dave fell quickly to sleep.

Dave woke to a youthful Cuda, “So that’s the Six Days of Creation. That’s Genesis on one level, the genealogies. It also works through the names on another level which we will go into now.”

“Oh,”

“Don’t worry,” Cuda said with a laugh, “There’s nothing for you to do really, only listen.”

“Well fair enough then,” Dave said and got settled.

“We will take a look at Esau and his three wives first. First there was Adah the daughter of Elon, then Aholibamah the daughter of Anah who in turn was the daughter of Zibeon and finally Bashemath the daughter of Ishmael and the sister of Nebajoth.”

“Right, a bit of a lad was he?”

“You could say that,” Cuda said with a laugh, “Or you could say that **through God’s purpose seeing light you get God’s transformation to God’s spirit and you could also say that from a mind blessing self through seeing light you get God’s light(God’s spirit) which in turn gives you God’s spirit seeing God’s purpose blessing a self of God(life of God’s spirit) Finally you could also say that from being blessed with spiritual understanding(life of God through God’s purpose) you get light through a self of God blessed seeing spiritual wisdom and a self of God’s spiritual understanding through life seeing spiritual wisdom.**”

“Well that sounds better,” Dave said with a laugh, “And were there any children?”

“Yes Esau and Adah had Eliphaz who went on to have Teman, Omar, Zepho and Galam and Kenaz and with his concubine Timna he had Amalek. In long hand **through understanding God’s love and God’s transformation to God’s spirit you get through God’s purpose blessing the spiritual word a mind of God which gives you wisdom through life of God’s light, seeing a life of God, a knowing mind through the spiritual word seen, a will of God’s wisdom (God’s life) and work through light of God’s mind.**

From through God’s purpose blessing the spiritual word (a mind of God) merged with wisdom blessing life (light of God) you get God and a life of God (God’s purpose through work).”

“Right, seems quite straight forward.”

“Good, so Esau married Bashemath and had Reuel who went onto have Nahath and Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. In other words **through understanding God’s love married to a self of God’s spiritual understanding through life of God’s spiritual wisdom you get knowing and love through God’s purpose which gives you the light of God’s spirit (God’s spiritual wisdom) and a mind through knowing God’s spirit, spiritual understanding of God’s life (life of God’s spirit) and life blesses mind (mind of God’s spirit) with me so far?”**

“Yes.”

“Right so Esau married Aholibamah and they Jeush, Jaalam and Korah or **through understanding God’s love and God’s spirit seeing God’s purpose blessing a self of God(Life of God’s spirit) you get a blessing through loving spiritual understanding(blessed by God), God, God’s purpose(God’s life) and work seen knowing God’s spirit.** And putting all that lot together?”

“Me, I thought it was my day off.”

“Well you are owed another four days on the boat I suppose,” Cuda said with a laugh, “I’ll give you this one and we’ll call it a day off.”

“Yes fair enough.”

“Right then through God’s purpose seeing light you get God’s transformation to God’s spirit. From a mind blessing self through seeing light you get God’s light which gives you God’s spirit seeing God’s purpose blessing a self of God.

From being blessed with spiritual understanding you get light through a self of God blessed seeing spiritual wisdom and a self of God’s spiritual understanding through life seeing spiritual wisdom.

Through understanding God’s love and God’s transformation to God’s spirit you get through God’s purpose blessing the spiritual word, a mind of God which gives you wisdom through life of God’s light and seeing a life of God a knowing mind through the spiritual word seen, a will of God’s wisdom and work through the light of God’s mind.

Through God’s purpose blessing the spiritual word and wisdom blessing life you get God and a life of God.

Through understanding God’s love and a self of God’s spiritual understanding through a life of God’s spiritual wisdom you get knowing and love through God’s purpose which gives you the light of God’s spirit, a mind through knowing God’s spirit, spiritual understanding of God’s life and life blesses the mind.

Through understanding God’s love and God’s spirit seeing God’s purpose blessing a self of God you get blessed through loving spiritual understanding, God, God’s purpose and work seen knowing

God's spirit."

"Very good," Dave said with a laugh, "Excellent in fact."

"Really, so what's the next lesson then?"

