



Tales with

I In.

Peter the Celt

Part 1

1. I'm Alright Jack.	3
2. Jack be Nimble.	19
3. Jack be Quick.	28
4. Jack Jumped Over the Candlestick.	33
5. Jack of Spades.	38
6. Jack the Lad.	44
7. Jack the Ripper.	48
8. Jack and the Beanstalk.	55
9. Jack of Hearts.	60
10. Jack the Giant killer.	65
11. Jack of Diamonds.	71
12. Jack o' Lantern.	76
Do you know what it is yet?	81

1. I'm Alright Jack.

Jack Sprat could eat no fat his wife could eat no lean but that need not concern us for he is a different Jack Sprat to the one in this tale. In fact Jack Sprat was not his real name but a nickname he had picked up because of his small, squat stature. I will stick with this name though as his real name Giovanni Templeton Smythe is a bit like one of those late night arty television programmes, pretentious, long winded and not worth repeating (do you really think I'm going to sit here and write out that name every couple of sentences, oh ye of little understanding). Anyway enough of this waffle we'll get to the syrup.

A New Year's Day and a ringing telephone brought Jack out of his sleep and into a reality clouded by a hangover, the remnants of his previous nights over indulgence still in his mind. He picked up the phone and through a pounding head said, "Hello."

"Jack," a voice said on the other end, "Nigel here, are we still on for today?"

"What?"

"You know, what we were on about last night."

"Last night?" Jack said still not remembering.

"Yes, you know that fellah."

Jack had fully awoken by then but he still did not have a clue as to what Nigel was talking about.

"Look," he said, "Start at the beginning."

"The Word on the Street says that Jackey Collins is looking for a couple of lads. Don't you remember, we said that we would nip over and have a chat."

"Oh right," Jack said, not really remembering but in need of some work, "So what does he want doing?"

"The Word never said. He just said turn up at three and we should be alright."

"Sounds good to me so anything else interesting happen then?"

"What last night? Nothing really I didn't think that you had that much to drink."

"Oh I caned half a bottle of whiskey before I went out," Jack lied to try and protect his image.

"Oh really," Nigel said not believing him, "Anyway I'll pick you up in half an hour," and put the phone down. Jack quickly got dressed before going into the kitchen and making himself a cup of tea. He looked at the time, it was 2 o'clock. "Oh my head," he said and as if to emphasise the statement put the palm of his hand to his forehead and groaned. He took a drink from the mug and it felt good to his arid mouth. "Work eh," he said afterwards. He did not like working for Jackey Collins as he was a bit of a con man but needs must and when the table is empty it does not pay to be too fussy. He finished his drink and made himself another to try and finished off his rehydration. Divvy Nigel would not be too long now so he tried to clear his head and compose himself for their meeting with Jackey. He had known Divvy Nigel for around five years and they had worked together for most of that time. Nigel had acquired the term divvy for his simplistic view of life but he was quite an articulate and rational man who could turn his hand to most kinds of manual work. He got on well with Jack for they were of a pretty similar nature. The knocking door announced his arrival. "We got time for a brew," Nigel said on entering, "It's still a little early."

"Yes sure," Jack said and went into the kitchen.

"So," Nigel said following him, "You reckon we're going to make this one pay?"

"It will be a first," Jack said as he switched the kettle on, "Knowing that purple prick we probably won't cover the cost of the petrol." (Now to anyone reading this in ignorance a purple prick is a tight fisted wanker, well that's the wisdom I'll leave the rest to your understanding)

"Yes," Nigel said, "As long as we pin him on a price we should be alright."

"Easy said but so is pinning a tail to a donkey blind folded. Anyway the kettle's boiled," and made them both a cup of tea.

"He's a sharp one," Nigel said after he had taken a drink, "God I needed that, he won't con us this

time.”

“Any clues as to what he wants?”

“Well you heard what I heard; The Word says that he wants some stuff shifting that was it really.”

Nigel finished his drink and got up, “We'll find out soon enough.”

“True,” Jack said and finished his drink. Jack followed Nigel to the van and they quickly finished the journey to Jacky's house.

“Right let's see what the old git's got to offer,” Jack said getting out of the van and shutting the door behind him. They knocked on Jackey's door and it was opened by Jackey himself.

“3 o'clock on the dot,” he said without greeting them, “Come on in the kettle's on.”

They followed him into the living room and took in it's over powering darkness. The dark oak beams seemed to give the room a coldness that was noticed even in summer. Brass ornaments everywhere, it had a very quaint country cottage appeal that made a mockery out of the houses post war facade. “Sit yourself down,” Jackey said, “So much work about?”

“We get by,” Jack said defensively not wanting him to know just how desperate he was.

“I've heard,” Jackey said, “The Word on the Street says you're looking for some work.”

“Strange,” Jack said, “He told me you were looking for a couple of workers. We must have got it wrong,” and stood up as if to leave.

“What's your hurry,” Jackey said putting his hand out and changing tact for he saw that they were in no mood for his usual approach, “Yes I'm after a couple of lads. Only a little job but it can lead to bigger things.”

“I've heard that one before,” Jack said, “Many times.” At that the door opened and Jackey's wife Julie came in with the tea. “Two sugars wasn't it Nigel,” she said as she passed him his cup.

“Thank you Mrs. Collins,” Nigel said taking the cup off her. He had adopted an air of bashfulness in her presence and this had long been noticed by Jackey as Julie was often tempted to dwell on it. She left the room and Jackey said, “A couple of hours work and fifty quid between you, who said that Santa doesn't exist.”

“What's the catch?” Jack said, “What do you want doing?”

“You know Elson's factory?”

“Off High Street.”

“That's right, well I've got the contract to demolish it.”

“Right,” Jack said for Jackey had stopped.

“Well I can't make the starting date and I need someone to be there. Council red tape, you know how it is.”

“You said a couple of hours that sounds more like a full day.”

“Oh no, I just want you to turn up and take the lead of the roof so the roofers can go straight in that's all. A couple of hours maximum, you ever been on a roof before?”

“Er yes,” Jack lied.

“And you've stripped lead?”

“It doesn't look too hard.”

“Good, just strip the lead off and bring it to me and you've got an Hawaii, what do you say?”

“When do you want it done?”

“Tomorrow, any time during the day.”

“Sound,” Jack said getting up, “And you'll settle up tomorrow?”

“Yes, as soon as you bring it.”

“£50, tomorrow.”

“Of course,” Jackey said and saw them out once outside Nigel said “£50 for a couple of hours work, things are definitely looking up.”

“Mmm yes.”

“You don't sound too sure?”

“Well it's not like him to give us a price up front. Knowing him it's probably a couple of days

work.”

“I shouldn't think so, there shouldn't be that much lead on it. I reckon a couple of hours sound right.”

“Have you done this sort of thing before?” Jack said in a surprised tone.

“Oh yes my dad was a roofer. I used to help him all the time.”

“Really, thank God for that. I've never been on a roof before in my life.”

“No problem, just leave it to me.”

They climbed into the van and Nigel dropped Jack off telling him he would be around the next day at one o'clock. Jack went inside, put the kettle on and thought about their meeting with Jackey. Something did not seem right and yet he could not put his finger on it. He tried to cast it off but the feeling would not go away. It was a gut feeling that was just beyond his grasp so in the end he put it down to nerves for he was in truth a little wary about getting on a roof. He poured himself a drink and went back into the living room to settle down in his favourite chair. As he put the cup down on the table beside the chair the door knocked. “No rest for the wicked,” he said as he got up to answer it. “Rollin’” he said after he opened the door, “When did you get out?”

“This morning, you want to go for a drink?”

“I'm a bit short at the minute; would you settle for a cup of tea?”

“Yes why not,” Rollin' said and went inside. Jack put the kettle back on which quickly boiled and made him a drink.

“So how was it?” Jack said passing him his cup.

“I got used to it. Well I didn't get much choice in the matter. Are you still working with Divvy Nigel?”

“Well off and on there's not much of anything about at the moment.”

“No change there then,” Rollin' said and took a drink, “Are you still with Pauline?”

“Well off and on,” Jack said with a smile.

“No change there either then so no work then?”

“A bit of a job tomorrow working for that Jackey Collins.”

“You must be desperate. Watch him, that bastard stitched me up.”

“What?”

“Yes it was because of him I ended up inside.”

“I didn't know that. I thought you went down for burglary.”

“I did, except that it started off as a house clearance job.”

“Sorry?”

“Collins gave me a bell and told me that one of his properties wanted emptying, said the tenant had done a runner. Told me to meet him down there and gave me the address. Said that he might be a little late but the property would not be locked so I was to make a start on the electrical gear. I was only there for 10 minutes and a cop car pulled up. It seems that he had got it into his head that I was having an affair with his missus, well so I heard later anyway.”

“Seriously?”

“Oh yes, I couldn't tell the coppers that though.”

“Why not?” Jack said in surprise.

“Well they wouldn't believe me for a start, not with my record. Besides I wouldn't like to see that in the paper, I would never be able to show my face again.”

“Yes, I see what you mean.”

“So what's he want you to do?”

“Strip the roof at Elson's factory; mind you I'm not sure now that you have said that. He reckons he's got the contract to demolish it but wants us to take the lead off first.”

“Strip the lead of the roof, weren't you a little suspicious?”

“A little a lot more now that you've said that. I'd better give Nigel a bell and tell him, see what he says about it.”

Jack dialed the number and said, "It's switched off, never mind I'll see him tomorrow. You reckon it's a stitch up then?"

"Well the factory has stood empty and looks due for it, maybe it's genuine I'm not sure. It depends on whether he thinks that you have designs on his wife or not."

"Shouldn't think so, I've never gave him any reason to."

"Neither did I but a sixty year old man with a wife half his age and a paranoid streak makes his own reason. What about Nigel?"

"Nigel," Jack said with a laugh, "No I don't think that he's interested in women, he's a bit shy like that."

"Probably a genuine job then keep an eye on the road when you are up there though just in case."

"Yes I think I will what about you?"

"I'll bide my time and wait for my moment. He won't get away with it don't you worry about that." They spent the next couple of hours catching up on old times until the door knocked and stopped the flow.

"Nigel," Jack said letting him in, "I tried to call you earlier but your phone was switched off."

"I was probably up on a roof. Roland how are you?"

"Fine Div, glad to be out."

"What do you mean up on a roof?" Jack said interrupting him.

"I thought that I would save you a job. You said you'd never been on a roof before, a couple of valleys that was all. That fella must be getting soft in his old age. I mean £50, it only took me half an hour. We'll just turn up tomorrow and he'll be none the wiser."

"Sound," Jack said.

"I thought you'd be out getting drunk," Nigel said turning to Rollin', "Celebrating."

"Our finances said different," Rollin' said, "I've got about a fiver and Jack's skint."

"Well I've got a couple of quid," Jack said, "Lot of good that will do."

"I've a tenner," Nigel said, "We could get a couple of bottles of cheap whiskey between us."

"Sounds good to me," Rollin' said, "Jack?"

"Yes why not," Jack said, "I'll nip down the offy then."

Jack nipped out into the street and in what seemed like the twinkling of an eye but was really 10 minutes, was back again with the elixir of strife. He poured out three healthy measures and they quickly settled into a discussion of truth and the higher meanings of life (Just kidding don't shut the book)

"So Nigel," Rollin' said after he had took a healthy measure from the glass, "How's your love life, are you still a virgin?"

Nigel went quite and although he did not blush you could tell that he was embarrassed. Jack came to his aid seeing it as his duty, "If they are all like Pauline he's better off that way. Anyway your love life must have been pretty empty the last few months, well unless you had an obliging cell mate." and laughed.

"Funny," Rollin' said and emptied the rest of the glass.

As Nigel refilled the glasses he said, "I don't know what all the fuss is about. Me, I prefer the bottle to the breast," and held it up to emphasise the point.

"Well it has its place," Rollin' said, "But you can't beat the other. Mind you I suppose it's a case of what you never have you never miss."

"I'm not a virgin," Nigel snapped, "I'm 25 years old. What kind of saddo do you think I am? No, I ain't obsessed with it like you that's all."

"So you would turn it down then," Rollin' said with a mocking sneer.

"Don't be silly I just wouldn't court it."

"What?"

"The minute you settle down the bastards have got you."

"Well I don't know about that Nigel," Jack said, "It's a bit strong."

"No not women society."

"You'll have to explain that one," Rollin' said, "It's a little beyond me."

"Think about it," Nigel said getting into his flow, "Settle down, get married, buy a house and have children. You are not your own man any more. You have responsibilities."

"Well what's wrong with that?" Rollin' said.

"Think about it," Nigel repeated, "When you have responsibilities you have to put up with a hell of a lot more crap. You become enslaved to work and fall into the niche that society has chosen for you."

"Yes but you have to work to live," Rollin' said, "That's how it is."

"I never said that you didn't. No my point is that when you are only accountable to yourself you have a lot more freedom. I mean look at Old Bob."

"Bob Davies?" Jack said.

"Yes, when Elson's closed down he was devastated."

"Well yes," Rollin' said, "But he'd worked there all his life, besides what has that got to do with what you are on about?"

"There were rumours' that it was going to close down months before it did. If he had, had anything about him he would have started to look for another job as soon as he heard them."

"Well yes but I still don't see your point."

"His mind was shackled; chained to worrying about how he was going to keep up the mortgage payments, put clothes on his children's backs and loads of other things. Responsibilities like that cloud your reason for when things go wrong all you see is despair. He just clung onto the hope that everything would be alright. He put his fate in others hands for his will had long been sapped. No you can keep all that."

"I can sort of see what you are saying," Jack said, "But I would have thought that it would depend on what sort of person you were in the first place."

"Maybe but I reckon it's more to do with the circumstances for your experiences mould your perceptions in the first place."

"Er yes," Jack said not understanding.

"Well take Bob as an example. His circumstances made it that he was struggling just to keep his head above water. Whatever he earned went into paying the bills, paying off loans and basically keeping the household running. That became his experience and molded all his perceptions. He could not see beyond that so when something came along to threaten it his mind could not deal with it because it was out of his range of understanding."

"You know I can see that," Jack said, "But surely that affects everyone for they all have to live."

"To a degree it depends on how much baggage they are handling. Take me as an example. I can live on next to nothing so I can put money aside to give me a breathing space."

"Yes but you still live at home with your parents," Rollin' said, "What about when you have to leave and go out into the real world?"

"That's just it though isn't it? The real world is getting married having kids and getting a mortgage. If I'm happy where I am why should I go out and leave it all behind. That would be stupid wouldn't it?"

"Do you mean that you are happy enough to live with your parents for the rest of your life?" Rollin' said not believing his ears.

"Well theirs," Nigel said with a laugh.

"I don't believe I am hearing this," Rollin' said, "That's sick that is."

"Not really. We all have to die, let's be honest."

"And mortgage does mean death bond in French doesn't it," Jack said adding fuel to the fire for he liked the way that the conversation was going.

"Says it all doesn't it," Nigel said, "When my parents bought the house and brought me into the world they sacrificed their lives. That might sound melodramatic but it's true for their whole lives"

were mapped out from then on.”

“Using that logic,” Rollin' said, “You should make the same sacrifice.”

“I'm afraid that logic is as patchy as your hair,” Nigel said referring to the fact that Roland was going prematurely bald (he was only 21); “My sacrifice will be to look after them when they are old and believe me I will take that very seriously. I look at it this way; they sacrificed themselves for me so I will return the favour.”

“You know I can actually see sense in that,” Jack said, “Look around nowadays, how many people go into care homes and lose their house to pay for it.”

“Yes stupid isn't it,” Nigel said, “They struggle most of their lives to pay the mortgage to lose it in the end and then their children go and do the same. One sacrifice should be enough when you think about it for the family home should pass down through the family.”

“Well yes,” Rollin' said relenting, “That might work in your case because you are an only child but what about a family with more than one child.”

“That's not my problem if they are foolish enough to have more than one child that is up to them.”

“Sound selfish to me,” Rollin' said.

“That's probably because it is but let's be honest so is society. I hear the birth rate has fallen from 2.4 to 1.4 so maybe quite a few others are wising up.”

“Yes I've heard that,” Jack said, “They reckon that soon, what with people living a lot longer, society will not be able to sustain itself.”

“Oh,” Rollin' said, “That must be why the government is trying to bribe people to have more children. I wondered about that. I saw they were offering them money with some lame excuse that it was to show children how to save.”

“Wasting their time,” Nigel said, “Believe me people are getting a lot wiser now. That's why people aren't even bothering to turn up at the polls. Don't vote I say it only encourages them.”

“Yes,” Rollin' said, “But to live life as a monk, bit extreme isn't it?”

“Oh no, as I said earlier I wouldn't turn it down. To tell you the truth I wouldn't mind giving that Julie one.”

“Julie?” Jack said.

“Yes you know, Jackey Collins' wife. I reckon she would be up for it too.”

Chapter 2.

Jack looked at Rollin' and then Nigel, “Julie Collins, what makes you think that?”

“The way she looks at me,” Nigel said and seeing that the glasses were once more empty refilled them, “Let's be honest she's stuck with that old git and I bet he is as tight with her as he is with everyone else so you couldn't blame her really.”

“That would explain it,” Jack said.

“Explain what?”

Rollin' went on and told Nigel what he had already told Jack and Nigel was fuming, “What, do you mean he tried to get me put away. Wait till I see that bastard.”

“He's too well connected,” Jack said.

“What, do you mean let him get away with it,” Nigel said in surprise.

“Oh no,” Jack said, “Just take a little time out and think it through, we could actually turn this to our advantage.”

“We could,” Rollin' said, “How?”

“Well I reckon he'll try the same kind of thing again and again all we have to do is stay one step ahead of him. We might actually earn out of him because he will be more concerned about stitching Nigel up. We could even set our own price.”

“You know you are probably right,” Rollin' said, “Where would I fit in with all that though for I reckon he owes me?”

“You got done for burglary so we'll burgle him. Should about even things up I reckon.”

“Sounds good to me he must have loads of money stashed away as people like him don't like using banks. He's that well connected he will think that nobody would dare do it.”

“Sorted then,” Rollin' said, “Leave it a couple of weeks to divert suspicion and we should be pretty safe.”

“Yes,” Nigel said, “He deserves everything that's coming to him. You know I ought to try my luck with Julie for the logic you used with Rollin' works for me.”

“I'm not sure,” Jack said, “That might make things a little too complicated. Mind you if you played on it, it might help.”

“Well it would definitely cloud his mind,” Rollin' said, “Do you think that you'd be up to it?”

“Funny,” Nigel said and finished of the whiskey in the glass, “I'm on a mission now, and this is personal.”

They carried on drinking until the bottles were both empty and Rollin' and Nigel left Jack to fall quickly to sleep.

Tuesday morning saw Jack waking up on the sofa with a nasty hangover. He had remembered the previous night's conversation, well the relevant parts of it anyway and looked forward to tangling with Jackey Collins with relish. First things first though he had to go over and see Pauline and apologise for his actions New Years Eve. He had meant to go the day before but what with one thing and another it had slipped his mind. He put the kettle on and eagerly waited for it to boil. He did not really know what he was going to say to her and in truth he did not know if she was worth bothering with for they had grown apart recently. Jack made himself a cup of tea and thought a while for a suitable excuse as to why he had walked out and left her alone in the pub. She had been talking endlessly about marriage and it had unnerved him more than slightly but he could not really tell her that as it would upset the apple cart. He felt that at 22 he was far too young to get hitched and with what Nigel had said the previous night he was having doubts about getting married at all. Jack took a drink and started to talk himself out of seeing her but fate had other ideas. The knocking door stopped his thought train and he went over to open it.

They say speak of the devil and he's sure to appear and although to call Pauline a demon might be stretching the point she definitely had a demonic look in her eyes and she was spitting fire and brimstone. “You've got a nerve leaving me on my own in the pub like that,” she snapped without greeting him, “I'm getting really pissed off with the way you are treating me, who the hell do you think you are?”

“Look I'm sorry about that,” Jack said sheepishly, “Come in.”

“What for, just to hear a load of bullshit what has happened to you recently? You were never like this before, you've changed.”

“Are you going to come in or are you going to stand on the street and broadcast our business.”

“This had better be good,” Pauline said entering the flat.

“Do you want a cup of tea?” Jack said trying to stall so he could collect his thoughts together.

“No I don't want a cup of tea,” Pauline snapped, “I want some answers.”

“Alright then.”

“Well?”

“I'm waiting for the questions.”

“Don't get smart with me. Why did you walk out on me? Why are you treating me so badly? What is the matter with you? Is that enough for you?”

Jack thought awhile and said, “Why did I walk out on you? It's the constant talk of marriage; it's doing my head in. I'm sorry Pauline but it's all I ever seem to hear from you. Look we are only 22.”

“What? But you proposed to me. You got down on one knee and asked me.”

“Ah,” Jack said not really wanting to say the next thing but thinking it best, “I was a little drunk.”

“Alright, but you have sobered up since.”

“I know, but you swept me away with all the plans.”

“And that's it then, that's what all this is about. Jack, why didn't you tell me?”

"I'm sorry; you seemed to have your heart set on it."

"I thought you had. Put the kettle on Jack I think I could do with that drink now."

Jack went into the kitchen and made Pauline a cup of tea. He returned and they carried on.

"So why didn't you think you could tell me?" Pauline said, "We used to be able to talk about everything."

"Well you know what you women are like about marriage."

"What seriously, how little you know."

"Sorry?"

"Well let's be honest it costs you an arm and a leg to begin with and from what I see most married couples aren't happy."

"Oh so what are you saying?"

"If we are happy together we'll stay together. I know that whatever your faults you are faithful so I have no worries there. We don't need to make a life time commitment and anyway let's be honest that's foolish."

"It is?"

"Yes I can't be sure if I will feel the same way about you in 10 years let alone a lifetime."

"Oh."

"Well neither can you. Just have the honesty to tell me and I'll do the same."

"You've surprised me, you really have. Look I was going to come around yesterday to apologise but I got waylaid. I'm sorry about that."

"Well it did seem like adding insult to injury at the time I must admit, just as long as it doesn't happen again. Don't forget you're Jack Sprat and not Jack the lad and we will be alright. So what way laid you then?"

"Roland Hills came around and I also had to see that Jackey Collins about some work."

"When did Roland get out?"

"Yesterday morning, do you fancy another brew?"

"A quick one, I've got to nip over to see Angie. Actually she might be able to put some work your way."

"Really."

"Yes, it won't be for a bit but I'll get all the gen."

"Sound," Jack said and made them both another cup of tea. After they had finished Pauline left saying she would be back around 8 and Jack hung around waiting for Nigel and thinking about the stupidity of his previous actions. He regretted that he had let it fester for it was just needless stress on a misunderstanding that should never have grown. He vowed to be more honest in future for it would save him a lot of fretting and started to think that maybe he did have a future with her. The knocking door stopped him at that so he got up and let Nigel in.

"Do you reckon I'm too early," Nigel said by way of greeting.

"Well its only 2 o'clock, we're in no real hurry. You want a cuppa?"

"Yes, my mouth's still a little dry."

"Not a bad night," Jack said putting the kettle on once more.

"Quite enlightening, so how are we going to handle it?"

"I want to make sure first. You can never tell with Rollin' he might have his own agenda."

"How are you going to do that?"

"Leave it to me. I'll drop him into the conversation and we'll see how Collins reacts." Jack passed Nigel his cup and they both sat down. They talked for around an hour and then Jack checking his watch said, "3 o'clock, I reckon that should do it."

Within 15 minutes they were outside Jackey's house and parking up. Jackey rushed out and said, "You were supposed to be at Elson's today, what are you playing at?"

"We've been," Jack said, "The leads in the back of the van, where do you want it?"

"What, what do you mean you've been?"

“First thing, thought we'd get it over and done with. Where did you say you wanted it?”

“I didn't. Just shove it around the back, we'll have a cup of tea and then I'll settle up.”

Nigel and Jack unloaded the van and were soon sitting in Jackey's living room waiting for their tea.

“Well you did a good job,” Jackey said, “Carry on like that and you'll never want for work again.”

“Things are definitely picking up,” Jack said and started to make his play, “I bumped into this fellah, Roland Hills; I don't know if you know him but he reckons he can line us up with a lot of gardening work.”

Jackey's reaction to the name told Jack he did and his next statement, though untrue, confirmed this, “He's a smack head so I wouldn't hold your breath.”

“I don't know him so I will have to take your word for that but no offence he seemed pretty genuine to me. I guess it's just a case of wait and see at the end of the day.”

“Well maybe, but I'm willing to wager that you won't make as much from him as you would with me.”

“It doesn't have to be one or the other, it could be both.”

“True.”

“It's just that he's paying £40 a day so no offence he will get priority.”

“You're getting £50 for a couple of hours; normally you get £50 a day so why should he get priority?”

“Oh you must have misunderstood me. No it's £40 each, not between us.”

“Well fair play if you can get it but as I said before I wouldn't hold your breath.”

At that moment Julie came in with the tea and said, “It is two sugars isn't it Nigel?”

Nigel's manner was completely different this time. He looked her straight in the eyes, smiled and said, “Yes, that's right, thank you very much.” Jackey's face flushed with anger and this did not go unnoticed by Jack. After she had left them to it Jack said, “So I guess we won't be seeing much of Elson's factory. How long do you think it will take to demolish it?”

“What?” Jackey said trying to control his anger but only half masking it.

“Elson's” Jack repeated, “How long do you think it will take to level it?”

“Well we've had to put that on hold for a while.”

“Really whys that then if you don't mind me asking.”

“Red tape, you know what these council people are like.”

“No,” Jack said much to Jackey's displeasure though he did come up with a good answer much to Jack's surprise.

“It turns out they've gone over budget. I can't actually start the job until the next tax year in April.”

“Shame that,” Jack said and then put on a convincing laugh before saying, “I hope you don't expect us to go back up and put it back”

“No,” Jackey said with a less convincing laugh, “That would be silly. So when are you supposed to be starting this gardening work then?”

“He's supposed to be getting in touch with us soon, hopefully it will be sometime this week He reckons it might even be tomorrow. He'll phone if it is”

“Well if it happens it happens but I'll give you a bell if I need anything, anyway I expect you want paying now,” and got up and left the room.

Jack gave Nigel the knowing nod but said nothing for fear of being overheard. After a couple of minutes Jackey returned and gave Jack 5 old ten pound notes saying, “Good doing business with you I'm afraid I've got to nip off and see someone now so you will excuse me if I show you the door”

“Sure,” Jack said and both he and Nigel got up, “I've got to get back and see if that fellow has rung back anyway.”

As Nigel and Jack returned home in the van Jack said, “Yes, he's got a stash alright.”

“Really, how do you know?”

“Look at the notes they are all cold and clammy, they get like that when they are stored and out of circulation.”

“However did you know that?”

“Just like hitchhikers I guess. Something you pick up along the road of life.”

“Well it looks like Rollin' was right; did you see his face when you mentioned him?”

“Yes, and when you played up to Julie.”

“We'd better be careful; this could be a dangerous game.”

“If it sounds too dicey I'll just say we've got another job on. I reckon we could only get away with it for a couple of times anyway as he would be bound to wise up after that.”

“True, so are you off out tonight then?”

“No, Pauline's coming around. She says she knows someone who might be able to put some work our way.”

“Sounds good to me I thought that you had fallen out with her.”

“Just a misunderstanding, a bit of stupidity on my part I'm afraid.”

“What asking her to marry you?” Nigel said with a laugh.

“Well yes,” Jack said sheepishly, “But don't worry as it's all been sorted out now.”

“So when's the big day then?”

“When hell freezes over,” Jack said with a laugh, “It turns out that she doesn't want to get married either. We had a bit of communication breakdown that was all.”

“I thought that they all did. You know settle down and bring children into the world. I thought it was conditioned in them, you know, maternal instinct and all that.”

“Yes I did as well. Just goes to show doesn't it. Anyway we're here now. Here's £30 that should be about right what with the petrol. I ought to give you it all really as you did the work.”

“Not to worry you'll do the same for me one day after all its swings and roundabouts in this game.”

“Cheers, I'll give you a bell tomorrow and let you know if any work turns up.”

Jack got out the van and Nigel drove off. He went inside and made himself something to eat, the first thing in 2 days but that was not unusual for Jack. He had a cup of tea with his meal and watched the television with disinterest just wasting a little time until Pauline came. At around 5 o'clock the door knocked and Jack got up to open it. It was The Word on the Street and he was a lot earlier than Jack had suspected.

“Alright Jack, you got the kettle on?”

“Yes sure,” Jack said in a friendly manner though he was quite guarded as he did not really know his involvement in the affair.

“So what's been happening,” The Word said by way of conversation.

“Well I thought that you would know that,” Jack said with a laugh as The Word seemed to know virtually everything that was going on, “Tea of coffee?”

“A cup of coffee would go down well and I hear that congratulations are in order.”

“Sorry?”

“You getting married so when is it due?”

“No and never, it was just a little misunderstanding brought about by a lot of alcohol.”

“Oh one of those nights, was that job any good?”

“Not from Jackey Collins.”

“Yes he is a bit tight but I guess that something is better than nothing.”

“True, I'll just put the kettle on. So not being nosy, well too nosy how much does he pay you?”

“What?” The Word said as Jack returned from the kitchen.

“To work for him.”

“I don't.”

“Oh I must have misunderstood. I thought that you were running messages for him.”

“No, not me I just bumped into him and he asked me if I knew you. I said yes so he said tell him if he wants a bit of work turn up at three.”

At that moment the door knocked and Jack opened it to see Rollin' standing outside, “Some night last night,” he said to Jack as he let him in, “So how did you....What's that bastard doing here?”

The Word looked very uncomfortable so Jack guessed he knew more than he was letting on. "Something I should know about," Jack said looking at The Word menacingly.

"Yes," Rollin' said, "He was the one who told me about the job."

"Really," Jack said and returning his look back to The Word, "It seems you bump into Jackey Collins quite a lot."

"I didn't know it was a set up," The Word protested quickly, "He just said that it was a house clearance."

"Yeah right," Rollin' sneered and moved closer to him, "I think that you know more than you are saying. I think a good kicking would be in order. It might help loosen your tongue."

"Honest, a house clearance was all he said. I was as much surprised as you were, tell him Jack."

"That's just it see," Jack said, "From where I'm standing it doesn't look too good for you. Maybe Rollin's got a point as you don't seem to be telling us everything."

"You do anything to me and you know you'll get it back a lot worse," The Word said knowing that the charade was up and so trying to brazen it out, "You don't know what you are up against."

"Really," Jack said, "Do you think that Jackey Collins is going to stick his neck out for you when it gets out you're a nark?"

"I'm not," The Word protested, "I just passed the message on."

"The messages, you nearly got me and Nigel busted. Now I do happen to know what we are up against. I know that Collins is well protected but not you my son. There had to be a scapegoat and it looks like it's you kid."

The Word went quiet for he could see the truth in what Jack had said. Jack saw that he had him beat so he said, "So what mischief has he lined up for Nigel?"

The Word looked at the ground and said, "A house clearance."

"What? I thought that he had more imagination than that."

"He didn't know that you knew Roland."

"And neither did you for I guess you would not have come around if you did."

"So what happens now?"

"Now," Jack said, "Now you work for us. Any tricks or funny business and you'll go down as a grass."

"I'm not going up against Collins I'd rather be known as a grass."

"You don't have a choice in the matter, play it right and he'll never know. I want you to tell him that we'll be at least a week as I have another job on."

"What is that it?"

"No, I also want to know about all his scams and dodgy deals. I want to know where he gets his money from. I want to know everything about him. Now I expect to see you in a week with all the details and also with what his plans are."

Chapter 3

After he had left Rollin' said, "Well no need to ask you how you got on with Collins."

"Hook, line and sinker I'm afraid that I told him that you were out of prison."

"Common knowledge by now so don't worry about it. So what's this about scams and dodgy deals I thought you were just going to sting a few jobs out of him."

"Well I got a little angry; it's only just sinking in that I might have ended up in prison. The whiskey must be wearing off."

"Bit of a lousy trick though, I thought that Sullivan was supposed to be a mate."

"Yes, grassing bastard. I've no real grudge against Collins; he's just a paranoid old man. Mind you it wasn't me he was trying to set up I would have got it through association. No, Sullivan is a different kettle of fish."

"We are still on for the burglary though; you're not having second thoughts are you?"

"Oh no, I reckon he must have a few grand hidden, it seems a shame to leave it that way."

“My thoughts exactly a house clearance, well he'll get one good and proper.”

“Yes we definitely ought to fleece him I mean let's be honest he's been doing it to us long enough.”

“True, speaking of work you wouldn't happen to know if there's anything about?”

“It's a bit quiet but I'll ask around.”

“Cheers, I appreciate it. Are you going down the Swan later?”

“No Pauline's coming around, looks like it's going to be a quiet night in. Oh sorry where's my manners, would you like a cup of tea?”

“A quick one, I think I might nip over and see Chillin', he might have some smoke on the go.”

“There's a cup of coffee already made thinking about it that any good?”

“Yeah go on,” Rollin' said and took the drink that Jack had made for The Word, “So here's to Jackey Collins, may all his troubles be big and irresolvable,” and took a drink from the cup. As it had cooled slightly he emptied it in one go and said, Right I'll catch you later.”

“Sure,” Jack said letting him out, “I'll give you a bell if I come up with anything,” and Rollin' walked off down the street.

Eight o'clock came and Pauline duly arrived. They kissed by way of greeting and settled down on the settee after Jack had made the drinks, “So what does Angie want doing,” he said, not expecting much.

“Quite a lot by the sound of it, her and Andy have bought themselves a house got it for next to nothing but there's a hell of a lot of work wants doing on it.”

“Oh,” Jack said picking up.

“Yes, now the bulk of it will have to wait until next month. Andy's got a few grand coming then so money won't be a problem.”

“Great, so what sort of work are we actually talking about?”

“A bit of plastering only patching so you should be alright, painting and decorating throughout, putting in a new kitchen and quite a lot of bitting and bobbing, I think you could manage all that. She wants the chimney re-pointing and there's a few slates that have slipped but I told her I wasn't sure as I didn't know if you did roofing.”

“Well Nigel does it so it shouldn't be a problem.”

“Good. I think that she would prefer it all done by the same person as it saves a lot of hassle.”

“Sound, I'll have a look at the job and give her a price then.”

“She would prefer it if you just gave her a day rate and they would sort out all the materials for you.”

“Er sure tell her £40 a day per man but I could not say how long it would take, not without seeing the job.”

“She's on no hurry as long as you don't just stand around.”

“Pauline.”

“Only joking I could give her a bell now if you like. I know it's not until next month but she wants the garden sorted first.”

“Yes go on then,” Jack said so Pauline did. Angie accepted the price and Jack talked to her about the garden. After he had finished he put the phone down and said, “Sounds like the garden is a job in itself.”

“Really?”

“Yes, I'm not complaining though. She wants me to start tomorrow and try and get it sorted before the weekend.”

“That quick do you think you will manage it?”

“I'll get Rollin' in-between the three of us we'll do it.”

“That's sorted then.”

“Not quite, I had better give them both a bell. I told her we'll be starting at nine,” and did just that. After he had made the calls he said, “And you deserve another drink. I tell you what, why don't I treat you to something a little stronger. We could stay in or go out; I'll leave it to you.”

“A quiet night in sounds good although I wouldn't say no to some wine.”

“I won't be a moment,” Jack said getting up, “I'll nip and fetch some.” Jack was soon back and they carried on. They talked for a while and the subject got back to marriage. It was Jack who brought it up, “So why don't you want to get married anyway?”

“You're not proposing again are you,” Pauline said teasing him, “I don't think you and alcohol mix.”

“Er,” Jack said sheepishly as he still felt foolish.

“Just joking no I prefer my independence as much as you do.”

“I thought all you women wanted marriage.”

“You're rationalising with stereotypes, hardly logical. Look I've got a good job and it gives me a good lifestyle. I don't need a man to look after me as I can look after myself in fact from what I see it's the men that want looking after.”

“You were talking about rationalising with stereotypes,” Jack said with a playful grin.

“Well present company accepted but you were a special case.”

“Oh thanks.”

“You were brought up in a children's home and when you left you got your own place and started to look after yourself.”

“Er so?”

“Most men are different, they had everything done for them by their mothers and so when they leave home they expect the same treatment from their partners. I'm afraid the balance of power has shifted slightly now. I've got an independent income; I'm my own person and not some idle man's skivvy. No you can keep marriage.”

“Well I'm glad to see that you don't have strong opinions on it. So why did you go into the planning of the wedding with such gusto?”

“I hardly mentioned it; I think you've blown it out of all proportion.”

“Ah maybe I did spend a lot of time dwelling on it myself, fear probably.”

“Well there you go. Sure I agreed to marry you but that was only because I knew you didn't need a wet nurse and probably because I thought that was what society expected of us. No most couples end up unhappy as they are always under each other's feet. I need my own spare time sometimes as I guess you must do so I'm happy to see you like we do.”

“And children?”

“Ah, I'm afraid I haven't got any maternal instincts, well not at the moment anyway. I can't really speak for the future but looking around I don't see much future anyway.”

“Sorry?”

“Well let's be honest Jack would you really want to bring up a child today. Look at the drugs problem for a start. No family life you can keep it. I hope I haven't disappointed you Jack.”

“No, no I can see your point. You are right I guess.”

“Good. 10 years time who knows but I can't really see myself changing my mind. Some might say I'm selfish but that's up to them.”

“True, and sex?”

“It depends how good you are and I'm not talking about your behaviour.”

“Well I guess we could all do with practice,” Jack said guiding her to the bed room, “Got to keep the skills honed.”

Jack was up and out before Pauline and went to work with a vengeance. I will not bore you with the details of gardening, oh go on then. (Just kidding, wrong sort of book, try Gardener's World) The tale picks up the following Tuesday at Jack's flat with The Word, Rollin' and Jack.

“So what's the job then?” Jack said.

“Another house clearance,” The Word said sheepishly.

“We are going to have to do something about this I'm not going to burgle someone's house.”

“What?” The Word said, “I thought that you did Elson's.”

“By the time I found out it was already done and besides that was different.”

Sorry?" Rollin' said.

"No emotional heartache."

"What?"

"I wouldn't like to be burgled you've got an emotional attachment to your personal things. Elson's was due for demolition so we were just liberating it before someone else did."

"Oh right," Rollin' said, "So how are we going to get out of it then. If all he is offering is house clearances we'll get nowhere."

"True," Jack said and thought awhile. He could come up with nothing so he said, "That will have to keep to later. We could just say we're working to hold him off. How did he know when we'd come anyway?"

"Oh," The Word said sheepishly, "I'm afraid that was me."

"You?" Jack said confused.

"Er yes, I phoned him."

"Him or the police," Jack said looking at him angrily.

"Him, the first time he told me to wait outside the house and phone him when Rollin' came. He said he wanted to make sure that Rollin' did not rip him off."

"What?" Jack said.

"He said he would come straight over when I rang. He also told me to make sure that you did not see me as he did not want you to think he was spying on you."

"What?" Rollin' said looking at him in a slightly different light, "So you didn't actually know?"

"No, it sounds daft the way I say it, Jackey Collins though, different story entirely."

"Yes I can believe that," Jack said, "I've seen him in action. He's like a lion when it comes to his pride. What about once bitten twice shy?"

"He had me by the short and curlies. He used the same logic as you did. Now it looks like I'm stuck in the middle."

"Well and truly left out in the cold," Jack said, laughed and then said, "You must have been out all day waiting for me."

"All day and then he's got the cheek to say to me that I overslept as you had been and gone, I was there since first light though."

"Well Nigel actually did it the day before. So you are just as much a victim as us?"

"Yes in fact more so as I get it from both sides."

"You know I never really thought of it like that," Jack said changing his opinion of The Word slightly, "So tell us about the deals and we could cut you in. What do you say Rollin'?"

"He's just as much right I reckon."

"We haven't any definite plans yet," Jack said quickly just in case Rollin' carried on, "But don't worry it will be lucrative."

"I'm not sure," The Word said, "He keeps very quiet about his deals. I don't actually see him that much and it's only usually to take orders. From what I do know about him he's a bastard with good connections."

"Ah," Jack said, "Well three heads are better than one anyway any ideas about the house clearance problem?"

"Van broken down," The Word said, "You can't do removals?"

"Maybe," Jack said, "Yes, it would give us a couple of days to think of something else just in case he doesn't swallow it." they finished at that for The Word left.

"So you think that we can trust him?" Rollin' said, "I noticed you did not say anything about the burglary."

"Well his spirits willing but his flesh is weak. Collins has got him under the thumb. He won't grass normally but under pressure I would not like to say."

"When it hits the fan you mean."

"Yes one of the reasons why I said that I don't do burglaries. The most The Word could get from us

is that we were trying to undercut his work.”

“Yes, I can see that.”

“No I'm happy just to find his nest egg and then its money in the bank.”

“He doesn't like banks does he? Collins I mean.”

“No, he's got a very warped opinion of them. He explained it to me once.”

“Really?”

“Yes he reckons that they're the biggest con out.”

“Banks?” Rollin' said in surprise.

“Yes, he says basically that they are just a financial pool to make a select few a vast amount of money.”

“Sorry, how does he work that one out?”

“He says that you put your money in, they gamble it on currency deals, shares and stuff and pay you back the minimum interest rate they think they can get away with. The traders and higher management make obscene amounts of money by gambling with other people's money in a win-win situation as if they lose it's not their money.”

“Putting it like that I'm not sure if his logic is that warped.”

“Well I don't know. I reckon Collins could sell ice cream to the Eskimos.”

“True, so how are you going to find out where he hides it?”

“Logical deduction I suppose as I don't trust The Word enough to ask him. Now when he went to pay us he left the living room so it's not in there.”

“Cuts it down I suppose, not by a lot though.”

“Well he also didn't climb the stairs as I would have heard him. It's either the kitchen or the dining room.”

“Not bad, cuts out a lot of time.”

“We don't want to make life too difficult. Just get in, quick look around, grab it and out again one man job. We just make sure that whoever does it has a good alibi.”

“I'll do the job; I just need to know when the house is empty.”

“I'll try and tease it out of Sullivan. You know thinking about it we ought to just do the house for I think that working for him wouldn't be worth the hassle for the little I would actually get.”

“Maybe, well unless you want to use the job as the alibi.”

“Well it might work for me. I don't know how it would work for you though?”

“True, I wasn't thinking.”

“The alibi will have to be one of your gardening jobs,” Jack said going deep into thought.

“Mine?”

“Yes, I told him that you could line me up some gardening work.”

“Why-ever did you do that? It won't be long before he puts two and two together and gives us what for.”

“I needed a cover. If I didn't think the job safe I could side step it plus if he thought he had competition it would drive the wages up.”

“I can see that but why use my name?”

“Stupidity I guess, I was more concerned about getting work out of him.”

“That's knackered that up then. Collins will know the whole story.”

“I'm not sure; The Word would have mentioned it wouldn't he?”

“Depends on whose side he's on. He didn't seem too eager to discuss Collins dealings.”

“I don't think he knew them. No I believe he was set up so he would have told us if he'd have known.”

“Well Collins knows that I know you and it's only natural that I should tell you.”

“Yes I can see what you are saying; mind you I said that I didn't know you. I told him that you were some bloke I met who said that he could put work my way.”

“We might be safe then.”

"I could tell him that you never rang back, I didn't say that the last job came from you. He would probably believe that as well for he seems to have got it in his head you are a smack-head."

"Oh cheers."

"I'll have a word with Sullivan and tell him that. When do you think we'll see him again?"

"A couple of days probably you know thinking about it we should just walk away. We know roughly where the money is we just have to watch the house for a while. Leave it for a couple of weeks so we are out of Collins thoughts and we should be pretty safe."

"It would be less hassle. We would have to tie up some loose ends first though."

"Not really. In fact you probably have."

"I have?"

"Yes think about it. You've told him that the van's knackered just take it a stage further."

"Sorry?"

"You can't work without a van so you had to absolve the partnership and get a real job. Collins' should be happy with that as Nigel wouldn't be coming around no more. Believe me within a couple of days his mind would centre itself on someone else."

"What about The Word?"

"Send him packing, he's just a tool. Tell him we've had a change of heart."

"I can't see that working."

"Depends how we play it. Say we don't want anything to do with Collins as he's just a paranoid grass that isn't worth bothering with. I'll tell him that I'm not risking going back to prison for him as he is just a gobshite. I think that Sullivan will be too relieved that he is off the hook to think too deeply into it."

"Yes, I can see that working."

"Right, we've still got him down as a grass so even if he didn't believe us he's restricted in what he says."

"True, so quick recap then. You never got back to me and with the van breaking down I am out of business. Yes I can see The Word going for that so the message will get back."

"Then tell The Word that although we know the circumstances it was still a lousy trick and his friendship is no longer required."

"Yes walk away completely, I like that. A couple of weeks and we're in clover."

"And with what I made on the gardening job I'll survive it, well with a bit of budgeting."

"That's sorted then."

They talked some more until Rollin' left later that day and Jack went to bed. The Word came around three days' later saying that Collins had sent him to see if the van was fixed. Jack briefed him on what to tell Collins about the work situation and also told him what Rollin' had said. The Word accepted it as true with great relief and left to tell Collins the news and time marched on. The days passed and a fortnight later the deed was done and the money divided between the three of them £5,000 each and The Word got the blame. It seems that with Collins paranoia not on Nigel it quickly fell on The Word and with good reason for a change as he was actually having an affair with Julie. The timing of the job was impeccable for it was the day The Word panicked and disappeared along with Julie so fate must have smiled in Jack's favour for he heard no more from Collins.

2. Jack Be Nimble.

As January turned to February nothing of note happened and Jack got to start his house renovation. He was pretty affluent then and had thoughts of going on holiday fighting with thoughts of buying a motorbike so his mind was kept pretty busy. Nothing much happened through February well except the time he met The Ultimate Fear but I do not expect that you want to know about that. You do? Well alright then.

It was around about the middle of the month and Jack was relaxing around a friend's house. Neville Winds as known as Chillin'. Rollin' was also there and they were smoking high brand cigarettes. The Manic Street Preachers filled the background although only in spirit for it was a tape. As the track finished Motorcycle Emptiness came on and Jack in his cloudy haze thought back to his biking days. Chillin' was a biker of the old days; a good ten years older he was from a different generation.

"You know the best bike I ever had was a Z650," Chillin' said somehow finding Jack's vibration, "Ah yes, I could tell a story or two." (I hope that he does not intend to otherwise I am out of a job.)

"Yes I bet," Rollin' said with an air of indifference, never having ridden a bike in his life.

"I prefer two strokes," Jack said, though it must be said that he had only ever had a DT175.

"Well each to their own," Chillin' said having given up on that argument long ago, "So what was your worst crash?"

"Never did, I was too good."

"What seriously they used to call me Teflon because I could not stick to the road. So you have never come off in your life?"

"Well I've come off a few times though I've never crashed it."

"Oh what about them then?"

"Nothing bad about them, just stupid I guess. What about yours?"

"I took a head on once. The bike bounced down the road. Wish I could have seen it, they say it looked quite horrific."

"What do you mean seen it," Rollin' said, "I mean you were there weren't you."

"Only in body as I had blacked out before then."

"Blacked out," Jack said, "What happened then?"

"I woke up in the ambulance just as it was pulling into the hospital. Weird thing is that I didn't think it was me. I thought it was a friend so my first words were 'is he alright?'"

"Really, so you must have done some damage then."

"Not much," Chillin' said and showed them a scar under his right arm, "Oh and I trapped a nerve in my neck but it freed itself eventually."

"Was that it? You got off pretty light then."

"Yes, the bike was a lot worse. Three indicators, a foot rest, front end collapse and an assortment of dents."

"So what's the attraction then," Rollin' said, "With motorbikes I mean I don't see the fuss."

"Ah," Chillin' said, "Now if I had to explain it to you, you wouldn't understand it."

"What?" Rollin' said.

"It's the buzz," Chillin' said, "Testing yourself against the elements and the fear of death."

"Sorry?" Jack said.

"A country road, have you never just opened up and put your trust in fate as much as your ability to handle the machine?"

"Er that sounds a bit reckless doesn't it," Jack said, "I mean let's be honest you come off a bike you get hurt."

"What about the buzz?"

"It's a bit extreme though."

“The greater the buzz. You ought to try it, seriously you'll like it.”

“I'll have to get a bike first; I can't see it having the same buzz just with running.”

“Oh,” Chillin' said losing interest.

“I was thinking about buying one, funny you should mention it. Either that or a holiday.”

“A holiday,” Chillin' said, “I thought that you had to work to be entitled to that.”

“Funny. As a matter of fact we're renovating a house at the moment. It looks like it will take all month.”

“Then you'll need a holiday to recover.”

“Probably, I didn't expect the work to be this hard I can tell you.”

“Well if you are getting a bike out of it I wouldn't complain. If you're serious I'm thinking of selling mine.”

“Yours I didn't think that you still had a bike.”

“Oh I kept the bike after the crash. Fixed it back up and left it in pristine condition. Four years it's stood now waiting for me to get the courage to take to the road. I call her The Ultimate Fear.”

“You've given you bike a name,” Rollin' said, “Seriously?”

“Yes, why not.”

“The Ultimate Fear?” Jack said.

“It means different things as time marches on. When I first had her I had no fear as I was opening up along country lanes. The only thing I feared was the bike packing up for I saw that as fate being against me so that was the ultimate fear.”

“Yes I can see that, if it cuts out on you that's it.”

“Then I took a head on and now I will not get on it so it has a different meaning.”

“And you don't think that you will ever conquer it?”

“I'm indifferent to it now, I get my kicks elsewhere. It's just taking up space at the moment don't get me wrong there is nothing wrong with the bike I've just changed.”

“And what sort of bike is it?”

“A Trident.”

“And how much are you actually looking for, although I'm not too keen on a Brit bike.”

“£1200. I reckon I could get a lot more for it if I was prepared to put up with the hassle.”

“I'll think about it. As I said I'm not really sure at the moment.”

“Sure, take your time it's not going anywhere.”

“I like the name though I'll give you that.”

“Well I have my moments. It's surprising what the smoke trawls up.”