"Ah I'll er leave that to you."

"Fair enough," Cuda said with a laugh, "Now that's quite a major passage but there are smaller ones as well. Take Adam and Eve as an example they had Cain, Abel and Seth so from God transformed to God's life and love through you get a will of God blessed with light, God's self through God's purpose and understanding through spiritual wisdom. We'll come back to that one later as I'm only finding examples at the moment."

"Sure, fair enough."

"Another example would be Isaac and Rebekah, these had twins called Jacob and Esau so from blessed understanding of God, God's will and knowing through self and work of God's spirit you get blessed with God's will seeing self through understanding God's love. So you see you have quite a lot to go at."

"So it seems."

"Now before you can do it you have to know the alphabet, the symbols and the understanding of the symbols."

"That sounds like quite a long job."

"It should take you about a day I should say," Cuda said with a laugh, "Are you prepared to lose another?"

"Sorry?"

"I would say that it would take about a day to awaken it so if you are prepared to lose a day I could do it in a flash."

"Well alright I suppose," Dave said and with that he was enveloped in a flash of light and found to his surprise that he knew the alphabet.

"So you should be alright now," Cuda said, "Now going back to Adam and Eve and their children did you notice any parallels with Shem, Ham and Japheth?"

"Well I suppose Seth could be Shem. Ham could be Abel if the spirit of God's life was God's purpose. I'm not sure about Japheth and Cain though."

"God blessed with light is the spiritual word. Anyway it was not a major thing I was just pointing it out to you."

"Fair enough."

"So what about Cain, Abel and Seth as aspects of the mind, any thoughts about that?"

"Will, Understanding and God's self. I can understand the first two but I'm not sure about the last."

"That's because he was buried," Cuda said with a laugh.

"Yes that's right Cain killed him didn't he?"

"Well not strictly true after all Abel had received God's blessing."

"Sorry?"

"He was immortal he could not die."

"Oh right."

"That was just symbolic of Man going against his purpose. It was also symbolic of Man obtaining his purpose as it depends which way you want to look at it."

"What?"

"Whether your perspective of God is one of anger or love. You could take the story as literal and have a God of anger or look a little deeper and find a God of love."

"I never knew. So how would that actually work then? Killing for a start, you could not equate that with love surely?"

"It does not mean that he literally killed him. To kill something in mythology means to obtain it that's all. The mark of Cain was divine protection and by going east he was heading to the sun or enlightenment."

“Well it makes sense I suppose.”

“Right so back to Abel then. Now I called your Will and Understanding your Self before. Not Cain though as that is your Spiritual Will it was your Physical Will I was talking about. Your Self as mentioned was a manifestation of both your Spirit and Soul. Cain the spirit and Abel the Soul which is literally God’s self through God’s purpose. Your physical will dies and is reborn spiritual and your Self evolves to your Soul or God’s self.”

“Yes I can see that, God’s will and God’s purpose.”

“Good, only a little more to say on it really and that’s the Garden of Eden, what actually was it in reality?”

“I’m not sure. It did exist but I’m guessing it was just a place.”

“Well it was a place but it was also symbolic of instinctive living for when Adam and Eve got free will they had to leave it.”

“Oh right.”

“Adam himself was symbolic of free will, for eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge ye shall be like Gods knowing good from evil, God transformed to God’s life. He did not have free will as such, he was free will.”

“Yes I can see that so what about Cain, Abel and Seth then?”

“Well Seth did not come along to much later. Abel was actually his ancestor.”

“What, did he actually exist then?”

“Not as a person but as a people. Man is a mixture of Homo Sapien and Neanderthal, Cain and Seth. That the sons of God saw the daughters of Man that they were fair and they took them as wives of all which they chose or the offspring of Seth met with the offspring of Cain. A noted step in Man’s history as was the flood a noted tragedy so Genesis does have a literal meaning just don’t take it literally.”

“Oh right,” Dave said with a laugh, “Quite a book then.”

“You don’t know the half of it,” Cuda said with a laugh, “The symbol of infinity and the symbol of the three concentric circles reflected. You have only had the symbol of the tree.”

“Sorry?”

“Two triangles, a smaller one on top of a larger one, that’s why I called it an expansion.”