“So what is your ultimate fear now, well if you do get rid of the bike I mean?”

“Oh not another bleeding discussion,” Rollin' said, “Look I'm going to get off now, I'll see you tomorrow,” and left the scene to start another somewhere else. After he had gone Chillin' said, “Ultimate fear, being buried alive I guess.”

“Oh I thought you would have said dying.”

“Not mine, I've got nine lives.”

“What?”

“Well, look at it from my point of view. I died at the crash, I must have done.”

“I think that smoke maybe too strong. Whatever makes you say that?”

“When I came around I thought it was someone else.”

“So?”

“Think about it. When I woke to all intents and purposes I was someone else concerned about my condition.”

“And?”

“So something must have died and I took over with another life.”

“So you think that you are some sort of human cat?”

“Well I don't know about that I just know that it took away my fear of death.”

“If that's the case then what's stopping you getting on the Trident?”

“It's the fear of fate rather than the fear of death. Now I reckon that everything happens for a reason so for me to crash what was the reason?”

“I don't know. Besides I don't believe that everything happens for a reason. You had a bit of bad luck that was all, it could happen to anyone.”

“No I disagree; you make your own luck in this life.”

“Have it your own way,” Jack said not wanting to get into debate on the matter, “So what do you think you've done to upset fate then?”

“I don't know, well it's all done and dusted now.”

“So how many crashes have you had then,” Jack said thinking that his logic dictated that it should only be.....

“One.”

“So what's all that Teflon crap?”

“Just someone else's nickname I thought it sounded pretty funny.”

“Oh just a joke then, what about charging blind down country roads?”

“Yes I've done that before. No that Teflon was just a throwaway remark.”

“And fate?”

“No that holds true. I lost a life back then it's something I'll never forget, it made me look beyond a little, it was quite enlightening I can tell you.”

“So why should you fear fate more than death, that's not logical.”

“It is to me, it's a spiritual thing so don't worry about it.”

“No I'm interested, well as long as you are not planning to embark on crusade.”

“Not me, I'm no Richard III.”(At this juncture in the tale I must intercede as in regards to historical accuracy it should be Richard the Lion-heart. Now in regards to cockney rhyming slang forget the previous statement.)

“Good, I'm not that interested in religion.”

“Nor me. No I fear fate more than I fear death because fate transcends death, it's a reincarnation thing.”

“You mean the Law of Consequences?” Jack said much to Chillin's surprise.

“Yes that's right as I said it's a spiritual thing.”

“And your ultimate fear is being buried alive, are you sure it's not getting on the bike?”

“No,”

“Well not being funny but I can't see how fate fits in with this. To me it sounds like you are too scared to get on the bike.”

“No, why would that be I've already died once so why should I fear it?”

“Well if you really believe that you tell me. Fate won't wash unless there is something you are not telling me.”

Chillin' went quiet for awhile before answering, “I saw it in a dream the day before, that's how I knew it was fated to happen.”

“Maybe it was just a warning; you needn't have taken the bike out that day.”

“Well I thought that it was just a dream at first, scary but a dream nevertheless.”

“Oh so you found out the hard way you still think it was fate?”

“Maybe it was just a warning.”

“So what's stopping you getting onto the bike and riding off into the sunset, it can't be fate.”

“Maybe I'm getting a little too old for it, it doesn't have the same appeal as it used to.”

“So you don't miss tearing down country roads,” Jack said just to rub it in.

“No I'd rather just chill out with the music any day of the week.”

“Well I'll think about it and let you know,” Jack said, then looking at the watch, “Is that the time I'd better get off as I've got an early start tomorrow.”

“What, that renovation job?”

“Yes, we’ll be there another fortnight I guess. After that I might take it easy. I’m starting to miss my lie-ins now.”

“I’ll bet,” Chillin’ said as he let Jack out.

As Jack walked the short distance to his place his thoughts were firmly on Chillin’. He knew he was an odd ball but then again so were most of Jack’s friends as he preferred it that way. His perceptions that he had died before were quite tame to most of the stuff he came out with so Jack took little heed. He had remembered when Chillin’ had said that he used to belong to a certain chapter of a certain outlaw biker club but had to leave as he was reluctant to use weapons. Yes Chillin’ could tell a tale or two and Jack who took it all with a pinch of salt found it quite entertaining. Rollin’ on the other hand had a different opinion of him he thought him a bullshitter not to put too fine a point on it though he did concede that he knew where to get a good smoke and was very generous with it. Jack though he quite liked the bloke was known to wind him up on the odd occasion. “A Triumph Trident,” he said aloud, “£1200 sounds a lot of money it’s just a bike at the end of the day.” His mind debated on the pros and cons and this took up the rest of the journey. When he got home Jack put the kettle on and the conversation turned, “Hang on a minute,” he thought, “It’s probably all a pack of lies. I don’t ever actually remember seeing him on one; he could have got that scar anywhere.” He took a drink and thought no more about it until the next day at work when he saw Rollin’.

“So how long did you stay?” Rollin’ asked.

“About another hour I thought that I would have an early night.”

“He can wear you down can’t he?”

“True, do you reckon he has actually got a bike for sale?”

“What serious, I shouldn’t think so, well I’ve never seen him on one in all the time that I’ve known him.”

“How long is that?”

“About three years, he used to drink in the Swan.”

“Well he says he hasn’t been on the road in four years.”

“Oh yes I remember. Maybe he has got one then you can never tell with Chillin’. Why, are you thinking about buying it then?”

“If it exists I wouldn’t mind a Trident. Well balanced you know as it’s a triple.”

“Well that means nothing to me.”

“Me neither,” Jack said with a laugh, “I read it somewhere.”

“What did he call it again? Giving a bike a name, I don’t know.”

“The Ultimate Fear, I quite liked the name.”

“Well don’t dwell on it, it probably doesn’t exist anyway.”

“You know I ought to say that I want to have a look at it then see what he has to say about it.”

“You’ll know for sure then, actually it might be fun thinking about it.”

“We’ll nip up tomorrow night then, I wouldn’t mind seeing if it exists,” and made arrangements for the next night. The rest of the day went pretty quickly and the evening saw Jack in the company of Pauline. He had told her about the bike and much to his surprise she was keen on him buying it.

“Pristine condition,” Pauline said, “You ought to buy it if you can afford it. I’ve seen them go for anything up to six grand. Even if it’s just to buy it to sell it again you won’t lose out on it.”

“Well if it’s true.”

“I don’t know the man so I can’t judge but if it’s true snap his hands off.”

“I’ll know tomorrow.”

“If you need to borrow any money let us know. It would make a good business deal.”

“Alright,” Jack said with a smile and said no more on the subject. They talked some more before retiring to bed and Jack fell into a deep lucid dream. He was sitting on a Triumph Trident gunning flat out down a country lane. It was a hot bright day and he was enjoying himself banking into the sweeping bends. The Trident was chromed almost from tip to toe and gleamed and sparkled like a

diamond set in gold. Jack dropped it down a gear and accelerated into a long right hand bend. He was banking that low that if he had, had a match in his mouth he could have lit it. (Well maybe not but you know where I'm coming from.). He followed the curve of the road, his mind totally focused on his line and swept out into a left hand bend. His thoughts were that occupied that he never saw the concealed entrance up ahead nor the tractor as he hurled towards it until it was nearly too late. The tractor driver had panicked and broke hard leaving it stuck halfway across the road and Jack with very little space to manoeuvre. He jerked the bike into a new line and somehow managed to get by. The exhilaration of the near miss mixed liberally with relief lifted Jack's senses and woke him up. He saw that it was only 2 o'clock and reluctant to disturb Pauline lay there and thought about the dream. Yes, his mind was made up. He wanted the bike and as he drifted off again that thought was paramount in his mind.

Jack next found himself on the same bike being chased by a police car. He could not stop as the car was too close behind him to pull up in time so as you can imagine he was hanging on by the skin of his teeth. The scene was in a town now, late at night and pretty quiet though not for Jack as he came up to a sharp bend. He had taken it too narrow and the police car tried to overtake him nearly knocking him off in the process, the next one he took wider forcing the car to go wider still and brake hard in front of a lamp post. The chase carried on and Jack found himself in front of a park entrance trying to negotiate the barriers that were put there to stop cars. The car had stopped and two police officers were out and almost upon him. It was then he woke up.

Jack went into the kitchen, put the kettle on and debated on the meaning of the dream. He could get nowhere with it so he cast it from his mind and thought about the bike itself. The nightmare did not retract anything from the bike's appeal so he looked forward to seeing it if it actually existed. He put some bread in the toaster and a couple of eggs in a saucepan to boil. Pauline had joined him in the kitchen just as they were ready to be served. "Timed that right," Jack said greeting her.

"Don't I always, Pauline said taking a cup of tea from Jack's hands, "So sleep well?"

"Not bad, a couple of weird dreams though," and went on to tell her about them. After he had finished Pauline said, "I reckon you ought to keep off the smoke if it's going to do that to you."

"No it's just strange though isn't it, two dreams of the same bike, the same bike Chillin' was saying was up for sale."

"Who knows how the mind works, maybe deep down you want to buy the bike and so the dream works accordingly."

"I could understand that with the first dream but what about the second?"

"I don't know Jack. Maybe it's warning you not to break the law when you get it."

"Yes probably. I just hope that it's not a premonition like Chillin's."

"Sorry?" Pauline said as Jack had not mentioned it.

"Chillin' said that he had a dream of a crash and then a crash. I know he's a bit of a story teller but after last night's dream he might just be telling the truth."

"Oh. No thinking about it there may be a way of checking if it's a premonition."

"There is, how?"

"Well think about it, you haven't seen the bike as yet. I mean it might not actually exist but that's a different point. You said that the bike was chromed, if this one is then you'll know for sure."

"True, I'm willing to bet that there's not many about."

"So the odds are well against it."

"Then I'll find out tonight," and they both sat down to breakfast.

Chapter 2

Seven o' clock saw Jack knocking on the door of Chillin's flat. Rollin' had cried off as he had decided that a night out in the pub was more preferable.

"Come in," Chillin' said letting him in, "I'll make us a smoke."

"Well actually it's the bike I've come to see. I got to thinking it sounded a good bike."

“Well I don't actually keep it here. Anyway I've been having second thoughts about selling it.”

“You have?” Jack said, his suspicions getting stronger, “So why the change of heart?”

“I guess talking about it got me interested again. Besides its tax exempt now and with classic insurance it should be cheap to run.”

“Oh well I guess it's just the smoke then.”

“Sorry about that. I'll put the kettle on first and we'll get down to business.” It was not the business that Jack had in mind but it was a close second so Jack settled in happily. “No I got to thinking I'd keep it. I mean let's be honest you don't see many about, especially chromed.”

“Chromed, from top to bottom?”

“Yes that's right, panels, tank, the whole lot.”

“And this is the same bike that you saw in the crash?”

“Er yes, why?”

“I saw one in a dream, well two dreams actually.”

“Really, you saw my bike in a dream, what happened?”

“Well the first one had me just missing a tractor and the second being caught by the police. I tell you they were really clear.”

“That's weird that it, so what does it mean?”

“I haven't a clue. I just know that when I had them I felt that I was really there.”

“Well you said that mine was a warning.”

“I was just guessing, it sounded right.”

“You know that, that was not the only time I dreamt about that bike, I must have had at least a dozen.”

“Well who knows what dreams are for,” Jack said dismissing it for it was starting to sound even more complicated, “I wouldn't mind taking a look at your bike though.”

“It's over on the other side of town in my ex's garage. I'll have to arrange it as we don't get on.”

“Sure,” Jack said thinking he was being evasive.

“I'll get back to you on it,” Chillin' said and changed the subject to confirm Jack's fear. They talked on for another hour before Jack made his excuses and left. As he walked the short distance to his place he thought back to the bike and the whole confusing scene. Jack reasoned that Chillin' must have had the dream yet he did not think that he had the bike so he was a little confused. These two thoughts fought for his attention and he covered the journey in their grasp. He was none the wiser when he got home so he left it at that and made himself a drink before retiring to bed and another dream.

Jack found himself on a narrow country lane going hell for leather with no regard for his surroundings. He swung to the left and then to the right going with the bike as if they were one. He saw a 'T' junction and braked hard but it was too late. He found the bike sliding on gravel and careering over to a parked Mini. He hit the car and slid down the road with the bike behind him. Jack woke up in a cold sweat and automatically checked his arms for damage. Three dreams of the same bike and Jack was in total confusion. What was happening to him? He rarely dreamed normally so this added to his stress. He tried to rationalise it but it was well beyond his understanding. It was another hour of pointless conjecture before he fell back to unconsciousness.

Jack found himself in a dark cavern being guided by a light in front of him. As he merged into it he found himself in a large square room with the Trident holding centre ground. He studied the bike for it had started to glow and watched it transform itself into being. Its whole form had changed from solid into a dark spirit that fluctuated before his eyes.”

“Giovanni Templeton Smythe,” a voice echoed around the room, “Or Jack Sprat to his friends, meet the Ultimate Fear.”

Surprisingly Jack was neither alarmed nor scared, he just seemed to take it in his stride, “Who do you serve?” he found himself saying.

“I serve myself,” the voice echoed.

“And what do you want from me?”

“Your fear for that is what I feed on.”

“Looks like you are fasting from now on.”

“You've got no control over it for I can do it while you sleep.”

“The dreams,” Jack said upon realisation, “That's what they were about. Fear of crashing, fear of getting caught. What about the last one though?”

“A stronger manifestation of fear, pain.”

“Fear, pain and then death?”

“You seem to have a grasp of the situation, it's a shame you have no control over it.”

“Oh but I have, you see I can wake up.”

“Maybe but then you'll only slow it down Jack. I'm afraid you have to sleep.”

“You can't hurt me, the pain left as soon as I woke up.”

“They say that if you die in a dream then you die in reality,” the voice said changing tact.

“I don't believe that; let's look at it with logic.”

“Logic, it works on understanding.”

With that the scene changed. Jack found himself falling off a cliff and plummeting down to his demise. His whole body dropped like a stone and he felt gravity's strong pull on him. The ground got closer and much to Jack's surprise he could not wake up. Closer still he got and then he started to slow down and then suddenly lift and soar into the sky. His stomach rose and the elation from this sent him back into the well lit room.

“So you can fly,” the voice said, “Where's the logic in that?”

“Must mean that I can't die then so where does that leave you?”

“Now I wasn't after killing you that would be daft Jack. If you die then so do I as I've nothing to feed on.”

“So what about fear, pain death?”

“Well you said it; I just go with the flow. I mean let's be honest if you want to think negative its good breeding ground for me.”

“And what do you actually want from me? You must have got in touch for some reason.”

“I want that bike if it exists.”

“What, do you mean that you don't know?”

“Sorry, force of habit I always try and leave a statement with a doubt.”

“So it does exist and you want me to buy it.”

“Buy it, steal it whatever just get it. You know that you want it anyway.”

“Well I would never steal it, besides how do I know that I want it as it could be just you and anyway who are you to try and feed of me.”

“I'm your shadow self, the Ultimate Fear. To truly know me is to bury me. Until you do that I will feed of you.”

“So all I have to do is to find out what you are and that's it.”

“That's right, easy isn't it?”

“Death, no fate.”

“Maybe it's not so easy after all. You see it changes with each person it touches. You are welcome to keep trying but I must caution you that if you are wrong you will pay a forfeit.”

Jack thought a while and remembered Chillin's fear of being buried alive, “Being buried alive?”

“Wrong,” the voice said and Jack found himself lying in the bottom of a grave unable to move. He looked up and saw a shovelful of earth fall on him. Another quickly followed and Jack felt the weight of the soil on his legs. More and more dirt came over and the weight of the soil seemed to semi crush his legs. Soon he could see no light and just felt the weight and darkness. After a while he found himself back in the brightly lit room.

“Not much food in that,” the voice said with more than just a hint of disappointment.

“Well it wasn't my fear,” Jack said and then the realisation, “You are not the ultimate fear you are

mine. It changes with each person that was just a blind alley”

“Well deduced. So what is your ultimate fear then? Bare this in mind before you answer, if you are wrong then the same thing will happen to you.”

“I think I guessed that one. Now let me get this right I have to guess what my ultimate fear is and if I get it wrong I go through the fear and you feed from it.”

“That about sums it up.”

“It's more than that though isn't it.”

“Is it?” the voice said pleading ignorance.

“The more you feed the stronger you get and the weaker I get. You said that if I knew what you were I would bury you. What I want to know is what will happen to me.”

“The same you see Jack this isn't a game. We are playing for life. The winner takes it all and the loser has to fall,” and the room bellowed with laughter after that.

“Well I look at it like this,” Jack said, “I've got nothing to gain from this so I don't think I'll bother.”

“That's your choice and now you must bow down before me.”

“What,” Jack said with a laugh, “Is this some sort of joke?”

“You failed the quest.”

“I never took one.”

“To find out what I am.”

“Oh dear, never mind, just one of those things.”

“I wouldn't be so sure of yourself Jack. You don't quite know what you have got involved in.”

“You can't harm me. Sure you can give me the occasional nightmare but I can live with that.”

“I'm afraid it's a little worse than that, I can turn you into a nervous wreck.”

“Yeah right,” Jack scoffed, thinking that he meant through lack of sleep, “All I have to do is get some sleeping tablets.”

“Not as easy as that Jack you see as I get stronger you get weaker; your confidence will disappear for all you will have is fear. Not a good guide for life really, controlled by your instinct you may as well be a rabbit, a Jack Rabbit,” and laughed again.

“What, so you will just take over?”

“Yes, you won't feel a thing, you won't even know if it's happening. You'll just wake up and that's it. A nervous breakdown and it's got your name on it.”

“Looks like the game's on then.”

“I thought that you would see it my way.”

“Right,” Jack said going deep into thought, “Well it's not death as we reincarnate,” with that the form flickered and lost strength. “What just happened there?” he said on seeing it.

“What, where?”

Jack could see that it was hiding something but carried on regardless, “And it's not the fear of hell either, reincarnation sorts that as well.”

The form flickered again and Jack looked at it strangely although said nothing, “So what about fate then,” Jack said still thinking about it.

“Well you mentioned it before.”

“Now you wouldn't be encouraging me if that was the right answer,” Jack said dismissively. “So why not fate then?” he thought some more before saying, “Ah got it. You cannot fear something that is an effect of your actions for you are in control of your actions.”

“Are you trying to say that you control fate then?”

“No what I'm saying is that my actions create reactions so each action has a consequence. In that sense I can control it though that's not fate as such it's a divine law that fate upholds.”

“So why do people fear fate then?”

“They don't understand it. That's not my problem for it's not my fear. No it only comes from ignorance,” with that the form flickered once again.

“Well you don't seem to be any the wiser,” the voice said trying to put a spanner in the works.

“Maybe not but I'm taking my toll.”

“You think so,” the voice said trying to knock him off guard.

“Oh I know so. I don't know quite how as yet but I reckon I've hurt you three times.”

“You think so,” the voice repeated again not giving anything away.

“So onto the ultimate fear,” Jack said dictating the terms, “I said being buried alive before but thinking it through that's just a form of death and so falls to the reincarnation logic.”

The form flickered once more and so Jack thought that he would carry on, “Being shot, now that would be the same too.” another flicker. “Being crushed as well,” another flicker. “Falling off a cliff,” another flicker. “Drowning in a molten mass of volcanic lava,” another flicker. “Yes,” Jack said, “Every one of those fears falls down on its face because we all live on. So thinking it through the ultimate fear must be a mental death as opposed to a physical.”

With that the form changed into Jack so he found himself looking at his reflection. This did not last though for the ground opened up and it fell into the ready-made hole. Jack woke up just before the alarm clock and went to work as normal. He lost interest and forgot about the bike so he never asked to see it again much to Chillin's relief I will wager.

3. Jack be Quick.

February turned to March and Jack's renovation job finished. It was a quiet month for work but he was not too bothered as he had enough money to ride it out. Spring was making its presence felt and wedding bells were in the air though not Jack personally for he was not that way inclined. No, the bells never tolled for Jack they tolled for a school friend of his, Anthony Dear or Bambi to his friends. He was not a close friend of Jack's, in fact more of a rival for they both competed in the school cross country competitions. Bambi always won as he was fleet of foot though Jack was always a close second. This rivalry spread from sport into everyday life and carried on after they both left school though not as strong for they rarely saw each other. In fact Jack only found out about the stag night from Nigel the day before.

"Oh I bumped into Bambi the other day," Nigel said as he sat in Jack's flat drinking a cup of tea, "He was asking if I still saw you."

"Really," Jack said not too bothered, "What's he after?"

"A marriage certificate more fool him."

"Bambi getting married," Jack said in surprise, "Who to?"

"He mentioned her name but I'm afraid I don't remember it. She didn't go to our school though he said he met her through work."

"So what's he doing now then?" Jack said not totally indifferent but getting close.

"P.T instructor, mind you he was in to his sports at school."

"Waste of time going to university then just to be a P.E. Teacher. I don't know."

"Oh no, he doesn't teach kids he trains at a private fitness centre, very up market, The Beeches at Aston Cross."

"I've heard of that place. They charge an arm and a leg to try and get rid of a stomach, very posh."

"Yes that's right they get some very famous people."

"I'll bet so what does he want then?"

"Oh nothing really he wants to see if you are going on his stag night."

"Really, when is it?"

"Tomorrow, he says meet at The Swan around seven and we'll end up at a club."

"It's a bit short notice, are you going?"

"I may as well. I did not really know him as he was a couple of years younger but it's a knees-up at the end of the day."

"True. To tell you the truth I did not really like the bloke as he was a bit of a big head. Nice of him to invite me I wonder what he's after?"

"Oh so he's not a mate then. Sorry, he gave me the impression that he was."

"Well he's not an enemy it's just that we had a bit of rivalry. It's all to do with one up man-ship with him."

"Sorry. I never knew."

"It's probably different now. This was from back in school he might have grown up by now."

"Well it's still a knees up at the end of the day, are you putting the kettle on?"

"Sure," Jack said and went into the kitchen. He made them both a drink and returned. As he passed the mug to Nigel he said, "No it all stemmed from cross country. I could never beat him."

"Well I read that he was area champion so it seems you weren't the only one."

"Days gone by I don't even think that I can walk the course now."

"Yes," Nigel said in agreement, "It's surprising how unfit we quickly get."

"Don't I know it? I bet Bambi's still pretty fit."

"Well you won't be racing him except with beer that is."

"And I'm not that much good at that either."

"You'll know for sure tomorrow," Nigel said with a laugh and changed the subject. They talked

some more and Nigel left around four so Jack had an hour to kill until Pauline came around. He thought back to the constant races, constant in the fact that he always came second that is. Yes, he was certainly a lot faster than Jack and at the time he was pretty envious of him after school though it lessened as Jack could not see the point. In the end it just seemed petty so Jack left him to it. When Bambi went to university Jack completely lost contact and any thoughts about him quickly disappeared.

Pauline's arrival stopped his reminiscing and after letting her in they settled down to a quiet night of good conversation. It was not long before Bambi's name came up though for Jack told her about the stag night.

"Tony getting married?" Pauline said in surprise, "I never knew that. You know I never thought that he would."

"You were at university with him if I remember right?"

"That's right. You want to watch yourself if you are out drinking with him."

"Really," Jack said in surprise, "Why's that then?"

"That bloke could drink like a fish at uni. He won the Golden Cone award two years running."

"What? Golden Cone award, what the hell is that?"

"Oh it's an award for the student that can drink the most. It's a traffic cone that's been sprayed gold."

"Right so when did you actually get time to study then?"

"Funny. No, I tell you it was quite an achievement and two years running made him a bit of a legend."

"Looks like it's going to be a heavy night then," Jack said and told her about their history.

"You're going to have a hell of a hangover. I don't know Jack, you men and your pride."

"Me. I have no doubts he can drink me under the table. I'm not that much of a drinker."

"So there won't be a competition then?"

"Not from me I wouldn't stand a chance. He's well out of my league."

"They used to call him the drain," Pauline said as a slight nostalgia slipped in, "He could pour anything down him, cocktails the lot. I seen him in rounds with two different groups and he still kept up. Yes he was definitely a legend."

"Don't rub it in I've got to go out drinking with him tomorrow."

"Yes but you won't be racing."

"It's a stag night Pauline and the fellow, well the last time I saw him, liked to try and rub my nose in it. I reckon that if it is not a race it will be a very fast pace."

"I won't come around Saturday," Pauline said laughing, "And Sunday as I think you'll still be sleeping it off."

"Cheers, I think you're probably right." The subject changed and time moved on. The next day came and Nigel knocked on Jack's door at six with a couple of cans to start the proceedings. "I thought we'd make an early start," he said by way of greeting as he passed Jack a can.

Jack opened it and took a drink "It's going to be a long night," he said after he had finished, "I've heard he can drink like a fish."

"Well here's to fish then," Nigel said as he raised his can before taking a drink.

"Yes you're right; it should be a good night, many turning out?"

"I'm not sure" Nigel said and took another drink, "I wonder what club we are going to?"

"Probably Canters, no dress code."

"Just as well then I'm afraid my attire won't stand close inspection."

"Mine neither, don't worry about it," Jack said and took another drink, "Not bad this, do you want a smoke?"

"Have you been round Chillin's?"

"Not recently. It's surprising how long I can make it last."

"Yes go on then. Make a couple for tonight it you've got a lot."

"Not a bad idea," and started to make them, "I should have got some Billy really, it would help me

with the drinking.”

“I wouldn't worry about it. I bet there will be that many people there he'll hardly notice you.”

“True,” Jack said and lit one up, “Yes you are right. I don't know what I'm fretting about.” They finished the smoke and drank another can and by then it was time to go. They walked the short distance to The Swan and much to their surprise it was empty.

Jack got served and said to Nigel, “Strange this. Have we got the right night?”

“Yes he definitely said Friday.”

“It's still a little early yet,” Jack said looking at his watch, “It's only ten to. You'd have thought there would be some signs of life though.”

With that the door opened and three men came in. Jack recognised Bambi but the other two were unfamiliar.

“Giovanni,” Bambi said, “How are you doing man?”

“Sound,” Jack said shaking his hand, “So who's the lucky lady?”

“Elisabeth Brady. I doubt if you know her. I met her through work. These are two of her brothers by the way. Stephen, Andrew I would like you to meet an old sparring partner of mine, Giovanni Templeton Smythe. He always used to come second. What are you having to drink by the way.” he said the last part straight after so Jack had no time to think of a reply to the insult.

“I'll have a lager then,” Jack said and made a note in his head that Bambi had not changed.

“Same for you Nigel?”

“Yes go on then,” Nigel said sizing him up as he did not like the insult either.

They settled down around a table and Bambi started the conversation, “So what are you doing with yourself Jack?”

“Bitting and bobbing. I work with Nigel, mainly building.”

“Really,” Bambi said with disinterest, “I'm a physical trainer now. Work at The Beeches, along with Stephen and Andrew's a Warehouse Manager. I bet you make it pay I've heard about you builders.”

“I get by. So where are the rest of them? I thought there would be more here by now.”

“Oh this is it I didn't want a big affair. You know what it's like with large stag nights they can quickly get out of hand. No just a select few will do me.” He had finished his first pint by then so he said, “Some do's this is. Who's in the chair?”

“I'll get these,” Nigel said, “Do you want to give us a hand Jack?”

“Yes go on. Shall I get some change for the pool table?”

“Sure,” Bambi said, “I like a game of pool.”

At the bar Nigel said, “I didn't realise that he had such a high opinion of himself.”

“Well he's not changed I'll give him that. Not to worry I guess it is his night.”

“It won't be the way he's going,” Nigel said with a laugh and took the glasses from Dave behind the bar. “Cheers Dave,” and they both went back to the table.

“I was just telling Stephen about our racing days,” Bambi said on their return, “He found it pretty amusing.”

“Ah days gone by,” Jack said shrugging it off.

“Yes I used to do a bit of running myself,” Stephen said, “Pretty hard going cross country.”

“I don't think that I could walk it nowadays,” Jack said, “Ah the joys of youth.”

“You're only the same age as me,” Bambi said, “You're talking like you are an old man.”

“I was only being ironic; you know a sense of humour.”

“Oh,” Bambi said and took a large drink from his glass, “Like that is it. So you want that game of pool?”

“Yes sure,” Jack said getting up.

“We'll get another drink on the way past,” Bambi said and emptied his glass. Jack still had half a pint and was struggling to keep up. Nigel on the other hand was in his element as was the other two. They got served again and got on the pool table. Jack and Nigel took on Bambi and Andrew and though it was a close call Jack and Nigel lost.

“Still coming second Jack,” Bambi said and Nigel seeing Jack about to lose his temper said, “You got lucky, we play better when there's money involved.”

“Oh a gambling man,” Bambi said not really knowing how to take Nigel, “It would make it a little interesting I suppose. I was area champion you know.”

“I thought that was for cross country,” Nigel said in surprise.

“And pool,” Bambi said and took a large gulp from his near empty glass, “And a couple of awards for drinking.” Another round and they set the balls up.

“So whose playing and for how much?” Nigel said as he chalked the cue.

“Five pound a man sound good to you?” Bambi said, “And I'll play with Andrew.”

Bambi's whole game changed and he virtually finished from the break. Nigel pulled a couple of balls back but Andrew quickly cleared the rest.

“Do you want another?” Bambi said.

“Maybe later,” Nigel said, “I reckon it's got to be my round.” Nigel went to the bar and was some time in returning. Jack still had three quarters of a pint left and was struggling to make an impression on it.

“Come on Jack,” Bambi said, “It's still early yet, we've got a long night ahead of us,” and laughed loudly.

Jack took a long drink and emptied half the contents just in time to see Nigel return with another.

“There you go,” Nigel said passing Bambi his drink, “You said you got an award for drinking. What was it, some sort of yard of ale competition?”

“Well two awards actually,” Bambi said correcting him, “The golden Cones award 97 and 98.”

“What, I've never heard of them.”

“I got them at university,” Bambi said proudly, “The best drinker of them all.”

“Oh a student thing,” Nigel said with a twinkle in his eye, “I thought you meant a real award for real drinking.”

“Say what. You don't know what real drinking is until you go to university.”

“So they used to say. I've heard that it's different now we're not in the eighties anymore.”

“Right,” Bambi said and emptied his glass, “We'll see how you get on tonight.” and looking at Jack with a full pint of lager, “And I hope you last a lot longer than your mate.”

“Jack's not a lager drinker,” Nigel said, “He's like me a cocktail drinker. I could drink this piss until it came out of my eyes and still not get drunk. There's a problem see, there's only one drink that will get me drunk and that's rocket fuel.”

“What, are you trying to be funny?”

“No Gold Label and Southern Comfort. It's as sweet as honey and stings like a bee.” (At this point in the tale I would caution you not to try this at home as I cannot be held responsible for the effects of this concoction.)

“I've never tried it,” Bambi said, “And you reckon it's good.”

“Oh yes,” Nigel said. Jack had somehow managed to finish his drink by now so the insult must have hit home. “I'll get us one if you want. Would you like to give me a hand Jack?”

“Sure, Jack said getting up, “I've just got to go to the toilets first.”

“I hope you're not going to be sick Jack,” Bambi said with a laugh.

“Funny,” Jack said as he left the room.

Jack came back and joined Nigel at the bar, “What are you playing at,” he said on arrival, “How the hell I'm I supposed to drink that stuff?”

“Got it covered. You'll be drinking a substitute that Dave mixed. You might want to pretend you're drunk after a couple. That's where I was earlier, giving him the ingredients.”

“So you saw it coming?”

“Well I don't like losing at pool. We'll see how he plays when he's pissed.”

“What about you that's a pretty lethal drink.”

“I'll only drink every other one, just in case he gets suspicious. There is not much difference in the

taste but you never can tell.”

“Does that mean that we are going to have to go to the bar each time?”

“Yes that might be a problem,” and looking at Dave, “What do you reckon?”

“Well all the regulars have their own special glasses. You could borrow these two they were left behind and never claimed so you can keep them if you want.”

“Cheers Dave,” Jack said, “Much appreciated,” and emptied the contents from his and Nigel's glasses into the new ones.

“If they want to see me mix them you might be in trouble,” Dave said.

“Never thought of that,” Nigel said.

“I could tell that that it's got a nasty reputation, you know like snake bite,” Dave said, “So it's not a good idea to mix it at the bar.”

“Yes why not,” Jack said, “We owe you one Dave,” and they both went back to the pool room.

Nigel passed the drinks around and explained the situation about its service.

“So,” Bambi said smelling it and getting a little put off, “This is it then?”

“Yep,” Nigel said, “The first one must always go down in one it's a tradition.”

Bambi finished it in one go and said, “Got a nice taste this has so what about a game of pool?”

“You play with Stephen and Andrew awhile,” Nigel said, “I play a lot better when I'm drunk.”

“Sure,” Bambi said, “And maybe you want to increase the bet?”

Nigel pretended to think and said, “What about the loser has to pick up the tab for the drinks?”

“What? Jack said pretending to be surprised, “Do you know how much that will be?”

“Well that round cost £20,” Nigel said, “So it might be quite a wack.”

“You're on,” Bambi said, his eyes lighting up, “Right let's get this tab going,” and another round was sent for. Jack and Nigel sat out the next few games and another couple of drinks were emptied.

Jack pretended to be a little too drunk to play and Nigel played the concerned friend routine. The drink kicked in early for Andrew and he decided to think of an early evening. He left around nine though by then Bambi and Stephen were far too gone to notice.

“So,” Bambi said, “Whose round is it?”

“Mine I guess,” Nigel said getting up.

“How come you've got different glasses anyway?”

“Won 'em, it's just a thing down The Swan.”

“So what about the pool game then?” Bambi said impatiently.

“We'll see after this round,” Nigel said and went to the bar.

“I reckon he's about pissed,” Bambi said to Jack after Nigel had gone, “And you definitely are. However did you get a trophy?”

“With a very strong stomach,” Jack said as he had quite sobered up by then, “Student eh, you don't know you're born.”

“Alright how about I put my award up against yours on the outcome of the game?”

“Sure, although what I want with a traffic cone I do not know.” Nigel had come back by then so the wager was increased to both cones for both glasses. Still Nigel held off from playing and more drink filled the tables. Bambi was getting well out of his head and Stephen was a lot worse. Another round came and Stephen declined saying he would not be fit for pool and still the alcohol came on. At around quarter to eleven Nigel said, “Right, we'll get a game before last orders,” and set the table ready for action. Bambi took the break and virtually lost the game from the start. He left it that open that Nigel easily cleared five balls and left Stephen in a snooker. Stephen leant down to take his shot but his eyes started to go on him and he left the room quickly to vomit.

“You may as well take it,” Jack said pretending to be drunk, “I don't think he's coming back.”

Bambi took his shot and left Jack with two shots to clear up though he did not need them. The bar tab came to £200 and Jack got two golden sprayed cones the very next day. They did not end up in Canters as Bambi was too drunk and broke but it was definitely a night he would never forget. (Actually he probably did as it does have that effect.)

4. Jack Jumped Over the Candlestick (Spiritual Joke, Sorry).

April came and with no work on the horizon but Jack was happy to sit back and live off his immoral earnings a while longer. Thoughts of holidays and motorbikes were out and thoughts of self improvement in. He had never really been keen on education before though he was a pretty rational, articulate man. He got his education from life and though still only 22 he had a wise head and a fair bank of knowledge. He breached the subject to Pauline much to her surprise one fine spring morning.

“What, you go back to school,” she said almost spilling her coffee.

“No, I thought a course at tech.”

“Well that's still school.”

“Not full time, a couple of nights a week.”

“And have you picked one?”

“Not yet, I'm still toying with the idea.”

“So what exactly are you after,” Pauline said still not sure if he was teasing. She had often heard him extol the virtues of self reliance and the waste of money higher education was.

“I'm not sure, something to improve myself.”

“Well you could try the gym,” Pauline said with a laugh.

“Not my body my mind and anyway what's that supposed to mean?”

“Not being funny,” Pauline said keeping up the act, “But since work has dropped off you've got a lot more lethargic.”

“And you think that it's starting to show,” Jack said going over to the mirror to check.

“I thought that it was us women that were vain,” Pauline said laughing once more.

“One of those days is it,” Jack said giving up.

“Self improvement then,” Pauline said getting serious, “Another trade?”

“No I've got enough of them, well not on paper but in my head.”

“English Literature perhaps?”

“Not really my thing. It's something I don't think will appeal to me.”

“What about some of this New Age stuff, I don't know if they do it at school though.”

“New Age, what's all that about?”

“Well it covers a broad spectrum; I was thinking more of the esoteric side.”

“The what?”

“It's all about wisdom and understanding.”

“Well I could do with some wisdom that sounds more like the thing I am after.”

“I'll have a word with Harold at work he's always on about it.”

“Harold, is that the fellow I met at the works party? Middle aged with the face of an owl.”

“Face of an owl, very descriptive, I didn't realise that you had met him.”

“He cornered me once, kept me talking, well listening to be more accurate for what seemed like hours.”

“Well he does go on,” and then defensively, “But he knows what he's talking about.”

“Plenty of practice,” Jack said softly to himself with a smile and then, “So you reckon he can help then?”

“I'll ask him, he might let you come and sit circle.”

“Sit circle?”

“Oh it's what they call their meetings, well so Harold told me.”

“I'd probably best have a chat with him and see what it involves. I don't know about this circle thing it sounds clairvoyant.”

“Sure I'll arrange it tomorrow,” Pauline said and the subject changed to something else. Pauline left at six as it was Jack's night for pool and Nigel was due to call. Jack had took to playing pool down

The Swan once a week now his finances were better and though not quite in Nigel's league he could give him a game and sometimes even win. The tale picks up again at frame two with Jack about to break. He is one nil down but it was a close game so he is pretty keen to start.

"So you think you'll take me this time?" Nigel said.

"It's on the agenda; my favourite record's just about to start."

With that Charmless Man by Blur came on and Jack tore into the pack potting a red down in the process. He took another shot to watch another go down and two more quickly followed. He lined up for another but got distracted by the door opening and a man making his way to the bar. It was Harold and probably the last person that Jack had expected to see. He took his shot and missed leaving Nigel an easy clear up.

"I thought you had me that time," Nigel said, "You started off well."

"I guess I'm in need of a drink," Jack said and emptied his glass, "I mean two games and one pint it's embarrassing, same again?"

"Go on twist my arm then," Nigel said and Jack went to the bar.

"It's Harold isn't it?" Jack said as he approached the bar.

"Er yes, that's right," Harold said not recognising him.

"I'm Jack, Pauline's fellow. We met at the work's do last year."

"Oh yes I remember, Jack, yes. Can I get you a drink?"

"No you're alright I'm in a round. So you live round here?"

"Oh no," Harold said quickly, "I live over Rossington Way."

"Bit out your way," Jack said wondering why he was slumming it.

"I'm off to sit circle, I just called in for a quick drink."

"Actually funny you should say that Pauline was going to see you about setting up a meeting so I could find out a little more about er esoteric I think she called it."

"Er sure, so what are you actually after?"

"Wisdom, well I'm not sure really, I want to improve myself."

"A very noble sentiment so you want to sit circle with us then?"

"Well I want to find out what it's about I don't really want to just turn up."

"Tricky that you see it works on experience and understanding. It's hard to explain really, you have to endure it."

"I don't like the sound of that," Jack said but before he could continue a mobile phone rang.

"Sorry," Harold said taking it out of his jacket pocket. He spoke awhile before calling off and putting the phone back before saying, "Would you credit it, they might have phoned me earlier. Waste of petrol that's what it is?"

"Sorry, something wrong?"

"They've canceled. Mrs. Larkin's took ill again. Oh well I may as well have another."

"I'll get these," Jack said as Dave came up to them, "Same again Dave and whatever Harold's having."

"A pint of bitter thanks."

"You don't play pool I suppose," Jack said and much to his surprise Harold did. Jack introduced Harold to Nigel who was surprised that he had invited him in on the game though greeted him warmly.

"So," Nigel said to Harold, "How do you know Jack then?"

"I don't really," Harold admitted, "I work with his girlfriend Pauline."

"I was thinking of getting into self improvement," Jack said to Nigel by way of explanation,

"Pauline thinks that Harold might be able to help."

"Oh," Nigel said thinking it odd but saying nothing, "So what are you into then?" to Harold.

"Oh all sorts. Mythologies, philosophy, psychology, environmentalism, spiritualism, that kind of thing."

"Sounds interesting." Nigel said

“Well it gets me through the day,” Harold said adopting a more pompous tone.

“I’ll set them up,” Nigel said noticing the slight change in character, and then game commenced with Harold taking the break. Two yellows sunk and Harold said, “Looks like I haven’t lost it.”

“What?” Nigel said thinking that a little too pompous.

“My luck,” Harold said, “Yes there are more things going on in heaven and earth,” It was around about then Jack remembered what a bore he was.

Harold took another shot and the ball cut in at a very unusual angle. “Right,” Harold said and then looking at Nigel, “Sorry about this,” and made his next shot look like a straight cut. His apology to Nigel completely threw him because a shot like that looked impossible and could only be done through luck. Harold took another shot and missed although it was a pretty straight shot to a middle pocket. “Ah well,” Harold said and Nigel took control. He put four down and left Harold snookered behind the black.

“Good shot,” Harold said and eyed the white from an unusual angle. He took his shot and the white hit three cushions before cutting a yellow into the bottom pocket. “Sorry about that,” he said again. He went on to take another virtually impossible shot with a cut that fine it could slice an atom. He missed a fairly straight shot to the middle so he still had a yellow on the go.

“Unlucky,” Nigel said meaning it and went on to put in an easy red into a centre pocket. He missed the next shot but left the white safe, well so he thought. The yellow was on the cushion near the top right hand pocket and the white was two inches the wrong side of it. Harold cut the yellow and it rolled down the table never leaving the cushion until it sank in the bottom bag. His next shot on the black was well off target and left Nigel pretty much well set up for the game. The first red went in pretty easily but left him in the wrong place for the next. He tried to double it missing the first pocket but getting it in the opposite one.

“Sorry about that,” Nigel said as he took to lining up for the black.

“Do you play finishing on a double?”

“Sorry?”

“Oh that’s how we usually play it,” Harold said by way of explanation, “It’s a bit like going out on a double at darts.”

“Oh right,” Nigel said getting it, “Yes sure why not. Will I have to nominate in this?”

“We usually do it makes it a little trickier.”

“Okay then,” Nigel said and nominated a pocket that meant a straight double. He took it and missed the pocket leaving the black fairly close to the far end of the table. The white ended up at the near end the wrong side of the black for a cut to the right hand bottom pocket.

“Bottom left,” Harold said and sure enough, despite the improbability it went down.

“Good game, where did you learn to play like that?”

“Oh I practice a lot,” Harold said reverting back to his pompous self.

“No there’s something more to it. I’ve been watching how you play, analysing you.”

“What,” Harold said surprised that Nigel even knew the word let alone practiced it.

“Yes, you miss the rational shots and put in the imaginative ones.”

“What,” Harold said again completely surprised at Nigel’s grasp of the situation.

“That’s amazing,” Jack said thinking that maybe Nigel had hidden depths that even he did not know about.

“How do you work that one out?” Harold said thinking his grasp might have been at a straw.

“The straight shots to the middle bag, no lateral thought involved and you miss. The shots that need lateral thinking. You put them in but not only that you put them in from angles that look impossible to the eye.”

“That’s how I play. So tell me, where did you get that kind of insight from?”

“I practice a lot. So you just go for it and put your trust in luck?”

“That’s about it, and your insight?”

“Same thing I guess it just seems to come to me now and again.”

"You'll do well at circle. You ought to turn up and see what you think."

"Not me thanks, besides its pool night, we have our traditions."

"You'll get more out of it than a game of pool. Anyway think about it I've just got to nip to the loo."

After he had left Jack said, "I never knew that you knew about stuff like that. Perhaps I've been looking at the wrong person. You seem a bit off circles."

"Too many people bring their egos into it. I've never been to one but my mother's been to many."

"I never knew. So what about the weird way he could play pool?"

"Sounds a pretty good way to play I might have a practice and see how I get on."

"Not the straight shots though," Jack said with a laugh and at that moment Harold came back.

"My round I think," he said thinking nothing of the laugh, what are you both having? Is it winner stop on by the way?"

"Two lagers please," Jack said, "And it is winner stop on so I guess it must be my break."

Harold went to get the round in and Jack put the money in the machine. As he was setting the balls up Nigel said, "Why don't you try it. Just go for what you think that most improbable shot is and see what happens."

"I'll get seven balled," Jack said with a laugh, "No I'll try it a couple of times and see what happens."

"You never know. There are more things going on in heaven and earth."

"Don't you start," Jack said still laughing, "I'll think this is some sort of conspiracy."

Nigel laughed and said, "Are you going to split them?"

"I'll wait until he gets back, only manners."

Seeing that the jukebox was silent Nigel said, "I'll put your favourite record on."

"Might help, though I hope he doesn't take it personally."

Harold came back and Jack took the break. He hit it hard and a red cannoned into the bottom left pocket. His chance to try came straight away and he took it with gusto. The next red was pretty straight and went in easily and left the white ready for an easy middle pocket red. That one down he cleared another three leaving one left for next time. Harold took two amazing cuts and two easy shots before snookering Jack behind the black. Though it looked impossible to get Jack got it off three cushions and though it never went in it was placed pretty close to make it almost certain next time. Harold's first cut went in easily though he missed a pretty straight one afterwards. Jack put his last ball down and missed the double on the black. Harold's first cut went in easily though he missed a pretty straight one afterwards. Jack then missed the double on the black. Harold cut in his second last ball with an unusual shot and the last one with a simple cut as it was over the pocket. He nominated for the black and missed leaving Jack a straight double and the game.

"Good game," Harold said shaking his hand, "You must practice a lot as well."

"Hit and hope most of them but I did seem to sense some."

"Good, it works on experience and understanding."

"What, so this is the sort of thing you do at circle?"

"No," Harold said, "It's just a by-product," and turning to Nigel, "You seem a little dismissive of circle, why's that? Have you been to one before?"

"No my mother warned me about them but I see it as a personal journey anyway so group therapy's out of the question."

"Group therapy, is that how you perceive us?"

"Well yes, links for this and links for that. No it's not to my taste."

"We're not like that, it's more like one big pool of knowledge that we all dip our toes in. Many hands make light work as they say."

"And too many cooks spoil the broth. No my personal development can't be done through a committee."

"Well I'll not say that I'm not disappointed I think you could have enriched us no end and I'm sure we could have returned the favour."

“We're playing different games, just like pool.”

“Well I did beat you, doesn't that say anything?”

“I can beat you now. You gave me your insight.”

“You think so?”

“Jack did using your insight. He had never played like that before.”

“Oh. Well maybe we might have other insights that will appeal to you?”

“I doubt it, looks like I'm playing Jack,” and put his money in the machine.

“Hang on,” Harold said, his temper rising slightly, “Are you seriously trying to tell me that you think you know more than a group of six people? These are not just normal people you know. We are all pretty well respected by the people around us.”

“That's as maybe but this is my journey.”

“Oh yes,” Harold said in a mocking way, “And how far down the road has the journey taken you?”

“To the essence of enlightenment I guess you could say the end of the road.”

“Right,” Harold said laughing, “And what is it?”

“The essence of enlightenment works on three levels wisdom, the knowledge that gives you the discernment to know right from wrong. Spiritual wisdom, the knowledge that gives you the power to build up your imagination and loving spiritual wisdom, pure light and the knowledge to cleanse the Soul of its emotional heartache and give you true insight into your purpose in life. This was hidden in the mythologies and lost to Man so this level fell to obscurity. It is symbolised in Genesis by the death of Abel though as he was blessed by God he was immortal so it was more like a sleep. I believe you would call it your sleeping conscious. Now Cain symbolic of the intellect or the bit of you that takes the straight shots feeds on wisdom and Seth symbolic of the imagination, the bit that does the fine cuts feeds of spiritual wisdom. Three levels of understanding, mental, spiritual and divine. Now tell me what do you think I could get from your circle?”

“What. Could you write that down for me I wouldn't mind taking it with me to the circle.”

“I doubt it. I don't think I could remember it.”

“What?”

“I just go for it and put my trust in luck. That's how it works I'm afraid.”

The conversation ended not long after that Harold going off after he had lost another game of pool. Jack started to look at Nigel in a new light and basically let him become his teacher. It was not a black board and chalk kind of thing it was on a more informal basis. Pauline saw Harold the next day because Jack had not seen her to tell her otherwise and was quickly put wise. She started to take more of an interest in Nigel as before she had thought him somewhat of a moron and life carried on much as normal from that. A strange tale you might think with a plot that's shallower than a soap opera but there is more things going on in (oops I think it's contagious.)

5. Jack of Spades.

The year turned through May and most of the flora had bloomed giving the land a fresh colourful appeal. Jack's lessons with Nigel came on well and he had learned all about the elements, the chakras and the seven deadly sins. He grew in strength spiritually, though as it was out of his level of consciousness he did not realise it. It was another quiet month for work the only job he got came from Pauline and though grateful for it, it was a very dirty affair. Jack was at Pauline's and she was playing the dutiful host by making him a cup of tea. "Oh I might have another job for you," she called from the kitchen.

"What, for Anne?"

"Oh no you've finished there. She was very happy with your work, in fact it was her that recommended you to Jenny," and came back in giving Jack his tea.

"Jenny, I don't think that I know a Jenny. Thanks."

"Jenny Simpson, her dad owns Wyecroft Farm."

"David Simpson, I know him vaguely. I don't think I'll make much out of him."

"Well that's what she said," Pauline said with a laugh, "That's why I said might. He wants some sheds cleaning out."

"That doesn't sound too difficult. I'll have to see what he's paying first."

"Go over and see him and see what you can sort out."

"I'll nip over tomorrow with Nigel. A few garden sheds shouldn't take too long."

"True. So how are you getting on with Nigel, learned anything interesting?"

"It doesn't seem to mean anything yet. I sort of understand what he is saying but I can't actually equate it."

"I guess that takes time, I've heard it works through contemplation."

"That's what he said it's just a case of wait and see."

"You'll get there in the end," and they talked some more. The tale picks up the next day with Jack and Nigel making their way to the farm.