“Oh, but why a triangle?”

“Well the first day was one text, the second two and the third three and again between days four and six. Put them on top of each other thinking of each text as, I don’t know, a stick and they form two triangles symbolic of the Tree of Life.”

“Oh right and the other two?”

“Well infinity is symbolic of precession, the Earth’s perceived journey around the constellations and the circles are symbolic of the brain.”

“The brain?”

“Yes the small circle is the reptilian brain, the middle one the lower mammal and the larger one the upper mammal.”

“But why two?”

“The brain has two separate minds.”

“Right, and what’s all that about then. I thought there was nothing more to say.”

“Oh quite as book Genesis it will probably take a day to explain each one.”

“What, two days you mean?”

“If we push hard.”

“Couldn’t you do what he did before?”

“Sorry?”

“With the alphabet.”

“Oh that would make things even I suppose.”

“Well not that I ever perceived that you owed me 10 days but if you want to think that yourself,

well I'm not one to interfere with your free will.”

“Very noble of you.”

“Well you've got to set an example haven't you? I mean let's be honest, people interfering in other people's decision making causes a lot more trouble than anything else.”

“Very noble indeed then,” Cuda said with a laugh, “Alright then you shall have those two days.”

Dave was once again enveloped in light and he knew and understood the two symbols. And if you've got a couple of days spare why not read **History- Well Here's Mine**, The Christian's Tale. You might find it quite enlightening.

Epilogue

The Land of Time and Purpose

**She leads me out to deserts dry
And leaves me there alone to fry,
She torments me with a heart-felt sigh
Though I'll follow her to the day I die.**

Epilogue

Time passed by and life went on accordingly, well not strictly true as that makes an impression of an orderly transition from one set of circumstances to another when it was anything but that. Dave's spiritual life ran smoothly enough, he grew in understanding as he progressed from site to site and he evolved quite dramatically over the few months that had elapsed since the loft conversion. He had started to get a deeper meaning of things and Meta physically speaking he was supreme. His domestic life though was a different story. Jane's progress was slow and painful and although fate was on her side she never saw it in that light. Her inability to stand back and look at the big picture meant she fell down regularly to deep depression and if the truth be known it had frayed her relationship with Dave considerably though as that will come out later in the tale I will not dwell on it at present.

The tale actually begins in dream-time with Dave coming face to face with a distraught Zinbar, "Busta's been kidnapped," he said without greeting.

"What again," Dave said in surprise and then, "Hang on a minute, by who? I thought we had cleared your world."

"He's not in our world."

"Well all the worlds have been cleared. Haven't they?"

"The elemental worlds."

"Are there any others?"

"It's not a world as such it's more a borderland between reality seen and the lower elemental worlds," on seeing Dave's confused expression Zinbar thought it prudent to elaborate, "Imagine three concentric circles. The smallest one is reality seen and radiating out you have the lower elemental worlds, Air due north, Earth due east, Fire due south and Water due west, four points on a wheel. The last circle holds the upper elemental worlds. Now between the second and third circle there were borderlands you had to cross."

"Oh right," Dave said on recognition, "The Desert of No Return was one."

"That's right, well instead of four separate borders there is only one border between the first and second circle which comprises of all the elements merged together. It is here they hold Busta."

"Who?"

"The Giant Tortoise with the help of the Dark Owl and brown otter."

"To what purpose?"

"Ah," Zinbar said sheepishly, "As a punishment for trespassing."

"What," Dave said in surprise, "So they hold him with good reason. I'm not sure if I can get involved."

"It was only boredom that caused him to trespass, him and Doug were only after adventure. Things have changed since you illuminated the dark side."

"Doug, he was there too?"

"He managed to escape to tell the tale. Look I had better start at the beginning as it will be easier."

"I won't argue with that."

Zinbar thought for a while before he said, "After you had cleared the dark side we found that we did not need diamonds any more. This left us without a purpose and in need of another. Ben was happy enough for he had the horse and could take us around all the other worlds, well the ones that were open to us."

"Sorry?"

"The underworld and the Land of Time and Purpose are forbidden to us."

"The Land of Time and Purpose, is that where they have Busta?"