"He's supposed to be a bit tight isn't he?" Nigel said as he drove up to the entrance.

"I shouldn't think we'll get much for emptying out a couple of garden sheds anyway. It's probably a waste of petrol."

"Well we're here now," Nigel said and they parked up in the yard. As they got out David came over and spoke to them, "Are you here about the sheds?"

"That's right," Jack said, "You've got some garden sheds that want emptying?"

"Garden sheds; there must have been some misunderstanding."

"Sorry?"

"They're cattle sheds, haven't been cleared in years. I would do it myself but it might be a little too much for me."

"Cattle sheds?" Jack said and looked at Nigel.

"Yes it's a hard job," David said, "You'll definitely earn your money."

"So let me get this right," Jack said, "You are not talking about emptying them you are actually talking about cleaning them?"

"That's right, though I thought it was the same thing."

"Just a misunderstanding, so where are these sheds then?"

"If you'd like to follow me," David said and took them both to the sheds.

Jack and Nigel looked to the sheds with disbelief and Nigel said, "Nice job you got us Jack."

"So what do you think then? Are you up to the job? Are you workers or shirkers?"

"Oh I reckon we can handle it," Jack said.

"And within the time limit?"

"Time limit," Nigel said to Jack, "You never mentioned a time limit."

"I didn't know," Jack said and turning to David, "What time limit?"

“Oh didn't Jenny tell you, it's got to be done by the end of the week before the new stock arrives.”

“The end of the week, today's Friday, you must mean next week.”

“No this week the stock comes Monday.”

“No chance. I could bring someone else on the job but even with three I don't think it can be done.”

“Oh,” David said with a heavy sigh of disappointment, “What about if I made it worth your while, sort of a production bonus.”

“It's not the money it's the time involved. I don't work Sundays for a start so we are only talking about one day.”

“You don't work Sundays” David said in surprise, “You'll never make a farmer then.”

At that moment it started to rain and not just drops. The clouds opened and it bucketed it down.

“Come in,” David said, “We best get shelter,” and they followed him into the house kitchen.

“Well that's knackered it completely,” Nigel said, “It will be harder work shifting it when it's sodden.”

“Should be pretty dry,” David said, “The sheds are well sheltered. Do you both want a cup of tea?”

“Yes go on then,” Jack said and Nigel agreed.

“So,” David said after he had made the drinks, “You don't work Sundays then, it looks like I might be up the creek without a paddle.”

Jack thought awhile and said, “Couldn't you just move them in and we'll clear them later. After all let's be honest, it's not realistic to think that you could have it done before Monday.”

“No can do, the sheds have got to be spotless before the new stock arrives. Regulations I'm afraid.”

“Then you've got a real problem. Whoever takes that job on is going to work through the night to have to have a chance of finishing it and looking at the rain they won't be able to work in it. You want to hope it stops quickly or it will be hard work barrowing.” Jack looked out the window and saw that it was not easing. Rain bounced off Nigel's van with such ferocity that he was surprised it had not dented it. Just to run from the house to the van would have drenched them. “It doesn't look like it's going to let up. Shame that because you could do with someone starting it tonight.”

“I couldn't get any one at that short notice, I'm afraid that you are my only hope.”

Jack looked at Nigel and said, “Do you think it can be done?”

Nigel shrugged his shoulders and said, “Your guess is as good as mine. It would mean working non-stop and you might have to come in Sunday.”

Jack turned to David and said, “How much are you actually offering?”

“£300 is the best I can manage.”

“Well what do you think,” Jack said to Nigel, “We'll need Rollin' so that's a hundred pound each for working through Friday night, Saturday and probably Sunday.”

Nigel thought awhile and said, “It could be 52 hours solid.”

“That's less than two pound an hour, when you put it like that it sounds like charity.”

“And don't forget the rain it looks like it's going to be here a while. It will definitely hamper progress.”

“Yes, it's not a job to take on lightly.”

“Well you might finish it before Sunday,” David said, the quicker you finish it the higher the rate.”

“Oh granted,” Jack said, “The theory sounds good but looking at the work reality says we'll be lucky to finish it before Monday.”

“I'm afraid £300 is the best I can do my circumstances are not what they should be.”

Jack looked at Nigel and saw that he did not want to take the job on so he said, “Sorry, I don't think that it would be worth our while. I reckon at a push and I mean push, we might have the work done in time but not for that sort of money. I mean 52 hours works that's six and a half days work, not for a hundred bar.”

He turned to leave, not relishing the soaking he was going to receive and made his way to the door.

“Hold on,” David said, “Er let me think for a little while and see what I can come up with.”

“Sure,” Jack said, “I'm in no hurry.” This was more to do with the fact that he did not want to get

wet than he wanted the job.

“What about a horse?” David said.

“A horse?” Nigel said and looking at Jack said with a tone of incredulity, “Whatever are we going to do with a horse.”

“Hold on Nigel,” Jack said going deep into thought, “Pauline likes horses, could you excuse us for a moment,” to David.

“Sure I've got to nip to the toilet anyway,” and promptly left them.

“What do you want a horse for?” Nigel said, “That does not make sense.”

“Not me. Pauline. Let me just give her a bell to make sure.”

“Go on then. Lot of good it will do you she has nowhere to keep it for a start.”

Jack phoned Pauline who was delighted to have it but as Nigel had predicted had nowhere to put it. He came up with a compromise that was agreeable to her so that was sorted. Next came Nigel.

“What about this,” Jack said, “I'll throw my money back in the pot so that will leave you with another £50 each.”

“We'd better see if he will be up to it first. This close to the weekend he might have made plans.”

“True,” Jack said and phoned Rollin'. “We've got a job on if you are interested cleaning out some cattle barns.”

“Sure I don't mind a bit of dirt, what time Monday?”

“Ah, I'm afraid it's got to be done before then.”

“Oh, I won't be back until late Sunday. I've got to go up and see someone in Manchester. It's too late to cancel I'm afraid.”

“Can't be helped,” Jack said with a heavy air of disappointment, “Cheers anyway. Let us know how you get on,” and hung up. He turned to Nigel and said, “That's knackered that then.” He looked out the window and said, “God I wish this rain would stop.”

“We still might be able to do it. It's up to you Jack.”

“If he accepts the terms for the horse I'll be happy. I think we can do it at a push.”

“And for £150 each yes why not.”

“Oh no I'll be happy with the horse you can have the money. It's more like £6 an hour for you then.”

“You're happy with the horse? You're welcome to your share don't forget I'm still living well from that gift.”

“Don't worry about it. No I was thinking that the horse would make a good birthday present. She's 23 next week.”

“Oh a labour of love then,” Nigel said with a laugh, “What about 50/50 with the money and I get visiting rights to the horse.”

“I thought that you didn't like horses,” Jack said in surprise.

“I don't. I might have the right but it doesn't mean that I have to use them.”

“Done then, having rights and not using them, I don't know.”

“It's nice to know that they are there,” Nigel said with a laugh. At that moment David came back and said, “So is it sorted?”

“Tell me more about the horse,” Jack said.

“Well I've got a riding school full of them I'll soon sort you out a good one.”

“There's a problem though. My girlfriend would like a horse but she had nowhere to put one.”

“Ah I see. Stabling charges are very expensive. Yes quite a dilemma.”

“Well I was thinking, what about if you don't give us the horse you just give us the rights to the horse?”

“Sorry?”

“It's still your horse but we have the rights to ride and groom it occasionally. We can work out the details later I just want to see if it appeals to you.”

“Yes that's fine by me. So £300 and a horse and you are starting tonight?”

“Rain or shine,” Jack said and looked at his watch, “it's eleven now. We could be back to make a

start at six if Nigel's agreeable." He was.

"There will only be the two of us," Nigel said, "I'm afraid it was too short notice for the other one."

"You still think you'll finish it then?"

"We'll try our best and if we don't succeed we'll be very close. Now onto lights, how well lit is the place?"

"It's not, the electrics off. I've got some lanterns though."

"I know you farmers are self reliant but isn't that going a little too far?"

"Financial rather than self reliance I'm afraid. The house electrics on though so you should be alright for a drink and if I ask Jenny nicely you might get a meal too."

"Right so that's sorted then. We'll be back to start at six. Hopefully the rain will have stopped by then so you could show us where you want it putting."

Jack and Nigel ran to the van but still got soaked in the process. As Nigel drove back he said, "I think I'll try and get some kip in."

"Sounds a good idea, I would myself but Pauline's coming around."

"She wants to find out if you got the horse?"

"Yes but that's not how she put it."

"Oh."

"It was more like I won't see you over the weekend, I'll miss you," Jack said with a laugh.

"Right," Nigel said laughing, "Anyway I'll leave you to it and pick you up at a quarter to."

"Sound," Jack said getting out of the van. He went inside and put the kettle on but before it boiled the door knocked. As he let Pauline in he said, "I don't know Pauline, why don't you ever use that key I gave you. You're soaked."

"Not a nice day to work on, is the kettle on?"

"Just boiling as we speak so what about the key then?"

"I don't know. If I know you're in I'll knock and if I know you're out and I need to get in I'll use it. Daft isn't it?"

"I'll make the tea," Jack said with a laugh and gave up trying to analyse it. When he came back Pauline said, "So tell me about this horse then? Have you seen it?"

"Er no, he's got a riding school full of them so you just have to go down on your birthday and take your pick."

"What is it about birthdays that brings out the child in us?" Pauline said and then went on, "I'm getting a horse, I'm getting a horse."

"You're mad you are. I didn't realise that you felt so strong about them."

"I used to ride them all the time when I was a kid. I forgot about them for a while for I had to grow up and go to university but yes I like horses."

"They take up a lot of time though don't they?"

"We'll they're worth it. You always make time for horses."

"As long as you know what you are letting yourself into. A pony's for life and not just a birthday."

"Funny. No I'll treat him better than I treat you."

"Well that's not saying much. I'm starting to pity that poor mare."

"Who knows it might be a stallion."

"I'm going to regret this about half way through my shift," Jack said knowing the direction the conversation was going.

Jack did manage a couple of hours sleep and was up and ready when Nigel called.

"The rain hasn't eased once," Nigel said going through the door, "You should have heard the racket it made on the roof. I didn't get any sleep at all. You know the more I think about it the worse the idea seems to appear."

"Believe me it couldn't get any worse. We'll have a quick drink before we get off it looks quite cold outside."

"Sounds good to me have you got any water proofs?"

“Yes, you want a set?”

“No I'm alright, I was thinking of you.”

“Still got the old ones from work,” Jack said putting the kettle on, “So how do you want to play this?”

“We'll take them one at a time. Two wheel barrows, one fills and one empties. Do it navy style and we'll be alright.”

“Navy style?”

“Yes, they used to be able to shift ten tonne a day.”

“Ten tonne a day that's some soil how many in a gang?”

“No each. My father told me that you weren't a navy until you could do that.”

“Each, however did they manage it?”

“A different type of person. Reckon we are too soft today. No they sort of just switched off and found their own rhythm.”

“What?”

“Yes, they never spoke whilst they worked. They seemed to just switch off and stick to the same motion.”

“Really, that sounds a pretty hard thing to do. It must have taken some concentration.”

“None at all it's a bit like how we play pool now. You don't concentrate you step back and let something else take your shot.”

“What is this, a wind up?”

“Try it and see,” Nigel said as Jack passed him his tea.

“No let up outside still,” Jack said looking out of the window, “I think we're going to get very wet, very muddy, very tired very quickly.”

“And very rich,” Nigel said raising his cup.

“Yeah right,” Jack said. They finished their drinks and arrived at their darkened hell bang on time. The dirt had not to be barrowed too far so they were lucky in that respect but unlucky in the fact the rain never relented. Jack was inside for the first hour so he was pretty dry for a while. Nigel on the other hand was soaked after the first journey having sunk on his maiden voyage. The work was hard and Jack was out of breath pretty quickly.

“You are going to have to pace yourself,” Nigel said picking up the full barrow after leaving the empty one, “Try it the navy way.”

Jack started to shovel again and then something clicked. It was hard to explain. It was like he was working but he was not. It was a very uplifting experience; it was just a pity he could not maintain it though for Nigel's return always brought him out of it. After the fourth time it happened Jack stopped him and told him about the strange phenomenon.

“See what happens when you step back. Now imagine doing that all day. It's perfect for contemplation.”

“Days dreams more like,” Jack said and carried on with Nigel treading more quietly. Jack's hour was soon up and he had to leave his contemplation for a while. He too was quickly soaked and his first hour outside seemed like a life time. They switched again and again until the first barn was finished around first light.

“Fag break?” Jack said as they surveyed the work.

“Why not?” Nigel said taking one of Jack's smokes. He looked at his watch and said, “12 hours, we'd better kick up a gear if we want to finish in time.”

“Four more left. We'll do the two smaller ones next that should pull us back.” They finished their smokes and made a start on the second barn. It was about three quarters the size of the first and with the acceleration of pace they had it finished by noon the same day. David came out and was pleased with their progress. It was still raining so he invited them in for some dinner.

“You must have worked pretty hard to clear that lot,” he said as they sat down to roast beef and a pint of lager, “I thought you'd work like a navy so you may as well eat like one,” and laughed.

They took half an hour off and Jack sat back to some good conversation ending thus.

“Sure only the best food for them,” David said, “Well the ones that weren't conned anyway.”

“They took their food pretty seriously,” Nigel said, “Kept the machine well oiled.”

“Had to, they must have burned some calories.”

“Guess we'd better burn some ourselves,” Jack said seeing the half hour up. They got back to work and started on the third barn. The rain had slowed down a little but it was still a heavy pour. The third one was much the same size as the second but it did not look too dirty. The last two were a different story altogether. They were the same size as the first one and looked very hard going. They worked in the third one and after only an hour had half finished it. They stood back to take a quick break before changing the shift and were completely shocked by the sight. The rain had stopped but the last two barns had fell victim to a flash flood.

“Quick get a brush,” Nigel said and they both ran over to the fourth barn, “It must be an old stream bed. Just loosen the dirt with your brush and the water should flush it.”

They took one each and by the time the water had subsided they had managed to clear the vast majority of it. That done they quickly cleared the rest and finished the last barn much to David's surprise as he was just coming out when they had. It was only five o' clock and a lot earlier than expected. Over a cup of tea he paid them and thanked them profusely and Jack and Nigel went home older and wiser though I would not say richer from their experience.

6. Jack the Lad.

A sunny June, a happy Pauline and a peaceful month for Jack he had even taken to reading though not that much as he preferred to listen to Nigel as it was easier. He had, had a very strange dream that seemed to include an out of body experience though he had thought nothing of it at the time. Work was slack but he was in no hurry as the weather was good and he was happy to be idle. He saw a lot less of Pauline but he had expected it as a horse was bound to take up a lot of time. He had taken to playing pool with Nigel 3 nights a week and the heat of the day meant he had more of an appetite. Rollin' joined them occasionally and it was always a pretty jovial affair. Now the tale I have to tell happened on one of those festive occasions. It was a particularly hot day and the beer had flowed heavily. Jack was still not much of a drinker which was surprising really as he had been getting in a lot more practice. He was on his fourth which was good going as he had only been in there an hour and as he took a large drink from his glass he watched Rollin' take his shot.

"Not bad," he said as he watched the black go down, "Not bad at all," as he watched a couple of girls walk into the bar.

"You're joking," Rollin' said following his gaze, "Jesus Jack how many have you had?"

(P.C. Alert- I most solemnly avow that Rollin' is a character, a stereotype no more and has no relevance in my pattern of thinking nor in the day to day living of my life.)

"Well I wouldn't say no," Nigel said.

"Let's be honest," Rollin' said with a laugh, "With your history you'd leap a frog if you could stop it hopping.

"Alright, alright," Nigel said laughing as he had not heard that one before, "So when did you get so fussy?"

"Well look at them they look like the brides of Dracula, dead man walking."

"They're Goths," Jack said, "That's how they dress."

"I know that bleeding stupid if you ask me. I wouldn't mind but I reckon the taller one wouldn't scrub up too bad. Have they got something against water? White powder, they looked like death warmed up."

"Oh so you haven't really formed an opinion yet," Nigel said with a laugh.

"Anyway my round I think," Jack said getting up, "I'll get some more change for the pool table." He was at the bar getting served when one of the girls who was also at the bar said, "Are you going to be on all night?"

"Well normally. No one usually comes around this side of the bar. Just put your money on if you want a game."

"Sure," the same girl said, "So what's it like round here?"

"On a Wednesday dead you might get a spark at the week end but it doesn't last long."

"We've got to meet a friend here. Said she'd be here at seven but we were a little bit late. I don't know how long you've been here but I was wondering if you'd seen her."

"Well we got in at about half six and it's been dead in here pretty much since. She might have gone into the lounge."

"No, she definitely said the bar."

"She's probably late then," Jack said and ordered the drinks, as a matter of courtesy he offered to buy them one.

"No thanks, but I wouldn't mind a game of pool while I'm waiting for my friend."

"Er sure, what about mixed doubles?"

"Sounds good to me, I'm Harmony by the way and this is Melody."

"And would your friends name be Destiny?" Jack said as a joke more suited to our older readers, well unless you caught the repeat.

"Yes that's right," Harmony said, "Do you know her. She does live round here."

"Er no."

“Good,” she said and looked at him in a strange way, “But you do have a certain aura, what would you say Melody?”

“A very powerful spiritual influence though I could not be sure of his capability.”

“What is this,” Jack said, “A wind up?”

“How do you know our friend's name,” Melody said, “It's not an everyday name?”

“It was just a T.V. programme, a kid's show.”

“Oh,” Harmony said, “I don't remember seeing anything like that. Mind you we did not see much T.V. as children.”

“Oh right,” Jack said, “So what are you a group or something?”

“Sorry?” Harmony said.

“You know, Harmony, Melody, Destiny, I thought you might be called the angels.”

“The angels,” Melody said and looked at Harmony in a strange way. She looked at Jack and said,

“Why do you call us that?”

“From the show, that was what they were called.”

“And this television programme,” Melody said, “What was it called?”

“I can't remember,” Jack said, still not sure if it was a wind up.

“Do you believe in Destiny,” Melody said.

“I'm not sure, she hasn't arrived yet.”

“What, no I mean fate.”

“Well yes,” Jack said as around that time he had been giving the matter quite a lot of thought.

“We are the angels of the Black Madonna.”

“What?” Jack said getting more than slightly confused. In the toss-up between whether it was a joke or whether they were mad the coin was still spinning.

“You knew who we were,” Melody said, “You seem to know everything about us.”

“Yes but it was just a kid's show, I was just making a joke.”

“No it goes deeper than that,” Melody said, “We came to you looking for Destiny and you knew her name.”

Now Jack in his usual routine of life crossed many different realities and met quite a few eccentric people. This was another league though and he was (like me) wondering how he got into the situation he was involved in. He decided to cast his torment on the others so he said, “Anyway you said something about a game of pool?”

“Yes, Melody said, “I'll be your partner.”

“No,” Harmony said, “I will.”

This was a turn up for the book, two women fighting over Jack. He was not used to it. It had only happened once before and that was in an inverted way. (You have him. No, I don't want him you have him.)

Harmony must have been the stronger of the two as Melody quickly relented. Jack brought them over to the pool table and introduced them to the others. Rollin' was going to make the same joke but Jack quickly stopped him.

“So who do you want to play with?” Jack said to Melody as he set the balls up.

She walked over to Rollin' and sniffed him in a cat like way before saying, “Envy, lechery and a lot of anger,” she then proceeded to Nigel, “A bit of sloth, not too strong though. This one will do.”

“Er thank you,” Nigel said not really knowing what else to say.

“What was all that?” Rollin' said feeling insulted.

“I was just reading your aura, tasting your scent.”

“What is this,” Rollin' said, “Are you mad?”

“I sense a little anger, hardly a good basis for a pool player. Add lechery and that's quite a distraction.”

“You flatter yourself,” Rollin' said and retreated back to try and work out if what she said was true.

“Now sloth,” Melody said, “I can live with.” They played a game of pool and Rollin' made his

excuses and left. Ten minutes later Destiny arrived so make of that what you will.

“So how do you do that?” Nigel said after Rollin' had gone.

“I just sense it,” Melody said, “It's a spiritual thing.”

“And what exactly are you? I mean you are more than just Goths right?”

“We are not Goths we are servants of Brains.”

Jack laughed at that, the drink probably making him a little less tactful. His initial fear had changed to one of entertainment. “Sorry,” he said after he had finished, “I was thinking about something else now what were you saying.” (Try that one out, you'll be surprised.)

“We are the servants of Brains,” Destiny said, “I am Destiny the aim of its being, this is Harmony the balance of its nature and this is Melody the vibration factor.”

“Jack said quietly to Nigel, “It's time to wake up now isn't it.”

Nigel was intrigued though. He turned to Destiny and said, “And what can you do?”

“I can see the future.”

“Did you know that you were going to be late?” Jack said trying to stifle a laugh.

“I see greater things than that. I see a childrens' home and a little boy crying. It looks like you Jack.”

“A children's home,” Jack said, “How did you know that?”

“I can read your memories. I can pick it up in your aura.”

“That's amazing,” Jack said changing his opinion of the situation, “And what about you Harmony?”

“I understand dreams.”

“And how did you come to be?” Nigel said.

“To serve the mighty Brains,”

“No, how did you get involved in well whatever you're involved in?”

“It matters not our time before,” Destiny said, “That is dead. We are now reborn in the light of matter.”

“But matters not light,” Jack said, “It's different entirely.”

“We worship the Earth,” Destiny said thinking that maybe there was something about him, “That is our light.”

“Right,” Nigel said taking it all in. It was strange. Nigel liked the company of eccentrics (Occult failures he used to call them.) as it was surprising how much insight they actually had, “And how did you get these powers?”

“By being reborn in the light of matter,” Harmony said, “They are gifts from The Earth Mother.”

“The Earth Mother?” Nigel repeated.

“The Goddess Penelope,” Harmony said, “She that wears the parka.”

“We seen her at a festival,” Melody said, “It was her that gave us the gifts.”

“Ah,” Nigel said, “You said a festival?”

“Yes, the festival of the light of Beltane.”

“Right,” Nigel said, “And this lady, Penelope, she told you that she was The Earth Mother?”

“Incarnate,” Harmony said, “She told us that soon it would be time. She does not like the way the Earth is shaping up.”

“And you believed her?” Jack said.

“Well not until she disappeared,” Melody said.

“What,” Jack said looking at them in a new light, “Are you trying to say that you saw a vision?”

“Yes,” Harmony said, “The Earth Mother takes on many aspects.”

“And a sense of humour,” Jack said reassessing his thoughts, “You said that you served Brains?”

“Yes,” Harmony said, “Our own for that is The Earth Mother inside us she told us to serve them by using them and they'll serve us with pride.”

“And how does that help The Earth Goddess?” Jack said thinking that if it was a joke it was a very clever one and they were good actors.

“It helps her to live within us,” Harmony said, “She is our power.”

“That's weird that is,” Nigel said.

“She speaks to us as well,” Harmony went on, not being distracted, “It was her that sent us here.”

“Er right,” Jack said not really knowing how to take it, “What for?”

“She never said.”

“So let me get this right, you were actually told to come here?”

“Yes, through a dream.”

“Now that is weird,” Nigel said, “So you had a vision and afterwards got your powers?”

“Well when she blessed us,” Melody said, “And gave us our names.”

“Right,” Nigel said getting a firmer grasp on the situation, “And then you were told to come here through a dream.”

“Oh you'll be surprised at dreams,” Jack said remembering back to a former one.

“I know,” Nigel said, “I was trying to get it fixed in my mind. It's going to be very difficult to put into a reality shot.”

“And you have no idea why you should be in this pub at all?” Jack said, “Did anything happen in this dream?”

“No,” Harmony said, “It was just us in the pub.”

“Maybe it was just a prediction,” Jack said, “I had a mate who crashed a bike the day after he saw it in a dream.”

“Yes but there was a purpose to that so we must be here for a purpose.”

“Maybe you are over rationalising it. It might be saying that you will be as opposed to telling you that you have to be.”

Harmony thought awhile and said, “You know you might be right. I've never thought of it in that light.”

“Well it's not the light of matter,” Jack said making a joke more than anything.

“Very true,” Harmony said agreeing with him much to his surprise, “You have some understanding. You are a strange man; fate has definitely found a home in your eyes.”

“Right,” Jack said not really knowing what else to say. His humour seemed to bring on a strange response from the girls; they always took it with sincerity. He vowed to keep quiet in the humour department as it would just get him into trouble. He reasoned that they must be devoid of humour a casualty to self righteousness but a price some people are proud to pay. Maybe the vision had enhanced it, he did not know nor care enough to pursue. (Makes you wonder about my earlier apology though doesn't it.) “Er, do you want a game of pool?”

“No, I would like to know more of your wisdom for I want your understanding.”

“Careful Jack,” Nigel said sensing something wrong but not quite sure what.

“What do you want to know?” Jack said, not hearing as the beer had dulled his senses somewhat.

“What have you got to tell me?”

“The meaning of life?”

“No, something worth knowing.”

“Give me a clue then, some direction.”

“You mentioned fate, give me your insight.”

“Jack,” Nigel said quickly finishing his drink, “It's your round; I'll give you a hand at the bar.”

“Oh right,” Jack said, his first pleasure taking over.

“So what are you having then,” Nigel said and took their orders. At the bar Jack said, “What do you reckon then? Weird but I think that Harmony's keen on me.”

“She's after your insight. Watch them for they are spiritual vampires.”

“What? I'm not that drunk Nigel.”

“No seriously, it's quite common in the occult.”

“What are you talking about?”

“The occult has a negative side; it's called the path of shadows.”

“And?”

“Well the other path if the path of light, enlightenment, it's there to help you develop your Self. If

you follow the path of light you get spiritual replenishment from the source, if you don't you have to find your own."

"Yes but let's be honest it's not going to hurt. Besides let's be really honest, you would, wouldn't you."

"It's up to you but she'll take away your confidence."

"Right," Jack said thinking that maybe Nigel had some deep hatred for women as he never seemed to be occupied in chasing them. They went back and played another game whilst Jack thought about his insights into fate. He had actually come up with quite a few as I said earlier so it was no feat of memory to recall them.

"Okay then," Jack said after taking the break, "What about this one? To get on with fate you have to get on with your Self."

"It's a bit low level. No, I meant have you any real insight not just some slight discernment."

"Oh," Jack said and thought some more. He looked to Nigel for help but none was forthcoming.

Nigel just sadly shook his head, "Right then. Fate was created to uphold divine laws."

"Maybe I was wrong about your understanding. Anyway if you'll excuse me I must visit the little girls' room." With that Destiny and Melody both got up and went off to power their noses.

"The bitch," Jack said after they had gone, "The cheeky cow."

"I told you. It's the carrot and stick approach. Massage your ego and then batter it once you have the insight. She grows in wisdom and you lose your understanding because you question its relevance."

"I ought to tell her where to get off. Nutty cow."

"No, let's have some fun. She's battered two of your insights so we'll do the same."

"What?"

"Just follow me. Watch it they're here now."

"So," Harmony said, "Have you anything to redeem yourself?"

"You have to give in order to receive," Nigel said, "That's a divine law you know."

"And?"

"You want my wisdom, I want your understanding."

"What?"

"I want to know how you can do what you can do. You want my light, I want your power."

"I would have said it was a poor bargain and besides it is not mine to give."

"I know how to take it I was just offering you a chance."

"You don't, that would be well beyond your understanding."

"You got it through insight. I don't know what drug it was that gave it to you but I know how to take it from you."

"How?" Harmony said not really knowing if Nigel knew what he was talking about.

"With a deeper insight I know who you seen in the vision."

"Lady Penelope, the Earth Mother, the Black Madonna."

"Well two out of three ain't bad. She was Lady Penelope and she was The Black Madonna."

"She was the Earth Mother; she told us what she was."

"She was The Holy Spirit, the Great Spirit, call her what you like."

"Then why did she call herself that?"

"To try and build up your powers of discernment and as for her appearance to try and build up your sense of humour."

"No," Harmony said rejecting it.

"You've took it on board now. You've been knocked off course and I bet the dream was there to show you how to get back."

"The dream," Harmony said as realisation hit her understanding.

"And the insight was you have to give in order to receive," Nigel said and gained himself some power. A strange, fascinating, aloof sort of tale (vintage 2002) I hoped that you liked it.

7. Jack the Ripper.

July came and just seemed to flood Jack with work. Decorating, landscaping and even the job of guttering a house. He still grew in wisdom though as he had Nigel working with him. Around the middle of the month he took his judgment and that shook him quite badly for a time. He had taken to saying mantras to try and mould his mind as Nigel put it but he stopped them for a couple of days after this experience. Nigel's reassurance helped him back on track so it was not a major blip. He saw a little more of Pauline although the horse still occupied a lot of her time but with work as it was and Jack's spiritual search also he was often tired and both irritable and irritating.

Now the tale I have to relate centres around one of Jack's jobs and Nigel bumping into an old school friend, Colin McKenzie or Clumsy Colin to his friends and immediate family. It starts with their first meeting.

"Guttering eh," Nigel said, "We're going up in the world."

"Yes right," Jack said still weary of heights and not looking forward to the ladder work involved in the job.

"You bastard," Jack said when they pulled up to the house, "You might have told me it was bungalow. You know what I'm like about heights."

"Well it's been a bit boring recently, Nigel said with a laugh, "Besides I didn't know."

"Yeah right," Jack said getting out of the van, "I believe you." He knocked on the door and a large gangly man with what seemed like shovels for hands opened it.

"Have you come about the guttering?" he said without hesitation and then, "Nigel, Nigel Green, where have you been hiding?"

"Alright Clumsy," Nigel said shaking his hand, "I didn't realise you lived here. The woman said her name was Brady."

"Oh I rent it. So I would ask what you are doing with yourself but I guess it speaks for itself."

"Bit of this and that, what about yourself?"

"I'm doing alright. Got a few things on the go, you know what it's like."

"Right," Nigel said knowing what it was like as when it came to telling stories the Colin of old could tell stories that made Chillin' Winds look like a draught.

"Anyway do you want a cup of tea before you measure up? I might be able to put a bit of work your way as it happens."

"Really," Jack said, "Well we'll have to talk about that."

"Kettle shouldn't be too long," Colin said and went into the kitchen.

"That sounds good," Jack said after he had left.

"I wouldn't hold your breath he used to be a bit of a bullshitter at school."

"Oh. Mind you he might have changed. How long is it since you last seen him?"

"A good eight years so you might be right. You'll soon know though as he hasn't too much imagination, you can see right through them."

Colin came back and said, "Take a chair; we're not here to stand on ceremony." He passed them both a mug of tea and they both sat down.

"So," Colin said, "Married?"

"Not me."

"Anything on the go?"

"Nothing I would like to anoint. And you?"

"Divorced, it didn't work out, you know how it is."

"Sorry to hear that," Nigel said getting quite good at faking sincerity, "Mind you it's not uncommon nowadays."

"Well I've got something else now doesn't do to turn up empty handed at these work dos."

"Work dos. So what do you do then?"

"Management," Colin said nodding his head in a self satisfied manner, "Yes nice little earner. I

even get paid while I'm here.”

“Where's that then?” Nigel said trying to sound impressed.

“Safe Keeping, it's a security firm. We put faces on the doors to keep out the divs.”

“And you manage it?”

“Yes that's right. I've also got a warehouse I use for storage. Yes I'm kept pretty busy.”

“Well fair play to you. It's good to see that you got on.”

“Well thanks,” Colin said not really knowing what else to say as Nigel's false sincerity had knocked him off balance slightly.

“You mentioned some jobs,” Jack said thinking that Nigel's warning might be just.

“Yes, do you know anything about electrics?”

“Sorry, not our field.”

“Shame that I was looking for some re wiring in the warehouse, er plumbing?”

“Not really only the depths of sorrow when I have a nasty hangover.”

Colin laughed in what sounded like a false manner. “Yes, that's good that is. Tell you what, give me your number and if anything comes up I'll get back to you.”

“Sure.”

“Shame that it was quite a big job. You could have made on that too. Yes anything else and I'll be in touch. If I can help someone out along the path of life then I've had a good day.”

“Very noble,” Jack said picking up on Nigel's fake sincerity, “Thank you.”

“Well that's what we are here for at the end of the day, isn't it,” Colin said getting slightly embarrassed to be flooded with goodness, “Anyway about the job. If the price is right when will you be able to start and how long do you think it will take?”

Jack looked at Nigel before turning to Colin and saying, “Tomorrow and I reckon two days max more than likely one.”

“Right and you get rid of the old cast stuff?”

“Yes that's all part of the job,” Nigel said, “The house is just a straight semi with no gable isn't it?”

“Yes that's right.”

“£400, pretty standard.”

“Right, I'd better check with the land lady, after all she will be paying for it.” and put on a false laugh before saying, “The amount of money she charges it's about time that greedy bitch stumped up some.”

He dialed the number and gave her the price then she wanted to speak to one of them so Jack took the call. “Now,” she said without introduction, “Has he asked you about taking the old stuff away?”

“Yes, don't worry its part of the job.”

“Good, well the price is acceptable and you've come well recommended. So when can you start?”

“Tomorrow.”

“Well Colin's got to sign on in the morning so there will be no one around when you get there. Would that be a problem? I mean will you need to get in for anything?”

“No, we only really need water to test it but an outside tap would do. Oh and the back gate unlocked.”

“There's a tap around the back and the gate has no lock. Now would you prefer cash?”

“Makes life easier.”

“For you maybe,” the woman said with a laugh, “I'll leave the money with Colin tonight. How long do you think it will take?”

“Might be done tomorrow if not definitely the day after.”

“Fine. Do a good job and I will recommend you myself.”

“So who er actually recommended us?”

“My son in law Anthony, Anthony Deer.”

“Bambi,” Jack said in surprise.

“Well I don't know about that,” the woman said adopting a different tone, “Anyway could you put

me back to Colin please.”

Jack gave Colin the phone and said to Nigel, “You didn't tell me that this job came from Bambi.”

“I didn't know myself she only said a friend had recommended us. I forgot I gave your mate my number. Doesn't matter anyway.”

Colin had finished around then so he said, “So looks like its tomorrow then. You won't need me for anything will you?”

“No,” Jack said, “Well only to pay us at the end of the job.”

That's alright; I won't be around much in the morning see. I've got a house clearance to put into storage. I'll try and get back as soon as I can and we can catch up on old times,” he said looking at Nigel.

On the short journey home Jack said, “I see what you mean about imagination. He's signing on tomorrow, his landlady told me.”

“He's got a lot better I'll give him that.”

“He must have been real bad then.”

“Think so. Look into them jobs he offered.”

“Plumbing, electrics, what about them?”

“Think about it, we're small fry builders. What are the chances of us having those skills?”

“Pretty slim but not non-existent.”

“And if we'd have said yes he would have known the job was too big for us. We couldn't afford the materials to even start it.”

“So he was quite clever then.”

“He's moved on a bit.”

“Bleedin' bullshitters,” Jack said with a laugh.

“No harm done besides I look at it like this. Ours is not to reason why ours is just to take the piss.”

“Yes I noticed that. You were laying it on a bit strong weren't you? It's good to see that you got on,” and laughed heartily.

“It means different things to different people though doesn't it,” Nigel said with a laugh, “Very noble of you to point it out.”

“Yes, well after his bout of self righteousness if I can help someone along the path of life. I mean I thought he was going to break out into a song.”

“Ah he's alright. Just take him with a pinch of salt he's not a bad fellow. His heart's in the right place it's just a shame his mouth is elsewhere.”

“So why do people bull shit anyway, I mean there's no purpose. He wasn't asking anything of us. I could understand it more if he was trying to make out of it.”

“Ours is not to reason why.”

“You don't know then. Ah well we'll just enjoy it then.”

Nigel thought awhile and said, “An emotional vampire perhaps. He perceives that we believe him and hold him in good esteem and sups accordingly.”

“What,” Jack said thinking back to the angels from hell, “So he was actually feeding of us?”

“Well no, you didn't believe him.”

“So you have to believe in him for it to work?”

“Properly yes, otherwise he feeds of his own ego.”

“And your sincerity?” Jack said seeing if it had any relevance.

“Just playing on his guilt really he was actually trying to feed of your envy for your envy is his pride. By the fact that I was not envious rather I was pleased for him it knocked him off balance. His guilt would be saying this man speaks from the heart, why don't you?”

“So he gets embarrassed,” Jack said in amazement, “You know I wondered about that.”

“You can get quite a bit of fun from it,” Nigel said as he pulled up at Jack's.

“Cup of tea?” Jack said as he got out of the van.

“Yes go on then,” Nigel said and followed him in. As Jack waited for the kettle to boil he said,

“You know we ought to really tell him that we're wise to him.”

“What and spoil the fun it's been quiet for weeks.”

“Yes but it's the principle isn't it. He must think that we're complete idiots.”

“That's cutting your nose off to spite your face. We catch him out once and he'll never bullshit again.”

“Well that's good isn't it,” Jack said as he poured them both a drink.

“Spoils the fun and besides who are we to judge him. I don't know why he's like that, that's really not my problem. I know he's genuine in some ways and if there was work he would put it our way. He's harmless; leave him to his dream world.”

“I suppose so,” Jack said and took a drink, “I suppose he just sits in and signs on when he needs a vacation.”

“Just play up to it. Anyway what time shall I pick you up tomorrow?”

“About nine we'll nip straight down the builder's merchants.”

“Sounds good are you out tonight?”

“No quiet night in. Pauline's coming around at seven.”

“Right, I'll see you later,” and left Jack to it. Pauline came at seven and they spent a quiet night watching tele and drinking cups of tea.

Next morning came and Nigel picked Jack up on time. They went to the empty house to work out what they needed. Colin arrived back at around eleven to a well progressed job. The front was completely finished as it was a straight run with no down pipes. The back was stripped and waiting and Nigel and Jack were taking a breather.

“I see,” he said, “You would last long at our place. Full bore we were at it I can tell you.”

Nigel winked at Jack and said, “That's probably why we are where we are and you are where you are.”

“What?” Colin said not quite sure how to take it.

“The more you put into it the more you get out of it,” Nigel said and Jack had to stifle a laugh.

“Oh,” Colin said, “Right. Er do you want a drink now I'm here.”

“Well not it it's too much trouble,” Jack said, “You must have gone hell for leather to get finished. What time did you start?”

“Seven, it might sound early but it had to be done.”

“Very early,” Nigel said in mock admiration.

“Well as you said the more you put in and all that,” and went off to open the back door and put the kettle on.

“Shouldn't be too long,” Jack said, “About an hour?”

“Sounds right,” Nigel said.

“You were close then weren't you? I thought he nearly sussed you.”

“I might have laid it on a bit thick, covered it though,” and laughed.

“Yes the more you put in,” and laughed as well.

Colin came back and gave them both a mug, “Here I was only joking about your work you know. You've done pretty well.”

“You'll be offering us employment next,” Jack said with a laugh.

“If I'm looking for anything in the future maybe you'll have to give me your number before you go.”

“So you must be raking it in,” Nigel said, “You got many people working for you?”

“Just four in the warehouse it's not a very labour intensive job so they manage usually.”

“And this morning?”

“Special rush job it doesn't happen often but when it does you have to show willing.”

“So it sorts of runs itself then?”

“Yes, I wouldn't have it any other way.”

“And your other place,” Nigel said, “Safe Hands.” (It's actually Safe Keeping but their memory for details like that is very vague, try it and see.)

“Virtually runs itself now its set up same people at the same places. We have twenty on the books.”

“You must be rolling in it,” Jack said in mock admiration.

“I get by,” Colin said with false modesty (Literally in this case), “Yes I'm not complaining.”

“So not being funny,” Nigel said, “I would have thought you'd have your own house instead of renting.”

“Oh this is only temporary. The divorce was quite a shock to the system and five kids; you know what the C.S.A. is like. I'm just building my finances up again.”

“Oh right,” Nigel said with genuine admiration for the answer, “That would explain it.”

“Yes it seems a real shame. You work your fingers to the bone and that happens. It was only a one night stand.”

“Your missus was playing around?” Jack said playing the idiot.

“No me, one of the barmaids at one of the places I used to run. Mad for it she was, blond, legs to her eyebrows and then in the air.”

“Oh good sort then,” Jack said.

“Top dog,” Colin said (sorry about that), “When I said a one night stand it actually lasted a fortnight. She chucked me in the end as I was too much for her. She couldn't hack it in the end; you know every night and all that.” Jack nearly lost control at that little pearl but just managed to stop in time. Nigel kept it well though. He said, “Mind you, you were always one for the ladies if I remember rightly, back at school.”

“Yes things don't change. Anyway she found out about it. I reckon it was another one of those barmaids.”

“What like jealousy?”

“Yes, seriously they were all gagging for me. I reckon it's a power thing myself.”

“You do?”

“Yes, top doorman, you know where I'm coming from.”

“I know where you're coming from,” Nigel said with a laugh that gave out two different perceptions to Jack and Colin.

“So have you pulled anymore of them?” Jack asked.

“I've had them all, the divorce was last month.”

“Quick worker then.” Jack said

“Doesn't pay to hang around anyway I'd better leave you two to it. I'll be out with another cuppa later. How long do you think you'll be?”

“Another hour,” Jack said, “Well if not as near as damn it.”

“Great,” Colin said and left them to it.

“I see what you mean about cutting your nose off,” Jack said, “It is pretty entertaining.”

“Every night, what a guy,” Nigel said and then laughed.

“Oh God I nearly lost it then and his face when he said it, the conviction in it.”

“He probably believes it himself; you can never tell he's been doing it long enough.”

“School you mean?”

“Yes, all his women seemed to go to a different school.”

“Oh right, shall we crack on?” and they went back to work. Jack was pretty right in his prediction, only five minutes out. They had just finished packing the broken cast guttering in the van when Colin came out. “All done?” he said, “The kettle's on. Come in for a cup of tea and we'll settle up.” The followed him in and wrote him a receipt. As they sat drinking the conversation went straight back to Colin, “Yes you done well. I'll definitely put the word around.”

“That's very good of you,” Nigel said, if not in cloth cap mode it was pretty close, “We appreciate it.”

“Well anytime, you know that. You've got to help your fellow man and all that.”

“You seemed to have got a lot wiser since I saw you last,” Nigel said, “Mind you 8 years is a long time. What have you been doing, you mentioned the army if I remember right.”

“Yes I did my bit I can tell you. Yes I've seen a bit of life I'm not just some divvy on the dole. Left the army with a bit of cash in my pockets and bought that warehouse. Run down it was but I done it up. Done it up well I did. A few of the other fellows in the squad were talking about setting up a doorman outfit when they left. I sort of tagged along with it and ended up running it.”

“Quite an achievement,” Nigel said, “They must respect you.”

“Well yes I suppose. Good lads, do anything for you. Yes I guess they did respect me. They always came to me with their problems.”

“I guess,” Nigel said and then for a joke, “They could have done the guttering.”

(Bang) “Well no offence,” Colin said, “But it's hardly a job for a soldier.”

Nigel looked at Jack and gave him a knowing grin. (There comes a time in the feeding process when this is bound to happen. You believe, subconsciously, that you have your victim's esteem and so envy turns to pride. Your victim's reverence for you is seen as subservience so your pride comes in to take full advantage.) For Jack and Nigel the joke was over for he had crossed the line.

Sensing a change of atmosphere Colin said, “Right £400 wasn't it,” and went to a cabinet and took out an envelope. Money paid and counted. As they left Jack said, “Oh a fellow called around for you when you were out.”

“Must have been about work I'll probably catch him later.”

“Well work in a way he was from the D.H.S.S.”

“What?” Colin said visibly uneasy.

“Yes, I told him that you were down signing on so he said he would be around tomorrow at eleven.”

“Ah.” Nuff said

8. Jack and the Beanstalk.

August came and Jack found his balance. He grew in strength and developed a certain knowing. Work had dried up but Jack was too busy to notice. Fate kept throwing him the opportunity to earn brownie points and Jack in his generous nature took to them with gusto. 'Old Ma MacDonald down the street was wondering if' and numerous other scenarios to satisfy his zest. He had even started to help Pauline with her horse. He would never ride it though just feed it and groom it. No, he saw it as parallel with riding a MZ on one level. On the other he was too scared of getting on it. He quite liked it though for he sometimes went to feed it on his own. It is on one of those occasions this tale relates to.

It was a bright hot afternoon and Jack was taking in the sun after feeding the horse. "Hi," a voice said interrupting his day dream. He looked up to see a tall thin girl of around his age, "I'm Glenda." "Er pleased to meet you Glenda," Jack said wondering what she was after.

"Is that your horse?"

"Well no it's my girlfriends, well sort of."

"Pauline?"

"That's right, do you know her. Oh sorry, if you did not know her you would not know her."

"True," Glenda said with a laugh, "So you must come here quite a lot then?"

"They take some looking after. Mind you th farmer does most of it. When I say we own it we don't. We actually just borrow it."

"Sorry?" Glenda said and Jack went on and told her the story (He should have just showed her the book, less hassle.)

"So you've got visiting rights on a horse that's amazing. It's such a good idea as well, saves a lot of trouble."

"Yes, one of my better ones."

"You came up with that. Mind you, you look like one of those deep thinking blokes."

"Really," Jack said not used to intellectual flattery, "Thanks."

"And modest too," Glenda said looking at him with almost love light.

"So how do you know Pauline then?" Jack said pulling himself together.

"I was at school with her."

"I don't remember you. St. Thomas?"

No I had moved out of the area by then. Wye-croft infants."

"That would explain it. I'm sure I would have remembered you."

"Oh you flatterer."

"Er oh no, it was a small school that's all."

"Oh," Glenda said with a hurt look in her eyes.

"Sorry," Jack said quickly, "I don't mean it like that. No you're not bad, you're alright."

(At this point in the tale I had better give you a brief description of Glenda. You might understand why he could only bring himself to say alright then. Now when some women are dressed up you would say mutton dressed as lamb. Well in Glenda's case you would say a kebab. (The base that launched a thousand quips.) Sometimes nature by way of compensation endows her victims with a well proportioned figure. In Glenda's turn it was not the case. She was like a bean pole. If she'd have swallowed a pickle onion half of the men would leave town. (God who writes this crap- a line guaranteed to give any critic a humour complex).

"You're nice you are," Glenda said, "Pauline's a very lucky woman to have someone like you."

"You ought to tell her that," Jack said with a laugh, "She might treat me a little better."

"She treats you bad?"

"No, I'm only joking we get on really well. She never mentioned your name though."

"It's not long since I've seen her again, as I said I've been away."

"Oh so you are only back recently then?"

“About three months ago.”

“So where have you been then, well if you don't mind me asking.”

“No, not at all it's no secret. I've been ill.”

“I'm sorry to hear that. Nothing too serious I hope.”

She looked him straight in the eyes and said, “I'm dying.”

“What?” Jack said nearly reeling back in shock.

“Yes, nothing I can do about it so there's no point worrying about it.”

“That sounds terrible and you take it so calmly. I admire your bravery.”

“No choice,” she said with a weak smile, “I've known for some time so I've had plenty of opportunity to accept it.”

“No, I'd still be tearing my hair out. Aren't you frightened?”

“Oh yes, especially now as it will soon be over. It's about got me.”

“Sorry?”

“The illness.”

“So what actually is it? Well that's if you want to talk about it that is.”

“I don't mind. No it does me good to talk about it, get it out my system. It's a very rare genetic disorder called Rodger's disease. I've had quite a good grounding on it over the years.”

“Yes, I suppose you must have done.”

“Discovered by Dr. James Rodgers in 1836, it affects 1 in 120 million people.”

“You were very unlucky then,” Jack said impressed with the figure.

“And with lottery chances, yes it takes 13 years for it to reach gestation and six months to finish.”

“And that's it?”

“Afraid so,” she said and looked at the floor, “And those 13 years, hell I'd call it. Constant supervision. You know many a night I wished they'd have stopped. I mean why keep me alive just so I can die it doesn't make sense.”

“Don't distress yourself,” Jack said and put his hand on her to comfort her.

“You're so strong. I wish I had your strength inside me.”

“You'll be alright when your time comes,” Jack said at cross purposes.

“And you know the worst thing, the thing that really tears me up; I'm going to die unfulfilled. Do you know how that feels? I'm going to die a virgin, about sums up my life, doesn't it really? Clinically clean.” Jack remained silent as he did not know what to say. His unintended insult had taken on a new significance. “But you said that I was alright didn't you. I'm not ugly am I?”

“No, not at all you're very nice, very er pretty.”

“Thank you Jack,” she said and kissed him on the cheek, “You're a very good man. I wish I had a man like you. Pauline is a very lucky person.”

“Er thanks,” Jack said not really knowing what else to say.

“No I don't,” Glenda said getting morbid again, “For it will be harder to leave this place when it's my time. I wonder,” she went quiet for a couple of seconds before saying, “Could I borrow you?”

“What?”

“I'm sorry,” she apologised profusely, “I wasn't thinking straight. I don't know what came over me. Do you forgive me I did not mean to offend you?”

“I could never cheat on Pauline; it's just not the done thing.”

“No, no I wouldn't want you to. You're a special man Jack. I would not like to be the one that made you unfaithful.”

“If I wasn't with Pauline who knows,” Jack said trying not to add insult to injury, “But I'm afraid that's hypothetical.” Jack thought awhile before he said, “Look er I might know someone.”

“No, I'm afraid it's you or no man now. You see now that I've met you I know there can be no other.”

“What, what is this, you hardly know me.”

“I know that you're deep. I know you're intelligent, I know you are modest and kind. I could travel a

lifetime to find someone like you. Isn't life cruel? To actually meet you when it's too late and find out that if it wasn't too late it was too late for you had another and to Pauline as well. She was my best friend at school. We used to share our sandwiches together and I'd borrow her pencil when I lost mine. There's definitely a cruel streak in fate. It won't hurt Jack. No one need even know. I'll be gone soon. Give me your strength."

"My strength?"

"I want you inside me. I want to know that when I meet my maker, if he does exist, I will have your strength for I will have the memory of a loving moment."