Zinbar nodded before saying, "Doug and Busta soon tired of the other worlds and as Doug had a brother in the Land of Time and Purpose they decided to go there."

"So there are gnomes there?" Dave said interrupting.

"Yes, that is why it is forbidden to us."

“Sorry, I don't understand.”

“During the great split some gnomes became goblins and others took life eternal in the service of the Great Mother. Now this service took two forms, the mining of diamonds or knowledge of Self and tending the inner border or knowledge of purpose. It was deemed that with Man's fall from grace it was prudent to keep the two groups apart and so the dark-side was created with this in mind. When you cleared the dark side you opened up a direct route between the two groups.”

“Right.”

“So logically speaking you must be back in favour.”

“If that's the case he wasn't trespassing then.”

“Then you will plead his case?”

“What?”

“Go and talk to the Giant Head, no gnome can enter until this is done.”

“I'm not sure about that. I don't know anything about the place for a start. Without guidance I will quickly get lost.”

“Well Doug gave me a good description of the place I could help you with directions. The questions though, I'm afraid you are on your own there.”

“These questions, are they forfeits?”

“No,” Zinbar said with a laugh, “You are safe enough it's only the gnomes that are forbidden. If you don't know the answer you won't progress any further that's all.”

“Well that's one thing I suppose so these directions then?”

“The entrance is guarded by a large brown otter. Busta and Doug sneaked past him but I'm guessing to pass him you will have to answer some questions.”

“Right.”

“If you answer the questions he will guide you, Busta and Doug did not have that privilege. They told me that after they had passed him they came to a small wood and found Axeman and Picksey who lived there.”

“Axeman and Picksey?”

“Two gnomes, they look after the forest. They took them to see Tinker who tends the Dark Owl. He was taking them to see Ponder when they were caught by the Giant Tortoise.”

“Right, are there any other gnomes or animals I should know about?”

“Doug's brother Douglas and Torch and Lamp, these tend the Giant Head. I don't know about other animals though as that was as far as they got.”

“Fair enough when do I make this journey?”

“Well straight away if you like,” Zinbar said and with that Dave felt himself lose consciousness. He woke up to a frosty morning and an equally frosty Jane, “Are you going to get a job today?”

“Well I'm going to try,” Dave said patiently. His finances had run out a couple of weeks ago though he was reluctant to get a job as he did not really like to leave her alone.

“Anyway I'm going to see my mother,” she said, “You'll probably be out by the time I get back,” and left him to ponder on how it had got to that stage. He knew the purpose behind her suffering although he could not tell her as she would just see him as insensitive and probably a little mad. Her circumstances had changed dramatically and a lesser mortal would have fallen under all the stress. It had all started well enough, she had taken early retirement from work and this had cleared a lot of stress from her life. The first major blow was the death of her brother and surprisingly it hit her very hard. His family's scramble for his perceived wealth was although comical to Dave detrimental to Jane's grieving process and the constant phone calls informing her of the situation and the need to inform Jane's mother hampered the flow of grief no end. Natty even phoned up once to inform Jane that she thought his diamonds were hidden in his boots and buried along with him so that will give you some idea of what she had to put up with. Comedy aside the family's want to inform Jane's mother caused Jane untold stress. One of her sisters who had not seen her in years took it onto herself to go around and actually told her though luckily for Jane her mother's mind was not very

strong at the time so it would soon be forgotten. Jane's eldest sister constantly phoned her pestering her to tell their mother bringing more stress to the situation. It was only when Jane said that if she did she would have to put up with the consequences and look after her herself that the phone calls desisted. So as you can imagine life for Jane was never simple. This was the state of play at the moment and Dave spent the day going around employment agencies but as it was a quiet time of the year got no joy. He went to bed at 10.30 tired and run down.

Dave woke up to find Zinbar waiting patiently, "It's not far from here," he said and took him through a dense forest until they came to a vast stony flatland where he said, "This is the start of the borderlands. I'm afraid that I can't go any further. I will wait here for you though," and wished him good luck.

As Dave walked off he found the terrain hard going and he started to have second thoughts about the venture. With every step he took the thoughts got stronger and he was starting to get a strong urge to go back. The voice within him said, "It is only a little fear of the unknown it will soon pass," and he was reacquainted with his inner Self.