Jack looked into her eyes and saw the person behind the shell and thoughts of Pauline and faithfulness fell by the wayside. He took her and made her whole, fulfilled in the notion that he had given a fellow Soul a helping hand he had a clear conscious. After a time, well a few times, he finished, wished her well, well under the circumstance that is and departed.

He never mentioned his escapade to Nigel that night at the pub nor told anyone else for that matter but kept it under his hat. The following day he went over to give Nigel a hand to move some furniture and was out till around four. The tale picks up with Nigel driving him home.

"Thanks for that," Nigel said, "I owe you one."

"Don't worry about it, got time for a brew?"

"Yes why not," Nigel said as he pulled up. They got out and when Jack opened the door he got the shock of his life. His flat although never very tidy had never looked that bad. The whole place had been smashed up. "What the.....?" Jack said.

"Bastards," Nigel said on seeing the sight, "They want hanging they do."

"Shit," Jack said going deep into thought, "I'm not insured," another thought came into his head, "The money," and rushed to check his hiding place.

"Now that would have been bad," Jack said coming back, "I'd better do a check and call the police I suppose," and took a look around. As he saw the mess he began to reassess the situation. The television was still there although smashed up. The Hi Fi in fact nothing of any value was missing. Jack thought hard and said, this was not a burglary, nothing's been taken."

"Somebody got a grudge against you?" Nigel said and they both looked at each other and said, "Jackey Collins."

"No it can't be," Jack said, "The Word took the blame for that. Besides he would have come around before now."

"It might have taken him that long to find The Word I reckon for 15 grand The Word would get quite a beating."

"That's all we need. No he wouldn't smash a house up. It's not his style."

"Well 15 grand is a lot of money, maybe he did this looking for it," a sudden thought then crossed Nigel's mind, "He might look at mine next. Jesus I've got to go. My dad's not as fit as he used to be."

"I'd better come with you," Jack said and they quickly made their way to the van. As they sped off Nigel said, "He's better not hurt them. I don't care who he is but he'd better not hurt them." Jack remained quiet. He was not looking forward to tangling with Jackey Collins but he knew that he had to. Do not get me wrong Jack was no coward but this is Jackey Collins we are talking about. "I don't care who he is," Nigel said again and again. They pulled up and quickly ran to the house. Nobody was there and there was no sign of disturbance. Nigel sighed with relief and Jack said, "I'd better stick around for a bit just in case."

"Thanks," Nigel said, "Not a word to them when they come back."

"Of course, do you reckon he'll come?"

"I'm not sure."

"Hang on; has he got your address?"

"I'm not sure but for that sort of money he could easily find it."

"True," Jack said and sat down on a chair, "What are we going to do. I reckon I've got through

about a grand of it.”

“I'm down to three and as for Rollin' he lost it in that scam up in Manchester.”

“Ten grand down. I wonder how much that would be in knee-caps.”

“I hate to wonder. Do you think he would let us work it off?”

“Doubt it we've hurt his pride. You know what that means to him.”

“Then we're in big trouble. Well it was good whilst it lasted anyway.”

“Maybe we're worrying over nothing. We don't really know it was him for sure. I mean now that the panic's over let's look at it logically.”

“Maybe, but who else would do it?”

“I don't know. Maybe they left a clue or something.”

“Well we won't find it here,” Nigel said getting up, “No you're right about Collins it was just panic.”

They traveled back to Jack's and cleaned the place up finding nothing in the process. Nigel loaded up the smashed up television and some broken furniture into the van and took it to the tip. Jack made himself a cup of tea with his last remaining mug and settled back to try and work out who had transgressed his privacy. No he thought it could not be Jackey Collins and conflicting thoughts fought for domination. After around ten minutes he had totally dismissed the idea as he reasoned The Word would have said they had wiped their hands of the affair. So if it was not him then who could it be? He did not have a true enemy in the world or could not think of one at least. Another ten minutes of useless contemplation and Nigel was back.

“I just called around to see if you needed anything else.”

“No I'm alright. Thanks anyway.”

“I'd better get back. You never know.”

“I don't think it was him. We told The Word we had washed our hands of the situation.”

“Well maybe. I'll be up tomorrow,” and drove off. That done he decided to phone Pauline, tell her what happened and see if she was still coming around later. It was then that things started to get a little clearer.

“You bastard,” Pauline screamed down the phone at him, “How could you?”

“What?” Jack said confused for believe it or not he had completely let Glenda slip from his conscious memory.

“What?” Pauline shouted, “You're making it worse you heartless piece of crap.”

“Pauline, what is this all about?”

“You betrayed my trust in you. How could you? How could you Jack?” and started to cry.

It was around about then it occurred to Jack that he might have a lot of explaining to do. “I'm sorry,” he said, “I didn't think that you would find out.”

“What? You're a bastard, well sod you, you heartless bastard. I don't know what I ever saw in you.”

“Pauline I can explain everything.”

“Maybe but not to me as I want nothing else to do with you.”

“Listen Pauline,” Jack said panicking slightly as the full realisation of the seriousness of the situation hit home, “Hear me out please Pauline, I love you.”

“You've got a fine way of showing it. What do you do to those you hate?”

“Please Pauline hear me out.”

“You're wasting your time I don't think anything that you can say to me will alter the betrayal.”

“Please Pauline hear me out I don't want to lose you.”

“This had better be good.”

“Not over the phone. Shall I come to you?”

“No. I'll go through this charade but you'll not set a foot over this door again. I'm coming straight around,” and hung up.

Jack put the kettle on and waited pensively for Pauline's arrival. How had she found out? Had someone seen him? No, he quickly dismissed that. He was no further forward when the door

knocked. He opened the door and let a glaring Pauline enter.

“Do you want a cup of tea? He said to try and pacify her.

“No,” she snapped.

“Just as well I only have one cup left.”

“You're lucky it's not your knee-caps. How could you do this to me? Anything but this.”

“I'm sorry but let me try and explain myself. She was dying and I was her ray of hope.”

“You fool, you poor misguided fool. What have I done to deserve this?”

“No, it's true she's got this genetic thing wrong with her. She told me. It's called Rodger's disease. It takes 13 years to gestate and six months to live.”

“You idiot, she said it was just like taking candy from a baby. Thanks by the way you lost me my job. My independence, well I'm independent of you now.”

“What do you mean taking candy from a baby? Do you know this woman?”

“What does it matter anymore? You betrayed me and to make it worse it was from your own stupidity.”

“What?”

“Rodger's disease, you're dying for a shag,” and left Jack feeling slightly miffed and very jaded.

9. Jack of Hearts.

As July turned to September Jack was still mourning the loss of Pauline and drinking perhaps a little too heavy a little too often. He had tried to ring her but to no avail and when she changed her number he knew it was over. Work was sparse but he was indifferent to work. He still studied and grew from it but without Pauline he was incomplete. He was out most nights now and his little nest egg had started to crack open but he was too wrapped up in self pity to take it on board.

Now the tale I have to relate is centred round one of his nights out but it actually starts before that. It begins in Jack's flat with him exorcising his grief, "Bleeding women, I thought the world of her I did."

"It will ease in time," Nigel said not really knowing what else to say.

"Small comfort," Jack said inconsolable, "How stupid of me, what a moron."

"Well she wrapped it up in science. Don't be so hard on yourself it's only natural."

"What?" Jack said now adding confusion to his list of worries.

"It's a subconscious thing. You perceive them as the new gods."

"Scientists," Jack said in surprise, "Never."

"Part of you does and that becomes your truth."

"My truth?"

"Yes, you have been conditioned by nature to serve that is your purpose. Now for you to serve you must have something to serve. God to some people their perceived purpose in life to others."

"Yes I can see that," Jack said still not knowing where it was leading.

"Now this thing you serve, that is your truth, your Self."

"So you serve your Self?"

"Well it's actually your Soul but when you serve it you become self less because as you are serving your purpose you become your purpose and have no need for an ego."

"What? That sounds like non sense."

"I'd better illustrate it I suppose," Nigel said and thought awhile, "The Holy Grail. No, the Hoover."

"What?"

"Yes, you'll like this one. A Hoover is what it's called and hoover is what it does. It's both a noun and a verb. When you hoover that is an action but not only that you become its purpose, you hoover. To hoover you need two things, you and the Hoover, you being the purpose and the Hoover being the essence. Now when you hoover you are at one with the Hoover as you are serving your purpose and it is its. Your purpose becomes your essence as you and the Hoover in the pursuit of its purpose are one, hoovering."

"That's amazing but what has that to do with truth?"

"The Hoover is your truth. It is what has authority over you and if you accept it as your true purpose it becomes infallible because it is your trust in it, your faith."

"You know I can see that," Jack said, grief replaced by fascination and curiosity, "But I can't see how that fits in with science."

"Have you ever heard of conjectural faith? No, it looks like we're back on the elements again."

"I'll put the kettle on," Jack said getting up, "I tell you what it sure beats moping around doesn't it." He went into the kitchen and made them both another drink. After returning he said, "The elements?"

"Right. Air or that what cannot be seen. You know about the Spirit but it also means higher truths."

"Sorry?"

"Things beyond the range of reality, God, the devil, the meaning of life. Spiritual wisdom."

"Right."

"Not to get to Air you have to go through Fire and Water which put together makes Air."

"Intellect and imagination."

"Wisdom and conjectural faith. You intellect collects wisdom and your conjectural faith is your

understanding.”

“But why conjectural faith, how is that understanding?”

“Conjectural means that it is rationalised through your understanding as opposed to your intellect. We're talking about spiritual understanding of wisdom so spiritual understanding of wisdom gives you spiritual wisdom. Now this understanding is what you serve before enlightenment, it had authority over you for it controls your perceptions. You accept these perceptions as true without question for that is your understanding of the situation. You probably have heard 'well it says in the scriptures' kind of thing.”

“So your faith becomes blind,” Jack said grasping it.

“Yes subconsciously you have blind faith in the powers that be.”

“But scientists?”

“It is a scientific fact,” Nigel said with a laugh, “It affects us all to a degree the stronger your faith the more the degree.”

“What about no faith at all?”

“There's always the doubt that there might be something in it. If it is out your range of consciousness there always will be.”

“So she blinded me with science. Why would anyone like to do something like that? Why break up someone's relationship? There was no point to it, no purpose.”

“Ours is not to reason why. That's a problem that she must deal with. I've got too many of my own to start worrying about hers.”

“True. I just can't get my head around it. Dying for a shag and I fell for it. I mean let's be honest a decent writer wouldn't use it, he'd pass it onto a T.V. Company.”

“Oh it's being taken for a mug then.”

“It's more than that but I tell you what, she'll get hers.”

“Hopefully, we'll see what Nemesis has to offer her.”

“Sorry?”

“Divine retribution.”

“Well I didn't think it would be that important to bring God in.”

“It's automatic, what you sow so shall you reap. Divine retribution or divine providence, it's up to you how you use it.”

“And Nemesis, that's what he is?”

“Well she, she comes from your feminine side.”

“Oh, so this mythology business, I've never been down that road.”

“Good place to travel you'll get a lot from it. Take the furies from Roman mythology. Three winged maidens who dwelt in the depths of Tartarus. They punished crimes and were supposed to be able to destroy your piece of mind.”

“Guilt?”

“That's right; you see they say a lot more than you first think they do.”

“I'll bet. I'll get straight onto them. It might help me to keep my mind of Pauline. I hope they send the furies on that Glenda bitch.”

“We'll see. Only one thing though don't do an Icarus.”

“An Icarus?”

“Yes the son of Daedalus. They escaped from a prison in Crete by wings made of feathers and wax. Despite being warned by his father Icarus flew too close to the sun and the wax melted dislodging the feathers. He fell to his death.”

“Oh, so I won't try to fly then.”

“Good idea at the best of times. Think of the wax as the insight and the feathers the understanding. If you take on knowledge that's too strong for your insight it will melt.”

“Sorry?”

“Looks like it's another example then,” Nigel thought awhile and said, “Right what about this one?”

There are two perceptions of God, the old man in the chair, the Odin figure; you'll find him in Norse and the enlightened soul."

"Yes."

"Now if your perception of him is the old man in the chair, your truth or canons we'll call them are centred round him as some sort of outside force, right?" Jack nodded so Nigel continued, "As you evolve you see him as an internal force, your channel to the divine," Jack nodded again, "So as you can see there is quite a broad spectrum of light or an abyss even, to cross."

"Yes I can guess that."

"To cross this gap we have to do it in stages, ten in all. They are the levels of understanding. If your level of understanding is well above someone else's you might actually damage them with a deeper insight than they can cope with."

"Right, and so all this understanding falls by the way side."

"Like an ivory tower. Yes you'll get a lot out of those myths and legends."

"I'll definitely give it a go."

"Have you started to cross reference it yet?"

"I can see some strands but after that."

"Ah, sometimes that's all they are. Anyway it's not a bad night out, how's your pool arm?"

"Could do with a shake," Jack said getting up. They arrived into an empty bar around about seven and Jack got the drinks in and Nigel set the pool table up and they started their game. They had a very pleasant first hour and Jack was starting to feel lifted but that quickly fell to Earth (A bit like Icarus I suppose.). The door opened and who should walk in but Glenda. She was not alone either. Another three girls were with her. Well I say girls, when they first walked in two looked like effeminate men and the third could make Rambo look feminine.

"God," Jack said hitting the earth, "That's all I need."

"You know those fellows," Nigel said looking up from his shot.

"That tall thin one is not a man, it's Glenda."

"Good God you were well blinded weren't you."

"I know. Normally I wouldn't do that when I was blind drunk."

"She seen you yet?"

"No, I hope she don't start anything that fellow with her looks pretty mean."

"Oh oh," Nigel said as he saw her catch Jack's eye.

"Well look who it is," Glenda said interrupting the other girl's conversation, "It's the man who cured me of Rodger's disease." They all laughed loudly at that and Jack got a better look at one of the effeminate men. The feather cut hair, the shirt that did not quite sit. It suddenly dawned on him that he was actually a woman. With that in mind he looked at the other man and yes he was the same. With the odds more in his favour Jack got braver. The other man might look rough but between him and Nigel it could be sorted. He thought about how she had ruined his relationship with Pauline and hatred built up inside him and to stand there and mock him in front of her friends was adding insult to injury. He wanted to know why she had done it to him. That would have to keep though for the game must begin. He looked at her with distaste and said, "You had to invent a disease to get laid mind you looking at you I can see why."

"Now is that your way of talking to your lover. Jack I thought you was a romantic, my heart is broken."

"You've got a disease alright lady; it's something in your mind. Rancid it is."

"It quite took you apart and all it took was a bit of emotional mind play, very low level. Mind you, you should be used to it really. That's what keeps your sort in their place."

"My sort is it and tell me what your sort is. What sort of person goes out of their way to destroy a relationship with someone she barely knows?"

"Oh I know Pauline alright; I used to work with her in fact. Well until she got the sacked," and laughed.

“You evil bitch,” Jack said, his fist clenched, “I ought to rip your head off your shoulders.”

“I wouldn't do that if I were you,” the large menacing man said in a woman's voice.

“You keep out of it, whatever you are; this is between me and her. If you're the only thing that stands in the way you won't be standing for long.”

“I wouldn't be holding your breath,” one of the other women said, “I've got a black belt in Karate and Sue's on her brown.”

“As I said Jack,” Glenda said, “I know Pauline well. We don't really get on you see. She doesn't like my choice of lifestyle and I don't like hers. Now I've got nothing against you Jack you are just a small minded man controlled by his libido. A point I had to prove to Pauline.”

“So let me get this right, you ruined my relationship just to prove a point?”

“That's right it's a cruel world. I said that all men were controlled by their cock and she said I was talking rubbish.”

“Well you were.”

“I got you didn't I?” Glenda said with a laugh.

“No you didn't, not in that sense. You got me through trickery. You had to say you were dying. I mean let's look at it logically. No way drunk or sober would I ever go after you.”

“You wouldn't turn me down though. You already haven't.”

“Through trickery.”

“You say. You know I was lying you must have done. I mean Rodger's disease, everybody knows about it.”

“You're just conning yourself. Maybe you feel a little guilty about it or maybe you are that deluded that you think I might actually like you. You never proved your point though; you wrecked a friendship that was all.”

“Some friendship, you betrayed her.”

“And some woman you are. You destroyed a friendship to prove well try to, a stereotype. I think your mind's in the wrong direction.”

“Oh I know what I want in life and that does not include a man.”

“Yes, except you have to borrow one occasionally to keep you satisfied.”

“What?” Glenda said, confused by the twist in logic.

“Let's look at it logically. You don't ruin a relationship to prove a point you must have had an ulterior motive.”

“You flatter yourself.”

“Make a change from you then, quite a show. I reckon you meant it, maybe your libido got control.”

“No chance.”

“And what about when I was inside you. You were certainly enjoying it then.”

“Have you seen when Harry met Sally? You ought to it might add some depth to your life.”

“I would do but you've already plumbed them and as for the film you were on about. You weren't acting lady I could feel every spasm of ecstasy,” he looked around and said, “I take it one of you is her fellow.”

“She's my partner,” the one called Sue said, “And I ain't a fellow.”

“And what do you think of her going off with others?”

“My views are none of your business. What she gets up to is no fuss to me.”

“So an open relationship then she receives sexual gratification elsewhere as you cannot supply it.”

“What, no,” Glenda said not liking the way the conversation was going.

“And not just me, how many others what do you reckon her appetite would be? I mean let's be honest look at me I'm nothing special. If she would go with me then she would go with anyone.”

“No wait,” Glenda said, “He's lying. I got no satisfaction from it. I was there to prove a point.”

“That all men were controlled by their libidos,” Jack said, “I would have thought if that was the case then all women would be controlled by their urge to conceive to uphold the maternal instinct. Is that it Glenda, if that's your real name as I'm not sure how much of a liar you are? You want a

baby?"

"No, bullshit I've got no maternal instincts."

"What he say sound logical Carol," Sue said, "I don't know about the maternalistic crap but if men are controlled by their urge to create women must be controlled by their urge to conceive."

"What are you trying to say?"

"I need to think this one out. Maybe there's more to this than meets the eye."

"No I would never betray you."

"You already have and he's right you wouldn't have done that just to prove a point there's more to it than that."

"Wait, no," Carol said but it was too late, "It's not like that," as the door shut behind Sue. Carol chased after her but was back spitting fire after 10 minutes, "You bastard," she screamed at Jack,

"What have you done?"

"You did it yourself you only have yourself to blame."

"No, this ain't down to me."

"Anyone can see it, it's only you."

She looked at the large woman and said, "Is he right?"

"I'm not sure," she said, "But if he is and you hurt Sue I'll rip you up." She looked at her friend and they both departed leaving Carol on her own. Well apart from Jack and Nigel that is and with them there she would not lack for conversation.

"They say what goes around comes around," Nigel said, "You know maybe there is something in that."

You might be right there Nigel and a reappraisal of fate might be in order."

"How so Jack," Nigel said taking it to heart.

"Well when she first came in I thought that fate must be against me but thinking further into it I'm not so sure."

"Fair comment Jack and ably put if I might make so bold."

"It hurts doesn't it," Jack said.

"What do you care?" Carol said.

"It happened to me, I know what you are going through."

"No, not like this it doesn't."

"We all suffer, we all go through pain."

"Not like this," she repeated, "She meant the world to me."

"So did Pauline."

Realisation started to sink in and Carol said, "I'm sorry. I've been so stupid, I didn't think."

"We never do, well not until it's too late."

She looked at Jack and the same look she had on their first meeting came back, "You are a good man Jack. That makes me feel even worse."

Seeing her glass was empty Jack said, "You go and freshen up and I'll get you another drink. What are you having?"

"Half a lager please you and Pauline, you will get back together won't you?"

"Probably, in time maybe the same thing will happen between you and Sue?"

"I doubt it," Carol sad and went to the toilet. Jack took her glass and filled it half way with his. As luck would have it nature was calling so he took it into the toilet and replenished it at the trough. He brought it back and put it on the table saying to Nigel, "Well if she wants to take the piss out of me. She may as well go the whole hog," and laughed heartedly.

A fitting end some might say whilst others an end that fit in.

10. Jack the Giant Killer.

October came and Jack progressed quite well with his mythologies. Worked picked up once more which was just as well as Jack's finances were fast dwindling. The work was mainly decorating which was good for Jack as the air outside had took a bitter feel. The tale I am about to relate revolves around the time that Jack took a walk in the land of the giants, the Filbert family. Five brothers, each one over six feet four and build like this brick outhouse that everyone seems to be on about. The actual story centres around the time Jack and Nigel were working for the eldest one Martin and his treacherous wife Odessa.

The tale begins the day before with Nigel knocking on Jack's door, "Got a job," he said entering, "Kettle on?"

"A job?" Jack said as he went into the kitchen.

"Yes, got a drain that wants doing."

"You pick your moments," Jack said putting the kettle on, "Its freezing and they reckon it's going to be worse tomorrow."

"Pays the bills."

"So whose it for then?" Jack said coming back from the kitchen.

"Filbert, I think he said Martin."

"Oh Jesus you don't half pick them. Don't you know who he is?"

"No, never heard of him."

"Mean Dean Filbert?"

"Mean Dean. I didn't know his surname. Oh well."

"Better do a good job then. They usually pay their bills anyway."

"I've heard stories about that Dean. He used to be a bit of a lad when he was younger."

"Oh he hasn't changed, now he is a rough man. You want to hope that his missus hasn't got a thing for you. It could be another Jackey Collins."

"He's worse than him. No out of the two of them no contest. I keep well away from them glory boys like Dean, he's a maniac."

"Well Martin's not that far behind. They reckon that Danny is the worst."

"Danny, I don't think that I know him."

"The cutter?"

"That's Danny?" Nigel said in surprise, "They say that it will be a cold day in Hades before they let him out."

"You wouldn't blame them for that he's not a very stable man at the best of times."

"Sounds like quite a family, I didn't realise they were brothers."

"Yes, pretty big family of them. Five brothers and a couple of transit vans full of cousins. Not an outfit to mess with."

"No. Have you had much dealing with them yourself?"

"I used to know Colin. He wasn't a bad fellow, bit of a nasty side to him though."

"Must be a family trait," Nigel said with a laugh, "What was their dad like?"

"Oh he was a big man too. I don't remember much about him though he left when they were very young. Went back to Ireland, so I heard any way, left a lot of debt behind him he did, got a lot of expensive stuff out of the catalogue just before he did his flit. They say that it took their mother years to clear the debt."

"Not a nice man then."

"Doesn't sound like it. The lads though, they're generous to a fault. They all seem to have a nasty side to them though. That might be down to their dad doing what he did, I'm not sure."

"Could be, so how's your pool arm?"

"Oh not tonight Nigel I think I've been over doing it recently. It's nearly every night of the week my supplies are dwindling."

Nigel laughed and said, "So no drink tonight then?"

"Cup of tea?" Jack said and Nigel agreed so Jack made them both another. When he came back he said, "Yes those Filberts definitely have some power."

"Well glory," Nigel said correcting him.

"So what's the difference?"

"Glory immortalises your name while power just enhances it," Nigel said and on seeing the blank expression on Jack's face, "With power goes influence your ability to help your fellow man, well in theory anyway."

"In theory?"

"Yes, it tends to delude you so you look at it more as power to take. I'm not talking about spiritual power here I'm talking about emotional power."

"Societies?"

"That's right. Now if you are controlled by pride you seek this external power because it enhances itself in this light."

"And the spiritual power?"

"From love, you get that from helping your fellow man."

"Oh so they are pretty close then, one gives and the other takes."

"Two sides of a triad. Think of pride as self love and spiritual power as Soul love from the source."

"Yes I can see that so what about glory then?"

"Comes from anger, it's the pursuit of the war monger, spiritual envy in the triad."

"And how does it equate? Glory is not just about war though is it?"

"Oh no it's just that history tends to immortalise war winners. To the victor goes the glory kind of thing."

"Yes but not always, what about Jesus Christ?"

"His glory came from the divine, its spiritual power. Believe me when you have that external glory has no relevance in your life. He never courted this external glory as he saw it as vanity. Any prophet would. It was history that glorified him. In fact I'm willing to wager that if he was around today he would shun both the power and the glory."

"You think so?"

"Undoubtedly, it enhances your ego."

"And that's a bad thing?"

"Oh yes. Blocks your channel to the divine and you forget your true purpose."

"Right, so it doesn't do to get idolised. Mind you look at your mate Colin."

"Clumsy. Yes, says it all really. No, lose your purpose and you lose your insight."

"Ah, I'll bare that in mind."

"Oh and another thing as well these three can actually control your aura."

"My aura?"

"Yes, your attraction to other people."

"Sorry?"

"How other people perceive you. If you give out a powerful aura it sends out a strong signal and gives you an air of confidence."

"And how do you get this power?"

"Through being good at what you do, well that's on one level, the other is from feeding off others admiration. Now when I'm saying be good at what you do it doesn't have to be a job though that does help. It's more to do with actions."

"Yes I can see that because then you are happy in yourself."

"And on a deeper level you could say the power that gives you the aura comes through the Holy Spirit from the activation of spiritual love through divine providence."

"What? Now that is deep."

"That's spiritual wisdom whilst yours was wisdom, can you see the difference?"

“Yes,” Jack said and remembering back to his night out with Harold, “You said three levels to that Harold?”

“Ah, loving spiritual wisdom, the light at its purest, real insight.”

“And have you got it?”

“Be good at what you do or Self through will seeing (seeing transformation) God's wisdom, spiritual love. God's wisdom blessed seeing love (transformation seen). Each letter means a different word.”

“It doesn't mean anything to me, it sounds like non sense.”

“I've got to bring it down to Earth first. In the first part seeing transformation is bracketed so it actually says self through will seeing God's wisdom. Seeing transformation is bracketed for it is the transformation of enlightenment which is done through God's wisdom so it is saying that the Will transforms the Self. Now on this other level you don't have to feed off others admiration you can feed of spiritual love which is God's wisdom blessed with seeing love.”

“The Holy Spirit,” Jack said upon recognition.

“Right and you being God's wisdom are blessed with love.”

“Amazing, that really is.”

“Three levels of truth. Now pride controls wisdom for that is its level of existence. Anger controls spiritual wisdom and love loving spiritual wisdom. So when you choose your destiny you pick your level.”

“Amazing,” Jack said and thought a while, “So love controls it all then?”

“Pride is self love and anger is spiritual envy or righteous indignation which I guess you'd call misguided love. Love doesn't control them though it's man's free will that gives them life.”

“Sorry?”

“His will is their life. If his will is anger then that controls his destiny but his will must be anger first to activate his life into it.”

“I think I need a rest. Do you fancy another brew?”

“No I had better get off now. You reckon about ten tomorrow?”

“Yes I don't fancy working too early on a cold and frosty morning.”

Nigel left and Jack got to thinking about what he had said. It was amazing and he spent the rest of the night just contemplating it.

New day saw him up and on the job. His weather forecasting was correct and he had to dig pretty quickly just to keep warm. Around noon Odessa came out to check on their progress. She was a stunner, jet black hair and deep blue eyes. She could have been a film star. (She might be yet, you can never tell with life.)

“You're making short work of that,” she said as she approached them, “Would either of you like a cup of tea?”

“That would go down well,” Jack said

“Come into the kitchen then, you must be freezing.”

They did as she had bid and took a drink from her in the kitchen. It was a large room that had more than enough space for the large table they ended up sitting by.

“Yes you must be pretty weather hardened to work on a day like this,” she said, “Rather you than me.”

“You get used to it,” Jack said thinking he had seen a lot worse.

“No, I think it takes a special man to do it. It's all brain-work nowadays we're getting too soft. Martin now, look at him, he's a big man and yet he's useless with the shovel, can't stand cold weather neither.”

“Martin?” Jack said in surprise, “I would have thought he was well up for the job.”

“You'd think so but at 38 and a heart attack he can't do anything.”

“Martin had a heart attack, I never knew that.”

“Do you know him?”

“Well sort off. I was a mate of one of his brothers.”

“About four years ago completely destroyed him for a while.”

“I’ll bet,” Jack said and the subject changed once more. Break over they were back at work and the afternoon flew quickly by. Martin came back at around 2.30 and he looked none the worse for his ordeal. The job would take another day but that could not be helped as it was expected. They packed up their gear and Nigel went back to the kitchen as he had left his watch there. Here he became privvy to a surprising conversation. He overheard Martin asking Odessa how they got on. “Pack of idle gits. Just stood around most of the day and wouldn’t lift a finger.”

“Really,” Martin said in a surprised voice, “Are you sure? They look like they’ve made quite an impression on it.”

“Yes, so imagine how much more they would have done if they’d have actually worked. Our Tony could have done it and been finished by now.”

“We’re not going through that again. Your Tony is a useless smack-head.”

“No,” Odessa protested, “He just needs a break that’s all, a chance to get back on his own two feet.”

“He’d only give it to a dealer. Look I’m sorry Odessa he’s his own worst enemy.”

Nigel thought it prudent to leave around then and went back to the van to get off. As he drove back he told Jack what he had heard.

“Well lucky we’re finishing tomorrow she sounds a right one and to look at her butter wouldn’t melt in her mouth.”

“She’ll have no complaint about the job anyway. No we’ll finish off as quickly as we can and leave them to it.”

“That’s the best bet but who would have thought it.”

“Well it’s her brother at the end of the day I suppose. Maybe it’s a little misguided but it’s not personal.”

“True. No I can see it from her point of view to some extent but it shouldn’t affect us.”

“It won’t if we’re quick,” Nigel said and pulled outside Jack’s flat. They went in for a cup of tea and carried on with the conversation.

“No come rain or shine we want to be off tomorrow,” Jack said, “That Martin still looks in good shape for a man that’s had a heart attack.”

“Do you think that was true?”

“You can never tell. We’ll be done and dusted tomorrow so after that it won’t matter.”

“True. Have you still got that cassette player?”

“Cassette player?”

“Yes, the Walkman.”

“I think so, why?”

“My cousin was after one. She’s learning French with one of those cassette courses.”

“I’ll go and check,” Jack said and was quickly back with it.

“Thanks,” Nigel said taking it off him, “This will give her a lot more time.”

“Tell her there’s no hurry,” Jack said and his good deed for the day was done.

The next day saw them there at eight and with a keen shovel. They made good progress but slowed slightly when the heavens opened. They worked through it for around ten minutes and then Odessa came out, “Come in out of the rain,” she called, not wanting to get too wet.

They quickly ran in and she said, “You don’t want to be working when it’s like that. Have a cup of tea you’ve been at it since eight.”

They gratefully accepted and as they drank the tea she said, “Oh you might be able to do me a favour. Mind you, you’ll think I’m being cheeky for asking but I guess as you know Martin it should be alright.”

“Er, what are you after,” Jack said trying to pick his way through that lot and giving up.

“Well as it’s raining and let’s be honest you don’t really want to be out in that.”

“Not if I can help it,” Jack said with a laugh.

"I was wondering if you would drop me off to see my brother I owe him some money. It should only be about half an hour so it shouldn't be too long."

"Well the rain looks like it will last that long," Jack said and went to try and finish off his drink.

"Don't rush yourself. Here, would you like a slice of cake?"

"Sure I haven't had that in a long time."

"Too soft a living for your lifestyle I'll bet," Odessa said in an endearing way, "No, Martin could never work in the rain."

"So what does he do anyway?"

"Just a factory worker, permanent six two for the last four years. Albright's, do you know it?"

"Yes, Rosliston Road."

"That's right. Not a bad place really, pays a good wage. Not in your league probably. I know what you builders can earn."

"Too sporadic to make a decent living but we get by." They talked some more and they had their cake and ate it. As Jack and Nigel waited in the van whilst Odessa went in to see her brother Jack said, "Forty minutes that took."

"Yes it's a funny half hour and she's been in there for ten minutes already."

"Well it keeps her happy I suppose. She'll be less likely to be telling stories about us (She had better not that's my job.) Now we've done her a favour."

"I suppose. I wish she would hurry up though."

"I know what you mean. We're going to have to push to get the job done today. I still don't want to have to come back tomorrow."

"Anyway she's come out now about time too."

They drove back and continued working as the rain had stopped. The ground was clay and the water had made it heavy going but they stuck at it and got through it. Martin arrived back and said hello as he walked passed them. He went into the kitchen and Nigel and Jack thought no more of it until around five minutes later when he came back in a bad temper.

"What is this?" he demanded to know in a menacing voice, "Are you taking the piss?"

"Sorry," Jack said looking up from his shovel, "What?"

"You've stood around all day yesterday and you've done even less today," he shouted.

"What do you mean stood about?" Jack said confused and a little angry at his criticism of him as a worker, "Have you seen how much we've done? You don't do this much by standing about."

"You could have had it done in a day. You're stringing the job out to try and get more money out of me."

"Are you trying to say we're conning you?" Jack said temper ignited, "Look at all the work we've done. It's impossible for it to be done in a day it's a Herculean task."

"You were standing around all day yesterday, my wife saw you and today you look like you've done even less. Okay we had a bit of rain earlier but that's no excuse. I want this job finished today and that's final. If it's not you won't be paid at all," and stormed back inside again.

Jack looked at Nigel and said, "The two faced bitch. I would walk off the job but we're that close to finishing."

"Don't worry we'll just finish off and go."

They put a broad back into it and just as it was getting dark finished the job. They knocked on the door and a slightly calmer Martin answered it. "You finished then," he said begrudgingly, "About time too."

"Now hold on," Jack said angrily so maybe Martin was not quite Jackey Collins, "We've worked hard today and yesterday."

"Not according to Odessa but that's by and by. I'm content in the knowledge that you only conned one day out of me."

"Right," Jack said not really knowing what else to say.

"I'll get you money," Martin said and went inside for a while. He quickly came back and said,

“Right £40 each for a day and a half £120.”

“What do you mean a day and a half,” Nigel said, “We've been here for two.”

“You got here at 12 today. Odessa told me.”

“Then she's a liar,” Nigel said much to Jack's surprise.

“What did you just say?”

“Well it won't alter it by me repeating it. You heard what I said she's a liar and I can prove it.”

“That's fighting talk little man. Maybe I shouldn't pay you at all.”

“I said I can prove it,” Nigel said and took out the tape recorder. “We got here at eight.” With that he switched it on. Odessa's voice came on, “Have a cup of tea you've been at it since eight.” He switched it off again and said, “Told you.”

“You've recorded the conversation,” Martin said totally surprised, “What is this?”

“Just a safe guard I overheard your wife slagging of our working ability.”

“Alright,” Martin said giving them the rest of the money, she might have been mistaken about the time but I reckon she was right about your idleness.”

“Well, Nigel said, Today was a bit slow I'll admit but we had to run a message for your wife.” With that he played the tape until he got to, “I was wondering if you would drop me off to see my brother. I owe him some money. It should only take about half an hour so it shouldn't take too long.” Nigel switched off the recorder and said, “I would say that the half hour was more like two.”

“Odessa,” Martin shouted angrily, “I want a word with you.” He calmed down quickly and apologised profusely and with sincerity before bidding them good bye. As they drove home Jack looked at Nigel and said, “You saw that coming.”

“Well something like it. Besides you can never be too careful.”

And Jack's foray into the giant's land was complete not quite Thor and Loki but we can't have everything.

11. Jack of Diamonds.

November took its turn and work carried on at a more steady pace. Jack had learned the alphabet and spent a lot of time practising it. Soon he could turn it from non sense to semi sense and actually got quite a lot of understanding from it. His charity worked continued at a pace though to call it that might be a bit strong as it was not a conscious choice. No it was just a good heart and a list of needy neighbours knocking on the door.

The tale I have to relate concerns one of those occasions and is set around the middle of the month. It was a cold afternoon that found Jack opening a knocking door. It was his next door neighbour Mrs.' Parkin, an elderly lady in her seventies.

"Hello," Jack said in surprise as she was not that agile on her feet to be walking any distance, "Come in you must be tired."

"Thanks Jack my legs are killing me."

She sat down and Jack offered her a cup of tea out of courtesy and much to his surprise she accepted it. He made the tea and she took a drink from it before going on to the matter in hand, "Not bad that Jack. I was wondering if you would run an errand for me my legs are not what they used to be."

Yes sure, just let me know what it is."

"It's a bit delicate Jack. It's a family matter so I would be very grateful if you kept this strictly between ourselves."

"It shall go no further."

"Good. I know I can trust you, you're a good boy."

"Er. Thanks."

"Now what it is, is I would like something fetching back. I've had a bit of an argument with my son Jason."

"Jason. I did not know you had a son."

"I've two, Jason and Arthur. Well anyway I would like you to fetch my vacuum cleaner from him."

"Sure," Jack said thinking that she might have over played the delicate matter routine.

"The trouble is I don't know where he lives now. You see we had a bit of an argument about six months ago and I haven't seen him since."

"Oh that might be tricky then. Not being funny I don't think that I would have a chance of finding him. Is this worth it just for a vacuum cleaner?"

"It's not just a vacuum cleaner it's one of those top range ones. You know the ones with the attachments that can do anything."

"Right, yes they're expensive."

"Now I know where my granddaughter lives, that's Arthur's daughter. She might be able to tell you. I would ask her myself but I can't get out and we don't really get on anyway."

"Oh," Jack said thinking was there anyone in her family that she did get on with, "Sure give us her address."

"The Ocean Wave you'll find it at Smith's Marina."

"She lives on a boat?" Jack said in surprise.

"Well a barge her and a couple of her friends."

"Right, I'll nip over and see her later."

With that the door knocked and Mrs. Parkin said, "Oh you have company. I'm going to have to get off now anyway." Jack guided her to the door and let Nigel in after he had bid her fare well.

"Things got that bad?" Nigel said after she had left.

"Sorry?"

"Soaping." (Doing something beginning with 'S' to old age pensioners).

"Funny. No she wants a vacuum cleaner fetching for her. Her son's got it but she doesn't know where he lives."

“Sounds fun, kettle on?”

“In a moment,” Jack said going into the kitchen. He made them both a drink and came back, “You know I'm getting on really well with that alphabet thing you gave me.”

“Yes it's definitely very strange. Have you tried it with the mythologies yet?”

“The mythologies, does it work with them then? I thought it was just with normal language. No I haven't been down that road before.”

“Give it a go, you'll be surprised.”

“Sure, so any hints on the subject?”

“Yes, all is not what it seems.”

“Sorry?”

“In mythologies, you think that they say something when really they say something else.”

“That sounds difficult; you'll have to give me an example.”

“Okay, Heracles and Anthaeus.”

“I don't think I've come across that one before.”

“Well I'll rectify that first. On one of Heracles' labours he had to journey through the country of the Pygmies. These Pygmies feared Heracles so they sent against him the giant Anthaeus who was the son of Terra, the Earth. Now the giant was a mighty wrestler who made any stranger that he met wrestle with him. There came a fierce struggle and even the mighty strength of Heracles could not over power the giant. Every time the giant came in contact with the ground he arose with new strength. Heracles noticed this and so he lifted the giant off the ground and held him high. The giant got weaker and Heracles overcame him.”

“I don't think I've come across that one before.”

“Hunt it out you'll get a lot from it. So you've heard the story, what do you think it's talking about?”

“I'll have to think about that one,” Jack said and went deep into thought. After a while he said, “Was that his shadow self?”

“You tell me. He journeyed through the land of the Pygmies, what does that stand for?”

Jack thought some more and said, “Spiritual wisdom- through the word blessing will life be blessed through understanding.”

“Good, you've come on well. So what does it actually mean?”

“Would the word blessing will be a loving will and this gives you a life of understanding as opposed to knowing?”

“Well that's the knowing, what's the understanding?”

Jack thought some more and said, “With a loving will of spiritual wisdom you get a life of understanding as opposed to knowing which is a deeper meaning to life.”

“So Heracles traveled through their land, what do you think that stands for?”

“He's in the realms of it, is this loving spiritual wisdom?”

“Why do you say that?” Nigel said wanting to make sure that he had fully grasped it.

“What its saying is that through the word or spiritual wisdom blessing the will your life is blessed by understanding it.”

“Blessed?”

“I'm not sure about that.”

“In this case think of it as purified, basically it's saying that spiritual wisdom purifies your life.”

“Oh right. So the giant has something to do with spiritual wisdom.”

“He stands for God's light (spiritual wisdom)-God through loving understanding so that makes him spiritual wisdom through loving understanding in other words loving spiritual wisdom.”

“Right,” Jack said taking it in, “And Heracles had to wrestle with it. Hold on I think there might be a conflict of interests here.”

“Sorry?”

“You said that you had to bring it to Earth Heracles could only defeat it by keeping it off the Earth. It seems to be saying two different things.”

“At first sight, you have to bring it down to Earth to get its full strength. Once that is done it goes into your Spirit.”

“My Spirit?”

“Yes, the spirit of God's knowing will, the Herac in Heracles. So what its saying is that you bring it down to Earth then you have to absorb it.”

“I can see that, so what about God's purpose through understanding?”

“God's purpose through understanding?”

“Les the rest of Heracles.”

“The only way to understand God's purpose is to experience it and the only way to experience God's purpose is to do it. You have to do a charitable act to serve God's purpose. This goes hand in hand with the first part.”

“Really?”

“Yes, think of it as a job. The first parts the theory and the second the practical. They both go into making the job and with one you have to have the other.”

“I can see that. Looks like you'll be helping me find this Hoover then.”

“Sorry?”

“An act of charity you've got to get it whilst you can.”

“You don't know where he lives. That's not like looking for a needle in a haystack its worse. We can't even find the haystack.”

“I've got her niece's address; she lives on Smith's Marina.”

“She lives on a boat?”

“Yes, well a barge. It's called The Ocean Wave.”

“Well I've got nothing planned for this afternoon, if she doesn't know though?”

“We've done the best we can do. We can do no more.”

“Alright then I'm up for it.”

They left the flat and drove in Nigel's van to the Marina.

“So,” Nigel said en route, “With all this knowledge you've got what are you going to do with it?”

“I don't know I've never given it much thought.”

“You could be a writer. Dave Adams makes a living from it.”

“Dave Adams. I thought he was on the dole.”

“He is,” Nigel said with a laugh, “He's got to sign on.”

“Funny. No I don't think writing's for me. I won't dismiss it though as I might change my mind besides I'm happy enough just to grow from it and enjoy the peace it brings.”

“Well there's still a road to travel see how you feel when you get to the end of it.”

“True,” Jack said and they pulled up at the marina. Being winter there was not many boats there so they quickly found The Ocean Wave. Jack knocked on the side and an attractive girl in her late teens came to the door.

“I'm looking for someone called Parkin,” Jack said, “I'm afraid I don't know her first name.”

The girl looked at Jack and said, “Well she's not here at the moment. You are welcome to leave a message but I'm not sure when she'll be back.”

“Her grandmother sent me; I'm looking for her uncle Jason.”

“Oh right,” she said, her manner changing, “I thought that you might have been someone else. Jenny, there's a fellow to see you about your uncle.”

With that a girl of similar age popped her head into the day light, “You're looking for my uncle Jason?”

“Yes, your grandmother sent us.”

“You'd better come in for a while. I'm afraid I don't really know where he lives.”

Jack and Nigel went into the barge and sat down on one of the benches. It was very hot inside because the fire was going at full strength. There was another girl there and she put the kettle on.

“We were all at school together,” Jenny said by way of explanation, “We decided to chip in for a

barge when we left.”

“Sounds a good life style.”

“Not bad in summer we just lift anchor and tour the river side pubs. It's surprising what you pick up on the way,” with that the girl making the tea laughed. “Now anyway,” she continued, “I don't know where he lives, my dad might though.”

“Arthur?”

“Yes, do you know him?”

“No, Mrs. Parkin told me.”

“Well my dad works nights so you might have a job getting to see him. I'll give you his address though,” and wrote it out. Jack looked at the address and said, “Harcroft Court, yes I know it. So what time does he usually get up?”

Jenny looked at her watch and said, “He might be up now actually.”

“Right,” Jack said getting up, “Thanks anyway.”

“Sorry I couldn't have been more helpful, we're a bit of a funny family you know how it is.”

“You've got me there I was brought up in a children's home.”

“Oh I'm sorry to hear that.”

“No I enjoyed it, most of the time anyway. Families, they are a bit of an enigma to me.”

“I ought to visit her really,” Jenny said for what Jack had said about living in a home had made her wonder, “She is my grandmother at the end of the day.”

“Well it's none of my business and as I said before I don't know anything about families but she does seem a nice woman. I live next door to her.”

“Oh you're her next door neighbour would you tell her I'll be up at Friday around 12 then. And maybe if you're in I might get a cup of tea out of you.”

“Sure, and if you are very lucky you might even get a piece of cake.”

“I hope so,” she said looking at Jack in a predatory manner.

“We'll see,” Jack said with a knowing smile.

They left the barge and proceeded to Arthur's house. In a quiet cul-de-sac they knocked on the door. No one answered so they thought he must be either out or still asleep. They were just about to go when Nigel heard sounds of life. The door opened and a middle aged man said, “What do you want,” in a manner that told Jack that he might have just awoken him up.

“I'm looking for Arthur Parkin,” Jack said.

“Well you won't find him here.”

Jack took out the piece of paper and said, “But I've got his address here,” and showed it him.

“Well that's my address. I don't know where you got it from though as it's not me.”

“His daughter gave it to me.”

“This daughter,” he said looking Jack straight in the eyes, “What's her name?”

“Jenny, er Jennifer.”

“And what do you want with this man?”

Well as you are not him it doesn't matter,” Jack turned around wondering why she had given him a false address.

“Just a minute,” the man said, “Yes I'm Arthur Parkin, what do you want from me?”

“I'm looking for your brother Jason,” Jack said a little miffed at being led on a song and dance,

“Your mother wants her vacuum cleaner back.”

“Jason, well I could give you his address,” and went back inside. He returned after a couple of minutes and giving Jack the piece of paper said, “Look I'm sorry about earlier. I was half asleep and a bit grumpy about being woken up. I thought that you were touting for work or something.”

“Not to worry. I was a bit reluctant to knock as your daughter told me you worked nights but she said that you would probably be up by now.”

“You were lucky to rouse me. I've been working all the hours God sent. I think it's starting to fray my nerves.”

“So where do you work then?”

“On the cross channel ferry I don't seem to get time to do anything else. I ought to nip over and see my mam really. She is flesh and blood at the end of the day.”

“I'll tell her that you are coming over then. I only live next door.”

“Sure, tell her I'll be up at the weekend then,” and bid them fare well.

Jack and Nigel next drove to Jason's. On the way there Nigel said, “They are not very forthcoming are they.”

“No, it's like getting blood out of a stone.”

“I think his daughter's keen on you.”

“We'll have to wait and see on that one. I'll let you know after Friday.”

They pulled up at the address on the paper and found out that it was a shop. Jack got out and Nigel remained in the van. He went through the door and saw a man not dissimilar to Arthur behind the counter. “Can I help you sir?” the man said.

“Are you Jason Parkin?”

“That's what it says on the door.”

“Your mother sent me.”

“What does she want,” Jason said with a marked edge to his tone.

“She sent me for her vacuum cleaner,” Jack went on unperturbed.

“She wants it back does she,” he said and thought a while before saying, “well it is hers I suppose. It's in the back. I won't be a moment, could you keep an eye out for customers as the bell doesn't work. Just call me if anyone comes in.”

“Sure,” Jack said and Jason left him. He returned after only a minute heavily laden with the vacuum cleaner and all its accessories. His manner was somewhat changed. “Look,” he said giving Jack the gear, “Tell her I'm sorry and it was a stupid thing to argue over. I'm not promising but I will try and get down one of these days.”

“Sure,” Jack said and loaded the Vacuum in the van. As they drove back he said, “Job done then.”

“And it didn't take too long.”

They pulled up at Mrs. Parkin and Jack gave her the cleaner. He told her that her granddaughter would be around on Friday and Arthur, Saturday. He also told her that Jason was sorry about the argument and was going to try and come up to see her. Her eyes welled with tears and she said, “Thanks Jack, you're a diamond.”

As you might have gathered November was pretty quiet.

12. Jack O'Lantern.

Sorry about that. Anyway December turned up and found a disappointed Jack. Jenny had not been around to visit him so he guessed that avenue was now closed. Work was steady and he still went out regularly though he was down to two nights for he had come to his senses a little. He had taken to his study with gusto and things were getting a little clearer. He was more contented in his self and he had taken a healthier lifestyle. He used to walk regularly and eat more often though only small portions as he liked to leave the table still hungry. The final tale related to one of the occasions he and Nigel were playing pool.

“Not bad,” Jack said after watching the black ball going down, “Looks like it's my break again. Are you ready for another drink?”

“Sounds good to me,” Nigel said draining his glass, “I'll set them up then.”

Jack went to the bar and as he was getting the drinks the door opened and Destiny appeared. She was closely followed by Harmony and Melody. Jack remembered their last meeting and was not quite sure how they would take him. Much to his surprise Harmony said, “I'll get these in Jack,” and he being the perfect gentleman that he was allowed her to.

“Er thanks,” Jack said leaving her to it.

“I've been thinking a lot since I last met you. You certainly opened my eyes; well your friend did anyway.”

“Well if I can be of service,” Jack said in a joking manner.

“You certainly can. I want to get back on the right path but I can't seem to find my way.”

“Oh and er what path are you actually on?”

“The occult I've a little confession to make. Your mate was right about the drugs.”

“The vision?” Jack said not really knowing for sure.

“Yes I got it on mushrooms. We were all there when it happened.”

“We all saw it,” Melody piped up.

“Well I don't suppose it matters how you got there,” Jack said not wanting to be judgmental.

“Anyway,” Harmony said, “I suppose you would call it the path of shadows.”

“Nigel has mentioned that I'm afraid I'm not too clued up on it though.”

“We thought it was light though,” Harmony said quickly, “It wasn't until that dream.”

“What sending you to the pub?”

“Yes, it made us evaluate well re-evaluate but now we're a bit lost for direction.”

“That would be more Nigel's department. Would you care for a game of pool?”

“Sure,” Harmony said and they all followed Jack. Reintroductions and back to the business.

“Harmony was looking for some new direction,” Jack said to Nigel, “I told her it was more your department.”

“Cheers,” Nigel said and turning to Harmony, “So what are you actually looking for?”

“I don't know. That's why we came in, on the off chance of seeing you.”

“Well what were you looking for when you first came in?”

“I don't know, the Philosopher's Stone?”

“Not the Holy Grail, it's the same thing but they lead to different interpretations.”

“Sorry?”

“The path of light and the path of shadows.”

“So I should have been looking for the Holy Grail then. So what is it?”

“It's a state of mind that will give you the inner peace that you crave. Well if you're looking for peace that it.”

“Peace? I'm not sure if that was on the list.”

“It wouldn't on the dark side that's more to do with excess.”

“To heighten the vibrations,” Harmony said making Nigel wonder what direction she had actually taken.

“So you weren't after peace then, inner peace.”
 “Inner peace?”
 “Yes, your fear of death.”
 “No, ours was more er to lengthen our lives.”
 “Oh, enlightenment.”
 “Well it was actually immortality,” Harmony said rather sheepishly.
 “Same thing it's just a grail and stone difference.”
 “I did not know that.”
 “Enlightenment appeals to the Soul and immortality appeals to the ego.”
 “Sorry?” it was Jack's turn this time.
 “The ego?”
 “Well all of it really,” Jack said and turning to Harmony, “I told you it wasn't my department.”
 “Certain words evoke certain thought trains,” Nigel said, “Immortality to most people means that you will live forever in a Captain Scarlet sort of way.”
 “Indestructible?” Jack said.
 “Yes, that's right. Now this is total darkness. As you grow in light and understanding though you start to think that maybe there might be life after death. You still call this immortality as usually (well dependent on your faith) it comes over as a heaven and hell thing. Now this perception is different from the re-incarnation one for one simple reason. You perceive that when you were born that was when you started life. So the birth of your ego is perceived as the start of your life. You still talk of immortality and perceive it to be your persona.”
 “Yes,” Harmony said, “I can see that. So it hits the ego?”
 “Yes, with re-incarnation though it's different for then you believe that you have lived before and so the ego loses interest.”
 “Loses interest?”
 “It does not care about any past lives it's more to do with live at present. In the ego's mind, we'll call it the little picture, the Soul does not exist. It cannot see past itself and so only believes in the shell. That's the part that the ego sees as immortal. You say enlightenment and it will not register with the ego.”
 “Oh I never knew. So when you are enlightened fully then you have found the Holy Grail and become immortal?”
 “How can you become something that you already are?” Melody said interrupting Harmony.
 “It's your ego that becomes immortal,” Nigel said, “Now the Grail actually gave you eternal youth.”
 “The Philosopher's Stone,” Harmony said on recognition.
 “Same thing just different thought strands.”
 “So enlightenment is to the Grail as immortality is to the Stone?” Jack said.
 “It's not quite that clear cut it's got a little misguided so it doesn't hold true.”
 “So this enlightenment?” Harmony said, “What actually is it?”
 “Higher knowledge, knowledge of the divine.”
 “And how does this give you the Holy Grail?” Melody asked.
 “It's a state of mind. Knowledge attains it.”
 “And where do you get this knowledge?”
 “Same place as you I just put a different interpretation on it that's all. Scriptures, mythologies, life.”
 “Life?” Harmony said.
 “You'll be surprised at what you find. Take you as an example.”
 “Me?”
 “Yes, now what did you say that woman said you were?”
 “The balance of its nature.”
 “So Harmony is the mind's balance.”
 “Right.”

“Well look a little deeper into it for something to harmonise it must have more than one aspect.”

“Er yes.”

“From an ego point of view you'll see it as one so anything that conflicts with that will be disregarded.”

“Right?” Harmony said wanting more elaboration.

“You'll lose the true understanding of it. You've got the wisdom but you don't understand it so you don't evolve in balance. You are not harmonised.”

“Right,” Harmony said upon realisation, “So the path of light evolves you in balance and this is done by understanding wisdom and not just knowing it.”

“So in life try and understand why it is happening as well. Did she explain why she called you that by the way?”

“No she just gave them to us. I just thought that it meant well balanced, you know harmonised.”

“Well it does, there are two aspects of your Self, your wisdom and your understanding. When you understand this wisdom then you are in harmony.”

“Oh so that's called enlightenment?”

“And it is enlightenment,” Nigel said with a laugh, “It goes deeper than that though.”

“It does?”

“Yes,” Nigel said and wrote something down. When he had finished he said, “The words sometimes hold the knowledge.”

“What?”

“Each letter is symbolic of a word; Nigel said and passed her the paper saying, “This is what harmony the balance of its nature says.”

She looked at it and read, “Spirit of God knows life seeing light (blessed with spiritual wisdom). Through self of God (God's purpose) God's light will. Through seeing the word (blessed) wisdom blesses life (God's wisdom), loving knowing through.”

“Thanks,” Harmony said, “I'll bare that in mind.”

“Could you do mine?” Melody said.

“Sure what was it again?”

“The vibration factor. Could you just write it out for us?”

Nigel did and gave her this. “Life through God's purpose seeing transformation (Blessed with spiritual wisdom) through love blessing self knowing God (wisdom blessed seeing light). The word- God's will (wisdom seeing knowing)”

“Thanks,” Melody said taking it.

“And I was the aim of its being,” Destiny said.

“Right,” Nigel said getting a sore hand with all the writing. “Transformation through understanding wisdom blessing light (blessed with spiritual wisdom) through God blessing life. Seeing the word blessed wisdom understood.-Self that's blessed with light will.”

“Ta,” Destiny said.

“Is this your local?” Harmony said

“Well sort of,” Jack said, “We come in Tuesdays and Thursdays. So yes you could say we are pretty regular.”

“Right,” Harmony said, “I'm afraid we have to make tracks, it was only really a quick drink. We'll have to talk some more,” and with that they left in unison.

“Strange women,” Jack said, “Almost spooky at times.”

“A bleeding arm ache, that's knackered me up for pooling.”

“Any excuse,” Jack said putting money in the table.

“Same again?” Nigel said emptying his glass. Jack nodded so Nigel took Jack's empty glass to the bar. Jack had just finished setting up when he returned.

“Your break for a change,” Jack said leaving Nigel to it. Nigel broke and the game commenced. It was a close game but Nigel took it and then Jack decided to take a rest.

“So they just came in, took the papers and left,” Jack said, “Mind you we did get a drink out of it.”
 “They bought the round?” Nigel said in surprise.
 “Oh, sorry Nigel I should have got that round in.”
 “Well never mind you can get the next one.”
 “And the next one besides. So how come you didn't want to explain the names?”
 “Pearls before swine. I would have had to go into the meaning of life, the nature of God, his seven spirits, the elements, do you want the rest?”
 “No,” Jack said quickly, “I get the point. Well it's a good idea anyway as it will help them gauge their progress.”
 “True, I wonder how long it will take before they can inject some life into it.”
 “Sorry?”
 “Understand it. When they don't understand it, it's dead to them.”
 “Oh right, yes I can see that. So what did it all mean then?”
 “What? Do you mean that you want me to write out all that lot again?”
 “Well you do it so much better than me.”
 “Yeah right, “Nigel said and wrote the names down once again. After he had finished he said, “Now before I start I will have to ascertain their relationship with each other.”
 “You mean that they're....”
 “No,” Nigel said interrupting him, “I don't mean that. Harmony- spirit of God knowing life (seeing light blessed). That's the Soul or the spiritual force within you. This is the life that you get from understanding spiritual wisdom. It's a mixture of the spirits of love and understanding.”
 “Right,” Jack said taking it in.
 “Melody, life through God's purpose (seeing transformation blessed). That's the right hand side of your brain, the masculine force within you that is the life that comes from knowing wisdom without understanding it. Destiny or transformation through understanding wisdom (Blessing light blessed). That's the left hand side of the brain, the feminine force. It gets its life from understanding wisdom.”
 “So Melody was the spirit of wisdom and Destiny understanding and put together you get Harmony or knowing.”
 “That's right, or God.”
 “The Hoover, yes I understand and what happened then?”
 “You get Harmony. Didn't you ever wonder why you just seemed to know things?”
 “Oh so that's the relationship then they are three aspects of the Self.”
 “Yes the spiritual wisdom just emphasises it. Harmony-God's light will is the Soul and you get this through understanding, the word blessed means injected with life or understood. The next bit says through wisdom understanding light which is God's light you get loving wisdom through a self of God.”
 “Amazing.”
 “Melody-love blessing self knowing God as opposed to understanding God, wisdom blessed speaks for itself and the word is God's will.”
 “And Destiny?”
 “Through God blessing life seeing the word blessed which is wisdom understood you get a self that's blessed with light.”
 “A self of light, the Soul. Yes I can see that now where does purpose fit in?”
 “Good question, it's the soul. That's the purpose that you serve. That's your God if you like.”
 “So where do I actually fit in then?”
 “You don't, you're not here.”
 “What?”
 “You've turned into the Hoover.”
 “Sorry?”

“You are no longer matter you are motion. You have become the Hoover in action. You serve your Self now for that is your life.”

“A self that's blessed with light has no matter,” Jack said upon recognition, “So I'm here but I'm not.”

“Well you could put it like that.”

“Must be your round then,” Jack said with a laugh, “I'd get one myself but I'm not here.”

Do You Know What it is Yet?

Twelve stories through the twelve months of the year though I won't labour the point. Yes you guessed it; it is the 12 labours of Heracles. So what were the 12 labours in essence? I'll give you a clue. Heracles had to subject himself to 12 tasks given by Eurystheus King of Argos on the understanding that if he accomplished the tasks he should be counted amongst the gods. Some say that this is symbolic of precession and it is in a very lateral way but its real meaning is the levels of understanding. Eurystheus stands for through loving knowing blessed with understanding; spiritual wisdom through loving understanding and this rules God's knowing will seeing understanding. Now God's knowing will would actually be Heracles and understanding would be the level he was on. So what rules this? Spiritual wisdom through understanding God (loving understanding) and you get this through knowing God (loving knowing) and understanding of purpose (blessed with understanding). Now with every labour finished Heracles climbed a level and on completion of his tasks he could be counted amongst the gods as he was then an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve. You think that sounds a little far-fetched well stick around and I will really open up. Now to prove this point and bearing in mind that it is all conjecture I will need to compare it with something else and maybe, well hopefully, get fresh meaning from both. I thought that I would use the angel chants from the Qu'ran to counter check it. So here we go.

Labour 1, The Nemean Lion-Spiritual wisdom- through light and life(through God's light)God's purpose blessed seeing light.

Alif Lam Mim or God (God's purpose blessed with the word) God's purpose (God's life) life blesses life.

Now to really force the point home I will have to bring in the Holy Grail. The grail was made to serve so its essence was its purpose; you cannot have one without another for without its purpose it would not exist. And what has that to do with level 1? The grail is God and God's purpose is to love. Taking it down to level 1 this means a being with the ability to create as explained with the spirits of life and love.

Now onto the Nemean Lion-Life through God's light that being His purpose and spiritual wisdom through light is its essence so God's purpose blessed seeing light is the mergence of the two, a being with the ability to create or a grail with the ability to serve take your pick (mine's the shovel). And the story itself? Heracles strangled the life out of it and took its hide symbolic of its power for his own. Heracles stands for spirit through knowing God's will (God's purpose through understanding) so basically the first part is the spirit of life (God's knowing is His life) and the lion God's purpose through understanding for it means God's purpose blessed seeing light. In Jack's story the lion was Jackey, his money was his life and his purpose was his wife. Jack's ability to earn money (create wealth) came from Jackey through The Word for he put the work Jack's way. When Jack stole the money he took away Jackey's life. He fleeced him and took away his strength. You could go a lot deeper into it but that should do for the point.

Now onto level 2, labour 2. The Lernaean Hydra or Spiritual wisdom-Through God's purpose and knowing light (God through God's light)spirit blessed with transformation (knowing God.)

Alif Lam Mim Sad or God (God's purpose) blesses the word, (God's purpose-God's life) life blesses life understanding God's transformation.

The first part spiritual wisdom through God's purpose and knowing light is basically just telling you how you get spiritual wisdom and that is through divine work(serving God's purpose)and knowledge of the divine(light) The second part God through God's light(spirit blessed with transformation knowing God). The spirit that transforms through knowing God is the spirit of understanding for life blesses life understanding God's transformation. God through God's light is God blesses the word for God's light is the word and when God blesses it He works through it (God's purpose) and brings it to life.

And the story itself? The well of Amymone is the Holy Spirit the three springs being the spirits of purpose, love and understanding and Amymone, God's life (blessed with life seeing light through)

who owned it is a spiritual life. The hydra guarded it. It had nine heads, one of which was immortal and every-time one was cut off two appeared. In Jack's story I had it down as the ultimate fear and each head denoted a fear. In Heracles it was symbolic of the seven deadly sins and spiritual pride (arrogance) which was mortal and spiritual envy (anger) which had to be buried. Now as I said two heads appeared when one was cut off and the only way to kill it was to burn the heads with the help of Iolaus (Blessed seeing God's purpose, God's loving understanding) for this purifies all fears through understanding them. Without truly understanding them they live on and multiply. This level is instinct and is found in the lower realms of fauna basically animals controlled by their instinct. Now at this point I ought to say that the levels are held in the names and the esoteric meaning in the stories the hydra being symbolic of the spirit of understanding, the feminine force to Heracles masculine which on this level is controlled by nature through fear.

Labour 3. Stag-understanding wisdom God's will.

Alif Lam Ra-God (God's purpose) blesses the word, God's life knowing God.

Now through understanding wisdom you get God's will so God blesses the word. Wisdom, well actually loving spiritual wisdom is God's will and understanding this, I mean the wisdom not the concept builds up your spiritual awareness. Now the only way to understand wisdom is through discernment, another of the seven spirits of God. On this level it comes over as knowledge of good and evil but on its highest level it comes over as insight. And the esoteric message to the tale? Er. a little confession I'm afraid. I've only got a rough outline of the story so the tale probably has no relevance at all. The stag, the horns and it being fleet of foot all fit in but as to the plot I'm afraid I've lost it. (Stop moaning. you got a drink out of it.) Anyway moving swiftly on this level is where man kicks in with his power to know right from wrong.

Labour 4 Boar-self seeing God's knowing

Alif Lam Mim Ra-God (God's purpose) blesses the word (God's purpose) God's life knowing God. God blesses the word means another spirit and this one is the spirit of wisdom or God's knowing. Speaks for itself really as wisdom is light and that is God's knowing. At this level we are talking about the growth of the ego. A downside to discernment is self consciousness, the start of the ego's life. Now onto the tale itself. I'm afraid it's the same excuse as the previous tale (You got a game of pool though so I'm not that bad). The story itself had some esoteric value to make up for itself and if it's any use the boar was Harold and what he ravaged was enlightenment. Erymanthus (the neighbour-hood it ravaged) means through knowing blessing life (God's light) spiritual wisdom (Loving understanding). Now the Soul is knowing and God's light is its life made of spiritual wisdom that feeds your understanding through your imagination. Confused? Blinding isn't it? Now at this point I would like to give you an insight. Heracles means renowned through Hera which basically means that fate is on his side. Now if you think these tales surreal read them again with that in mind.

Labour 5. Stables-understanding wisdom God's self, God's purpose through understanding.

Kaf Haya Ain Sad-Work of God (the word), Spirit of God blessed by God (God's blessed light.)

Now by understanding wisdom you get God's self and God's purpose through understanding means you understand it as opposed to know it. God's purpose is the action, the work of God and God's self is the spirit of God blessed by God which is actually the spirit of wisdom blessed by understanding or God's blessed light. At this level you become a bit more charitable to your neighbour and maybe a little more spiritually aware though you might not be conscious of it. As it grows you seem to develop a thirst for knowledge, sometimes not esoteric just knowledge in general. And the relevance to Heracles? Pretty parallel rally except a flash flood instead of a diversion of rivers and I threw in an emotional level that you might find interesting (horses for courses). So the two rivers that cleansed the sheds Alpheus and Peneus or God (God's purpose), the spiritual word through loving understanding and the word through light through loving understanding. I would say that, that leaves little to the imagination.

Labour 6. The Arcadian birds-spiritual wisdom-through God's knowing will (God's transformation

blessed by God's light) self blessed with knowing transforms to understanding.

Sad Ta Ha Tah Sin Mim-Understanding God's transformation (wisdom of God) spirit of God's wisdom. God's spiritual understanding blesses light (Life blesses life).

The self blessed with knowing (God's knowing will) transforms to understanding through enlightenment (transformation blessed by God's light) through spiritual wisdom. Now God's knowing will is the spirit of wisdom and through enlightenment merges with the spirit of understanding through transformation. In other words the self blessed with knowing transforms to understanding. And the connection with the angels chants? God's knowing will is a will of light and to be blessed by God's spiritual understanding is the transformation through the spirit of understanding. Now the relevance to the tale well just a bit of fun really. The closest I could get to a bird that eats flesh. So level six is the mergence of the spirits of wisdom and understanding. Nigel found Harmony through the power of understanding and Harmony got wisdom though it cost her, her power.

Labour 7 and doesn't it go quickly. The Cretan Bull-Spiritual wisdom-Through will of knowing and wisdom (God's light) self of loving purpose (God's purpose)

Ya Sin-Blessed by God (understanding blessed with light).

With God's blessing you get a self loving purpose, well more to the point you become one. You have a shift in consciousness from light to understanding and your old self dies. And the relevance to Heracles? He had to bring back the bull to Peloponnsus alive or the word-through God's purpose (seeing the word) seeing light, light through loving understanding and that is loving understanding. So what does he have to bring to loving understanding? A self of loving purpose. Understanding and wisdom, Nuff said anyway (he told me yesterday) And Jack's tale? Just an exercise in people watching or maybe Clumsy was Jack's old self for Jack had been a story teller in his time. I'm not sure. Let me know when you get to the right level.

Labour 8. The Diomedes Mare- Spiritual wisdom- from transformation blessed (seeing life through transformation) through understanding, life of God's knowing from.

So from the transformation blessed through understanding you get a life of God's knowing or the spirit of knowing.

Saad Ha Mim-Understanding God (God's transforming spirit) God's life blesses life. With God the knower of all things it's back to the spirit of knowing. And Heracles? He had to obtain it as opposed to kill it. Its hunger for flesh is its yearning for knowledge and Jack? Well you ran the gauntlet of emotions with that one. Its relevance?

Glenda stands for Will-God's purpose through light (transformed to God). When Jack slept with Glenda he received the spirit of knowing. His old flame Pauline or The word (God's love)-God's purpose blesses light through (We don't just throw this together you know) died and he became a will of light. Level 7 and 8 probably occur around the same time and the real lesson from the Tale, well I'll leave that to your imagination

Labour 9 The Hippolytes Girdle(received from Ares)- Spiritual wisdom- Through the spirit blessing the word the word sees God's purpose blessed with wisdom through understanding-the will (Blessed with knowing)transforms to God's purpose through and this came from God's knowing through understanding. So through the spirit blessing the word God's purpose blessed with wisdom transforms through understanding-the will transforms God's purpose through. The spirit of purpose anyone?

Ha Mim Ain-Spirit of God's life blesses light (God's blessed light). The spirit of God's life is His purpose (remember the Grail) so that says it all really. So the spirit of purpose, at this level you become the grail. Your purpose is to hold the spirit of love for that is what you will serve, that is the God within (An enlightened soul) and you are the purpose that serves. Well not quite but you are pretty close. We'll get back to that at the next level. So onto Heracles, the girdle was the spirit of purpose. When he slew Hippolytes the transformation was complete. And Jack? Well Glenda became Carol or will (God's knowing) seeing God's purpose, that was a state of evolution. And the

urine? Just something a mate of mine (Mark Atkins-Alright Oche if you are reading this) did once. I thought that I would record it for prosperity. I put the story of Icarus in and believe it or not (we don't just make this up you know) there is a connection with Heracles. He found the body and buried it on an island which was renamed Icaria. Icarus stands for blessed with a will of God's knowing (loving understanding) and Icaria-Blessed with a will of God's knowing (Blessed by God). Nigel came close but I'm afraid I've got to melt the wax again. Icarus was the old self. His death was not death but rebirth for Icaria is God's blessing. When this happens all your insights into God do tend to fry. Icarus was reborn as Icaria, his old self's death was his new beginning. Labour 10 the Gades Oxen, spiritual wisdom- will of God transformed through understanding (seeing insight through light)

Sin-Understanding blessed light.

Seeing insight through light. That's when you look into the word and get a deeper meaning (insight). Loving spiritual wisdom or blessed light is its name. This transforms your understanding and purifies the grail. Basically you purify yourself of the emotional heartache you had to go through to get to this stage. And Heracles? Well he had to bring the oxen back to Argos (God's knowing, will sees understanding) or in other words to get deeper insight. Now Gades was ruled by Geryon so a will through knowing (Blessed seeing light) rules the will of God transformed to understanding or enlightenment rules your transformation.

Geryon was a monster with three heads signifying the triple path of enlightenment. Anger, Pride and love. Take your path and it will control your destiny for that will be the purpose that you serve. The oxen were guarded by a two headed dog and its owner the giant Eurytion or from loving knowing blessed with light blessed seeing light. Now loving knowing is actually insight for it means knowing God as opposed to God's knowing, so when he slew the giant he got it. The two headed dog signified two of the paths to enlightenment and the giant the last one, the one that actually led to insight, Love. And as to the Pillars of Heracles. Well as some Altantean theorists tend to forget its relevance to their story I will do the same. The relevance with Jack? A two headed dog, a two faced bitch, a giant, a giant. The oxen? Nigel's insight was that he knew what was happening and so could take the necessary steps to combat it.

Labour 11-The Hesperides Apples, Spiritual wisdom-through the spirit that understands the word and knows the blessed transformation through understanding-God (the word) the word (God's purpose) through understanding.

Qaf-Soul- God, the word.

So in the end there was the word, the word was with God, the word was God. (Well not quite as it should be God's but that's level 12). The wisdom of God would be the word or a will of knowing in essence and the word would be a self of love understanding its purpose for God's purpose is to love. I suppose if you want to revert back to Nigel and his Hoover it's the Hoover switched off.

So Heracles. Eridanas river Nymphs or through knowing blessed with transformation (God's light), God's understanding. Knowing blessed with love (through knowing light) blessed with life-spiritual wisdom understood.

From knowing transformed to loving understanding is the process of purification through loving spiritual wisdom so that you can become a self of loving understanding. Love blessed with life? Life would be what you get from spiritual wisdom and blessed with love cleansed light (pure light as opposed to light). This is done through understanding spiritual wisdom (as opposed to just knowing it) and where did they send him to?

Nereus or light through knowing and loving understanding-more light. Now he was an aging sea dog, the sea being emphasis of the spiritual and could only be caught asleep and on land. You have to bring it down to Earth to awaken it. He took many forms means that you can read it in many ways is talking about the decoding for it can be pretty tricky with the sub texts and floating 'E'. Heracles was then sent to the titan Prometheus or the word-knowing seeing life through spiritual wisdom and through loving understanding. So from loving spiritual wisdom you get a deeper

knowing of God and life in general for you have quite an understanding of the big picture. And the vultures that fed on him? Spiritual wisdom-through loving love (God's purpose) wisdom (loving knowing) through understanding or through loving (the action) love (the purpose) you get wisdom (loving knowing as opposed to knowing) through understanding. The last part means a deeper understanding and the first part the activation of your purpose. You have to work for it I'm afraid. Now to activate your purpose you must lose your ego and become your purpose and the only way to do this is to put another before yourself, opening the door for someone, something as little as that. It's not the size of the deed and the next thing I say, probably the only time in its history that it's true, will shock you. It's the thought that counts. You activate the Law of Love for you uphold God's purpose. So when Heracles killed the vultures he got even more spiritually aware both in action and in deed. Now the titan sent him to his brother Atlas or God's wisdom, God's purpose (God's understanding) and this is what supports a spiritual life (heaven's above). Heracles took over Atlas' purpose so Atlas could fetch the apples to him so as Atlas was his purpose when Heracles took over he became it. And Jack? You must have cursed me when you read that, I'm sure my ears were burning. Hopefully it will make a little more sense now. I included the Pygmies and the giant interpretation in the story as opposed to the text to try and spread the load a little. Labour 12 Cerberus-will through knowing self and knowing loving understanding.

Oaf-Soul-God's word.

Cerebus speaks for itself really. A will that knows itself through loving understanding. The Hoover is now switched on, you are God's word.

Heracles had to bring it into the light and carry it back to Eurystheus or understand it. When he was in Hades (the spirit of God's transformation through understanding) he got the liberty of Theseus (Spiritual wisdom and understanding through loving understanding) or loving spiritual wisdom was released. Think of level 10 as the final level for 11 is the unpurified grail and 12 the purified it that's any help (think of it anyway if it's not)

And now to Jack. Think of the angels as Cerberus-the three headed being, the three parts of the brain (I forgot to mention the limbic system for the soul). Now each triad is a triad in itself giving a total of nine, a very powerful number.

The first triad I gave you in the story that was the triad of Melody, the wisdom. The next triad is the triad of Destiny and it goes

Anger-life sucks and then I blow (indignation)

Pride-life stinks but I don't know (delusion)

Love-life slows and I'm all aglow (contentment)

Anger-God's light (will through knowing)

God's purpose blesses the word through loving understanding (loving will of work). Understanding (God's light) transforms to spiritual wisdom through light blessing self (God's purpose seeing love).

Pride-The word known-blessed transformation through.

God's purpose blesses the word through understanding wisdom (Blessed with light) Work-understanding (self of loving wisdom) work light sees love.

Love-God's purpose seeing love through

God's purpose blesses the word through understanding God's purpose. Seeing loving understanding God's light transformation is blessed with life. God (God's purpose), God's purpose (God's will) - God's purpose seeing love.

So that is the next triad, the triad of Destiny, your understanding, the purpose that you serve. Now not content with just confusing you I will give you the triad of Harmony, knowing, understanding and wisdom.

Knowing-work-light seeing love (blessed light will)

Understanding-Loving light transformed through knowing. Understanding wisdom God's light transformed (Blessed light transformation)

Wisdom-love blessed with understanding transformed to life.

The first two are pretty straight forward, the third might want expanding. Wisdom understood in this side of the brain means wisdom known as opposed to understood, that is why it is transformed to life and not loving life. So now you have the three triads I'll link them together.

Knowing is the mind's harmony for it is the balance of its nature. It is done through loving spiritual wisdom or insight from love.

Understanding is the mind's destiny for that is the aim of its being. It is got through spiritual wisdom and can leave a nasty downside. Your God becomes a God of anger (righteous indignation) when you start to see a little of the bigger picture.

Wisdom is the mind's melody, the vibration factor. A downside of wisdom without understanding is that you can acquire pride for it goes straight to the ego.

And to bring them all down to Earth- understanding wisdom is the mind's knowing so knowing is when God and the word becomes God's word. (I know therefore I am).

Cheers. I'll catch you on the rebound.

Part 2.

1. Jack Knife.	88
2. Jack of Clubs.	99
3. Jack of all Trades.	105
4. Jack Plane.	110
5. Jack Tar.	116
6. Jack of the Green.	120
7. Jack and Jill.	126
8. Jack Rabbit.	131
9. High Jack.	134
10. Jack High.	140
7a. Jack Off.	146
Do you know what it is yet?	148

1. Jack Knife.

Another year and where has it gone? Doesn't time fly when you are enjoying yourself? Well it did for Jack for he mentioned the same thing to Nigel still slightly hungover from his New Year's Day celebrating.

"That's probably because it's not structured," Nigel said.

"Sorry, structured?"

"Yes, didn't you notice how it seemed to drag when you were at school?"

"Well I thought it was just because it was so boring."

"Might have something to do with it," Nigel said laughing, "So you didn't like school?"

"Oh no it wasn't that bad so by structured what do you mean? Termed off?"

"Yes, controlled. If you had a steady full time job you would notice it as well."

"Maybe," Jack said going deep into thought, "You know perhaps we ought to do that ourselves?"

"What, you mean get a real job?"

"Don't sound so shocked it won't hurt."

"I don't know about that get the wrong job and it can be pretty Soul destroying."

"True. Mind you we don't have to put up with it. I'm sure we could find something we like and we're pretty versatile so we've got a wider range of choice."

"There is that. So are you getting bored with the outlaw lifestyle?"

"It's too much of a struggle at times. Work's too sporadic and my nest egg's nearly fledged."

"It does have its downside," Nigel said agreeing, "But it gives a lot more freedom."

"I know what you are saying. Don't want to be controlled by the clock I just want to slow it down a little."

"You've got all the time in the world now. It doesn't matter how quickly it goes but I agree with you about the struggle. We ought to come up with a different plan."

"You're not talking about going on the rob are you?" Jack said in surprise, "It's not really a road I would like to travel down."

"No," Nigel said with a laugh, "I reckon if we work solid for six months we could live of the savings for the next."

"That sounds better. Yes it will give me time and take away the worry."

"The worry?"

"Just a figure of speech. We'll nip down the joke club when it opens again and see what they have to offer. Anyway that will keep. Do you want a brew?"

"Sure, I'd best make it a quick one though as I've got to nip and see someone."

"Okay," Jack said and getting up went into the kitchen to put the kettle on. "So who have you got to see?" he called from the kitchen.

"Oh Harmony actually."

"Really," Jack said coming back in, "You kept that quiet. You're a bit of a dark horse."

"Oh nothing like that I think she's just after my knowledge that's all."

"That's what they all say. It's about time I got someone myself really, thinking about it."

"You still miss Pauline?"

"At night I miss snuggling up to her but as for the rest, no I'm over her."

"Time's a good healer," Nigel said and then laughed before saying, "Not a wise thing to say when you are going through the process though."

"True, anyway the kettle's boiled," and went back into the kitchen. After a couple of minutes he was back and the conversation resumed. "So," he said after he had given Nigel his cup, "We'll have to go out one of these days and see what we can get."

"Maybe," Nigel said and took a drink, "It's a long time since I've been to a night club. Mind you I'm still not looking for a solid relationship; I'm not the kind to get married. You and Pauline had a good thing going."

"Yes, it wasn't bad. I'm after something like that again. You reckon that Harmony might be up for

it?"

"I could ask. I doubt it though. She's too rapt up in her studies at the moment."

"Yes I know what you mean it does seem to take over. Leave it a while and I'll ask her myself."

"Sure," Nigel said and finished his drink, "I'll only be a couple of hours I'll nip back if you want."

"Make it after seven then. I promised I'd nip over and see Chillin' for a while."

"Right," Nigel said and got up, "I'll see you later then." after he had gone Jack finished his tea and set off on his way. It was a cold day but as it was only a short distance he was not unduly bothered. He knocked on the door and Chillin' quickly answered it. They were soon drinking tea and deep into conversation.

"So you after full time work now?" Chillin' said, "It's a bit drastic isn't it?"

"Boredom I guess, my mind seems restless."

"All that mythology stuff I'm afraid once you start looking beyond you just can't stop."

"True."

"Why not take up a hobby, it might help."

"A hobby? I'm not sure. What like?"

"Well I write a bit of poetry, I get quite a lot from it."

"Really," Jack said thinking it might be another motorbike situation.

"Yes, generally I just throw them away when I've finished them but it's up to you what you do."

"You wouldn't have anything lying around then?" thinking that his first assumption was correct.

Chillin' thought awhile and much to Jack's surprise said, "You know I think I just might." He got up and went through into another room. He quickly returned and gave Jack a piece of paper. "I kept hold of this one."

Jack looked at the paper and read

Jail-House Clock

**Wednesday dawning, frosty morning saw me out with pick in hand
Swinging wildly to put it mildly, trying to break this rock hard land
The chilling wind would not rescind, it cut through me just like a knife
A tired body, this work is shoddy; I always seem to get the strife**

**Strike again, oh this pain; I think I've stretched this back too much
Strike once more so what's it for, I wouldn't call it work as such
Time goes slow and I should know I've been here now for just a year
It seems longer and though I'm stronger when I leave I'll shed no tear**

**So what's it for, I mean the law, what the thing that makes it tick
For from where I'm standing it's demanding, someone must be really sick
Breaking rocks, short sharp shocks, counting time till I get out
Stodgy food, conditions rude and from a screw the occasional clout**

**Justice calls but vengeance falls, has reality slipped a disc
I was wrong but when hungers strong I guess you have to take that risk
Swing once more, a muscle tore, I guess you'd say it's not my day
A loaf of bread and five years dead, guess that was the price to pay.**

After Jack had finished he said, "That's amazing that is. And you wrote this?"

"Yes, keep it if you want it."

"Sure thanks," Jack said and folding it up put it in his pocket, "So you just throw them away then?"

"Most of them usually they don't sound too good when I've come down."

"So you do them when you are high."

"They seem to come out better when I'm relaxed. Usually that is as some of them just sound like non sense the next day. You ought to give it a go if it is a hobby you are after."

"I'll think about it. I could definitely do with some sort of hobby."

They talked some more until the early evening when Jack said goodbye and left. Nigel came back at around half past seven and Jack told him about his conversation with Chillin'

"He must be channeling," Nigel said, "Creative writing some would call it or art even."

"Art, I never knew that. I thought it was about paintings and unmade beds."

"God's knowing wisdom," Nigel said with a laugh, "Some of the old painters had it."

"So that is art then. What about this modern stuff?"

"Well I wouldn't call it art. Pretentious crap would be a better description."

"And Chillin' just gets high and it comes out. Mind you he did say that sometimes it comes out as non sense."

"Maybe or maybe he doesn't understand it. It might be worth having a look at some."

"Ah I'm afraid he's thrown them out."

"You ought to try it yourself. You'll be surprised at what you uncover."

"I don't know about that I put it in the same league as that modern art."

"Yes times have definitely changed. They were well thought of in the olden days. I've done a few myself."

"You kept that quiet."

"No it just didn't come up in conversation that's all."

"So have you got anything on hand," Jack said a little interested.

"You might like this one it's called **Stonehenge-a Midsummer Night's Dream.**"

"Okay, so how does it go?"

**"Majestic grey monoliths stand out in a crowd
Withholding their secrets for time is their shroud
What marvel, what stature, what strength in their pose
Designed by the ignorant with a star gazer's nose**

**But who said they were ignorant, historians of course
For just like all scientists they were lost at the source
They lacked understanding, a major downfall
So come to the ignorant it was they that stood tall**

**What was Stonehenge then, just a circle of dominoes?
Erected for pleasure by men in boredom throes
Or was it much deeper, a throwback in time
Where men could stand tall in the worship divine**

**A chart for the stars, were the gods at their play
Though a henge is a meeting place at the end of the day
An assembly, a forum, a place to shed light
Or just to sell cattle for finances bright**

**No one can say for that shroud is still there
Though one things for certain it was built with great care
To erect such great dolmens what strength was expelled?
Its rank in importance and in stamina excelled**

**A star chart outside with its own inner circle
A dimensional gateway from where you could hurtle
Outlying stones to line up the sun's rays
To shine on the earth stone on mid-summer days**

**Now if the earth was the stone and the spirit the sun
And on this great mergence your balance is won
Well if that's case then we're in a bind
For we are the ignorant and the blind lead the blind"**

"Yes," Jack said after Nigel had finished, "I liked that, anymore?"

"Not with me, that's the only one I learned by heart. I ought to learn some more thinking about it as it's good for the memory."

"I suppose it is. Maybe I might try it myself. Chillin' reckons I just need a hobby that's all. He thinks my mind is too restless."

"It would be. Give it a try you might like it. Anyway I'd better be off."

"It's only 8 o'clock what's the hurry?"

"I promised to take Harmony out for a drink."

"What? You sly dog I thought you said that she was more interested in her studies. Mind you fair play to you she's not a bad looking girl."

"Well you got me thinking about it. Anyway if I don't see you before I'll see you in a couple of days and we'll nip down the job centre."

"Sure," Jack said and let him out. After Nigel had gone Jack made himself a drink and thought a little more about writing poetry. He was not really keen to tell you the truth but thought that he would give it a go as he had nothing to lose. He sat a while to let it come out but his mind was rationalising ideas and so blocked the flow. After half an hour he just gave up and put the television on watching it until he went to bed at eleven.

The tale picks up two days later with Nigel driving Jack to the job centre.

"So how did you get on with Harmony," Jack said, "Are you seeing her again?"

"I thought I might take her to the zoo and yes we got on alright, pretty well in fact."

"Good, I'm glad to hear it, fair play to you."

"Thanks, you don't mind me taking her out do you?"

"Sorry, why should I mind?"

"I thought you were pretty keen on her yourself. I don't want to tread on any toes."

"No," Jack said with a laugh, "She's a nice girl, not bad looking either but I don't think she's the one for me. I think I was more in love with the idea of being in love than anything else."

"Well it's in our nature I suppose; life and love go hand in hand."

"True, it used to be love and marriage at one time," and laughed.

"How are you getting on with your poetry by the way? Did you give it a try?"

"I gave it a go but to tell you the truth I got nowhere. I couldn't even think of a topic."

"Oh no that's not how it works. Don't think as that comes from the wrong side of the brain. Creative writing comes from the understanding side."

"But if I don't think about it I won't have a clue at all. How does it actually work?"

"On inspiration, something will happen to inspire you and it will unlock it."

"I don't know about that, that doesn't sound probable. In what sense do you mean?"

"It depends on the level. It could be a woman, a muse if you like or it could be something fate throws up."

"So that one you told me. You know the one about Stonehenge, what brought that about?"

"A television programme actually," Nigel said with a laugh, "One of those history ones. They were trying to explain how it came to be. It wasn't what they said it was more the way they said it."

"Sorry?"

"The conviction that they were right and not only that everyone else was wrong. I'm afraid that one comes from anger, well righteous indignation really."

"I didn't see the programme. Mind you I do know what you are talking about. Their evidence is even more flimsier than that what they are attacking and the conviction they say it with."

"Yes they pull apart some minor point and make such a big thing about it perceiving that they have

destroyed the case.”

“Well it's T.V. I suppose. It has to be entertaining.”

“There is that. I guess they have to try and justify the license fee.”

“Waste of time doing that,” Jack said with a laugh, “Well trying to anyway. You mentioned muse, is that like what I've been reading in Greek mythology?”

“Sort of but I wouldn't pay too much attention to them as they basically just hold spiritual wisdom.”

“So all that epic poetry, comedy, tragedy and stuff, there is nothing in it.”

“No it doesn't work like that. You are inspired by anger, pride or love. All that stuff has been over rationalised.”

“To what purpose?”

“A cushion for pride maybe who can tell for sure.”

“So how would it come about then. Why would anyone want to do it?”

“A bit like Stonehenge I suppose. They had a bit of information and put their emotional perceptions on it. They probably actually believe what they are saying.”

“Really?” Jack said in surprise, “I'm not sure about that thinking a bit more into it.”

“Why's that?”

“Well some of the stuff they come out with, it beggars belief.”

“New guardians they came to be deluded by their vanity,” Nigel said with a laugh, “They actually do believe what they are saying.”

“I never take heed anyway. Not now.”

“You can see beyond. You have more insight.”

“So the muses, what do they actually stand for?”

“Spiritual wisdom through life, loving understanding through understanding.”

Jack laughed and said, “No I meant the actual muses.”

“Oh sorry,” Nigel said with a laugh, “Do you remember what the names are?”

“Er no,” Jack said sheepishly, “I'm afraid I only just browsed through them.”

“Never mind. I'll just give you the names and not their so called presidencies.”

“That should make it easier.”

“Right, Clio, Euterpe, Thaleia, Melpomene, Terpsichore, Erato, Polymnia, Urania and Calliope.”

“Ah yes, I remember now,” Jack said with a laugh.

“Then perhaps you'd like to work them out?”

“Well I don't know about that and besides you do it a lot better than me.”

“Yeah right,” Nigel said seeing through the charade, “Okay then it's in four parts. The first part-Will- God's purpose blessed with seeing and loving wisdom through knowing the word through spiritual wisdom. That's straight forward enough.”

“Yes it's talking about the spirit of purpose and loving spiritual wisdom.”

“Good, so onto the second part. God (God's purpose that's blessed by God's life)-Through God's purpose the word sees light and life through wisdom. Through knowing the word understanding blesses spiritual will (seeing knowing) and through knowing God's wisdom (seeing the word) seeing God's purpose blessing life, light blessed by God.”

“Okay,” Jack said taking it in.

“Now the third parts pretty straight forward. Loving knowing-God's light blessed by God. It's actually just a supplement to the second part and should be bracketed.”

“Well I suppose it makes it less complicated.”

“That's right. So finally we have will of God (God's purpose)-God's purpose seeing the word through. So you have will, God and will of God.”

“Right, wisdom and understanding, knowing and finally purpose.”

“Just in time as well,” Nigel said pulling up in the car park behind the job centre.

Chapter 2

Jack and Nigel went into the job centre and climbed the stairs to where the vacancies were.

“Would you look at that,” Jack said, “They haven't got jobs on boards anymore it's all computerised.”

“Progress I suppose,” Nigel said and they took a look at one of the monitors, it's a shame the wage rate hasn't progressed as much.”

“True, look at it. Most of them are just minimum wage.”

“Well if they want to pay the minimum that's how I would work.”

“I won't argue with that, mind you I wouldn't take the job in the first place so I guess it's hypothetical.”

“Yes I know what you are saying. I reckon that whoever sets it ought to be made to work it. I mean if it's good enough for one it should be good enough for them all.”

“Well yes. I mean they must think that it's a livable wage so they should set an example.”

Nigel laughed and said, “Can't fault you Jack. With logic like that you'll go far.”

“Maybe,” Jack said with a laugh and pointing at one of the jobs on the screen, “But not there.”

“True. So what sort of money are you looking for?”

“£7 minimum, though I wouldn't expect to work too hard for it.”

“I know what you mean. I reckon just turning up would cover it.”

“I mean look at that one,” Jack said pointing at another job, “Duration 1 week. By the time you start you'll be finished.”

“It might be long enough.”

“Sorry?”

“Well let's be honest a week's long enough to find out if you could put up with all the bullshit that goes with controlled work.”

“Alright then,” Jack said and pressed the button that printed it out, “We'll try and see.”

They got a ticket with a number and waited for it to come up on the digital board. The place was fairly empty so they were seen pretty quickly. An attractive girl in her early twenties served them. After taking all their details she keyed in the number and the job came up.

“It's an agency job,” she said, “There's a name and phone number to ring, would that interest you?”

“I'm not sure about agency work,” Nigel said, “But it's up to you Jack.”

“Well it's only a week,” and then to the girl, “Sure.”

She phoned and said, “Hello its Emma from Helson Job centre. Could I speak to a Jonathon Smith please?” The conversation did not take too long and after she had put the phone down she said, “I'm sorry but he's not there at the moment. I'll print out the details and you can try him a little later if you like.”

“That sounds alright,” Jack said so she did. Nigel and Jack then went back and found another one so the procedure happened again. The job came up on the screen and Emma said, “It's an agency vacancy.”

“Haven't you got any real jobs?” Jack said in a light hearted way. She found it amusing and laughed. She dialed the number and this time got connected. She passed the phone to Jack so he could talk to the man. Jack told him of their experience and the man seemed keen. He said that he would try and get in contact with the firm to get them started Monday and took Jack's phone number. He also said that if he could not get in touch in time (it was a Friday) he would phone Jack early the next week. Job done they drove back to Jack's flat and put the kettle on.

“So you don't like agency work?” Jack said bringing the drinks in.

“It's the whole idea of it all.”

“Well yes but you get a lot more freedom. You can work when you want and take a more varied job description.”

“In theory but I'm afraid it falls down in reality. You turn down jobs and they rarely phone you back. No I know someone who used to work for one. He left when he found out they were booking

his work out at £18 an hour and only paying him 5.”

“I think I would. That's over doing it a bit.”

“It's only a week I suppose but I begrudge paying them that much. They are not pariahs they are more like leeches.”

“You'd think with the employment situation the way it is they would be out of business.”

“They've loaded the market.”

“Sorry?”

“Most companies nowadays only employ through agencies. You're forced into it, well in theory anyway.”

“In theory?”

“A lot of people won't touch agency work with a barge pole so the vacancies don't get filled. The companies suffer and the unemployment rate is higher than it should be. You'd think the politicians would do something about it.”

“The same people that set the minimum wage?”

“Stupid isn't it, the more people working the more people paying tax and the less people claiming benefit. They're not logical.”

“I think that's probably power delusion. They are a strange breed.”

“I won't argue with that. They would rather use tax-payers money to prop up low wages when if the company paid a decent wage it would not need to happen.”

“They are definitely heading for a fall. It must be through pride.”

“Well it's their problem. Do you want to give that man a bell?”

Jack dialed and was lucky enough to find the man in. “Hello,” Jack said, “I'm phoning up about the labouring jobs in the job centre. It says that it is for a week is there any chance of it going on for longer?”

“No, I'm afraid it's only a week. We're having a job to fill it.”

“Well not many people would want to work for just a week. Er is there any chance of making it cash in hand as it will save a lot of trouble with the tax department.”

“I'm afraid we don't work like that. We have a big contract with the company so it has to go through their books.”

“Oh never mind. So what does the job actually involve?”

“Just unloading lorries and cleaning up the site would you be interested in it?”

“Yes sure,” Jack said and gave the man both his and Nigel's national insurance number and bank details and got the start the following Monday. After he had finished he made them both a drink.

“Looks like we are now back in the land of time,” Nigel said, “Well it should be pretty easy anyway.”

“Yes just unloading lorries I can cope with that.”

“It should help me ease my way back in. I've been a bit idle recently.”

“I know what you are saying. We haven't been working too hard just lately have we?”

“I hope its inside as well. They've gave out rain for most of next week. I think I must be getting soft.”

“It's your age you know,” Jack said with a laugh, “It gets you in the end.”

“Right, anyway we ought to go out and celebrate tonight.”

“Yes why not, I fancy a game of pool.”

“I was thinking more of a night club. I thought you wanted to see what was about.”

“Yes okay,” Jack said, his tone picking up, “We'll have a few games in The Swan and get warmed up.”

“Sounds good to me and who knows you might even find someone to inspire you.”

“Oh the poetry, well I'm not too sure about that anymore besides I don't think I'll have much time now.”

“Okay. Anyway I'd better get back and see if anything's been happening. I'll call back at seven

then.”

“Sure,” Jack said letting him out. After Nigel had gone Jack decided that he ought to pay Chillin' a visit. He thought it might be a good idea as his supply was out and he fancied a couple for later. Chillin' was not in so he hung around in the hope of him turning up. It was a pretty cold day and Jack tried to take shelter from biting wind by hiding behind a bus shelter. He was debating whether to go home when he bumped into a familiar face.

“Er hello,” Jack said now really knowing what to say and how Pauline would react to him as this was the first time he had seen her since the split.

“Jack,” she said in a curt sort of way and looked at him warily.

“So have you been?” Jack said, not really interested but needing something to say.

“Good,” she said, “Very good in fact.”(Notice that it is she and not Pauline as in the last time they met. I don't generally get involved but I tend to take Jack's side. I mean let's be honest it was a good story she told him and wrapping it in science like that too. She would have made a good politician)

“Good,” Jack said and much to his relief saw Chillin' making his way down the street, “Any way I have to get off. It was nice er seeing you again,” leaving before she could answer him.

He met Chillin' at the door.

“Was that Pauline you were with?” Chillin' said.

“Er yes, I just bumped into her.”

“Oh right. So you are not back with her then.”

“No oh no.”

“That's good because I've heard she's seeing Davy Smith.”

“Davy Smith,” Jack said in surprise, “Mad Davy?”

“Yes, anyway I'll put the kettle on. You make yourself at home.”

Jack settled down and Chillin' brought the drinks in.

“So what's she doing with him?” Jack said, “He's a nutter and dangerous with it.”

“I don't know I just heard it from Rollin'. Anyway if you're interested I dug up another poem.”

“A good one?” Jack said hoping that it was not.

“They all are,” Chillin' said with a laugh, “No, it's one of the ones I would normally throw away.”

“Yes go on then. I've give up on the idea of writing myself but I wouldn't mind taking a gander.”

“I'll fetch it,” Chillin' said getting up. He was soon back and giving Jack a piece of paper said, “See if you can make any sense out of it.”

Jack looked at the paper and read

“I am the breath of life within us all; it matters not for it will fall

The ship that sailed across the sea, I never let things bother me

The whale that's stranded on the shore, to me you see they're just a bore

The dolphin swimming in the pool, yes life to me is never cruel”

“Strange,” Jack said after he had finished reading it, “And you just wrote it out?”

“Yes it just came to me. I didn't plan it.”

“Could I keep it and show it to Nigel?”

“Nigel?”

“Yes, he likes stuff like this.”

“Sure, I didn't think he would be interested.”

They talked some more and Jack left later after arranging to meet Chillin' in The Swan at seven. Seven duly arrived and they all made it on time.

“I'll get them in,” Chillin' said, “You want a game of pool?”

“That's what we are here for,” Nigel said, “Rollin' should be along in about half an hour.”

“You saw Rollin'?” Jack asked, thinking he would ask him about Pauline's suspected new beau.

“Yes I bumped into him said he would be half an hour late as he had to see someone.”

“Right,” Jack said and set the pool table up, “Oh I've got one of those poems that Chillin' wrote. He's right it does sound like nonsense.”

"Can I have a look at it?"

"Sure," Jack said and gave him the piece of paper. Nigel read it and said, "This wants looking into properly there is something strange about it."

Chillin' came back with the drinks and so played Nigel the first game. He lost it so it was Jack's turn. About halfway through the game Rollin' came in and by the time Jack had lost Rollin' had joined them.

"I see something's never change," Rollin' said with a laugh, "So are we on the pull tonight."

"I thought I would chance my arm," Jack said.

"I bet you've been doing that a lot recently," Rollin' said still laughing.

"So what's this I hear about Pauline?" Jack said, "She's supposed to have taken up with Davy Smith."

"Yes," Rollin' said, "It surprised me when I heard it myself. Anyway it's all water under the bridge I suppose."

"Oh yes it was just a shock. He's not really her type."

"I don't think that he's anyone's type the man is a psychopath."

"Well it nothing to do with me now I suppose," Jack said but fate had other ideas. At that moment Davy Smith walked through the door with a couple of his friends.