"I forgot about you," Dave said sheepishly.

"Well you've had a lot on your mind I guess you couldn't fit me in."

"Yes it has been traumatic."

"It will soon be at an end," the voice said by way of encouragement, "Anyway here's the otter. Just think before you speak and you should be alright."

In the distance Dave saw a figure and as he got closer he saw that it was a large brown otter.

"What manner of fauna are you?" the otter said as Dave got closer to it.

"I am a man."

"A mortal. This is no place for you. Are you lost or do you have business here?"

"I have come to see the Giant Head."

"You do realise that you have to answer a few questions before you can go any further?"

"I understand."

"Very well, I have seven questions for you to answer. Should you answer them correctly you will be taken to the next stage. Would you like the first one?"

"Alright."

"What is self consciousness?"

Dave thought awhile and his inner Self took over, "The mind needs a hook to understand things and this is personal experience. Basically it had to relate things to itself or understanding to truly equate it, now from this equating it grows in understanding and this is self consciousness in essence, the mind's fundamental tool for growth. There is also another type of self consciousness though and that is emotional self consciousness for the mind in its fledgling years tends to take things personally."

"Very good, what is consciousness itself?"

"Consciousness is the part of the mind occupied by the will. Another name for it would be awareness, awareness of self would be self consciousness and awareness of your surroundings would be general consciousness. Consciousness expands with mental growth and travels a broad spectrum from the subconscious, the domain of the self to super-conscious, the domain of the Higher Self which merge with the Will as it grows in understanding of self and spiritual purpose."

"What is wisdom?"

"Wisdom is situation oriented knowledge as opposed to knowledge itself which is more to do with facts and figures the domain of the intellect. Wisdom comes from the Self with its memory banks of experience, whether yours or someone else's. Now from the mind's point of view wisdom got through experience increases your understanding of Self thus expanding your awareness past consciousness general."

"Very good what is understanding?"

"Understanding is the Self's evolutionary growth but it is also your perceptions of situations in

particular and life in general. It grows through knowledge both of situations and life (which hopefully evolves you closer to your purpose) and leaves it better equipped to deal with future similar situations. From the mind's point of view understanding of purpose evolves you closer to your purpose and understanding of self evolves you closer to your Self.”

“Good, so what is reality?”

“Reality is a state of mind built on imagination so perceptions of it alter according to your mood and personality. Physical reality is the domain of consciousness general and it too is a state of mind, the state of mind being the level of understanding and built on imagination would be the imagination or creative ability of Mother Nature or to give her, her more pagan name the Earth Mother.”

“Right, what is the meaning of life?”

“Purification of the soul and expansion of the spiritual consciousness to achieve our purpose and be at one with the universe, our purpose being our divinity and the universe our balance.”

“And in lay man's terms?”

“Yes it is a mouthful. Basically it is saying get rid of your character flaws and become at one with your Self through having a mutual purpose. This is the last level of understanding, the culmination of life and the meaning of life at its most basic is to get rid of your ego.”

“Very good, and finally, what is God?”

“God is life itself, it stands for will sees transformation, it's a state of mind and not an entity.”

“Very good,” the otter said, “I am now free,” and turned white.

“Tarquin?” Dave said in surprise.

“That's right, you have cleansed me of my negative self's memory so now I am free to guide you.”

“Right, so er what actually is this place?”

“Your shadow self, self consciousness if you like. I am er was your self-conscious memory.

Anyway walk with me and we'll continue,” and Dave obliged. As they walked Tarquin said, “Your next test will be given by the Dark Owl but first I have to go and see a couple of gnomes to release them from their service.”

“Axeman and Picksey?”

“That's right; you must have been well briefed.”

“Well not really, I was only told that Busta had been kidnapped.”

“And what actually is Busta?”

Dave thought a while and said, “Self consciousness, it appears I've fallen to another trick.”

“Well it passes the time if nothing else.”

“I'm a little confused now though.”

“Why's that?”

“I've already rescued Busta once and cleared the dark side; shouldn't this place be already cleared?”

“Just mopping up you are actually rebuilding your Self but this time with a purpose in mind.”

“A purpose?”

“To achieve mind-fullness,” Tarquin said as they approached a small wooded area.

“Could you elaborate?”

“To be mindful of everything around you instead of yourself This can only be achieved when you have cleared your self-consciousness. Anyway we are here now,” and let out a loud shriek. They were soon joined by two gnomes, “Axeman, Picksey this is Dave. He has released you from your service to me.”

“What?” Axeman said, “This cannot be, our service is our life.”

“Your service now lies in the greater good. I no longer exist in person only in purpose.”

“But what is to happen to us?” Picksey said.

“Anything you want. You are free.”

“Free. To do what, there is nothing here only our purpose and without that we are nothing.” and with that both Picksey and Axeman disappeared.

On seeing Dave's concern Tarquin said, "Don't worry they will reappear in the Land of Creative Formation, no harm will come to them. Anyway forwards ever onwards," and they proceeded out of the forest until they came to a large square sand stone clearing. "Tinker," Tarquin shouted and from the undergrowth a gnome appeared, "We are here to see the Dark Owl," and from what seemed like out of nowhere a large owl flew in. "You have business with me?" it said.

"Indirectly," Dave said, "It is the Giant Head we are actually here to see."

"Very well to get to this stage I guess that you must know the procedure."

"You have some questions for me?"

"That's right, seven to be precise. The first one is a two part one. What are the seven spirits of God and why did they come to be?"

"The seven spirits of God are life and love, understanding, insight, wisdom, knowing and purpose. These spirits were put in place to enhance life and promote awareness or consciousness. The spirits of life and love being the start of life and as it climbs through the levels of understanding it accumulates understanding which gives it insight, from which it gets wisdom and through understanding knowing which ultimately leads to its purpose."

"Alright," the owl said begrudgingly, "What are the levels of understanding?"

"The levels of understanding are the evolutionary path that the Soul travels to achieve its God-Head. There are 12 of them in all though some say 10, the eleventh being a time of mental contemplation and study before you reach your destination level 12. Now levels 3 and 4 actually happen together as do levels 7 and 8 thus making it 10 distinct steps that withhold the 12 levels and a breeding ground for confusion."

"What are the actual levels?"

"The actual levels are 1. life and love, a being with the ability to recreate. 2. Understanding, an animal controlled by its instinct. 3. Insight and wisdom or self consciousness and a free will. 4. Material life and evolution out of it. 5. The mergence of wisdom and understanding. 6. Spiritual rebirth to a knowing life. 7. Find true purpose. 8 A deeper understanding of life and love through the spiritual word. 9. Mental contemplation and regeneration and 10 the culmination of everything for you become your purpose."

"What are the spiritual laws?"

"The spiritual laws are a group of laws set in place to try and keep the universe in balance. There are six in number and comprise the Law of Self Regulation or creation regulates itself, the Law of Consequences or karma over lifetimes. The Law of Poetic Justice or karma in one lifetime. The Law of Love which is that you have to give in order to receive, the Law of Equality or we are all equal in the eyes of the divine and finally the Law of Humility or if you take more than you need someone has to go without."

"What are the natural laws?"

"The natural laws are a group of laws set in place to guide the mind. Eight in number they are that every organism to the best of its ability is to be adapted to 1. Survive in the habitat around it. 2. Survive in the climate around it. 3. Survive in the social climate around it. 4. Attract a mate. 5. To give its offspring the best chance of survival. 6. To find its niche in the eco system. 7. To defend and hunt and finally the main law which it to evolve to its purpose."

"What are the states of grace?"

"The states of grace are the states of mind that the self passes through on its evolutionary path. There are five of them in number and they are instinct, intellect, spiritual negative, spiritual positive and divine. Basically instinct is animal drive, intellect the development of will, spiritual negative when your perception of God is one of anger, spiritual positive when your perception of God is one of love and divine when your perception of God is an enlightened soul."

"Finally, what are the levels of wisdom?"

"The levels of wisdom or more correctly the levels of understanding wisdom are states of mind the will passes through on its evolutionary path. Three in number they are pretty much akin to the three

states of matter. The first level solid, when you know but have no understanding then liquid when you know and understand and finally gas when you know and understand it in a spiritual sense, or wisdom, wisdom through understanding and wisdom through spiritual understanding.”