"Well speak of the devil," Chillin' said

Davy saw them and came over to Jack, "I hear you've been pestering my girlfriend,"

"What?" Jack said, more out of shock than deafness.

"I'm telling you once and only once, you keep away from her. I know you and her have a history but that's all that it is not. Do you understand?"

"I haven't a clue as to what you're talking about."

"Don't take me for an idiot, you've been told now," and went back to the bar.

"What was that all about?" Nigel said after he had gone.

"Beats me," Jack said, "Guess he's just letting me know how the land lies."

"Yes but you've never seen her since the split."

"I bumped into her earlier. I said four words at the most. Who does he think he is anyway?"

"A nutter," Rollin' said, "And he seems to have got it in his head that you want to get back with her."

"I'm over her. No he may be a nutter but I'm not standing for that," and shouted, "Oi," and walked over to Davy. "I don't know what your problem is but I won't be talked to like that by anyone." One of Davy's friends moved to try and circle Jack but Nigel stopped him in his tracks, "I wouldn't do that if I was you."

The man looked menacingly at Nigel but did not move forward. He was waiting to see how Davy would react.

"Are you looking for trouble?" Davy said with an evil glint in his eyes, "You don't speak to me like that."

"I'm just returning the favour. You don't frighten me but I'll save you a lot of grief anyway. Me and Pauline have finished, full stop. I don't pester anyone and I don't like being accused of it. Do you understand?"

"Oh I understand alright," Davy said and Jack saw a strange look cross his face. It was an evil grin disguised as a smile. Jack knew that he was about to throw a punch and his instinct took over. He jabbed hard with his right hand and Davy hit the floor. He did not expect him to fall and neither did the rest of the people in the bar. He was out for around two minutes and when he came around again he was spitting nails. "You'll pay for that," he hissed and quickly left the bar.

"Well I would have never have believed that," Rollin' said, "Not in a million years."

"I just got lucky I guess," Jack said.

"I wouldn't say that," Chillin' said, "He's not the kind of bloke to forget about something like that."

"Do you reckon he'll be back?" Nigel said.

"I wouldn't bet against it," Rollin' said, "Once he's got over the shock."
 "Let him," Jack said, "If he falls as easy as that he can't be up to much really."
 "He doesn't need to be, he's more of a blade man. He must not have been carrying one."
 "Probably gone back to fetch it," Jack said shrugging his shoulders.
 "You're taking it calmly," Rollin' said, "I would have left the pub by now."
 "No point. If it's going to happen it's going to happen."
 "Whose game is it," Nigel said, "Chillin'?"
 "Alright," Chillin' said and they carried on. The game was not a good one as their concentration was not there. Rollin's eyes never left the door for he was expecting Davy's imminent return. Time past and after 20 minutes and a couple of rounds the tension in the atmosphere subsided. Chillin' and Rollin' played against each other and this gave Nigel time to study the verse in more detail.
 "It's amazing this is," he said to Jack, "It's a shame he chucked out all the other stuff."
 "Do you understand it then," Jack said in surprise.
 "Well sort of. It will be a hard thing to get across though as its very lateral."
 "Oh," Jack said with more than a hint of disappointment.
 "I'll try though. Well unless you want to leave it to another day. It's not really the time or place now."
 "No," Jack said quickly, "Now would be sound."
 "Right then the first part comes from the imagination and the second part the rational."
 "No wonder it sounds funny."
 "It does make a lot of sense if you read it properly. The breath of life is the Soul and the second part of the line says it's not made of matter. Well in its purest form anyway for when you purify your Soul you get rid of all the matter."
 "The seven deadly sins," Jack said on recognition.
 "That's right. Now on another level it also says something else."
 "Really? This sounds like it could get quite complicated."
 "All part of the fun," Nigel said with a laugh, "No, all it is saying is that all your worries do not matter for as they are matter they will fall by the wayside when you are purified. You see things differently. Now the ship that sailed across the sea is your imagination and by the fact that it has crossed the sea it means the journey's over so you have a positive imagination and that's why you never let things bother you. The sea is symbolic of the spiritual realms and the ship the thought."
 "Right, yes I can see that."
 "The third line is the intellect. The shore stands for Spiritual understanding seeing knowing through and the whale is the Holy Spirit."
 "Spiritual love (God's purpose) through," Jack said interrupting him.
 "Good. Stranded means received for once you get it, it doesn't go back. Things to me are just a bore is talking about the vanity of reality and when you perceive beyond it your emphasis shifts to knowledge so anything else seems boring by comparison."
 "Yes I can see that. It is sort of saying that you get less materialistic."
 "That's right you are more concerned with your mind. Now the final line is talking about the Spirit. The dolphin stands for transformation seeing God's purpose, the spiritual word (blessed with light) and it swims in the pool or the word seen, (seeing God's purpose) so that is its life. Now life to me is never cruel is talking about divine protection on one level and a good mental outlook on another. Yes it was quite a little verse."
 "I'll ask him to save anymore that he does. Anyway it looks like we're ready for another drink. My round I think."
 "I'll give you a hand," Nigel said and they collected the glasses and went to the bar. At the bar Jack sensed he was being watched and Nigel said quietly, "Your mates back. Wrap that bar towel around your left hand in case he's carrying."
 Jack hidden from view did as Nigel had said and before long he was grateful for the advice. The

door opened quickly and Davy charged through brandishing a knife. He ran straight for Jack not thinking that he had been spotted but much to his surprise Jack side stepped at the last moment. Davy hit the bar and Jack hit him full bore on the right hand side of his head. Davy fell heavily and Jack relieved him of his knife, he held it to his throat and said, let's see how mad you really are?" and put pressure on it causing it to draw blood, "It's time you met your maker."

Davy looked into Jack's piercing eyes and knew that he meant business. He started to tremble and said, "No, don't hurt me."

"Listen to me and listen well. I have no designs on Pauline and no qualms about taking your life. Now I'm telling you this on the point of your death so I have no reason to lie to you. See this pub, this is my kingdom and you are not welcome here. Keep out of my way for if I see you again I will only think that you are after trouble."

Jack let him go and Davy meekly left the pub. Jack threw the knife away and the evening continued with Jack something of a hero.

2. Jack of Clubs

Half past nine saw them queuing up in the cold outside Canter's night club. The conversation turned to the coldness of the night and the time the queue was taking to clear.

"We'll be here all night at this rate," Rollin' said.

"It will be worth it once we get in I suppose," Chillin' said, "Mind you I should say if. They had better hurry up as we'll have to pay after ten."

"Yes don't I know it, a fiver a throw and £4 a pint it's just a con."

"I've half a bottle of whiskey in my jacket," Nigel said, "That should soften the blow a little."

"Top man," Rollin' said, "I wish I'd brought some myself."

"I've got some smoke too," Chillin' said, "Should make for quite a party."

The queue eventually filtered through and they got in without paying. Once inside they went to the bar and Rollin' got the first round in. As they were waiting to get served Jack looked around and said, "It's still pretty empty even though it was quite a queue."

"A big place like this takes some filling," Rollin' said, "Anything took your fancy yet?"

"I don't think there's nothing in yet. It's all men at the moment."

"True, mind you it's still pretty early."

They got served and went to a quieter off room where there was a pool table and a quiet corner to have a smoke. Jack took a drag and said to Chillin', "If you ever do any more of those poems could you save them me?"

"Sure. I'll have a good hunt around as well."

"Well look whose just turned up," Rollin' said looking through the open doorway into the main room.

Jack looked out but could not see anybody he recognised, "Who?" he said after his scan.

"Over at the bar. It's Pauline."

"What? Is she with that divvy?"

"No she's with her mate Anne. You know the one we did the house for."

Jack got up and went over to see what she was playing at.

"What's this about me supposed to be pestering you," he said angrily, "And what are you doing knocking around with the nutter Davy."

"I don't know what you are talking about," Pauline said (It's back to Pauline now as I am not one to hold a grudge.) "And who I see is my business and no concern of yours."

"No concern of mine," Jack snapped, "Not when he comes in my pub trying to threaten me. No, I would say that it was a concern to me. He's got it in his head that I am pestering you. I only see you at the bus stop for two minutes and you tell him that."

"I never," Pauline protested, "I didn't even tell him that I saw you."

"Well why should he think that I am pestering you? You must have told him."

"I didn't. I haven't seen him since yesterday so how could I?"

"I don't know. I just know that he came charging at me with a knife in his hand."

"What? No he's not like that. Not like that at all."

"There are three witnesses to say I am not a liar now if you want to go out with that nutter that's your business and I wish you well but keep him off my back."

"He's not mad. He's just a little misunderstood. He didn't hurt you did he?"

"Not for want of trying. No, I don't expect to see him again though," and left Pauline at the bar. He went back to the pool room and said, "She reckons she hasn't seen him since yesterday so where ever did he get that idea from?"

"Probably just trying to warn you off," Nigel said, "I wouldn't worry about it Jack, just don't turn your back on him."

"True. Anyway it looks like it's filling up a bit more. Shall we have another smoke and then a walk round?"

"Sounds good to me," Chillin' said and rolled another one up. Nigel spiked the drinks with whiskey

to beef them up and they were on their way. It was a lot louder in the main room and they had to shout to be heard. Chillin' left them shortly for he bumped into an old girlfriend and had a yearning for renewal.

"Lucky git," Rollin' said, "Look at her."

"Yes she's not bad," Jack said, "He kept that quiet, well unless she is his ex wife that is."

"I doubt it," Rollin' said, "The way he talks about her I wouldn't think he'd speak to her."

"Well looks like he's sorted. Anything caught your eye?"

"A couple but I don't think that I've caught theirs. What about you Nigel?"

"Not really. Mind you I'm not looking too hard."

"Anyway," Jack said, "I think it must be my round now."

"I'll just have a cola," Nigel said, "It will go better with the whiskey."

"Sounds good to me," Rollin' said, "If there's enough left that is."

"We'll get another round out of it."

"Then three colas it is," Jack said and went to the bar. On his return he saw that Nigel was on his own. "Where's Rollin', toilets?"

"No," Nigel said and pointed onto the dance floor, "He's over there dancing with that girl."

"That was quick, you can't turn your back for five minutes around here," and laughed. They both went off and found a table with some empty seats so sat down.

"Not bad in here," Nigel said, "We ought to use it more often. Found anything interesting?"

"No not yet. I feel a bit awkward to tell you the truth."

"You do? I never took you for the shy one."

"It's not that. Pauline's here. I guess I feel a little self conscious that's all."

"Oh," Nigel said understanding, "You must still have feelings for her."

"I suppose I must have. I guess seeing her again must have triggered off something."

"Do you want her back?"

"I'm not sure. I guess I'm a little confused at the moment. It's hypothetical anyway as she has someone else."

"True. You could call it a night if you want. I'm not too bothered about staying."

"No, we're here now. I'll be alright in a bit don't worry."

"Anyway it's my round," Nigel said getting up, "Do you want a lager?"

"Yes go on then," Jack said and Nigel went to the bar. He had not long gone when a voice aroused Jack out of his thoughts, "Excuse me." He looked up to see a tall slim girl in her late teens with long black hair. She looked vaguely familiar, "Would you mind if my friend and I took a seat?"

"No help yourself," and so they did. Nigel came back with the drinks and said, "You don't mess around."

"They're just taking the weight off their legs," Jack said taking his drink off Nigel. Nigel sat down.

"So what do you think then?" Jack said.

"Sorry?" Nigel said not knowing where he was coming from.

"About Pauline do you reckon I should try and get back with her?"

"Not advisable."

"What Mad Davy. He doesn't bother me."

"I'm afraid it's a little more than that."

"Sorry?"

"Do you want a game of pool?"

"Yes it's a bit loud in here," Jack said and so they both got back up and went to the pool room. They set the balls up for the game and Nigel said, "No it runs a lot deeper than Davy."

"It does?"

"You might be alright. It depends if there is love involved in the affair."

"How would that fit in?"

"If they had that bond and you broke it, it sort of switches the Hoover off. You'll lose your

purpose.”

“I never knew that.”

“It will only happen when you are in that relationship. You won't lose your power for good but I would think very carefully about the matter.”

“So why would that be then?”

“Well not only do you have to be free from sin to attain it you have to be free of sin to keep it. You set yourself up with Pauline and there is love involved you kill the bond. Believe me faithfulness is a big part of the game.”

“Oh right. Yes I can see that. So what else would make me lose my power then? You said free of sin, that would cover a very wide range of subjects. I mean who defines what a sin actually is?”

“It's been over rationalised but keep this in mind and you should be alright. If you hurt others then you hurt yourself. Now sometimes in the interests of self preservation you will have to.”

“You mean Mad Davy?”

“Yes he's as good an example as any. You'll know when the time comes for you will be guided.”

“You know I did sort of sense him that probably sounds daft to you but it's true.”

“No I believe you. It works on an inner knowing. You keep pure in heart and you will never lose it. Keep faithful and don't get greedy and you'll be alright. Anyway it must be my turn to break.”

“I'll roll up another fag then,” Jack said and Nigel took the break. After he had done Jack said, “You know thinking about it, it was probably just a bit of revenge that's all.”

“Sorry?” Nigel said as he watched a ball go down.

“Get my own back on Davy. I mean he accused me of it so I might as well do it kind of thing.”

“Could be,” Nigel said lining up another shot, “It's surprising how the mind works.”

“Yes I reckon that's it. Do you want to get off after this game? I think the music's too loud for me.”

“Sure,” Nigel said watching another ball go down, “It's a bit too noisy to think properly.”

“It's only 11.30 we can have a smoke at ours if you are not in a hurry.”

“Sounds good to me,” Nigel said and put another ball down, “I can't seem to get on with what they try and pass off as music nowadays.”

“Do you think we're getting old?” Jack said with a laugh.

“One way of putting it,” Nigel said taking another shot, “But I tend to think of it as wising up.” The ball quickly potted he went on to clear the rest of the reds and pot the black. They put the cues away and at that moment the tall girl with glasses and her friend came in, “Is it alright if we have a game?”

“Sure,” Jack said, “We're just going.”

“Oh,” the girl said with an air of disappointment that went unnoticed by Jack. They said goodbye to Chillin' and Rollin' and set off back into the cold dark night. It was quite a walk but they quickly covered it and were soon back at Jack's drinking tea. The subject quickly turned to poetry as Jack asked Nigel if he could remember any more.

“Well I've got a short one. It's called **Blind Faith**.”

“Sounds interesting, how does it go?”

“Follow me, just you see, you'll have eternal life

Mines the way so what do you say, I'll take away the strife

So bow down low and then you'll know humilities to cower

Though not me as you can see I'll settle for the power

What is faith? With logic safe it should be understanding

It's all within, it ain't no sin, it's not even demanding

Faith's not blind it should not bind, that was not its point

It has to grow; now you should know its logic with a joint

**To take things blind you'll quickly find a little thing called power
For others tend and to that end they think they are the flower
So lose that bind and faith is kind, you'll find your one true purpose
It's not to lead its just to seed, power's just the surplus."**

"Yes I like that," Jack said after Nigel had finished, "Could you write it out for us one of these days?"

"Sure no problem," Nigel said and took a drink from his cup, "Got a pen and I'll do it now."

"It will keep. To tell you the truth I don't fancy trying to hunt one out at this time of night."

"Fair enough."

"You know it's sort of similar to the one we were talking about earlier."

"Earlier?"

"New guardians they came to be deluded by their vanity."

"Well yes I suppose so, though this is more to do with religion I can see what you mean. It transcends many schools of thought."

"And this knowledge, it must have been around a long time?"

"Since the dawn of creation I suppose. I would say that we lost our way big time. Our lack of understanding has caused great misfortune and a lot of needless death."

"Needless death, isn't that going a bit far?"

"Not really, the human sacrifice for a start. People did in good, well bad faith for they perceived it would pacify the gods."

"True."

"They didn't need to. The actual thing was to sacrifice your life to God. It was not talking literal it was talking about a life of divine service that was all."

"So it was just a waste of human life."

"Oh much worse than that, whoever perpetrated the act condemned themselves as much as the victim. Life's a precious thing and no mistake. You kill someone and you deprive them of the chance of achieving their God-head. To the Soul that's a waste of life and ignorance of the fact is no excuse. You see they get a little bit of knowledge, their foundation if you like, and they ritualised it out of all proportion."

"To increase their credibility I suppose."

"That's right. I'll give you an example, you'll love this one."

"Sure, do you want another drink first?"

"Yeah go on then, thanks." Jack returned with the drinks and the conversation continued.

"Right," Nigel said, "The story concerns an explorer who got stabbed in Africa and was looking at a bad case of gangrene with no medical help for miles around. He was at a tribal village and the chief took pity on him. He got the village to dance before him and told the explorer to pick one. The explorer did not know what was happening but picked one anyway. The man he had picked was killed and had his head and limbs cut off. He was split down the middle and his entrails were pulled out. They wrapped the entrails around the man's leg and soon it was infested with maggots. The maggots ate through the man's dead skin saving him."

"Right and maggots only eat dead skin."

"Yes, they didn't need to go to all that trouble and a man lost his life when he didn't have to. Yes it's surprising what they come up with when they over rationalise things."

"Yes, I remember the muses."

"Oh it goes further than that. All their gods were the same. Their knowledge was hidden in the names and they took it as literal. Their foundation was built on sand."

"Sorry?"

"It shifts over time as we grow in understanding. It can only be done when your faith is blind for you accept it as truth. Look too deeply into it though and you realise that it doesn't stand up in the light."

“And the people who get power from it lose it. I guess that's why they prefer blind faith.”

“The blind leading the blind,” Nigel said with a laugh, “Yes they will go to very extreme lengths to keep hold of their power. They wrap things up in mysticism to try and keep it out of reach and that's where superstition comes in.”

“And not only that if you question their power they say that you are either a heretic or a traitor.”

“They've certainly got it well sewn up,” Nigel said and looked at his watch, “Anyway I'd better be off its getting on a bit.”

“Sure, are you coming up tomorrow?”

“No I'm afraid I'm busy. I'm going to the zoo with Harmony.”

“Oh right, so I'll see you Monday then.”

“Yes about 7.30,” and then left. Jack went virtually straight to bed.

Next morning Jack got up fairly late and made himself a cup of tea. He had not long sat down to drink it when the door knocked. He opened it and much to his surprise saw that it was Chillin'.

“You're early,” he said letting him in.

“Up. No I'm just on my way home as a matter of fact. I thought I would nip in for a coffee.”

“Sure. I'll put the kettle on its not long boiled so it shouldn't take too long. So how did you get on then? Daft question really.”

“True,” Chillin' said with a smile on his face.

“So who was she?” Jack said coming in from the kitchen.

“Anna Goldsmith. I haven't seen her in years. She's been working away for quite a long time.”

“Really, an old flame?”

“Yes, my first in fact.”

“And I take it you'll be seeing her again. Mind you from where I was standing she looked worth it.”

“I'm seeing her later actually. I thought I would get some kip first.”

“Good idea. So how did Rollin' get on then?”

“Well I saw him leave with her, not long after you in fact. Pauline was asking about you.”

“Me, what did she want?”

“She just wanted to know if you were seeing anyone. I think she might still be a little keen on you.”

“Water under the bridge,” Jack said thinking back to what Nigel had said.

“Well with Davy out the way it's a straight road. It's up to you though I was just letting you know how the land lay.”

“Thanks but no thanks,” Jack said with a laugh, “I don't think it could ever be the same again.”

“It's up to you I guess. So work on Monday then, are you looking forward to it?”

“Should be pretty easy, I just hope the rain holds off.”

“I don't know about easy, from my days of agency work I remember that they used to try and work your balls off.”

“Really? I'm a bit ignorant I'm afraid as I've never done that sort of work before.”

“Yes they used to treat us like we were the lowest of the low. Going on an agency was a sign of desperation. It might be different now as the employment figures have changed but I wouldn't hold your breath.”

“Why is that?”

“Well look it at logically. They are taking you on for one week.”

“Right?”

“Think about it to me that sounds like they have something special planned.”

“Sorry?”

“Something that their own staff are reluctant to do it's either going to be a dirty job or a hard job and probably both.”

“I was told it was just emptying lorries and cleaning the site that doesn't sound difficult to me.”

“Maybe I'm wrong then. As I said it's probably different now. I hear that agencies are having a job getting people so that might act in your favour.”

“I'll know for sure tomorrow. I think if it gets too much I'll leave them to it.”

“Yes the boots definitely on the other foot. I'm probably just being a little cynical don't mind me.”

Chillin' finished his drink and said, “Anyway I had better get off now as I'm pretty tired. Don't forget to let us know how you got on and I hope that you prove me wrong.”

“Cheers,” Jack said letting him out, “And don't forget to let us have any of those poems if you ever find them or get any more.”

“Will do,” Chillin' said as he walked off down the street. Jack went back inside and made himself another drink. He thought a lot into what Chillin' had said but dismissed it in the end as old news. He reasoned that the agencies must have changed since Chillin' worked for them for people seemed to put up with a lot less nowadays. It was definitely an employee's market now and he took comfort from that fact for it meant that he could pick and choose. Nothing else happened that day. It was pretty quiet right up until Jack went to bed at 10.30.

3. Jack of all Trades

Monday morning at 7.20 saw Nigel knocking on Jack's door, "We got time for a brew?" Nigel said when Jack had opened it.

"Sure, what's the weather like?"

"It's not raining now but I think it will. Did you pack away some tea bags, milk and sugar?"

"I certainly did. Looking at the coldness of the day I thought they might come in useful." Jack made Nigel a cup of tea which was quickly drunk and they were soon on their way. The address they were given was not that far away so they arrived 15 minutes before time. It was a large girdered structure that had only half a roof on and was going to be a community centre upon completion. They got out of the van and surveyed the site unsure of what they were actually supposed to be doing there. After a minute they saw a man come out of the cabin so Jack said, "We're supposed to be reporting to an Andrew Peterson?"

"Are you from the agency?"

"That's right."

"He's not here yet. I'm Colin by the way. You can wait in the cabin if you like."

"Cheers," Jack said and after introducing themselves said, "I could do with a cup of tea."

"Well I hope you brought a flask the electricity's not gone on yet."

"Sounds like it's going to be a long day," Nigel said with a laugh and they both went into the cabin.

At 8 o'clock a van pulled on and two men got out. The smaller of the two introduced himself as Andy. "So what have we got to do then?" Jack asked.

"Not a lot till the stone gets here. See that first bay; you can level it off if you like."

"Sure," Nigel said looking at the stone and how compact it was, "Have you got a pick?"

"I'm afraid not just a couple of shovels."

"Right," Nigel said and gave Jack a look of surprise, "Looks like it's going to be hard work then."

They got to work and Jack said "What is this; I thought we were supposed to be emptying lorries?"

"Looks like its groundwork. I think we will be filling the sides with stone, leveling up and putting the sand down."

"What?" Jack said in surprise, "That sounds like hard work," and it was. They carried on for around half an hour and stopped when two lorries came and dropped 40 tonne of stone in two large piles.

Andy came out and said, "Could you go around the inside and fill it with stone to level the edges?"

"Sure," Jack said and they both did as they were bid. After only 20 minutes Jack was struggling so Nigel said, "A bit of advice Jack. Let gravity be your friend."

"What?" Jack said, dazed from work and confused in logic.

"Shovel down," Nigel said and showed him, "The weight of the stone is its own force; you just guide it to the barrow."

Jack tried and much to his surprise found it a lot easier. (Special thanks to Mark for that piece of advice, cheers mate.) This only lasted a short time though for it only worked at the very top of the pile. They took their first break at 9.30 and it was a very tired Nigel and Jack that sat down to their sandwiches.

"Jesus my back is killing me," Jack said, "Just at the bottom."

"I know what you are saying it's got me too and at the back of my legs."

"Those navvies must have been hard bastards. Didn't you once tell me they used to shift 10 tonne a day each?"

"Looking at that pile I think we will be well on the way ourselves," Nigel said and then looking out of the window, "Oh no, that's all we need."

"What?" Jack said expecting the worse, "They're not bringing in another load are they?"

"No it's just started to rain, what a life." Colin came in at that moment and said, "You'll earn your money today won't you lads."

"The little they pay we earned it just turning up," Jack said with a laugh. Colin found it funny for he laughed too. "Stupid though isn't it?" he said after he had done, "Get a mini digger and it would be

done in a day.”

“True,” Nigel said, “I don't think they've heard about the industrial revolution around here.”

Jack laughed and said, “Or pick-axes, what sort of place is this?”

“A place that has never heard of the Iron Age,” Colin said laughing.

“So how long have you been working for them?” Nigel said.

“A couple of weeks I'm only here for this job, it should last until March.”

“And then?”

“I'm off to Rhodes for a good holiday.”

“Lucky sod,” Jack said.

“You don't know the half of it,” Colin said laughing, “It was paid for by my previous employer for I was going to sue them for unfair dismissal. They offered me two grand a couple of days before I was due in court.”

“Not a bad little earner.” Nigel said.

“Yes, and you'll love this. With the cheque came a letter saying that they did not admit liability and I was not to tell anyone about it.”

“Oh,” Jack said with a laugh, “So they gave it you out of the goodness of the heart. What a kind company they must be.”

“Very considerate I'll think of them all the time when I'm sunning myself at Rhodes.”

“Fair play to you,” Nigel said and with that the break was over. Back at work it was a hard slog and the rain made its play for the rest of the morning. Dinner time came and Jack and Nigel went to the van and sat inside it. Nigel rolled up a joint and said, “You might find this useful.”

“I'm not sure about that I had it once when I was line packing at the crisp factory and it made the day go a lot slower.”

“Different ball game it will help you through endurance so you might get majesty.”

“Sorry? Have you had some of that earlier?”

Nigel laughed and said, “I'm afraid it has to be experienced to fully understand it. You'll see what I mean once you get passed the pain barrier.”

“Well if you're sure,” Jack said and took a drag, letting it relax him, “So this is the land of time then,” he said afterwards, “Not a place I would like to come and live in.”

“I know what you are saying they are like zombies.”

“And Chillin' warned me. He said they would work us.”

“Well they have to I suppose. They have to get some return on their investment.”

“What they pay us, are you kidding?”

“Not what the agency pay us. No the company probably pays them £16 an hour.”

“And we're the suckers that are caught in the middle, Jack said in disgust, “I'd walk out but I'm not going to let the job beat me.”

“That's the spirit,” Nigel said with a laugh, “Don't let the bastards grind you down. The next job should be easier. When is that man supposed to be ringing up?”

“Early next week he said. I wouldn't be so sure about it being easier though.”

“Once bitten twice shy eh,” Nigel said with a laugh, “Oh by the way is there any chance of us making a detour on the way home. It shouldn't take more than half an hour. I could drop you off first if you like but I might end up a bit late.”

“No problem, anything the matter?”

“No I've just got to pick up a fridge for my mother. I want to get there before the shop closes though.”

“Fair enough so how did you get on with Harmony?”

“Sound,” Nigel said (Sorry about that), “Not bad at all. We had a good day out in fact.”

“Good and when are you seeing her again?”

“Not until the weekend I'm afraid. She's got to go to Glastonbury for some reason.”

“A bit early for the festival isn't she.”

"No," Nigel said laughing, "It is some sort of festival though."

"God are they going back already?" Jack said, "I wish the day would go as quick as the break we'd be finished by now."

"Time beckons," Nigel said opening the van door, "So who are we to argue."

"Well at least its stopped raining that should make it easier."

They carried on and worked at speed throughout the afternoon. Nothing of note happened as Jack did not reach majesty in fact he was having a hard job with endurance for he was totally wrecked by the end of the shift. They picked up the fridge and dropped it off at Nigel's and returned to Jack's at around 6 o'clock. Nigel put the kettle on while Jack checked the phone. "That bloke rang," he said, "At 11.30. looks like we might have another job."

"A navvy's life is never done and the amount of stuff we barrowed today must make us navvies."

"You reckon?" Jack said in surprise.

"We must have moved that 10 tonne each that they were talking about. That first pile was decimated and the second took a good topping."

"Right," Jack said, "Thanks," as he took a cup of tea from Nigel. "We'd have probably shifted more if they hadn't needed one of the barrows. What an outfit. I reckon that we must be better kitted out than they were."

"True. Ah a nice hot drink," and took a draught from it, "That's better. So this other job then, what does he say wants doing?"

"Helping the site engineer, oh and a bit of labouring."

"Probably the other way around then it's a little too late to ring him today as its gone six."

"I'm in no hurry. I'm too tired to think about it now anyway. That was one hell of a day."

"One day in hell more likely. Yes we certainly did some graft."

"I'm glad it's over. I was dead on my feet most of the afternoon. I never got that majesty that you were talking about."

"Maybe tomorrow," Nigel said with a laugh.

"In fact I was having a job coping with endurance. I don't think I've got the stamina to do a job like that full time."

"They probably don't go at that speed all the time. In fact I'm willing to wager they don't."

"I never looked at how the others were working. I was just going on what we were doing."

"I think you'll find they look busy more than anything else. Now that's a job in itself looking busy. Colin seems to be at it the most."

"He's a brickies labourer though I thought that was pretty hard work."

"Yes that's what I mean. I mean at work and not standing around."

At this point in the tale I had better elaborate on the actual structure of the work force. Colin you have met and also Andy. Now Andy worked for the company and though not site manager he was in charge. On the first day there was only another labourer called Dave that was with the company. Colin laboured for two sub contract brick layers who were called Les and Dave (that was their real names by the way.) and were on price work. There were also two roofers on site but the first two days were non productive for the wind was close to gale force. Anyway back to the tale.

"I'll keep an eye out for that then," Jack said and then laughed before saying, "Oh and also that majesty thing."

Nigel laughed and said, "You do that Jack."

"Any more poems by the way?"

"I picked this one up from home," Nigel said taking out two pieces of paper, "And I wrote that other one out for you."

"Cheers," Jack said taking them both of him. He read the one he did not know and liked it quite a lot. Do you want to hear it? Well if you are sure. **The Flower of Your Mind.**

Your mind is like a flower it needs to feed to grow

With knowledge learned and understood you are just what you know

**Its roots are set in ignorance and clouded by emotion
Perceptions through experience tend to mould each notion
The stem of life heads to the light, to wisdom that's divine
To gather warmth and soak in love so from it you might shine**

**Knowledge gained strengthens it and opens up the bud
The water of life heads on in and goodness starts to flood
Now once this bud is opened you have an open mind
An inner understanding of knowing what you find**

**Discernment then takes over; you seem to know what's right
A hidden sense of knowing, some say second sight
To some it comes out different though they end up as a weed
Devoid of natural goodness their driving force is greed**

**Their bud will never open for their water's tainted
Perceptions understood are not quite how they're painted
Forgetting they're perennial they live just for the year
Rooted in their ignorance their driving force is fear**

**They see the light as burning heat and try to shut it out
Amassing excess baggage, there's a lot of leaves about
Eventually they'll wither for it's the end of season
For a flower devoid of light is like a life devoid of reason."**

"Yes I like that," Jack said after he had finished (see I told you.), "It's got something about it. You know I might try and do one again."

"Yes give it a go. Leave it for a while though as you probably have a lot of anger in you at the moment."

"I have?" Jack said in surprise.

"Righteous indignation, the job itself and how you were conned into doing it. You might not see it now but it's buried deep within you."

"I'll have to take your word for that. Do you want another cup of tea?"

"A quick one then I guess it's a bath and an early night on the list of jobs to do."

Jack got up and made them both a cup of tea. He came back and they continued talking. "The weeds," Jack said, "Are they the people with power?"

"That's right that what taints the water. They don't perceive life as precious well only their own that is. Some perceive them as lizards," and laughed before saying, "Well they are right in the sense that they are cold blooded, anyone who could send people off to kill their brothers must be. Anyway speaking of war I'd better shoot same time tomorrow?"

"I hope so," Jack said letting him out, "I really do." Jack had a bath and watched the television for a while. Nothing of interest was on so he was just passing time really. He went to bed at 10.30 and fell quickly to sleep. Next morning saw Jack up 10 minutes before the alarm clock was due to go off. He quickly got dressed and saw that it was raining outside. "That's all I need," he said aloud to himself and went into the kitchen to put the kettle on. He had a bowl of cereals and made his sandwiches before going back and putting the television on to check the morning news. This was more out of boredom really as there was never anything on that interested him. At 7.30 the door knocked and he let Nigel in.

"Rain's just stopped," Nigel said, "Not for long by the look of it though."

"Never mind it all adds to the experience."

"Ah true understanding, perhaps you have hit majesty."

“Just call me your highness,” Jack said with a laugh before saying, “No, I’m still only a peasant.” He poured out the drinks and said, “Well let’s hope that it gets a little easier today. Mind you my back’s a lot better than I thought it would be.”

“A good hot bath does the trick; it takes away a lot of the stiffness.”

“It will probably come back again but it’s a nice thing to know.”

“If it’s just shifting stone we should be done today and if not the rest of the week should be easier.”

“Well here’s to the rest of the week then,” Jack said and finished his drink. They set off and arrived on site with ten minutes to spare.

“You came back,” Colin said by way of greeting.

“Thought we’d better,” Nigel said, “What with the company depending on us and all that.”

“Oh right. Loyalty, now that’s a thing you see little of nowadays.”

“Got to get it while you can,” Jack said and both he and Nigel went into the cabin and waited for their start. The van was twenty minutes late so they had a bit of a late start themselves. The day went pretty quickly and by the time they had finished the inside it was first break. As they sat in the cabin Andy came in and said, “Right, could you go around the outside now and build it up to the top of the blocks?”

“Sure,” Nigel said, “You don’t mean now though do you?”

“Oh no,” Andy said, “I meant after break,” and left them to it.

“Shouldn’t take too long,” Nigel said, “The trench is not as deep so a barrow-full should go a lot further.”

“True and down one side we can’t get in as there’s a big ditch in the way.”

“Things are looking up,” Nigel said and Colin came in saying, “Are you in at the week end lads?”

“Doubt it,” Jack said, “I think 40 hours is long enough for me.”

“Are you in next week?”

“We’re only booked for a week,” Jack said, “I thought that was all we were wanted for.”

“Maybe not then,” Colin said and went back out.

“What do you think about coming in next week?” Jack said, “If he asks us I mean.”

“I don’t know. I mean it’s not that bad here but that other job’s supposed to last for a couple of months.”

“I know what you mean we might end up losing it if we can’t make the Monday start.”

“Ask him tonight when we ring him, anyway he might not ask us.”

“True,” Jack said getting up, “No rest for the wicked.”

The second part of the day went quickly and soon they were in the van at dinner having a smoke.

“You know it seems to be getting easier,” Jack said taking a drag, “I must be getting used to it.”

“And you’ve not hit majesty yet?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Maybe that will help,” pointing at the joint.

“We’ll see,” Jack said and took another drag. The conversation carried on and they were soon back on the job. The rain picked up again and the driving wind sent it cutting into Jack’s body. The day dragged slowly with nothing of note happening until around 2.30. Jack was coming back with an empty wheel barrow pushing it up a ramp and struggling quite hard in the process. A thought came into his head, “Pain barrier,” and he crossed it and felt strangely lifted. All the pain had gone and in its place was splendour. To explain it would be pretty hard but the nearest I could get would be a glass up turned with a candle placed inside. You are the glass and where once the pain was now sat a candle. It was pretty exhilarating and saw Jack through the rest of the day. They got home and Jack checked the phone again. He saw that the man had rung at 9.00. He phoned back but had to leave a message saying he would phone him the next day as the man had left the office. Job done they had a quick cup of tea and Nigel left at 6 o’clock. Jack had a quiet evening in and went to bed early content in the fact his stoning days were over.

4. Jack Plane.

Wednesday dawning, frosty morning, oh sorry wrong bit. The alarm clock woke Jack up to a frosty morning. He looked out of the window and debated on whether to get up at all. There was a light frost covering everything outside and it looked a pretty cold affair. Eventually he rose and quickly got dressed to try and reheat himself before going into the kitchen and putting the kettle on. He had made his sandwiches the night before (You missed that bit as you were probably making yourself a cup of tea at the time.) So he just helped himself to a bowl of cereal. He switched the television on and saw the early morning news. Nothing of interest just a couple of politicians with transparent excuses and deluded egos (Deluded in the fact that they thought that they were believable) trying to explain their actions and being patronising in the process.

“Sure is a strange world,” Jack said with disbelief as he took a drink from his mug. Nigel knocked the door quite early so they sat awhile and watched the news.

“Doesn't look good for society,” Nigel said.

“Not to me either.”

“It looks like the five pillars are crumbling. Once they fall that will be it.”

“The five pillars?”

“The five pillars of society, what holds it up.”

“So what are they then?”

“Health care, law and order, government, transport infrastructure and the family unit. When all these fall all that will be left will be a wasteland.”

“Well I know things are bad but surely not that bad.”

“Let's take them one at a time and see. Health care. Care for the sick and care for the elderly. We'd better break it down even more to get the real picture of it.”

“I didn't think that you could. I thought that was it.”

“Oh no. We'll start with care for the sick. Now that comes on two levels, mental and physical. Most mental patients have got lost in those care in the community schemes and only ever turn up again when they've killed or been murdered.”

“That sounds a bit dramatic.”

“Maybe but it doesn't alter the fact. The way they are treated is disgusting and a shame to any right thinking person. They end up in either private homes or private houses whose owners are more concerned with profit than well being. The poor staff are under paid and over worked and this leads to great stress which is often taken out on the said patient if not physically then mentally for they pick things up as a child would and take it on board in the same manner.”

“Actually there might be something in that. I've heard that they work very long hours on next to minimum pay so I could see it happening. I mean let's be honest you only have to snap and lose your temper once and the damage is not repairable.”

“So care of the physically sick then. The waiting lists have been massaged to cut them down and so give a false picture. Most of the decisions are taken by administrators whose main concern is cost and there are not enough beds to cope with demands. People are sometimes actually left in corridors. Can you believe that in this day and age? Now most of the sick are elderly for they are more prone to be sick. They have paid into the National Health Service all their life and are generally disgusted at their treatment and the length of time it takes. Now when I say treatment I don't mean by the doctors and nurses I mean the general service of the hospital. Overwork and stress cause a lot of mistakes to be made and this only adds to an already low-moral. Administration costs are well too high and have become a bit of a gravy train that a lot of people dip their bread in. Health care today is very much akin to a shark's feeding frenzy and as for care of the elderly that is about on par with care for the mentally ill.”

“You know when you put it like that I can see what you mean. You look at the big picture and it's quite frightening.

“Stick around for in the words of Mistery Bachman and Turner when they are in overdrive you ain't

seen nothing yet. Law and order next. Moral in the police force is next to nothing. They have lost the streets and will never regain them. Prison is no deterrent to a lot of people as they would be better off inside than out. That's no reflection on prison that is more a reflection on the underclass and the misery they live in. The police have not the man-power to come out to every crime that is committed and even if they could they have little chance of catching the culprits. People only report crimes to get a crime number for insurance purposes. Most petty crime nowadays is committed by drug addicts to feed their need and are just as much victims as the people they rob. They can't see past their next fix and never think of the consequences of their actions for that reason. The streets are a dangerous place to be at the moment and a lot of people live in fear and to them life is hell. The prison system is clogged up and cannot cope with the demand that is put upon it. A lot of prisons are run by security companies whose one concern is profit and see rehabilitation as their loss. They have also taken over transporting prisoners to and from court and have their fingers in a lot of pies. The higher courts with their costs due to barrister high wages are unsustainable and biased to say the least and the judges are that out of touch with reality that most of them should be in the care in the community I mentioned earlier. Another crumbling pillar. So government, local and national. People have lost trust in both and want nothing to do with either. This is seen by the number of people who don't vote. You know they are even thinking about trying to force people to vote with threats of prison to the abstainers. Not a lot to say about either really as most of their sleaze seems to be found out. I had better get a move on or we might end up late."

Jack looked at his watch and said, "Carry on; on the way to work I'm getting quite into this."

"Alright," Nigel said and they both left Jack's flat and got into the van. As Nigel drove he said, "Transport structure. The railways are in a mess and have been damaged beyond repair. They can never be properly functional whilst they are fragmented and privatised and only a moron would think otherwise. A lot of people have made a lot of profit whilst the tax payer foots the bill. You cannot run a railway whilst you put profit before safety for one man's profit is another man's loss. The roads are a disgrace and in constant need of repair. The buses aren't much better so that only leaves the motor car as a reliable means to travel. Now traffic congestion is well beyond a joke and shows that there is something seriously wrong with public transport in general and people's lifestyles in particular. Their idea of a car pool is blood on the pavement after they have been car-jacked. So finally the family unit. I won't mention the falling birth rate although that is probably the greatest threat to society at the moment."

"Why's that?" Jack said in surprise.

"People are living longer yet with a shrinking work force. Soon there will be not enough money to pay the pension bill."

"Oh yes, I think I heard something like that before."

"So onto the family unit. Basically it's virtually disintegrated for with divorce and one parent families now the norm there is no family structure."

"Right, so it doesn't look too good then."

"Not really no," Nigel said as they pulled up on site, "Makes you wonder if it's worth working doesn't it."

"That thought had crossed my mind long before you had said that," Jack said with a laugh as he opened the car door to get out.

"Three days running," Colin said on seeing them, "You'll do alright next week."

"Yes," Jack said with a laugh, "Maybe we'll even get to eat."

Colin laughed and said, "You'll do alright today they won't get here to 8.30. They've got to pick up some pallets."

"Sounds good to me," Nigel said, "We'd nip and put the kettle on but I guess the electricity's not on yet."

"You guessed right. Maybe one day we'll even get fire."

"Only if this place burns down," Nigel said and followed Jack into the cabin.

"I'll keep an eye on the window and let you know when the van comes," Jack said, "We'll just nip out and look busy then."

"Good idea. I'll go and fetch the shovels and barrows out now. We'll just leave them near the store." Nigel went out and was soon back again.

"I noticed that you never mentioned education," Jack said on his return, "I thought that would be a pillar."

"Well it is crumbling as well but I left it out to try and make things a little less complicated. I suppose at a push you could put it into health care. You could also put the army under the law and order section too."

"Quite a shambles then. What did you call it again?"

"A wasteland."

"It looks like this site at the moment," Jack said with a laugh. "The van's just pulled in."

They both left the cabin and looked busy. Andy came over and said, "Could you carry on leveling off that bay you started on Monday?"

"Sure," Nigel said, "Have we got a pick today?"

"We've brought one in special I'll fetch it out the van," and went back to the van. He soon returned and Nigel and Jack got to work on the bay. Nigel loosened it with the pick and Jack barrowed it out or to the parts of the bay that were under and needed topping up.

"This is hard going" Jack said as he tried to scrape the semi loosened stones.

"Put your knee behind your hand to give it support and when it's full put your foot under it to act as a lever." (Thanks to Paul for that one. You may be an idle git but on what they pay you I wouldn't blame you (see next story))

Jack did as he was told and found it much easier. They finished it just by first break and when Andy checked it for evenness he was surprised at its accuracy. Jack and Nigel took their break in the cabin and Andy came to see them, "I'll give you that," he said by way of humour, "Are you in at the weekend?"

"No," Jack said, "I've made other plans, thanks for asking though."

"Nor me I'm afraid," Nigel said.

"Ah never mind what about next week then, what has the agency said?"

"Well they only told us one week," Jack said, "I asked them if it would be longer and the man said no. We're not actually with the agency you see."

"You're not?"

"Well we are but we're not if you know what I mean. We got the job at the job centre last Friday. It was only for a week so we got another one that hopefully we'll be starting next Monday."

"Oh I see. Never mind it probably would have been only for a couple of days anyway so it wouldn't be worth your while," and left Jack and Nigel to their sandwiches.

"Coming along nicely isn't it?" Jack said after he had gone, "Only one bay to level and we'll be ready to start with the sand."

"Well when it comes," Nigel said with a laugh, "I reckon that last bay will take some time. It's four times as big as the one we've just finished."

"I thought things were going too well."

"We finish Friday come what may. It doesn't matter if the job isn't done we will be."

"We already have been," Jack said with a laugh, "Twice in fact once with the wages and secondly with the job itself."

"True," Nigel said laughing, "It's good to see that you are taking it a lot better now."

"Well we've broke the back of it and I think that I'm getting used to it more now. It does not seem so much like hard work."

"The sand won't be that easy but I know what you are saying. It's starting to take shape now so you can see what you have done."

"That's probably it. You know if the pay was better I would really enjoy this."

“Well it sure beats the hell out of going to the gym,” Nigel said with a laugh, “And to think that people pay a lot of money to keep fit.”

“A month on this site would do the same thing and to think that we actually get paid for it.”

“Yes,” Nigel said laughing, “Isn't life wonderful?”

“Well I wouldn't go that far,” Jack said with a laugh, “Life is not a bed of roses it's more a bed of nails.”

“Yes I get the point, many of them in fact.”

“Ah well,” Jack said and looked out of the window, “Roll out the barrow,” and they both went back to work.

It was Jack's turn with the pick and he found it easy going as the bay was not stone based. After half an hour Dave came over wanting a hand. He had to dig out a 'T' shaped trench to put in a wall and wanted Jack to loosen the stone for him. That took them to dinner time when Jack and Nigel went back to the van and Nigel rolled a joint. After he had finished he said, “Oh I managed to find another poem if you are interested. It was in the van actually, I don't know how it got there.”

“Sure,” Jack said, “I'll give it the once over,” so Nigel passed him the paper.

“I called it **Real Imagination**,” he said as he did it. Jack read it out loud,

“So what is your imagination, a fish that's hard to land?

It's your ability to create an image with the information at hand

It's the spur to your enlightenment, the reason to your being

So learn to use it wisely, you'll be surprised at what you're seeing

Some people can see angels; well to me I guess that's fine

For in its purest sense it gives an access to the divine

Think of it as a chair and you'll not be that far wrong

For in it sits your guide and with him you'll grow strong

Now to capture imagination would defy our understanding

It's beyond our reality range so its apt to prove demanding

But as I'm feeling lucky we'll see what we can find

By starting with the premise that it's part of our great mind

Three parts make the whole if that will help you with the case

We'll take them one by one so the mind might have a face

The first one is the intellect I guess that's what you know

The second is the intuition, the understanding that you grow

The final is the imagination, the perceptions that you find

Guess that in its essence it controls your state of mind

Now at its lower levels is apt to do you harm

With perceptions in the main that tend to cause alarm

It's the fear of the unknown and it leads you on a dance

With terror as your partner and its music's ignorance

As you grow in light though you gain some understanding

The terror starts to fade as your questions get demanding

Your state of mind quite alters, you see a different picture

And optimism comes to play; it ends up quite a fixture

As you grow in light though you can get self obsessed

Imagination takes you over, you're better than the rest

**You fear not the unknown, it simply isn't there
You imagination is your self, here endeth the despair
Here endeth the despair? Well that's not strictly true
For I have further information and with it you'll turn blue**

**It concerns the higher truths, the purpose to your being
But because you're ego centred it won't be there for seeing
You can't see past the shell so you lack all understanding
Content to live in ignorance you block all things demanding**

**Now if you evolve in balance though you keep an open mind
With imagination as your friend for it's always kind
Logic comes to play with conjecture built through faith
And imagination strengthens for you've made the unknown safe**

**You see that's it in essence, reason left to chance
It's not just paranoia it's a hurdle to advance”**

“Yes I like that,” Jack said after he had finished, “I always thought it was the understanding though.”

“No it's the ability to create an image, that makes it the creative force, well unless it's negative then it's the destructive force.”

“Oh the God within, yes I can see that. Now I know that love is the creative force and anger is the destructive force but where does pride fit in?”

“Its self love, reflected love, the ability to take as opposed to the ability to give. It doesn't actually come from the Soul it's an ego thing. In fact it's what blocks your channel.”

“Oh right. That's what they must mean when they say that we live in God's reflected light then.”

“That's right, well until you become pure and get humility.”

“Yes I can see that. So that's why they say that the meek shall inherit the Earth.”

“Well humble, meek seems to give off the wrong impression to some people. They tend to think of it as timid nowadays.”

“Looks like we are back at work again,” Jack said watching everyone come out of the cabin, “Quick comes around doesn't it?”

They got out of the van and went straight to work. The afternoon proceeded quite quickly and by the end of the day the bay was finished. Nigel came in for a cup of tea and as they waited for the kettle to boil the phone rang. Jack picked it up and found out it was the man he was just about to ring. Jack told him that he would ring to confirm on Friday as he was not sure whether he would be working the next week. Job done he put the phone down and said, “That should hold him off for a while.”

“But we finished Friday, why did you tell him that?”

“He sounded desperate so I thought I would play on it. Besides have you seen how long the working day is?”

“No,” Nigel said so Jack gave him the printed sheet they got from the job centre. The hours said 8.00 – 5.30 so Nigel said, “That's nine hours.”

“Yes. I reckon it should be time and a half after 8 hours so if we leave it to the last minute we'll get more leverage.”

“True, yes I can see where you are coming from.”

“So that's sorted then,” Jack said and made them both a drink. When he came back he said, “So you got anything planned for the week end?”

“Saturday's booked I'm afraid. We could go out for a game of pool Friday night if you like.”

“Sounds good to me, it will be something to look forward to.”

The door knocked at that and Jack opened it to let Chillin' in.

"So how you getting on?" Chillin' said, "Was I right or was I right?"

"You were right," Jack said, "Unloading lorries turns out to be ground work. Whoever came up with that advert had a vivid imagination."

"Guess that's what they are paid for," Chillin' said with a laugh, "They'll tell you anything to get you on site."

"Yes don't I know it," Jack said with a laugh.

"Anyway," Nigel said, "I'll see you tomorrow. I'd better get going for I've things to do."

Jack let Nigel out and made Chillin' a cup of tea. When he had finished he gave Chillin' his drink and said, "So have you seen anything of that girl?"

"Yes I've just come from hers. She might have some work for you if you are not too busy."

"I'm not sure. I'm supposed to be working for the next couple of months. What does she want?"

"A roof wants doing. Stripped and re-felted. It's not hers it's her father's next door neighbour."

"I'm not sure about that. I'll have to get back to you on that one. I think we might be too busy but I could ask around for her if she wants."

"That will do for me I only said that I would pass the message on."

"Sorted then have you got time for a smoke?"

"Not really I've got to get back home and sort a few things out. I'm having an early spring clean."

"I guess that must be the global warming," Jack said with a laugh, "It's really made a mess of the seasons."

"True," Chillin' said and finished his drink, "Anyway I will catch you later."

Jack let him out and then put the television on. He thought about the roofing job and was glad that he had another source of work. He did not like the idea of getting on a roof for his fear of heights had not diminished. "Hypothetical," he said aloud dismissing the thought and went back to watching the television until he went to bed at 10.30.

5. Jack Tar. (Well Concrete Actually.)

Thursday morning saw Jack wake up to a bright new day. The rain had gone and the wind had calmed. He got dressed and made himself a cup of tea and watched a little television whilst he waited for Nigel. Nigel came on time and as they sat and drank some tea Jack told him about the roofing job.

"Really," Nigel said, "That sounds like a nice little earner. We'd make more on that than on agency jobs and I'm willing to bet it will be a lot less hassle."

"Hypothetical though but it's nice to have something to fall back on."

"True," Nigel said and finished his drink, "Anyway speaking of work we had better makes tracks." They headed off to the site and were greeted on arrival by Colin, "I hear that the overtime has been canceled."

"Really," Jack said with slight indifference.

"Yes they don't need it now. The bays should be ready well in time when they come to concrete it next Tuesday."

"Oh so the jobs on time then."

"It will be a week and a half in front. Yes not bad going."

"Someone must be on a bonus," Nigel said.

"Maybe," Colin said with a laugh, "But it's not me."

They brought the wheel barrow and shovels out and went into the cabin to bide their time.

"A week and a half," Nigel said after he had sat down, "That's some going we ought to be on a bonus."

"Not much chance of that," Jack said and looked out of the window, "They're on time today."

They left the cabin just as the van was pulling onto the car park. Andy got out and said, "We've got 40 tonne of sand coming. It shouldn't be too long. Could you barrow some stone over to the entrance and try and soak up the mud?"

"Sure," Nigel said and they did as they were bid. Two lorries arrived at 8.30 and then they got onto the job in hand. Jack found it hard going at first until Nigel came to his rescue, "Put most of the weight to the front above the wheel you'll be surprised at the difference." (Thanks to Mark again for that one. I apologise for not knowing your surname, also thanks for the sacrifice story.)

Jack found it a lot easier. In fact the barrow felt virtually empty. Andy came over to give them a hand at nine and shoveled with great gusto whilst Jack and Nigel stuck to barrowing.

"He'll not keep that pace for long," Nigel said as they passed each other on the circuit, "Watch him make some excuse soon and leave us to it."

"Old trick isn't it. Set a fast pace and disappear leaving the others to continue at it."

"I know what you mean," Nigel said and laughed before saying, "Mind you that's been our normal pace all week."

"True," Jack said and went back to the pile.

"You'll have to carry on by yourself for a while," Andy said when Jack returned; "I've got to see how the brick layers are doing."

"Sure," Jack said with a knowing smile, "No bother." so they carried on until first break. As they sat in the van Jack said, "It's a lot easier moving the barrow when it's packed like that."

"Well we don't want to make hard work out of it let the pivotal force do it instead. We're covering some ground now. Soon they'll have one of the bays ready for raking and then they can wacca it. That sands going down pretty quickly too."

"They'll need some more for tomorrow, well unless there's enough that is."

"Doubt it. I reckon they're looking at another 20 tonne at least."

"Do you think that we'll get it done before we go?"

"Wouldn't think so well not on our own anyway. We could do it with a couple more blokes, one shoveling and three barrowing."

"We'll see then. I tell you what though it's a hell of a lot easier shoveling sand than shoveling

stone.”

“Yes things are getting a little easier looking at Andy though you wouldn't think so.”

“He starts off well though I'll give him that shame that it doesn't last.”

“He hasn't got the power. No stamina.”

“The power?”

“Of renewal. Did you know that you could renew yourself through the Earth Mother?”

“What, is that some sort of joke?”

“No all you have to do is stand still a while and you can feel your negative energy leave you through your legs.”

“No chance,” Jack said with a laugh, “You're winding me up.”

“Seriously. Just stand still and say that mantra about surrendering your will. It sends the spent energy back to ground. You might need a smoke to help it on its way though.”

“Yeah right,” Jack said not believing him.

“Give it a go later, you'll be surprised.”

“Time to go back anyway,” Jack said looking out of the window, “They're all coming out now.”

They both went back to work and were joined by Dave for he had finished the job he was doing.

“Right,” he said trying to take command, “I'll shovel,” and went at it at a very brisk pace.

“Let's see how long he lasts,” Nigel said with a laugh.

“Should be fun.”

Barrow after barrow was filled (Well it wasn't really that many but I digress.) until Dave said, “Right one of you take over I'm going for a drink.”

Nigel looked at Jack and said “Fag break?”

“Sounds good to me,” Jack said so they both stopped and rolled themselves a cigarette each.

“If he wants to set the pace he had better make sure that he can keep it,” Nigel said.

Dave came back and saw them standing around so he said, “Oh like that is at?” and carried on shoveling. They did swap eventually and Nigel took the shovel. During the course of the morning they found out that Dave was on minimum wage, the same as them. This surprised Jack and Nigel and Jack said, “Not being funny but you are rushing around like an Irish punt for the minimum wage. You ought to be getting 8 or 9 pound at least, this is ground work.” Dave never really answered him but carried on regardless and this made for an interesting conversation in the van at dinner time.

“I don't understand that,” Jack said, “I mean we were conned into it. We just thought it was unloading lorries.”

“I know. I wouldn't mind but he's been with that company for over a year. Doesn't he know he could get a job anywhere with building as it is.”

“Yes, strange isn't it?”

“Maybe he hasn't got any confidence in his ability as a worker. I mean that's the only thing I can think of.”

“Well I've seen him work,” Jack said with a laugh, “Maybe you're right.”

“No he's not that bad. He would put a lot of people to shame. I know he stands around a bit and if he can put the harder work on others he will but he still turns a mean shovel.”

“Who knows then, one of the mysteries of the human psyche.”

“Maybe its conditioned reasoning, you can never tell.”

“Conditioned reasoning?”

“He could have tasted long term unemployment it's not good for the self esteem. You condition yourself to reason that you are lucky to have a job and will cling to it no matter what.”

“Maybe, you know it's funny you should say that.”

“Is it?”

“Yes when I was working with him earlier in the week he was on about working next week. I said that I wasn't and he said that if the agency says I was then I would be.”

“Really, what a strange thing to say.”

“I know. I didn't think much of it at the time. All I said was not me I'll be on another job. Doesn't he realise how buoyant the work market is at present?”

“Mustn't, mind you if you listen to the jokers on the television you would think that we were heading for a recession. The things they do to keep the wage rate down. I didn't think that anyone would believe them but now I'm not so sure.”

“Well it's his life,” Jack said and lit up a smoke, “But not as he knows it,” and laughed.

“I think that stuff is starting to affect you,” Nigel said laughing, “Or maybe you're working too hard.”

“I wouldn't know about that. It must be the smoke.” Jack passed Nigel the smoke and said, “You reckon we ought to call the agency tonight? You know get it sorted and settled.”

“Why not, leave it too long and we might be cutting off our noses to spite our faces.”

“I was thinking that.”

“Otherwise we might end up having to do that roof and I know how much you like heights.”

“Alright, alright,” Jack said knowing that he had been caught out.

“Beside I only have a tower scaffold to work from.”

“That's illegal. I thought that it had to be all scaffolded out by law.”

“I thought we were outlaws,” Nigel said with a laugh, “I don't know Jack. Next thing I know you'll be wanting me to tax the van.”

“Now you don't have to be so melodramatic I was only saying,” Jack said with a laugh.

“Anyway I'll give Dave a knock it looks like they are all going out.”

Nigel knocked on the car window and Dave woke up. He was still five minutes late on site and Andy told him much to his annoyance that they started at one. It gave Jack and Nigel something to play on and made for a pleasant afternoon. The work got pretty well covered and half the area looked like it had a mole infestation. The finished bays were raked level and wackered into shape and Jack and Nigel went home in a happy mood.

“Last day tomorrow,” Jack said as Nigel drove them back, “And tomorrow night I will show you how to play pool.”

“I'll look forward to that,” Nigel said with a laugh, “I could do with some lessons.”

“Yes I noticed, you seem to be losing your edge.”

“Well I could definitely do with sharpening up,” Nigel said as he pulled up outside Jack's flat.

“Time for a brew?” Jack said as he got out.

“Plenty, do you want me to put the kettle on whilst you phone the agency?”

“I forgot about that thanks for reminding me. Sure.” He opened the door to the flat and made the phone call. After he had finished he said, “You're not going to believe this, they've pulled the job.”
“What?”

“Yes, it seems the company got pissed off with waiting and so put a couple of their own lads in.”

“Looks like fates against you well unless it wants you to lose your fear of heights that is.”

“She's a hard mistress and no mistake.”

“I bet that job was just another bullshit job anyway. I mean let's be honest if they can put their own lads in now why couldn't they do that before?”

“Very true,” Jack said and thought into it, “Yes you're right thinking about it. It must have been another crap job; maybe fate was doing us a favour.”

“You see look a bit deeper and it's easily found,” and gave Jack his cup of tea.

“The bastards,” Jack said on recognition, “And it would have been for two months as well.”

“A lucky escape and no mistake.”

“That roof sounds a good job now. You know I would rather face death than all this bull.”

“At least you know where you stand,” Nigel said, “Well lie anyway.”

“Yes there's a lot of lying,” Jack said still with anger in his voice. “I think you're right Nigel a week is long enough. I would have thought that things would have changed by now.”

“Things have, it’s just that some people haven’t.”

“Well it won’t be our problem after tomorrow,” Jack said and took a drink, “You got time for a smoke?”

“Go on then, I shouldn’t really when I’m driving.”

“Leave it here tonight; you don’t live that far away.”

“Yes I’ll pick it up tomorrow. It should be safe here as it’s off the road.”

“True,” Jack said and rolled a joint. He passed it over to Nigel and rolled another. “That’s better,” he said after he had taken a drag from it, “That goes down well I can tell you. What a life.”

They talked some more until Nigel left at ten and Jack went to bed.

Jack woke up in a better mood the next day and when Nigel called he was back to his normal self.

They went to work as usual and the morning went quickly enough until they ran out of sand so while they were waiting Andy told them to carry on stoning the ground to soak up the mud. He also told them that Jonathon was coming in later so they had something to look forward to. The sand came after the first break and it was not long after that Jack found the power of renewal. To explain it I suppose would be like dangling tired legs in mid air. You feel an inner weight at the bottom of your legs and you can actually feel it drain. It happened to Jack when he was standing up and he felt the weight drain into the ground below. Not long after dinner Jonathon came and introduced himself as Jack and Nigel were loading up their barrows. “You’ve got a very varied job description,” Jack said and Jonathon laughed although the insult was not lost on him.

“He didn’t like that,” Nigel said when he had gone to see Andy in the office; “I wonder how he will try and retaliate?”

“A veiled insult under humour you know what these divvies are like. He’s spending enough time in the office I thought it was us he had come to see.”

After half an hour he came out and came over to them, “I’ve left some time sheets and I hear you are finishing on Friday, can’t hack it eh?” and laughed in a very plastic way. Jack held his tongue for he thought it trivial and beneath him. Instead he said, “We got another job.”

“Oh,” Jonathon said and wished them well before leaving them.

“Was that it?” Jack said, “Ah well back to work. It looks like the sand won’t last the day out.”

Andy came out and Jack asked him if there was any more sand.

“I’m afraid not, we’re having a job with the delivery. The van’s got to go back to base.”

“Oh well can’t be helped I suppose.”

Andy stuck around for the rest of the afternoon and put his back into shoveling the sand. It was hard work but he stuck to it and the pile of sand was cleared not long after four. The job was not finished but there was not that much left to cover so it would easily be ready for the concreting on Tuesday. Not that, that was Jack and Nigel’s problem and it never came up in conversation as they drove the short distance home.

“Glad to see the back of that,” Jack said.

“I know what you are saying my arms are knackered.”

“Yeah right, you’re just covering yourself for when I beat you at pool.”

“Sussed out,” Nigel said with a laugh, “You’re getting better, definitely a lot more discerning.”

“I’ve got the power,” Jack sang and then laughed. They pulled up outside the flat and Jack said, “You got time for a brew?”

“No I’d better get off. What time shall I call round later?”

“Does seven sound alright?”

“Yes why not,” Nigel said and let Jack get out of the van before driving off.

6. Jack of (f) the Green.

After Nigel had driven off Jack went inside and made himself a quick cup of tea before getting ready to go out. Well that was the plan anyway but it took a slight detour. The door knocked just after he sat down so he got up to answer it. Much to his surprise it was Pauline.

"Hello Jack, are you inviting me in?"

"Er sure," Jack said not knowing what she wanted, "Would you like a cup of tea?"

"A quick one I'm just on my way up to Davy's."

"Are you still with him then?" Jack said in surprise.

"And why wouldn't I be," Pauline said in a defensive manner, "He's got a good heart."

"So it is just his mind he has problems with."

"Look he's very sorry about that. Once I explained the situation to him he saw the truth. It's just that he gets easily led that's all."

"What?" Jack said in confusion.

"People tell him things and he takes them on blind. It sort of ignites his temper and he blanks."

"Don't you think that, that sounds a little dangerous, what about if he ever turns on you?"

"It's not in his nature to hurt women it goes against everything he holds dear to."

"Alright, alright. So who told him that I'd been pestering you then? You know he tried to stab me?"

"Yes, as I said he's very sorry about that. He thinks you've got a good punch by the way."

"Oh right," Jack said not really knowing how to take that, "So who told him then?"

"Just one of his mates it seems he was driving past when we were at the bus stop together. It's all sorted now." The kettle boiled at that point so Jack made Pauline a cup of tea.

"Anyway," Pauline said after she had taken it, "I told him that there was nothing between us now though we were still friends and he's alright with that."

"That's very big of him."

"Look Jack what you did to me was well out of order. You hurt me more than you could ever know. You opened up a can of worms and believe me it was very painful for me."

"Look I was tricked into it. How many times must I tell you that?"

"Oh I believe you now otherwise I would not be here."

"You believe me now? So why didn't you believe me before?"

"I didn't think that anybody would be that stupid but after seeing you at Canters I had a re-think."

"What, what's that supposed to mean?"

"I don't think that you are too aware Jack. My friend fancies you and you didn't even notice."

"Anne? She's married."

"No not Anne, it was someone else."

"Is that why you asked if I was seeing anyone?" Jack said remembering what Chillin' had told him.

"Yes I was asking for her sake."

"So who's this friend then, I don't remember anyone."

"Gillian Taylor, she sat next to you, she even followed you into the pool room for a game of pool."

Jack thought awhile and said, "A slim girl with glasses?"

"That's right, she did everything but throw herself in front of you."

"Oh," Jack said and laughed, "Ah well."

"Well?"

"Sorry?"

"How obtuse can you get? Do you like her?"

"I didn't really take much notice to tell you the truth. I think I was still a little hyped up from my encounter with Davy. I barely remember what she looks like."

"I'll give you her phone number if you like, give her a bell and take her out one of these nights. She's a nice girl, you should get on together."

"Right," Jack said taking the number and trying to remember what she actually looked like, "I'll do that."

“Make sure that you do. And Jack no stupid mistakes this time.”

“I got her back you know. I know that the damage has been done and cannot be altered but if it's any comfort to you she paid for it.”

“I doubt it Jack. She cost me my job and my trust in you and that hurt deeper than the job.”

“Why is that then? I'm not being funny and I know what I did was wrong no matter the perceived circumstances but it cut you a lot deeper than was normal.”

“It's a family thing you wouldn't understand.”

“Oh thanks. Alright, I didn't know my parents but that doesn't make me some unfeeling ogre.”

“No it's not that. I don't really want to talk about it.”

“Oh.”

“Alright, it was my father. He had a string of affairs and I saw what it put my mother through. She had a breakdown in the end and that's not a road I would like to travel. Believe me Jack for a child to watch her mother cry and suffer the way she did leaves a very lasting impression. It's a heavy burden to have to carry.”

“I didn't know. I'm very sorry. Maybe I didn't get that evil bitch back after all then.”

“She didn't know either. What did you do then?”

“I turned her logic back on her. I said that if men were controlled by their drive then so were women.”

“And?” Pauline said in confusion.

“I said that she only used it as an excuse to get laid because her girlfriend could not satisfy her. Her girlfriend stormed out and I don't think she'll be seeing her again.”

“Well there might be something in that. It's all water under the bridge now anyway.”

Jack laughed at that and said, “Oh and I gave her a drink to comfort her except that half of it had already passed through my body.”

“What,” Pauline said with a laugh, “And she didn't notice?”

“Too distraught poor dear,” Jack said with a laugh.

“Well I do feel a bit better I must admit. You're not a bad man Jack, just a bit naïve. Anyway I've got to get off now. Do yourself a favour and ring Jill.”

Pauline left and Jack made himself a cup of tea. He was going to leave getting ready until later as if the truth be known it would not take him long. He thought about Jill but could not remember her so it was not a long thought train. He mused on love itself next and found it a very confusing concept. Sure he understood spiritual love, God's purpose seeing loving through and how by acting on God's purpose you activate the Law of Love, the Holy Spirit, the Soul's understanding but the rest of it was a mystery to him. He understood that it was human nature to love and only divine ignorance caused hate but that did not really help him in his quest. He also knew that he felt empty inside when he was alone and single though he did not know why it should be that way. He seemed to be uncovering more questions than actually getting to the answers so he was quite relieved when the door knocked and put him out of his misery.

“Chillin',” he said letting him in, “You got time for a brew?”

“No I'm only passing by. I'm off to see Anne. Oh go on then, I can't stop too long though.”

Jack put the kettle on once more and said, “Oh good news by the way.”

“Yes,” Chillin' said wondering why Jack had stopped.

“We might be able to do that roofing job after all. That agency job fell through.”

“Oh I'll tell Anne that, she will be pleased. It's quite a messy job by the way.”

“What roofing, what makes you say that?”

“I'm afraid he's got a pigeon infestation. He has to sleep in the kitchen as that's the only room he can live in. The rest of the house is thick with pigeon droppings. It seems he's got a colony in the loft.”

“What seriously?”

“Yes, all the ceilings have collapsed and the place is in a right state. The stairs are too dangerous for him to climb, poor old man. She was telling me all about it yesterday.”

“What a way to live. However did he let it get in that state?”

“Who knows? I know I wouldn't like to live there. I don't think he's all there to tell you the truth. Mind you he's getting on; the man must be over 90. Says it all though doesn't it. He would rather stay there than live in a home.”

“True, look I'm seeing Nigel tonight. I'll have a word with him and we'll try and get over at the weekend. Could you get the man's address for us?”

“Sure Anne will have it. I'll phone you tomorrow and give it you. I don't think he's on the phone but he rarely goes out so your best bet would be just turn up.”

“Yes that sounds good to me,” and poured Chillin' a cup of tea.

“Cheers Jack this will go down well it's getting a bit nippy out now. They've give out snow for next week.”

“That's all we need I was hoping to try and get started next week.”

“Well it might not. You know how accurate these weather forecasts usually are.”

“Knowing my luck they will be right for once. Has this man got money to pay for the job by the way?”

“Yes his son died and left him a few grand.”

“That's a turn up for the book it's usually the other way around.”

“True,” Chillin' said and finished his drink, “Anyway I'll get off now. I'll give you a ring at 10 tomorrow and drop you his details.”

“Thanks,” Jack said and let him out. He looked at the clock on the wall and saw it was 6.30. “I'd better get a move on,” he said aloud and had a quick wash and brush up.

Nigel arrived at seven on the dot and Jack told him about the job.

“You'd have thought that his son would have never let it get into such a state in the first place,”

Nigel said after Jack had finished, “Aren't families a strange breed?”

“Wouldn't know but Chillin' thinks it will be a messy job.”

“It must have taken years to get as bad as Chillin' said it was. Are you sure he's not just exaggerating?”

“We'll find out tomorrow, anyway are you ready to lose a few games?”

“Yes, why not,” and they both walked down to The Swan. The pub was empty but that was not unusual so Jack set them up whilst Nigel got them in. Jack put on his favourite record and broke up the pack.

“Do you remember that tall girl with the glasses?” Jack said when Nigel came back with the drinks.

“Who sat next to us?” Nigel said passing Jack his drink.

“Cheers,” Jack said and took a drink, “That's better. Yes apparently she likes my face. She gave Pauline her phone number.”

“You know I thought that she liked you,” Nigel said putting down his drink on the table, “She must have followed us into the pool room.” He picked up his cue and took his shot, “So are you giving her a bell then?”

“I'm not sure,” Jack said as he watched the ball go down, “Er do you remember what she looked like?”

“Not really,” Nigel said as he leaned over to take his next shot, “You know how to find out,” and took it.

“True,” Jack said as the pocket rattled once again, “Don't I get a go?”

“Not this game probably,” Nigel said as he sent another down, “I reckon she wasn't bad thinking about it. Yes, pretty easy on the eye.” as another one went down.

“I'll give it a try then. Yes it looks like the old charm is back again.”

“How so Jack?” Nigel said in a pretentiously mocking voice and sent another ball to its demise.

“Looks like a seven baller to me,” and lined up for another shot.

“Never happened before,” Jack said and watched intensely. Nigel put the next one down and had a straight shot on his last red. “Double on the black?” he asked.

"I'll let you know if you get there," Jack said with a laugh. Nigel took the shot and watched the last red go down. The white was positioned well enough for Jack to say 'not bad'. (But he did not so I should not have really mentioned it.) The black ball did not touch the sides and they both sat down. "So," Nigel said, "You are getting ready to give the Hoover away then?"

"What?"

"Falling in love," Nigel said with a laugh.

"Oh, I was thinking about that earlier, funny you should say that. I got as far as spiritual love and after that."

"So what do you want to know? It's a hard thing to pin down though so I don't know if I'll be much help."

"Why do I feel so empty normally? I know you could just turn around and say its loneliness but surely it's more than that."

"Ah it's more the Grail than the Hoover then."

"Sorry?"

"You are the grail and you need to fill it. Emotional love fills it with joy, that's why you feel uplifted when you are in love."

"Oh. Yes I can see that when you put it that way but why does it do that then?"

"Why?" Nigel said and thought awhile, "Maybe you need to feel loved deep down inside, that's what ignites the joy."

"Maybe," Jack said half heartedly for he wanted something more tangible.

Nigel said on seeing this, "I'll give it some more thought whilst you are at the bar."

"That was about as subtle as a sledge hammer," Jack said getting up and picking up the empty glasses, "Same again?"

"Yes go on then. I think that ground work has left me with quite a thirst."

Jack went to the bar and Nigel pondered more on love while he waited. When Jack returned Nigel said, "Maybe it's in our nature to love for that is the purpose we serve. So when we don't serve this purpose it leaves a void, the emptiness that you were talking about?"

"Yes," Jack said as he sat down, "I can see that. That makes sense. So when I'm in love I'm serving my purpose and so I am happy."

"Well worth a trip to the bar," Nigel said with a laugh.

"So what about physical attraction then? Why should I perceive someone to be attractive and someone er not?"

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Someone you might not consider attractive might be considered attractive by another. It changes with the person."

"I know what you are saying but I was thinking more from a personal view. Why should I perceive someone as beautiful and someone else as ugly?"

"You shouldn't really be making judgments like that but I know what you are saying. Maybe it's a Soul attraction and you only perceive it as physical?"

"There might be something in that. You see a certain woman and it's not just the looks it's the aura that goes with it. Yes some women you can look at and think she's attractive but you see others and they seem to have something more."

"A bit of both then," Nigel said and took a drink, "Outer and inner beauty, life and love."

"And this drive to be in love, do you think it has something to do with the perpetuation of the species?"

"It has its place, instinctive force if you like. Yes you do have it as a driving force at the most basic of levels. Then you get a bit of understanding."

"Sorry?"

"It's not blind anymore. You have an appreciation of beauty and from it you get discerning. I suppose in nature it would be the biggest male kind of thing but in man it would be the best looking."

“So why would that be then?”

“Society favours the beautiful I'm afraid. You have an attractive partner more than likely you'll have attractive offspring.”

“You know putting it like that it makes sense and I guess it wouldn't be a conscious thing either, an instinctive survival of the fittest.”

“That's right it's all part of the instinctive drive still. Yes I would say that physical attraction has more to do with self consciousness so it would be heavily society based.”

“True, so basically it's an instinctive drive then, love I mean.”

“On one level, physical attraction but then you have emotional love.”

“Ah the grail, yes I understand that.”

“Well that's more from a soul mate point of view but you also have the family bond.”

“I don't know about that.”

“No I meant the family of Man. It could be the domestic family but it also could mean the friends around you too, a group consciousness perhaps.”

“Would that be the feeling of wanting to belong to something, emotional attachment?”

“Yes that's right, love on a different level. You see it as the herd mentality in nature though that was more for protection I guess. In society it might come over as the love of your country, then the love of your town, friends and family maybe its protection too if you want to look at it negatively.”

“Maybe, yes I can see some sense in that. Yes it's definitely a subject in itself.”

“True. I would say that love in its essence fills with you with the spirit of purpose and so when you serve it you get a purpose and so the spirit lives within you and this is the feeling of joy that you get.”

“Well you couldn't have put it better than that. Yes I think you've definitely hit the nail on the head with that one.”

“So all you need is a purpose to serve,” Nigel said with a laugh, “Which brings us nicely back to that girl.”

“Gillian Taylor.”

“Gillian Taylor? Johnny Taylor's sister?”

“I don't know. I didn't know he had one.”

“Yes, a couple of years younger.”

“Might explain how Pauline knew her then. They would have been at the same school. I don't remember her though.”

“Might have been that she was a couple of years younger. You don't tend to take much notice.”

“I haven't seen Johnny since he joined the army. He wasn't a bad bloke. How did you know he had a sister anyway?”

“I used to know Johnny years ago. I used to go round his house as a kid. Mind you she was barely walking then so I wouldn't have recognised her anyway.”

“Small world isn't it. Pauline didn't tell me that it was Johnny's sister.”

“Probably forgot. You ought to give her a bell to find out how he's doing if nothing else.”

“Yes,” Jack said and took out the number. He studied it a while and said, “I'll give her a bell tomorrow after Chillin' rings at ten.”

“We going to have a look at it tomorrow?”

“I thought so depends whether you have something else planned though. Chillin' said just turn up as he's virtually always in.”

“Yes the earlier the better as my finances are not what they should be.”

“I know what you are saying. That cheque will come in very handy next week.”

“Not as handy as the roof. He does know that we'll want money for materials up front doesn't he?”

“We'll have to sort that out tomorrow,” Jack said and at that moment Nigel's mobile phone rang.

“Hello?” he said answering it and looking at Jack said, “It's for you.”

“What?” Jack said in surprise and took it. It was Gillian, “Er hello, I was wondering if you would

like to go out for a drink one of these days. I don't know if you remember me but I was at Canters last week."

"Johnny's sister," Jack said wondering how she got Nigel's number.

"That's right yes. I used to go to school with you but I was a couple of years younger so I am surprised that you actually remember me."

"Well not at first I must admit. Er how did you actually get this number?"

"Pauline gave it to me. She said that it was probably better if I rang you and as your number was not answered she gave me this one."

"Oh."

"She's here with me at the moment as a matter of fact. We're in the Red Lion."

"What really?" Jack said with a laugh, "We're at The Swan across the road having a game of pool. Why don't you both come over and join us?"

"Pauline's got to go in a minute so I'll be on my own. I won't be interrupting a lad's night out will I?"

"No it's just me and Nigel playing."

"That fellow that was with you at Canters?"

"Yes," Jack said, "Hang on a minute," and turned to Nigel and said, "She's across the road. You wouldn't mind if she came over would you?"

"No, not at all actually it will give me an excuse to get off."

"What?"

"Well let's be honest Jack," Nigel said with a laugh, "Do I really want to play someone I've just seven balled. No I thought that I would nip over to see how Harmony got on."

"Oh fair enough then," Jack said and went back to the phone, "So what are you having, I'll get the drink ready."

7. Jack and Jill.

Not long after the drink was poured Jill arrived. She entered with a shyness that Jack found endearing but also confusing as it clashed with the forthrightness of the phone call. Nigel was the first to speak. He introduced himself, made his excuses and left.

“Was it something I said?” Jill said nervously but with humour.

“No,” Jack said with a laugh, “So do you want a game of pool then?”

Jack view on confidence was to pretend that you knew the person all your life. He reasoned that he could catch up with the details at a later date so that was not really important to him.

“Yes sure, you didn't mind me ringing did you?”

“No,” Jack said thinking that she was more attractive than he remembered her to be, “I was delighted. Surprised though but I know what Pauline's like so I should have expected it really.”

“What me ringing you. I guess it does sound impatient though doesn't it? Not the done thing I guess.”

“I feel flattered to tell you the truth. It doesn't mean that I will let you beat me at pool though.”

She looked at him and said with a smile, “The feelings mutual,” and Jack had met his match.

“So you like a game of pool then?”

“Play it regular, mainly at the Crown and Anchor.”

“Oh,” Jack said as it was a pub noted for its pool players, “So you are probably quite a good player then?” Jack actually did not play for a pool team but he kept an eye on the newspaper reports as he quite liked to know what was going on.

“Well I don't know about that. I play for their team though.”

“Ah,” Jack said as that particular team were the Manchester United of the pool league. (Mind you by the time this is published it might be Burton Albion, we live in hope.) He thought to himself that another seven baller was imminent and this was confirmed by Jill's next statement, “I'm in a tournament at the moment.”

“Really,” Jack said and reluctantly put the money in. Well he had good reason as he was indeed seven balled. He got on well with her though and had a pleasant evening. The tale picks up next day at noon with Jack and Nigel at the old man's address.

“They've definitely let this go,” Nigel said looking at the garden, “Chillin' might have something.” A pigeon landing and going into a hole in the roof confirmed it. “Do you reckon that those pigeons congregating on that last roundabout have something to do with this place?”

“Doubt it; there must have been sixty of them.”

Nigel knocked on the door and an old man answered it. He was still pretty agile and moved easily around the ground floor of the building.

“Hello,” Nigel said, “We've come about the roof.”

“Oh right,” the man said, “My name is Alan,” and shook both their hands as they told them their names, “I'm afraid that I daren't climb the stairs,” he said letting them in, “You are welcome to go up there yourselves.”

Nigel and Jack climbed the stairs gingerly as it was quite slippery and ended up in one of the previous bed rooms.

“Look at that,” Nigel said looking at the lack of ceiling, “And the smell. Chillin' said it was bad but I don't know.”

“Yes, we've definitely got a job on.”

They went back down and got down to business and all the details were worked out for them to start on Monday. There was a builder's yard around the corner so that saved a lot of time and Alan said that he would have enough money to get them started so everything was sorted. As they drove back Nigel said, “I'll load up the tower scaffold and that should do it. It will be a bit of a change for you.”

“Well it certainly won't be boring. Quite a colony though. I think they were from the house, those pigeons at the round-about I mean.”

“Looking at that place I wouldn't argue. Mind if I drop you off and not stop, I want to nip to the

shops.”

“Sure,” Jack said as the van stopped outside his flat, “Will you need a hand with anything before Monday?”

“No I should be alright. Shall I pick you up at eight Monday?”

“Sound and if I don't see you before I'll catch you later.”

Jack opened the door of his flat and said, “Well at least you might have made the dinner.”

“Funny,” Jill said, “How was it then?”

“It's a right place. Do you want a coffee?”

“Any chance of a cup of tea I'm not really a coffee drinker.” (Lucky miss there as it could have been a different story-see alternative ending (Jack Off).)

“Sure,” Jack said and put the kettle on, “You know I did not know that we had so much in common.”(You missed that bit along with quite a lot besides but that's another book).

“Alright, alright,” Jill said with a laugh, “So my dad's got a pub.”

“Funny,” Jack said with a smile, “No, it's good to know you.”

“Thanks Jack,” Jill said with a warm smile, “I appreciate that,” and gave him a kiss, “I'm afraid I've got to get off at one though.”

“Sorry yes. I thought we would have been back earlier. So do you fancy doing anything tonight?”

“A quite night in for me I was wondering if I could make it at yours?”

“You certainly can. What time shall I expect you?”

“Is seven too early?”

“No, no that's fine, the earlier the better for me. (That was nothing like playing hard to get.) I've got to nip and see someone later but I'll be back well before then.”

“Okay then,” Jill said and kissed Jack goodbye. Jack sat a while longer. He thought about Jill and a strange warmth came over him. It was peaceful and yet rousing. He soaked it in a while and thought about her sense of humour. Yes, he thought, she'll do. He looked at the time and saw that it was ten past one so he got up and made his way to Chillin's.”

He was soon knocking the door and entering a very tidy flat.

“You weren't joking were you,” Jack said, “You have been busy.”

“Well it's only once a year so I thought I'd make the most of it.”

“And you said you found some more poems?”

“Yes four of them. I thought after what you told me Nigel had said about the last one I would keep them for you.”

“Right, cheers. I'll roll us one up if you like.”

“Sure I'll put the kettle on. I've left them on the table for you.”

“Thanks,” Jack said and got on with the job in hand. Chillin' came back with the drinks and said, “That first one looks interesting.”

Jack picked it up and read it quietly to himself, “That's weird. They are all pretty similar in format.”

“I thought that myself and the same as the earlier one I gave you.”

“It must have been a serious stone in,” Jack said with a laugh, “I'll get Nigel to have a look at them when I see him on Monday.”

“Sound, so anyway I hear you're courting.”

“Er yes, well sort of anyway. She's coming back later as a matter of fact.”

“Sound,” (He was very musical today for some reason.);”You got time to try one of those poems now?”

“I wouldn't have a clue myself. I mean listen to this one

I am the fish that swam the sea of joy, the heart that shone upon the boy

The lobster in the stormy pool, the death of nothing but the fool

The shark that took unwilling bait, the fear of nothing but your hate

The salmon jumping o'er fall so you fear is not at all

Where would you begin?”

“Didn't you say that one side was from the rational and the other from the imagination?”

“Well yes but believe me Chillin' they go a lot deeper.”

“Maybe not, you also said, what was it? The first line was the Soul, then imagination, intellect and then Spirit.”

“Well yes. I just came down for a quiet smoke to tell you the truth.”

“Oh, don't mind me I guess I was just bored.”

“No, sorry it's me, my mind is elsewhere. What do you think it stands for?”

“Well I could see the fish as the Soul and swimming the sea would be an enlightened one.”

“Well alright then. So the second part would be telling you of the well being you get from it on one level for the heart denotes love. Also by the fact it shone it denotes brightness, a will of light.”

“I can see that, so what about the next line.”

“The lobster in the stony pool and this has something to do with the imagination. Well lobster stands for God's purpose seeing self (understanding wisdom through knowing) so that could be understanding of purpose. But a stony pool I'm not sure about.”

“Well Nigel said that the pool was the word seen, that was its life, but stony?”

“Could be its foundation built on stony ground making it hard going. No, hang on a minute you only get understanding through experience. You have to suffer to get true understanding.”

“And the death of nothing but the fool?”

“A fool is someone who knows everything but understands nothing, the ego. It's talking about a shift in consciousness.”

“Right and the shark that took unwilling bait?”

“Spiritual understanding, God knowing work. When the ego dies you are just your purpose. You fear nothing but your own actions in case they might come from hate and block your channel. The self of God blessed with wisdom, unwilling for it is unconditional.”

“Yes I can see that and the last line?”

“The salmon jumping o'er fall, the Spirit leaving the water and going to higher ground after clearing an obstacle.”

“And the obstacle?”

“The fear of death maybe but by the fact that he's cleared it, it now means he has no fear at all. It will also tie in with the previous line for as it is not in its nature to hate it has nothing to fear.”

“So what next then? We might sort of understand it but we don't know what it's for?”

“Maybe they need a title I'm not sure.”

“Maybe, I'll give it some thought and see what I can come up with.”

“Yes I will too. Anyway I'm going to have to get back now so let us know how you got on.”

“Sure,” Chillin' said as he let him out. Jack soon covered the short distance home and made himself a drink before settling down to study the verses once again. He decided to try and title the one that Nigel had decoded though he did not really hold out much hope. Much to his surprise he sensed the word 'kingdom' and so he thought he would pursue it.

The breath of life within us all could be the kingdom of nature, the collective soul. The positive imagination of the ship could be the kingdom of heaven as it is a state of mind sustained by the third line, the Holy Spirit and the final line the collective conscious. Three levels of consciousness linked by the Holy Spirit. He wrote down **Kingdom** on the top of the page and took a look at the other one. He had also reasoned that the second part of the line was the effect to the first part's cause so he was having quite a good day. As he looked at the second verse the word **Knowledge** came to his mind so he thought that he would let it see where it took him. The first one was an enlightened soul so that fitted quite easily. The second part denoting eternal youth through a will of light, the shift in consciousness and loss of fear all carrying on from it. The lobster would be understanding of purpose and the shark the channel you get to your Spirit, the salmon is your Higher Self. He wrote down the title at the top of the page and made himself another drink. After he sat down he decided he would make a brief summary of both the poems so he wrote under kingdom.

“The kingdom of God comes over on three levels, the collective unconscious is the Soul, consciousness or heaven and the collective conscious called the divine. It is linked by the Holy Spirit and is a reality of mind not matter.”

After he had finished he wrote under knowledge,

“Knowledge of the divine enlightens the soul, gives understanding of purpose and a channel to your Higher Self. To get this knowledge you have to lose your fear of death, the fool inside you and the only way to do this is to meet your maker.”

He put the two pieces of paper on the table with the others and checking the time saw that it was seven. He put the kettle back on and before it had chance to boil there was a knock on the door.

“You timed that right,” Jack said letting Jill in, “The kettle's just boiled.”

“Well I won't say no to a hot drink. I thought it was going to snow a little earlier but I guess it was too cold.”

“Well they have give it out,” Jack said pouring her a drink, “I don't fancy being up on a roof if it does.”

“I don't fancy being up on a roof at all,” Jill said with a laugh.

“You're not the only one if the truth be known. I've never been up on one before.”

“Seriously what never?”

“No.”

“And this roofing job, you will be alright to do it?”

“Oh yes, Nigel knows what's what. I'll just be following him.”

“John said that I should have remembered him. He said that he used to come around years ago.”

“I think you were barely walking,” Jack said with a laugh, “So how is Johnny then?”

“Not bad. He's over in Africa at the moment. He phoned earlier for a chat.”

“Did you tell him about us?”

“He mentioned something about lowering my standards if I remember rightly but I've forgotten the context in which it was said.”

“Like that is it? I don't know, I let you narrowly beat me at pool and this is all the thanks I get.”

“It was a seven baller. Narrowly beaten.”

“It was only the first game I was just testing you out, trying to find out what your weaknesses were.”

“And?”

“Well I think I need a couple more games to be sure. I generally don't take on the opposition lightly.”

“Oh, that's what it is, is it.” She looked at the table and saw the verses, “Do you write poetry?”

“Me, no, that was something a mate came up with.”

“Mind if I have a look I quite like poetry.”

“Sure, I've got to warn you though it might sound like nonsense to you.”

She picked it up and read the one titled Kingdom and after she had finished she said, “It's heavily symbolic isn't it?”

“Er yes.”

“And your mate wrote this. Which one would that be?”

“Chillin' er Neville Winds. He was with us at the night club, well early on anyway.”

“It must have been before I got there. I only remember you and Nigel. It's definitely an unusual verse.”

“Yes, he just wrote it straight out as well.”

“Channeling then,” Jill said much to Jack's surprise.

“You know about channeling?”

“Oh yes, they say that most of the great works came from it. Creative writing I would call it as it comes from your imagination.”

“You surprise me.”

“Well I'm not just a mean pool player and a pretty face,” Jill said with a laugh, “I do have other talents.”

“I'll bet,” Jack said with a smile, “So how did you get to know that then?”

“Common knowledge, they say that a lot of the sixties music was drug induced.”

“Sorry?”

“It relaxes you and knocks your consciousness slightly. Get rid of the ego and it just floods out.”

“Really,” Jack said impressed, “Not just a pretty face then.”

“You forgot about the mean pool player but I'll take it with the spirit it was sent with. Patronising bastard.”

Jack laughed and said, “So what does it mean then?”

“You've summed it up pretty well yourself. Three levels of consciousness, the three kingdoms of God, nature, man and divine. Nature being the collective conscious or feminine force within you, the mother figure if you like. Divine would be the collective conscious, or spiritual force, the guiding father figure and man whose will is the power, the masculine force in the equation and activator of the Holy Spirit through his actions.

“What, you got all that lot from the verse?”

“Well more from the foot note,” Jill said with a laugh, “I don't quite know how you got to that stage from the verse though but I would be very interested to learn.”

“The Soul is God's breath of life with all the impurities of matter in it. Ship is symbolic of will and sea the spiritual realms so it is talking about a spiritual state of mind fed by the whale or Holy Spirit.”

“The whale? How would that fit in as the only mention of a whale was the one that swallowed Jonah?”

Jack thought awhile and said, “I don't know if there is any relevance to Jonah unless it is saying inside the Holy Spirit is the spirit of wisdom.”(Jonah stands for blessed seeing light (God's spirit))

“I'll have to take your word for that. I can understand the last line though for the pool would be the pool of knowledge that the collective conscious has, the dolphin as your spirit swimming in it, yes at a push.”

“It's very lateral, anyway shall I see if there is anything on the tele?”

“Yes,” Jill said and they settled into a quiet evening in.

8. Jack Rabbit.

Sunday morning saw Jack up at first light. Jill had left the night before so he had the place to himself. He lay awhile and took in the brightness of the day. It was an unusual sort of brightness, more colder than the norm.

“Snow,” Jack said to himself, got up and looked out of the window, “I knew it,” and then “Bastard.” He quickly got dressed and put the kettle on. “I don't need this,” he said as he carried the cup of tea back into the living room. “Ah well if it gets too bad we'll have to postpone it that's all,” and took a drink from his cup. More out of curiosity than anything else he picked up another of the verses. It read

**“I am the flower in the warming breeze, the tempter that was born in sleaze,
The tree that shades the little ones, his life revolves in tricks and cons,
The gold that's shining in your hair, it matters not so you don't care
The swaying wheat that's in the field, so come ahead or do you yield?”**

After he had finished reading it he sensed the word '**Understanding**' so he wrote it down though void of understanding. He looked at it once more and let his mind go blank. He picked up a pen and wrote underneath it,

“The verse is one of understanding with the flower being the Soul. The warming breeze it sways in is spiritual love, the wind being its Spirit and love being a by-product of light, heat. Spiritual love being understanding to the Soul's knowing. The tempter is your imagination, the channel to the divine. His life revolves around tricks and cons for he is a trickster in a Mercurial kind of way. It matters not so you don't care makes it divine or light not matter and you don't care makes it unemotional. It is your guide and being born in sleaze or Understanding (God's purpose and God's mind through) means that it comes from your understanding. The tree that shades the little ones is the Tree of Life and the little ones are the levels of understanding. The gold is spiritual gold found in the spirit of God (blessed with knowing) or the spirit of knowing and is loving spiritual wisdom. The wheat is spiritual love and the field is the word blessed through God's purpose transformed or an enlightened soul transformed to serve it. Come ahead or do you yield is saying that is can only work through sacrifice for a selfless act activates the administration of the Holy Spirit.”

After Jack wrote it down he read it. He could barely understand it so he studied it intently. After a while it began to come clear so he wrote underneath it.

“Understanding comes through your guide or understanding and is the love derived from light. It comes on ten true levels on the mental plane and three true levels on the spiritual one. It is the Holy Spirit and feeds the soul.”

After he had finished he looked at the time. It was 11 o'clock and Jill was due around. The last few hours had just flown by and this surprised Jack more than a little. He was supposed to be going to the zoo and had promised to make the sandwiches. (Alright I know it's far-fetched but it's only a story.) The knocking door brought him back down to Earth. He let Jill in who said, “Sorry I'm late, it looks like the zoo's off.”

“And the roof,” Jack said as he gave her a kiss.

“A cup of tea would be nice.”

“Under what circumstances?” Jack asked with a laugh.

“Sorry?”

“I mean do you have to be nice to it first or is it just nice by nature.”

“Funny.”

“Kettle's already boiled; I was going to make a flask up.”

“Shame that, I was looking forward to it as well. So it looks like you've been busy,” and picked up the paper with understanding written on the top of it, “Very busy in fact.”

“Yes it just came out. Well when I say just I reckon about 4 hours.”

“Amazing, how come you didn't do anymore?”

"I've not long finished that," he said bringing the drinks in, "I've been up since seven."

"Er could I watch you do it next time. I've never seen it done before."

"I don't know if I'd be too self conscious. That was the first time this morning. We could give it a go later if you like."

"Sure, it will make up for the zoo."

They talked some more with the radio on quite low until 3 o'clock until the subject got back to the verses.

"What do you reckon," Jill said, "Do you want to give it a go now?"

"Alright," Jack said and picked up another of the verses. He read it out loud

I am the cat that's licked the finest cream, the basis of a four man team

The dog that watched the sleeping child, the outcome which is really wild

The cow that ate the greenest grass, for when it comes they have to pass

The bird that nests upon the crown, lest time moves on and they all do drown"

After Jack had read it he sensed the word 'Wisdom' and so put it down as the title.

"Wisdom," Jill said, "Was that channeled?"

"I just sort of sensed it so I guess it was, Jack said and looked at the verse once again. After a while he picked up his pen and wrote,

"The verse is one of wisdom with the cat being the Soul. It stands for will of God's wisdom and the cream that it licked, a will of knowing through God's life. It is the cream at its finest. The basis of a four man team is talking about the elements; it is the Earth to the Air, Fire and Water so it is the basis that they work around. The outcome of this work through wisdom, for that is its life, leaves you wild or love blessed with God's purpose transformed in other words enlightened. Now when it comes to enlightenment they have to pass a test of purity to obtain it otherwise you grow old and drown in the sea of time. The dog that watched the sleeping child is the imagination and the sleeping conscious, the dog being negative whilst it's asleep. The cow is symbolic of the Holy Spirit for it means will seeing love and it ate or got God's wisdom through grass or a will that knows God, understanding understanding. Now understanding understanding is got through experience so it is talking about wisdom through experience and not just understanding basically its saying you get the Holy Spirit through wisdom and divine action. The bird that nests upon the crown is self blessed with knowing transformation and it makes its home on the crown for it is the channel to the divine."

After he had finished Jill said, "That was strange, it looked like someone was all around you."

"Sorry?"

"It looked like you were in someone. You weren't actually writing it, it was sort of written through you."

"Honest. Mind you I did feel quite strange doing it."

"So what does it say?" Jill said and Jack read it out.

"It still takes time to understand it," Jack said, "Then I can write the last part."

"Right," Jill said getting up. I'll put the kettle on and leave you two to it."

Jack studied it again and it seemed to clear quite quickly so he wrote

"Wisdom is the mind's light, the understanding of which gives you love, food for the Soul and the knowing of which expands your spiritual consciousness. It comes over on three levels though they are more like aspects of itself. Knowing off from an ego point of view, understanding it and knowing it from a Soul's point of view. Wisdom, spiritual wisdom and loving spiritual wisdom."

Jill came back with the drinks and said, "Any luck?"

"Just finished," and passed it to her.

She read it and said, "That's amazing, and you just wrote it like the last time?"

"Yes. Shall I do the last one then? We can get it out of the way and see if they've got anything in common."

“Alright then,” Jill said and read it out

**“I am the mountain on the windswept coast, recognition hurts the most
The wave upon the golden shore, for the light it makes me sore
The palm tree swaying in the wind and that pain will not rescind
The milk upon the baby's chin so my head is in a spin.”**

Jack sensed the word 'Crown' as she was reading it so he wrote it down after she had finished. He looked at it awhile and then wrote,

“The verse is one of the crown, the culmination of the Soul's journey symbolised by it being windswept or cleansed by God, spiritually as it came from the sea. It was cleansed of matter or demons depending on your persuasion and this is done by recognising them. By recognising them you bring them out of the darkness and into the light which destroys them for they can only live in ignorance. Recognition takes their head or power and puts them in God's understanding (the word blessed with light). Now the wave is the Holy Spirit, the golden shore is a spiritual life from spiritual understanding (seeing knowing through) and its action is erosion of material matter and replacing it with light. The palm tree is the channel for it means the word- God's (God's purpose) life and the wind is the Holy Spirit for it means love blessed with light transformation and this holds the channel. The baby is the sleeping conscious though when awakened it's the spiritual will (blessed with light.). The milk is life blessed with God's purpose (work) and this is what it feeds upon.”

Jack finished it and read it out aloud. After he had finished Jill said, “You know I sort of made sense out of that one.”

“Yes,” Jack said and then wrote,

“The crown is the culmination of the Soul's journey. It has purged itself of all its impurities and merged with the spirits of wisdom and understanding, the Soul being the spirit of knowing. This is the mergence of Earth, Air and Water, the Fire being the purificator and the guide through-out its future journey.”

He read it out and then they tried to get a connection but had no luck. It was late by the time they had finished so they went to bed trying for a nine month sequel called the fruit of a.....

9. High Jack.

A cold Monday morning saw Jack up and breakfasted by eight. He made Jill a cup of tea and left her in bed for she had a day off work and with it a lie in. He told her just to let herself out when she was ready and they arranged to meet on Wednesday. Nigel came on time and Jack showed him the verses.

“Amazing,” Nigel said in an impressed tone, “Are they connected in any way for they seem to follow a set format.”

“Well if they are I couldn't find it. Me and Jill spend ages trying.”

“It will give us something to think about today,” and the subject changed to one of the weather, “If it is not too slippery to work that it.”

“I was thinking about that yesterday. If there's snow on the roof we've got problems.”

“If it's too bad we will just set the tower scaffold and get some materials in and call it a day. We don't want to be martyred for the cause.”

“True,” Jack said with a laugh and quite a bit of relief, “We'd better make a start then I suppose,” and they left Jack's flat and drove the short distance to the pigeons paradise. Although there was snow on the ground still the roof looked pretty clear so they set up the tower scaffold and had a closer look.