With that the owl turned to stone and Tinker disappeared.

“Very good,” Tarquin said, “You have just cleared your Self of its self conscious will.”

“So how does this actually work then?”

“The questions you answered were not just random; there was a purpose behind them.”

“Really?”

“Yes the first batch were to test your understanding of Self and purpose, knowing the answers meant that you had grasped the big picture and your memory had expanded past reality seen. The second batch was about the laws and levels of attainment, guidance for your Will to expand past its selfish nature.”

“Right, well if that's self conscious will and memory cleared where does the tortoise fit in?”

“Self conscious imagination I will elaborate more on the journey,” and they crossed the flat sandstone and watched the ground turn stony again. “He lives in a garden that's tended by Ponder.”

“And this is where Busta is being held?”

“Probably, or he might actually be with the Giant Head.”

“Oh, so I might still have some more to journey then.”

“Not far now. Anyway we'll deal with that when we come to it. Now to expand past self conscious imagination you have to know about the worlds of creation for that takes your imagination past reality seen. You will have six questions to answer this time and as you have recently traveled the worlds it should be pretty easy.”

“I'll bare that in mind,” Dave said as they approached a large well maintained garden.

“And just in time,” Tarquin said. They were soon joined by Busta and another gnome that Dave took to be Ponder.

“Dave,” Busta said, “What are you doing here?”

“I've come to rescue you, well with the Giant Head's consent that is.”

“You'll need to get past me,” a voice said from behind Dave and he turned to see a large tortoise.

“You have some questions?” Dave said.

“Keen to start. Very well, your first question then what are the worlds of creation?”

“The worlds of creation are the 9 different dimensions of reality comprising of 8 astral worlds and reality seen. The 8 astral worlds are elemental worlds and though separate from the ninth they are linked to it and can be visited when the Self is not restricted by its Earthly body i.e. during dream time or a heightened state of awareness brought about through meditation and certain hallucinatory agents found in plants and even animals.”

“What are the actual worlds?”

“The actual worlds are from the element of Air the higher and lower spiritual realms, from the element of Earth, lower and middle earth, from the element or Fire the nether and under worlds and from the element of Water the instinct and intellectual worlds. To picture them in their relationship with each other imagine a cross with reality at its centre, due north would be Air, east would be Earth, south would be Fire and finally west would be Water.”

“Very good, what is the relationship between Air and reality?”

“Air is the world inhabited by your Spiritual Will. In the lower spiritual realms it perceives God as a god of anger and in the higher realms it perceives God as a god of love. It is from here that you get your overall picture of life and first inkling that reality is not all it's perceived to be. Its actual relationship with reality is that it promotes a deeper understanding of life and puts it into a spiritual perspective.”

“And the relationship between Earth and reality?”

“Earth is the world inhabited by your Soul. Lower Earth when it is pure and mid Earth when it is tainted by matter. It is from here that the mind processes the information it receives and transforms

it to guide the mind and promote mental growth. Its actual relationship to reality is that it provides the mind with a purpose and once purified an access channel to the Higher Self from where you get to know all things spiritual and your true purpose in life.”

“Fire and reality?”

“Fire is the world inhabited by your Self. It dwells in the netherworld or subconscious until the physical body dies when it enters the underworld to be judged and reformed for its next time on Earth. It is from here that you that you get your understanding of life beyond reality seen for it deals more with perceptions of reality than reality as such. Its actual relationship with reality is that it provides information to deal with situations that reality throws up.”

“Finally Water and reality?”

“Water is the world inhabited by your Will. In the instinctive world the Will is not free but lives in a Garden of Eden type existence until it has evolved enough to enter the intellect or gain free will. It is from here that you get your awareness of reality for it processes the information received by the senses and utilises it for the living of life. Its actual relationship with reality is that it provides information to promote awareness and evolve the mind.”

“Very good,” the tortoise said and turned to stone. Ponder disappeared and all that was left was a bemused Busta.

“He's safe,” Tarquin said, “He's gone to the Land of Creative Formation that's all.”

“And what about me?” Busta said.

“You're free. We are off to see the Giant Head; you may join us if you like.”

“Yes sure,” Busta said and they started to walk through the garden. As the garden changed once more to stone Tarquin said, “I guess that I had better tell you more about this world.”

“I won't argue with that,” Dave said, “You called it the shadow self if I remember correctly.”

“That's right; it's a separate entity that lives in your subconscious.”

“So this is actually my subconscious?”

“The terrain yes the three aspects you defeated were the actual entity.”

“And the Giant Head, how does that equate?”

“Symbolic of the collective conscious one great mind, it's actually your true Self, divine light.”

In the distance they saw a large temple and as they got closer they saw that it was guarded by two large figures.

“On the left side is an angel and on the right Hercules, a legendary character from Greek mythology,” Tarquin said, “Does that mean anything to you?”

“No, well not really wasn't an angel a divine messenger though?”

“Good, created to uphold divine will and the story of the 12 labours of Hercules was symbolic of the levels of understanding. So you have divine will and divine understanding put in place to protect it and administer divine light.”

“They're made of stone,” Dave said as they got up to them.

“They have served their purpose. You have climbed the levels now.” They passed through the large opening and were soon joined by a gnome.

“Douglas,” Busta said, “It's been a long time.”

“Too long,” Douglas said, “But what are you doing here, you know that it's forbidden.”

“We are here to see the Giant Head. Well Dave is anyway.”

“I'm afraid that you will have to wait here Busta,” Douglas said, “But I will wait with you so you can tell me all that has happened.” With that 2 more gnomes made their presence felt.

“Torch, Lamp,” Douglas said, “This mortal is here to see the Giant Head, could you take him.”

“Sure,” one of them said and they both took a lantern each. Dave followed them down a darkened staircase at the bottom of which they came to a large room in the middle of which was a large stone head.

“We shall leave you here,” one of the gnomes said and they both climbed the stairs leaving Dave alone with his thoughts. He looked at the head and much to his surprise its eyes opened.

“You have come a long way and answered many questions,” the head said, “Now as a reward you may ask me one.”

“Oh,” Dave said, “Er right,” and thought awhile before saying, “Life, what is it and how did it come to be?”

“Good question. Life is spiritual energy that animates matter and brings it into being. Now all matter had mind potential although not all matter has life for life is not the mind but the thing that animates it, the Self. Before I go onto the Self I would like to talk a little bit more about the mind itself and define what it actually is. The mind is light to matters darkness though without the Self it has no purpose and so is inanimate. In much the same way as a motorcycle needs a key to start it matter needs a purpose for it to come into being. The mind is matters in built electrical system put in place to await instruction and the more basic the life form the simpler that instruction is. The flowers one instruction is to head for the Sun for that is what generates its growth. Its mind does this through photo tropism though as the Self is not very refined at this stage of development it is not conscious of it making it a reflex action. As the Self gets more refined though it gets stronger and more aware of its surroundings though as it is yet to develop a will of its own it is still an instinctive being that follows nature's laws. These laws mould the evolving Self until it grows in understanding enough to develop a will of its own and even then they still exert an influence.

To define life as an equation would be spiritual energy= matter animated by mind animated by Self or $E=MC^2$.

For a deeper understanding of how life works though you must first picture a five pointed star called a pentagram. At its apex is the Higher Self, this is what generates the spiritual energy in much the same way that the Sun generates the flower and just like the Sun's light it has to be transformed before it can do any good. This is done through the Soul situated bottom left of the five pointed star. In much the same way as the regulator/rectifier transforms the electrical current from the AC generator from alternating to direct current the Soul transforms the spiritual energy into mental energy to feed the Self's understanding(middle right of the five pointed star) or the battery if you are that way inclined. Now as the battery illuminates the electrical system the Self animates the mind (middle left of the five pointed star) which animates the Will (bottom right) which feeds the Higher Self and starts the process off again.” With that the head's eyes shut and the place got lighter. Dave went back up the stairs to find Tarquin and Busta alone. “They just disappeared,” Busta said.

“Well Dave the job is done,” Tarquin said and Dave felt himself get tired. Dave woke up to a bright new day, sure he still had problems but at the end of the day does it really matter?