“There are quite a few slates missing,” Jack said from the top of the scaffold, “It looks like it's going to be a job and a half.”

“I was thinking that myself. Mind you the roof looks pretty dry so that's a bit of a bonus.”

“There is that. So what's the game plan?”

“I thought we'd strip the two valleys, remove the ridges from the back part of the roof and then strip the side. We can put the ridges on the tower along with most of the slates.”

“Right,” Jack said thinking it would leave them with little room to manoeuvre but seeing there was no other way.

“Then we'll strip the old lathes and felt and batten this side. That will give us a base to put the slates from the other side on.”

“Yes that sounds good, I'm glad one of us knows what they are doing”

“Well I never said that,” Nigel said with a laugh. At that moment Alan came out and asked if they wanted a cup of tea so they came down. “It looks like you've took quite a job on,” he said once they were down, “And you've picked the right day for it.”

“The roof's pretty dry,” Nigel said, “So we should be alright.”

“Well I've got a couple of hundred quid together so if you want to start today you've got money for some materials. I wasn't sure with the snow.”

“No we should be alright to start today.”

“Great, the sooner the better for me I can tell you.”

“I'll bet,” Jack said with a laugh and Alan went back inside. They finished their drinks and drove around to the builder's yard to pick up the sand and cement, felt and a couple of bundles of lathes to get started and returned back again. The slates were easily stripped for it was just a sharp jerk to break the rusty nails so that part of the job did not take too long. By dinner time it was ready to be felted so they stopped for a cigarette and admired their work.

“Well we're down to the ribs,” Nigel said, “In pretty good time too. I've got a couple of spacing templates for the lathes so that shouldn't take too long. Then the hard bit.”

A brief description of the house might now be in order so you can get a closer picture of the job in hand. The building was semi detached and built in a 'U' shape but had a roof on the lower level of the 'U'. You could get to the first part of the next side from the lower roof but after that it was basically a case of hanging off until the lathes were fixed and ready to walk on.

“Yes,” Jack said, “I'm not looking forward to that.”

“It shouldn't take too long though. After that it should be plain sailing. I thought we'd do the lower roof next and get it out the way. We'll just take it as far as the upper roof and re-slate it to save

space.”

“Sounds good to me I'll bring the felt up then,” and climbed down the ladder that was tied to the scaffold. He returned with two rolls and went down again and fetched a handful of lathes, “This be enough?” he said on return.

“Should be,” Nigel said and they got to work. It did not take too long to felt and batten that side so they were quickly on the other. By the time they had stripped it, it was getting dark so they called it a day. As they drove home Nigel said, “Not bad progress today. Not bad at all.”

“You got time for a drink?” Jack said as they pulled in at his.

“Yes go on then I'm in no hurry.”

They went in and Jack put the kettle on and Nigel picked up the verses that they had left on the table.

“Kingdom, knowledge, understanding, wisdom and crown,” he read aloud, “I think they are staging posts on the Tree of Life.”

“The Tree of Life that was mentioned in one of the verses, what was it? The tree that shades the little ones I think it was understanding.”

Nigel checked and saw that Jack was right. “Yes, the levels of understanding I thought they looked familiar. He might have got them all down.”

“Well he threw a lot of stuff out so they may have got lost in transit.”

“It's a pity as they would have made for quite a little set. Jill not about?”

“No, I won't be seeing her till Wednesday now.”

“Ah well, you pooling tonight?”

“Not me. I thought I would have a quiet night in.”

“Wouldn't blame you I was thinking of doing the same thing myself.”

“I could do us a couple of smokes.”

“That's not a bad idea. I'll tell you what I'll nip off as I've a couple of things to do. I should only be half an hour and then I'll walk back.”

“Sure that will give me time to get a bite to eat.” Nigel left and Jack made a quick meal. By the time he had eaten and settled himself in with a cup of tea Nigel was back and knocking on the door.

Jack let him in; made him a drink and they settled down to an evening of planetary alignment.

“So do you think there is anything in it?” Jack said, “I was never must of a follower of astrology myself.”

“I think that there is but I have to hold my hands up in ignorance because I don't know why there should be.”

“It seems too vague. I mean you read it in the paper and it doesn't add up either.”

“Sorry?”

“I mean let's be honest are they trying to say that everyone who just happens to be born under a certain birth sign is going to have exactly the same circumstances as each other.”

“That's just a general reading. You have to get a personal reading to really benefit.”

“Well I suppose so. I've never really followed it as I've said so it's all odd to me.”

“Each to his own I guess. Mind you the planets do have a lot to tell us.”

“They do?”

“Yes, Spiritual wisdom- through the word (God's purpose) God's light through wisdom understood.”

“Oh right, and the planets themselves, do they mean anything?”

“Sure, have you got a pen and a bit of paper?”

“One moment,” Jack said and went into the kitchen. He was back soon and passing the paper to Nigel.

“Right,” Nigel said and thought a while before saying “Working out way out we have the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto” and wrote this down. Understanding loving light-life through knowing will (loving knowing)blessed with love through

light(loving understanding) and God's knowing spiritual wisdom(life of God knowing understanding) Blessed with love the word blessed with wisdom though knowing. Understanding God's wisdom love knows light. (Loving knowing).

God's light (loving understanding) - light through the word (wisdom). Loving light through the word (God's purpose) loving wisdom seen."

"Yes," Nigel said passing Jack the paper; it's surprising what they have to tell you."

Jack read the passage to himself and said, "Loving light, is that loving spiritual wisdom?"

"That's right. Understanding it is the Soul's life and growth, the Soul being the knowing will. It grows through loving understanding, a by-product of the light. Think of it as the heat if that helps."

"Oh right, that's what it means by blessed with love then."

"Yes understanding would be another word for it. It also grows by God's knowing spiritual wisdom that would be light itself. Now blessed with love in the second sentence means blessed by God and when this happens you get a channel to the spirit of knowing and so blessed with wisdom. You just seem to know but you don't know how."

"Yes, I can identify with that."

"Part of the process, now understanding God's wisdom love knows light. Light would be knowing the wisdom and love understanding it so put it together love knows light and that is loving knowing, the Soul."

"I remember you mentioning that once. Something about one side of the brain does one and the other side the other."

"That's right wisdom and understanding, right and left. Now the last part. You get light from wisdom and loving light through purpose. It's more of just a case of understanding wisdom you have to understand its purpose to evolve in balance."

"I can see that. It's a bit like the theory and practice of the job isn't it?"

"Yes to put it bluntly. All you need now are the signs of the zodiac and you'll be well sorted."

"Right, I'll get some more paper."

"No leave it tonight. You want to let that lot sink in first. I'll write it up for tomorrow night if you're not busy."

"Well I'm not seeing Jill till Wednesday so yes why not." They talked some more about life in general and Nigel left at around 10. Jack took an early night and tomorrow soon came around. They drank a cup of tea before setting off and on the way Nigel said, "Oh I wrote that lot out when I got in. quite a passage I can tell you."

"I'll bet. Something to look forward to then, it makes the day go a lot quicker."

"Well here," Nigel said and gave Jack a piece of paper, "This will keep you busy until we get there."

Jack looked at the piece of paper and saw this,

Blessed with understanding the word (through God's work blessed with light) God's purpose sees love blessed with light.

Will of understanding-the word blessed with knowing (blessed with wisdom) loving God.

God's purpose (love)-blessed with understanding transformation sees life."

"Yes I can understand that. What is it?"

"I speak in loving spiritual wisdom," Nigel said with a laugh, "Sorry I was bored after doing the zodiac so I thought I would try it."

"Oh er right. So how long did it take you to write out the zodiac?"

"About 10 minutes. They don't take too long to bring to Earth either."

"Sorry?"

"To make sense out of them," Nigel said as they pulled up, "Anyway we're here now."

Jack got out of the van and said, "The snows cleared a little, that's a good sign."

"True," Nigel said as he shut the door, "Right let the dog see the rabbit," and climbed up the ladder.

Jack quickly followed. To batten and felt the side of the roof did not take too long so they went

straight on with the lower roof. The slates were a lot harder to loosen than the others and one or two snapped when they tried their usual method. By dinner time it was stripped so they stopped for a cigarette. At the same moment Alan came out to see if they wanted a drink.

"Now that's good timing," Jack said to Alan as he climbed down the ladder.

"So how are you getting on with it?"

"Not too bad. The back part's nearly ready then it's just the main roof."

"Really, that quickly," and went back inside. Nigel had got down by then. Jack said, "What will happen to the pigeons by the way?"

"They will quickly find new homes," laughed and said, "And then we'll get more work."

"I won't argue with that. You know I'm quite getting to like this work. I think I've lost my fear of heights."

"Maybe it was just a fear of ladders then?"

Jack thought awhile and said, "You know maybe you are right," at that moment Alan came back with the tea, "It was two sugars wasn't it?"

"Thanks," Nigel said taking the cups from him, "Yes, two in both."

"I thought so. Mind you my memory's not what it used to be."

"Happens to us all," Jack said, "So after the roof is finished what are your plans?"

"They reckon that the upstairs is a mess. The ceilings have collapsed and the whole place is fouled."

"Yes, we saw it."

"So I guess that's the next job, well if the money is up to it."

"True, it's an expensive hobby definitely."

"I wouldn't mind but I don't know if I'm up to climbing the stairs now."

"Those stair lifts are supposed to be pretty good," Nigel said.

"It's the expense again."

"I suppose they are pretty dear. I've only seen them on the adverts and they don't mention the price."

"Maybe I ought to price them up. It seems a shame to be confined to one level, not after the cost of repairing it."

"Well there is that."

"I'll have to do that. I mean I expected to be paying more for the roof so maybe," Alan said the last bit to himself though it came out.

"We aim to please," Nigel said, "Though seldom hit the target."

"Oh, I didn't mean it like that."

"We're not greedy; you got it at the right price that's all."

"Well thanks anyway," Alan said, made his excuses and left.

"Seldom hit the target," Jack said with a laugh, "Where do you get them from?"

"I think it was in a book I read, sounded good so I kept it."

"Do you reckon we could do ceilings?"

"Shouldn't be a problem and we could do with the work."

"I was thinking that. Mind you he said that he might not have the money for it."

"We'll leave our number and tell him to get in contact when he is ready."

"Yes, ain't a bad bloke is he?"

"He's alright. What a life he must have been leading recently, it must have been hell. Fancy having to live in the kitchen, it beggars belief."

"It must have been rough, especially in winter."

"Rather him than me. He must have been a hard little sod."

"Aye," Jack said in a Yorkshire accent, "They don't make them like they used to."

"Too right, anyway shall we have another crack at it?"

"Needs must," Jack said and put his cup on the window, "And it's the devil that drives."

"Yes, you ought to start taking lessons."

“One day,” Jack said and started climbing the ladder. He was soon at the top and grabbing a roll of felt, “This should keep us going.” They had it felted and battened within the hour and were soon re-nailing the slates back on.

“There are loads missing,” Jack said, “I hope we don't go over budget.”

“No, I've already seen him about it. We just give him the receipt and he'll pay for it separate.”

“Good idea,” Jack said as he carried on nailing, “Looking at the amount that's missing.”

“Saves trying to guess, gives us a bit of lee-way for breakages too.”

“I'm sorry about that. Guess I'm not as used to it as you.”

“It always happens, don't worry about it.”

“You know I think we ought to do it for him if he can't afford to do it himself. Just bill him for materials.”

“What seriously,” Nigel said and thought awhile, “It it's just the ceiling and a clean out it should only take us a couple of days, I budgeted us for seven so if we finish in five we are not out of pocket. How does that sound to you?”

“Fair enough, but that's only if he can't afford it.”

“Yes, electrics, plumbing and that are out but we could give the place a clean.”

“Okay, we'll let him bring the subject up again.”

They carried on and slated the bottom roof and stripped the ridges of the main roof. The slates came off pretty easily and by darkness the one side was bare.

“Not bad going,” Nigel said as he got off the ladder, “We're well on target.”

“How long do you think it will take then?” Alan said coming out.

“Three days I would say,” Nigel said, “Maybe four.”

“Really, oh I phoned that stair lift place by the way.”

“Any good?” Jack said getting off the ladder.

“I could about manage it but that would be it. It's either the repairs or the stair lift and I can't have one without the other.”

Jack looked at Nigel who shrugged his shoulders then turned to Alan and said, “We might be able to help you out.”

“I don't know about that I'm not one for charity.”

“It's not charity,” Jack said and went on to explain about the budgeting arrangements, “So you've got two free days, well might have. Plumbing or electricity I'm afraid you're out of luck but anything else. You should foot the bill for materials that's all.”

“Well if you put it like that,” Alan said. (He put it a lot better than me, but then again he used to know Jackey Collins), “So it will just be the plasterboard then?”

“And some very strong detergent probably,” Jack said with a laugh.

“Sounds good to me, would you like a cup of tea before you go?”

Jack looked at Nigel and said, “Well a quick one and Alan went back in again.

“It's a shame about the other stuff,” Nigel said, “Mind you the plumbing's not forced to be that bad.”

“True, the electricity sounds the problem. The whole place probably wants re-wiring anyway. And that was before the pigeons got here.”

“I did notice that he had some very old light switches. Shame we don't know any sparkies really.”

“I know what you are saying. I don't like to leave half a job it goes against the brain.”

“Not a lot we can do about it,” Nigel said. Alan came out with the tea not long after and said, “It was two sugars wasn't it?”

At that moment something clicked and Nigel looked at Jack and said, “The Word.”

“I wouldn't even know where to look for him. He's long gone hasn't he?”

“Shame, he owes us still.”

“I know what you mean. I would have made him work for nothing.”

They drank their tea, talked of nothing in particular said their goodbyes and left. As Nigel drove

home he said, "He was a good electrician as well. Shame that."

"Can't be helped, we'll just do what we can for we can't do no more than that."

"True, I don't know anyone else though."

"He'll have to pay dearly for it. That will knock him back with the stair lift."

"Yes, he's looking at a few grand definitely."

"Expensive hobby I wish that I had learned it myself I've heard that some of them are on very good money."

"More then we'll see," Nigel said with a smile. He looked across the road and slammed the brakes nearly sending Jack through the window. "Sullivan," he said, "Grab him Jack I think we've found the spark."

Jack quickly got out of the van and ran across the road. The Word was about to run thinking it was something to do with Collins but seeing it was Jack kept his ground.

"The man himself," Jack said, "There's a lot of people looking for you. Quick get in the van before it's too late."

"Too late?"

"No time to explain, hurry." The Word quickly followed Jack and they both got into the van and drove to Jack's place. So what should have been a "Hi Jack" turned into a high-jack.

10. Jack High.

They said nothing as they drove the short distance to Jack's. They quickly guided The Word into the flat and Jack said, "You were very lucky then. What are you back here for I've heard that Collins wants your knee caps?"

"It wasn't by choice believe me."

"So what are you doing here?"

"Family stuff, I've heard my father's ill, very ill in fact. I just panicked and ended up here."

"Have you seen him?" Nigel said.

"Not yet. I'd not long got off the train when I met you."

"And what about Collins?"

"I didn't think at the time. Is he back with Julie?"

"I don't know. Are you no longer with her then?"

"No, she left after a month. She dropped me right in it I can tell you."

"I'll bet," Jack said, "So I guess you'll be looking for a place to stay. I wouldn't think it would be safe to stop at yours."

"No I guess you are right. I don't want to just turn up and have to go again. Straight away I mean."

"Oh yes you'll want to make sure that he's alright properly I guess."

"Well I definitely can't stay at his and I'm not really up to paying for a hotel."

"Tricky situation."

"I don't suppose that I could er stop at yours for a while. I'll drop you a few quid for the trouble."

"The trouble? Was that the trouble you nearly got us into with Collins in the first place or the trouble if he ever found out that you stopped here?"

"Ah, I take it that means no."

"Not necessarily we could come to some arrangement."

"Some arrangement?"

"Yes I've heard that you are a bit of an electrician and I want a house re-wiring. I'll supply the materials, you do the labour."

"What're-wire a house. That's a lot of work just for being put up for a few days."

"Oh no it's more than just that. I reckon that you still owe us for that Collins affair. You're still a grass in my eyes but just say I'm giving you a chance to redeem yourself."

"I see, and you'll supply the materials?"

"Yes, we'll even plaster after you."

"Alright and then we're quits."

"Then the matters over and nothing further will be said."

"I'll need to get my tools they're at my fathers."

"Well you have to see him anyway. It should be safer after dark too."

"I'll get off now then," The Word said, "I'll be back later," and left.

"Do you think he will?" Nigel said after the door had shut.

"Wait and see. So you mentioned the zodiac?"

"Ah yes, you'll like this. Spiritual wisdom- through the mind seeing transformation (blessed with God's will). Now before I start I had better go through the zodiac. It starts with Aries for that is spring, the real beginning of the year then Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and finally Pisces."

"Right," Jack said and Nigel gave him the piece of paper. Jack read "Through the mind seeing transformation(blessed with God's will) you get God's knowing blessed through understanding wisdom(God's loving knowing-loving understanding), Will through life blessed with light (blessed with God's will of light), Will through knowing God's purpose through seeing love (blessed with knowing), Will seeing God's purpose through seeing love(blessed with knowing), Will seeing God's purpose blessed with self knowing God(understanding), Will seeing knowing the word blessed with seeing understanding (God's will blessed with wisdom)wisdom (God's knowing blessed with loving

understanding),

Will of God-the word (knowing) blesses will seeing knowing light of God.

The soul- loving God's knowing blessed with loving understanding (the word blesses understanding) Will through understanding.”

After Jack had finished he said, “So from the transformation you get God's knowing, a will of light, understanding of God's purpose, knowing of God's purpose, loving understanding, the will of God and a will through understanding as opposed to knowing, a shift in consciousness.”

“Good but it goes a little deeper than that.”

“It does?”

“Yes God's knowing blessed with understanding wisdom is the spirit of understanding. Will through life blessed with light is the spirit of life. Will through knowing God's purpose through seeing love is the spirit of love. Will seeing God's purpose blessed with self knowing God is the spirit of purpose. Will seeing knowing the word blessed with seeing understanding is the spirit of wisdom. The word knowing blessed with loving understanding is the spirit of insight and finally loving God's knowing blessed with loving understanding is the spirit of knowing.”

“It says quite a lot then. Brings a whole new meaning to the saying it's written in the stars,” and laughed.

“Yeah right. Anyway I'd better get back now. I'll see you tomorrow, hopefully with Sullivan.”

“Hopefully,” Jack said as he let him out. The Word did return later that night so the next morning Jack and Nigel had extra staff. As they pulled up Alan came out and said, “Would you like a cup of tea before you start?”

“That would be nice,” Jack said, “Could you make it three as we have an extra hand today?”

“Sure, you must be in a rush to finish the roof.”

“Oh, actually this is Derek, he's an electrician. You get the materials and he'll do the house.”

“What really, my electrics been off for a couple of years now. Er how much would it cost?”

“Just the materials, shouldn't be too much as Derek knows where to get them quite cheaply.”

“Great,” Alan said, “I'll just put the kettle on. You do take sugar don't you Derek?”

“Yes, two please.” After Alan had gone The Word said, “The house looks in a hell of a mess. What's all this about getting the materials cheaply though?”

“Don't you get trade discount? Jack said.

“Only if Deceptive is on, I don't even know if he still works at Dawsons anymore, it's been years since I last went.”

“Well it shouldn't be that pricey anyway. I just said that for Alan's benefit.”

“I've still got a few sockets and light switches left over from previous jobs. It's not enough to do a full house but it will give you a good start. I think there maybe a couple of reels of cable too.”

“Sounds like you've got most of the stuff already.”

“It's all at my dad's; I'll see him tonight again.”

“Well I'm glad that he's getting better it must be a weight of your mind.”

“It is, though as it was a heart attack you don't want to get too complacent.”

“True, so what are your plans?”

“Well I've made quite a life for myself in Gloucester. I guess I'll just go back and renew it.”

“Sound, you'll have to leave us your address and we will nip over and see you if we are that way.”

Before The Word could answer Alan was back with the tray. He gave them their drinks and said, “Yes it's been quite a struggle without electricity I can tell you.”

“I'll bet,” Nigel said, “It looks like it's been a struggle all round.”

“I'm glad it's nearly over. I shouldn't have to live life like this at my age. Anyway I've no time for self pity,” and went back inside.

“So what's the plan then?” The Word said.

“Just get the place ready I guess,” Jack said, “Channel out the plaster and remove the old stuff. We can't do much more. If you need us to help you with anything give us a shout we'll be on the roof.”

“Will do,” The Word said and they drank their tea and started to work. The front part of the main roof was stripped after the back part was battened and felted and by dinner it was bare. They stopped for a cigarette and went down to see how The Word was doing.

“Not bad, The Word said, “Not bad at all in fact. Most of the upstairs is done as is the front and living room. I should be ready for the materials in a couple of hours.”

“That quick?” Nigel said.

“If you give me a lift I could go and pick them up. Call past Dawsons and I'll see if Deceptive is in.”

“Could do I suppose. What do you say Jack?”

“I guess it's the main job really. We could nip out, it will only be for about half an hour and the roof is well ahead.”

“Sorted then,” The Word said. Alan came out to see if they wanted a drink but they declined saying they were going to get some materials. They quickly loaded up at The Word's and found to their delight most of the things they would need. At Dawsons Deceptive was still there and greeted The Word warmly.

“How are you doing man?” Deceptive said, “I heard that you left town.”

“Yes, I'm only back for a couple of days, so what's been happening then?”

“Not a lot really. So anyway we'll have to go out for a drink while you are over here.”

“Sounds good to me better make it tonight though.”

“Sure, what about The Red Lion at eight?”

“Alright I haven't been there in ages.”

“It hasn't changed. So anyway what can I do you for?”(He used to be a policeman.)

The Word gave him the list and said, “Any special offers would be appreciated.”

“It's good to see that some things don't change,” Deceptive said and studied the list, “Call in tomorrow if you are not in a hurry for them. I can't really let you have them now as the boss is around. He'll be out tomorrow as it is his day off.”

“Right.”

“And it looks like the drinks are on you tonight. It's good to see that some things do change.”

“Funny,” The Word said. They left Deceptive the list and drove back to Alan's. Jack gave The Word £40 and told him to use it for getting the drinks. He also gave him a spare key and told him not to make too much noise on his return as more than likely Jill would be there. After that he said,

“So how do you know him then?”

“Marty Bends, though work I guess. He's been at Dawsons for quite a while now.”

“Good of him to let you have the stuff though.”

“Yes he's not a bad fellow. I just used to slip him a few quid now and again and he was sweet.”

“Looks like that's sorted then,” Nigel said, “We're moving on well now.” They pulled up at Alan's and had a cup of tea before getting back to work. Jack and Nigel felted and battened the front of the roof and started the job of re-slating it. By the time it fell to darkness they had half the main roof done and the debris piled up to be skipped. The Word had made good progress too so it was a pretty good day all round. Nigel dropped them off and Jack made The Word a meal before he went out later that night. Jill came around just as he was leaving.

“Whose that then?” she said.

“I'm afraid I've got a guest for a few days,” Jack said and went on to tell her the full story.

“It's very good of you to put him up especially after what he done.”

“Oh he's earning his keep,” Jack said with a laugh, “Besides it was nothing personal, he was just conned into it that's all.”

“Well you've got a good heart I'll give you that.”

“And that's why you like me.”

“I wouldn't go that far,” Jill said with a laugh, “You're still on probation.”

“Like that is it. You want to watch it woman or you'll end up having to make your own tea in the

future.”

“You wouldn't do that to me,” Jill said in mock horror, “Anything but that.”

“Sometimes you have to be cruel. Treat them mean and keep them keen, that's my motto.”

“I've noticed,” Jill said with a laugh, “I mean when was the last time you ever took me out?”

“Well I was going to let you take me to the zoo.”

“I'm afraid there's a problem there. I know we were supposed to be going Sunday but I've got something else on.”

“Really?”

“I've got to go over and see my uncle. I forgot that it was his birthday.”

“Oh right, but I'll still see you Saturday?”

“I'm afraid it's the whole week end. The whole family is going. He doesn't live around here so he will be putting us up.”

“Oh right, well have a good party then.”

“You don't mind?”

“No, not at all. You go and trip the light fantastic.”

“Well it's hardly that,” Jill said with a laugh, “He lives in a little village so it's going to be pretty boring. I mean the nearest place with anything going for it is Gloucester and that's five miles away.”

“Rather you then me,” Jack said with a laugh and then a sudden thought came to him, “Gloucester, is there any room in the car for another?”

“What, you want to go?”

“No, not me. That's where The Word is living now. I thought it might save him his train fare. Well that's if he's going at the week end anyway.”

“We could fit him in I guess. It will cost you a cup of tea though.”

“I'm make you one anyway,” Jack said getting up, “You deserve it for your kindness.”

“Sorry?”

“For taking pity on a poor soul like me,” Jack said with a laugh, “You know, dropping your standards and all that.”

“Well if you put it like that who am I to argue?” They talked some more until Jill left at 10 and Jack sat nursing a cup of tea and watching the television. The Word returned at around 11 and Jack told him that he might have a weekend lift for him if he was interested. The Word gratefully accepted so that end was sorted and they both retired to sleep.

The next morning arrived and Nigel picked them up at the usual time.

“I thought we would strip the ceilings first,” he said after Jack had let him in, “Get it all ready for when the skip comes tomorrow.”

“That's not a bad idea, Jack said, “Get all the rubbish together. It will make it a lot easier.”

“That's what I thought,” Nigel said as Jack passed him a cup of tea.

“Don't forget that we have to see Deceptive too,” The Word said.

“Looks like it's going to be a very busy day then, Jack said.

“Well today should break the back of it,” Nigel said, “After that it should be plain sailing.”

“That's what I like to hear,” Jack said and finished his drink, “We'd better make a start then I suppose.”

They soon arrived at Alan's and got straight to work. The ceilings were stripped by late morning so they got back on the roof. By the time they had broke for dinner the main roof was slated and ready for the ridge tiles to be mortared into place. They took a rough guess at how many slates they would need and got them from the builder's yard before going to see Deceptive. The boss was out as he said so the business was quickly completed. He had already sorted the things out on the list so it was just a matter of picking it up. They were soon back on site and drinking tea.

“Not long now,” The Word said, “I should be finished tomorrow. I might even help you to fill the skip if you are lucky.”

“Well many hands make light work,” Nigel said with a laugh, “If we push it we might get the roof

done today.”

“What seriously?” Jack said.

“Yes it's only the back end now. The ridges won't take long. I may as well re-point the chimneys whilst I'm up there and the valleys will be done quickly.”

“Sounds good to me I won't argue with that.”

“If you want to carry on with the slating I could crack on with the ridges and chimneys. That should save a lot of time.”

“Sure fine,” Jack said and that's how the rest of the day progressed. It had turned dark by the time Nigel had finished the valleys so they took the tower scaffold down and called it a day.

Nigel had a cup of tea at Jack's before getting off and The Word went to see his father so Jack had a fairly quiet evening in before going to bed at 10.30.

Next day saw Nigel bright and early and discussing the plans for the day. “I reckon we'll just fill the skip and nip to the builder's yard for some plaster board and detergent. We'd probably get the ceiling done today.”

“If you could do that first it will be a great help,” The Word said, I could get in and sort the upstairs lights out then.”

“Sure,” Nigel said, “No problem. We can always skim it after you have finished.”

They set off and arrived at Alan's house, had a cup of tea and then got started. The ceilings were quickly covered so by dinner time the skip was getting quite full. They stopped for a smoke and The Word said, “That's me done. He can put the electric on anytime that he wants.”

“Good,” Jack said, “And the rubbish is about cleared.”

“I could re-plaster the walls if you want. There's not much debris left to clear.”

“Sounds good, me and Nigel will start the clean then.”

“Rather you than me it's bad enough to be around the smell I wouldn't like to be cleaning it as well.”

“Take it easy now. You've done more than enough.”

“It wasn't bad actually. I might get back into it.”

“I didn't know that you dropped out.”

“I went warehousing instead. That was the only job on offer when I moved so I took it.”

“So this is the first time you've done it in over a year then.”

“Yes, sort of a re-awakening mind you I would say it was more of a re-interpretation as I didn't generally do renovation work, I was more for site work.”

“A resurrection then,” Nigel said with a laugh and after a cup of tea they got back to work. The skip was duly filled and the grooves re-plastered. The top of the house was scrubbed clean as far as the stairs but darkness came and they called it a day. The next day The Word left his address and got a lift back to Gloucester leaving Jack and Nigel on their own. The ceilings were quickly skimmed and the rest of the house was finished much to Alan's delight. Now the tale did not end there for Jack actually got left the house in Alan's will. He reasoned that he had no one else to leave it to and as they had been fair with him they should have it. Nigel declined the offer telling Jack that he already had one and so would just settle for visiting rights and basically they all lived happily ever after. (Well with the exception of Alan for he died a couple of years later.)

Epilogue.

Now as fate would have it the same Sunday they finished the roof the agency rang Jack. It seemed that the company had been let down and so Jack and Nigel had another 8 weeks work. At the time they had been talking about Genesis so I thought I would leave you a snippet.

“So, Nigel said, “On another level Genesis is about the levels of understanding.”

“Really, where's that then?”

“Well Adam and Eve are level one, life and love. Adam stands for God's transformation (God's life) and Eve love. The serpent was level two or understanding; it means understanding through knowing the word and light (wisdom). Level three was when they took the apple and got discernment and so

left Eden or their instinctive stage. Now level four kicks in with the birth of Cain for he actually stands for will of God blessed with light or the spirit of wisdom. Level 5 is Abel or God's self through God's purpose and when Cain took his life it was symbolic of him taking a spiritual life. His expulsion to the east, the rising of the sun, is symbolic of the path to enlightenment and the retribution is actually divine protection.”

“Really. And yet it sounds so different.”

“God's reflected light. Anyway level six is the mergence of the offspring of Cain and Seth.”

“Wisdom and understanding, Seth means understanding through spiritual wisdom.”

“Got it. Level seven and eight, the flood was level seven, God's blessing and the cleansing of sin and for level eight substitute knower for Noah. Now level nine is Shem, Ham and Japheth. Shem stands for spiritual understanding through life, Ham, the spirit of God's life and Japheth or blessed by God, the spiritual word through spiritual wisdom or?”

“Anger, love and pride in that order.”

“Good, so Ham seeing Noah naked was symbolic of level ten. Noah stands for light seeing God's spirit so when Ham saw Noah naked it meant that Noah had taken the spirit of God's life or the spirit of purpose. Canaan stands for will of God, light of God, God's light and its purpose is to serve that's why they became servants. So all is not quite how it seems.”

“You're telling me.”

“Yes I know,” Nigel said with a laugh.

And with that new interpretation of Genesis they really did live happily ever after.

7a. Jack Off.

(Alternative ending-starts with Jack offering Jill a cup of coffee in Jack and Jill.)

"Sure," Jill said, "I'd love one." Jack put the kettle on but before it could boil the phone rang.

"Could you get that?" he called to Jill from the kitchen.

"It's someone from an agency about a job," she called back.

"On Sunday," Jack said thinking that they must be desperate. He thought that maybe the agency he had done the ground work for had more tricks up their sleeve.

"Hello," he said taking the phone of Jill.

"This is Adam from A and E employment agency," the voice on the other end said, "You were interested in a labouring job."

"You canceled it."

"Ah, I'm afraid that there was a bit of a mix up. The company are still recruiting it's just that there is only one vacancy."

"No good to me and besides I've already got another."

"You er wouldn't happen to know anyone?"

"You must be more desperate than I thought. It's bad enough that you ring me at the week end."

"We can't seem to fill it."

"Maybe it's your wage rate. I mean let's be honest the advert is just a back door to groundwork. You ought to be paying £9 or £10 an hour for it."

"Alright £9 an hour."

"You should have said £10 but anyway as I said I don't work alone and I've got another job."

"Alright £12, I bet that other job won't pay you that much. It's now a six month contract too."

Now that got Jack thinking. The roof did look like a lot of work and he still had a slight fear of heights (That's God to you, you heathen). He would never make that sort of money in the normal running of things. £480 was a lot of money, twice his potential earnings as an outlaw. Besides Nigel got off with Harmony behind his back and although he was very happy with Jill it was the principle of the thing.

"Okay, I'll do it," and all the relevant details changed hands over the phone. After Jack had finished Jill said, "But I thought you were going to do that old man's roof?"

"This is a better deal. They will be paying me nearly £500 a week and for six months to boot."

"Really, well you can't argue with that. What about the poor old man though?"

"Nigel can do it with Rollin'. I was only going to be there in a sort of glorified labouring capacity anyway."

"Things are picking up then. Maybe I am highering my standards."

"Come here," Jack said and gave her a kiss, "You might even get a holiday out of this."

"I'll look forward to it," Jill said and looking at her watch, "I'm afraid the drink will have to keep."

"Is it one o'clock already? We must have been at that mans longer than I thought. You coming back later?"

"Sure," Jill said, "So keep the coffee fresh," and left Jack to get on with the business. He first phoned Nigel, "Nigel its Jack, bad news about the roof I'm afraid, I've took another job."

"Oh," Nigel said wondering how that could be.

"Yes the agency phoned back. Well I was thinking that you could do the roof with Rollin' instead and they did offer more money."

"Really, how much?"

"About five hundred a week."

"Well you can't argue with that. When do we start?"

"Ah, I'm afraid there was a bit of a mix up. It seems there was only actually one job available."

"Right, Nigel said and then, "Not to worry I'll call you sometime and you can let me know how you got on," and hung up. Jack was slightly taken aback by the abruptness of the ending but reasoned that Nigel was just jealous of him. He thought back to other occasions to enhance his case and

maybe it was Nigel who was holding him back was the next carriage of the thought train. He never dwelled on the subject too long though for he had promised to go over to Chillin's at half one. He looked at his watch and saw that it was twenty past, "Ah forget it," he said aloud, "I can look at those verses anytime." He did phone him though by way of compensation.

"Ah Chillin' some things come up mate. Could we leave it to another time?"

"Sure," Chillin' said in a disappointed tone, "Nothing too bad is there?"

"No, it's good news in fact. That agency phoned back and the job's back on."

"Oh right, so that roofing job's off then?"

"Oh no, Nigel and Rollin' could do that. No I got a better deal; get this £12 an hour."

"Not bad."

"Well it will be hard work. That's why I thought I would have a quiet day in."

"Save you strength kind of thing. Oh and I hear that you are courting too."

"Yes she was up at Canters that night we went. Jill Taylor. She's coming back a little later."

"Ah," Chillin' said with a laugh, "Now I understand, well fair play to you Jack you've got to save your energy."

Jack laughed and said, "Cheers Chillin' I'll come over one of these days and let you know how I'm getting on."

"Take care Jack," Chillin' said and hung up.

Job done Jack settled back and had a peaceful afternoon until Jill arrived back later. She had a cup of coffee and to Jack it was a very bitter cup to swallow but life went on and they all lived happily ever after. (Well after a fashion.)

Do you Know What it is Yet?

I took a slightly different format for this one but the outcome's still the same. The levels of understanding but his time we have the Tree of Life. This is just a mop up really as most of the ground work has been done. There is a bit of a hic-cup in the flow with two of the phrases running over and one of the steps being part of another but that will come to light as we progress.

Right then Malkuth stands for life of God, God's purpose, (work of loving spiritual wisdom). Work of spiritual wisdom has been bracketed for that's what God's purpose is. On a spiritual level loving spiritual wisdom creates life for that is what the Soul is made of but on this level it is the ability to recreate in the physical sense. It has been designated as kingdom but I won't get too much into that. It is Eden at its purest, everything is controlled by the environment and there is no will at all, no sense only purpose.

Now at Yesod understanding comes to play for it stands for blessed through understanding (seeing transformation). The bracketed piece is there to tell you that it's a transforming spirit or put it another way a spirit that blesses you. Now according to the evolution of this blessing (how much understanding you have) the firmer your foundation will be. At this level though it's basically paranoia though it still keeps its seasonal instincts.

Now the next level is one that I warned you about. The actual word is Zach Hod and stands for mind of God's spiritual will (spirit seeing transformation) another transforming spirit and this time the spirit of discernment. The mind of God is the ability to discern. You are no longer controlled by your instinct you have a free will.

Next we have a right carry on. Tiphereth net or wisdom blessed with the spiritual word and knowing through spiritual wisdom (light through wisdom). The spirit of wisdom, something to discern with. You are now in the realms of the intellect and growing in awareness.

Level five is a bit of a carry on too as it actually should read Ed Gebirah and stands for through transformation of will and self-loving knowing of God's spirit. The will grows in spiritual awareness and the Self acting on God's purpose grows in understanding. Knowledge of the divine, serving of purpose and the start of your path to enlightenment.

Level six is Ches or spiritual will through understanding. The spiritual will is the spirit of wisdom and it merges with the spirit of understanding through understanding.

Level seven the Daath or transformed to God (God's spiritual wisdom). You have God's blessing and are now an enlightened soul, you are God's spiritual wisdom. Your old self has died and you have become your Soul.

Hand in hand with this is Binah or self blessed with light (God's spirit) for you have an access channel to the divine, the spirit of knowing.

Level nine is Chokmah or spiritual will- seeing work, life of God's purpose. It's the spirit of purpose and it gives you a spiritual purpose so now you have something to serve. At this point life can go three ways but we have mentioned that before.

Level ten or Kether or work and spiritual wisdom through knowing the culmination of the journey. You are now an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve (the right one that is.)

Now Ain Soph Aur means God blessed with light, understanding (seeing) the spiritual word, God's loving knowing. God blessed with light is the Will and from this you get God's knowing. By understanding this light though you get God's loving knowing. On another level the first is knowledge of Self and the other knowledge of purpose. With the mergeance of the two you get th Grail.

Ain Soph or God blessed with light (understanding seeing the spiritual word) is the purified grail. And the relevance to Jack's tales? I'll leave that to your imagination. No? Alright then. Now as I said earlier there was a bit of a carry on with the levels so to compensate I incorporated majesty and endurance and I squeezed two levels into one bringing down 11 and 12 to 9 and 10. Confused? Stick around. I also kept 9 and 10 as they were so it was only the wisdom that was compacted. The understanding continued. Right Jack Knife, the kingdom and level 1 the basis of the story. Jack's

bored and looking for a purpose. He also wants a woman so not much of a kingdom really it is confined to the pub. No you were looking in the wrong direction there. Nigel is life and Harmony is love. It happened below the main level of what we call consciousness or in artistic terms a sub plot. Now the trigger to the next stage came from Nigel deciphering the verse for it brought it into the realms of understanding setting the scene for Jack of Clubs. Jack's understanding was still in instinct so he was too hyped up to notice Jill. This was still the foundation of the relationship just as Chillin's warning was the foundation for the ground working job. Now in Jack of all Trades Jack got discernment. His black and white somewhat insular life took a tumble. He had not expected to be tricked by the agency nor had he expected the work to be as hard as it was. Now he would have still taken the other agency but fate played its hand. At this level you are still controlled by circumstances for you have no wisdom to go on. Now majesty through endurance. The pain barrier would be nature's hold on you and majesty is to be like gods and know right from wrong. You now have a free will. Jack Plane saw Jack wising up (The world around him and some tricks of the trade to ease the burden). He wanted to control what was controlling him (his purpose-the agency.) though at this level he had the start of an alternative lifestyle (The roof-higher truth) though he still had some ground work to do. Jack Tar came next and a smoothing of the rough edges with tips to help him lighten the load. Ground work done he breaks through material life and takes a spiritual purpose (the roof).

Jack of the Green then and God's first blessing. I also carried it on to Jack and Jill (God's second). Now to explain these two levels it will have to be done in tandem. It is the mergence of three spirits symbolised by the fact that Jack got white washed (7 balled to you guv'nor). You have wisdom, understanding and knowing (Nigel, Jill and Jack) and at the mergence you are left with knowing. The first time by Nigel is the mergence that happens on level six and the second when he received God's blessing (meeting Jill). The fledgling of his spirit, the meeting of his maker and the death of his old self (7 balled again). Now Jack Rabbit, Jack got the power to channel through the spirit of knowing and a glimpse of his purpose (he set up the job at Alan's). High Jack and Jack gets his purpose. It is infested with pigeons (the dove's poor relation-emotional turmoil) it wanted re-roofing (strengthening of will). It is a time of reflection (Hi-Jack-Jack High) that carried onto level 10, basically a period of natural adjustment. It is also a time of inner cleansing and a resurrection of purpose (Symbolised by the electrics) which can only be done with the help of The Word through deceptive bends for the purpose could go three ways. I threw in the planets and then the zodiac for the God blessed with light section so it was quite a loose weave. Now work done you have to take up your purpose. Alan or God (God's purpose), God's light had to die before the purpose became Jack's or blessed with God's will of work or God's word.

Now the alternative ending. Jack now had experience of ground work which he could use to his advantage and achieve a materialistic lifestyle. He now had the power but he could take it in two initial directions. The roof-higher truth or stick at the same level and reap the benefits. He choose the later, the first step away from going back to hell. Now the story could go two ways. If the job was genuine he could have ended up quite proud for he was now a man of worth. Now on the other hand if the wage rate was just a con he could have got very angry. If you think that far-fetched think about it. Any verbal agreement made over the phone is just hear say really. He could have quite easily have gone to work and found out two weeks later that he had been lied to and no court in the land could prove that it had ever been said so he would not have a leg to stand on. Now ground work is symbolic of self development, a sharpening of mind, so it could be any job that you do and that title Jack Off. Well on one level it means off course but on a more humorous level well I'll leave that to your imagination.

Part 3.	
1. Jack Frost.	151
2. Jack Daw.	156
3. Jack Pot.	162
3a Fruit of a Jack Rabbit	166
Do you know what it is yet?	167

1. Jack Frost.

Monday saw Jack up and making himself a cup of tea while waiting for Nigel's arrival. The door knocked as the kettle boiled so Jack let Nigel in. "It's a cold day today," Nigel said, "Mind you a bit of barrowing should soon warm us up."

Jack made them both a cup of tea and giving Nigel his said, "This should do the trick. So it is cold out then?"

"Bitter. There's a very heavy frost too. I had a job to start the van."

"Not a good start to the day," Jack said and took a drink before saying, "Ah well we'll soon warm up."

"True," Nigel said and then looking at his watch, "We'd best get off I suppose," and finished his drink.

"It doesn't do to be late," Jack said following suit, "Especially on the first day," and laughed as he followed Nigel to the van. They quickly covered the distance and though they had a couple of near mishaps due to the slippery roads they got there in one piece. Now before I carry on I had better give you a brief description of the site and its state of evolution as it might prove relevant at a later stage. (It might not as you can never really tell with these things.) Now the site on completion would be a national headquarters of a drugs company and the cost of the development was £4,500,000. The ground floor was to be the car park and the next floor the actual offices. It was rectangular in shape and as the car park was open plan looked like it was on stilts. The state of play at their arrival was fairly early for they were still concreting the roof and floor and the building was basically a just framework.

"So who's the fellow we've got to see?" Nigel said as he got out the van.

"Martin Henson. He's the site manager."

"Right," Nigel said and they made their way to the offices to the right of the structure. After the introductions they were assigned their jobs and got to work. Nigel was to help the Site Engineer plot the kerbs out and Jack to pick the litter so as you can imagine it was a very cold and frosty morning. They stopped for breakfast at ten and sat in the van and had a smoke.

"My fingers are freezing," Jack said, "Mind you I think I got the better job. All that standing around, you must be like an ice block."

"I think I'd rather be barrowing stone. We're nearly done now though so maybe I'll be helping you."

"There's not much to do now I'm about finished myself. You should see the amount of bagfulls I've done I've nearly filled a skip."

"So we'll be looking for work then. Well hopefully we'll be inside cleaning the offices as that will be pretty warm."

"Hopefully," Jack said and then changed the subject, "You got me thinking about Genesis after you left yesterday."

"Oh,"

"Yes, it seemed to leave a lot of unanswered questions."

"Sorry?"

"Well it was supposed to have been passed down over generations before it was committed to text to me that makes a mockery of history as we know it."

"And?"

"Well look," Jack said getting slightly flustered, "Whoever wrote it must have been very intelligent in fact I would say more intelligent than we are today."

"Oh I know what you are saying," Nigel said with a laugh, "I just don't understand why you are saying it. Stonehenge springs to mind."

"Ah," Jack said remembering back to Jack Knife, "It must be the cold numbing my mind. So the other stories after Babel, what are they about?"

"Generally they are just vehicles for the names. Take Abram as an example, it stands for God's self knowing God's life and that's married to understanding God, knowing God's blessing."

“So for you to know God's life you have to understand God and know His blessing.”

“That's right, now Abram had a nephew called Lot or you could say that knowing God's life is akin to God's purpose seeing wisdom, God's purpose being His life and you being the wisdom. So level one would be Abram and Lot and levels two and three Sarai.”

“The levels of understanding,” Jack said in surprise.

“That's one of the vehicles, now Haran stands for spirit of God knowing God's light, the spirit of God being the transforming spirit.”

“Eden,” Jack said upon recognition.

“That's right. Now Abram got wisdom when he received the spirit of God and became Abraham. Sarai became Sarah or knowing God's spirit as opposed to knowing God's blessing or the spirit of wisdom. Now this is further emphasised by the birth of Isaac or blessed with understanding God, God's will.”

“And the sacrifice?”

“To surrender his will to the divine, to give his life to God. By God sparing the child it meant that Abraham was to keep his identity and the ram means knowing God's life or a spiritual life.”

“Yes I can see that.”

“Now level five Jacob and Esau or blessed with God's will seeing self and through understanding God's love. Jacob being knowledge of the divine or God's will and Esau being a spiritual life.”

“And level six, would that be when Isaac blessed Jacob?”

“Not on the big circle but I'll get back to that later. No level six is Jacob's marriage after seven years labour to Leah. Leah stands for God's purpose through God's spirit or the spirit of understanding. Levels seven and eight his marriage to Rachel or knowing God (spiritual will through God's purpose). This is further emphasised by the wrestling match with the angel at Peniel where Jacob saw God face to face and preserved his life. Level nine would be the throwing away of the idols and building an altar at Beth-el or self through spiritual wisdom (through God's purpose). Ten would be the birth of Joseph of blessed seeing understanding through the spiritual word.”

“Loving spiritual wisdom.”

“That's right. Now Joseph's imprisonment and rise to fame through dream interpretation is eleven and twelve is the resurrection process.”

“Oh right, you mentioned the big circle?”

“Yes that's the main thread of it but it also goes off in little circles. Now to look at the book as a symbol you first have to imagine the levels as a circle.”

“Sorry?”

“Evolution is not a straight line it's a circular motion. That's why they say Man's return to Eden. I'm talking about the Soul's evolution by the way. The first circle is Adam to Noah and the second from Abram to Joseph. Now the first circle is smaller than the second so if you put them together they look like the figure 8 on its side, the symbol of infinity.”

“That's amazing, and the other little circles?”

“Mainly genealogies and a few journeys take Abram as an example. He came from Haran, the spirit of God, knowing God's light so from this spirit you get God's purpose seeing wisdom or to put it another way from enlightenment you get the wisdom of knowing God's purpose.”

“Right, yes.”

“He then went into Canaan, went through Sichen to the plain of Moreh, built an altar and did the same at Beth-el with Beth-el to the west, Hai to the east and onto Egypt. So from the spirit of God knowing God's light he went through a will of God, light of God, God's light then understanding (blessed with spiritual will)through life. By building an altar at Moreh he dedicated himself to a life of knowing for Moreh stands for life seeing knowing through spirit. From this he built another altar and dedicated himself to a life of spiritual wisdom and purpose or Beth-el, a self through spiritual wisdom through God's purpose and Hai the spirit of God(blessed with) and also onto Egypt or through the will blessed with the word, wisdom.”

“So from enlightenment you get the wisdom of knowing God's purpose from which you get God's will and understanding through life and this gives you a life of knowing and from this you get a life of spiritual wisdom through God's purpose, God's blessing leading to a will of light or blessed with the word.”

“Good, now Egypt is ruled by a Pharaoh or the spiritual word of God (knowing God seeing spirit). When Abram told Sarai to say that she was his sister it was through fear of losing his identity for she was his understanding.”

“So basically it was a re writing of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac?”

“Yes, the spiritual word being your spirit, another part of your Self. Anyway I guess we had better get back and see what's in store for us.”

They left the van and returned back to their jobs. After Nigel had finished helping the Site Engineer he got the job of cleaning the offices, canteen and toilets so had a chance to keep warm. Jack on the other hand got the job of clearing litter on the roof and as it was just the basic frame work got a wind chill from the cold. By dinner time he was finished and very cold when he renewed his conversation with Nigel, “So what happened next?” he said trying to warm his hands in his pockets.

“They went back to Beth-el so Abraham got fresh understanding. Lot then went on to Jordan or blessed with seeing knowing transformation of God's light so basically he got to know God's purpose. Now in Jordan there were two towns called Sodom and Gomorrah or understanding seeing transformation(seeing life) and will seeing life seeing knowing(knowing seeing love) or?”

“Anger and pride. So when they were destroyed it meant Lot chose love.”

“Not strictly true Lot was love. Abram, Sarai and Lot are a triad, wisdom, understanding and purpose.”

“Oh right, that makes a little more sense and the fire and brimstone?”

“Purification and Lot's wife turning to salt would understand God's (God's purpose) wisdom or fresh understanding. To finish the circle Abram built an altar on the plain of Mamre in Hebron or he dedicated himself to a life of God's life(knowing through) which is found in a spirit and self of knowing(seeing light) so God's self knows God's life.”

“Abram,” Jack said on recognition.

“And that's the circle finished. Next to it you have Chapter 14 which you read as you would the genealogies and then the promised nation in Chapter 15.”

“The promised nation?”

“Yes, from the river of Egypt (Nile) to the River Euphrates, the Kenites, the Kenizzites and the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites and the Rephaims, the Amorites and the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

“Some nation.”

“Or to put it another way. From light blessing God's purpose and through the loving spiritual word knowing God's wisdom through understanding you get

1. Work and light blessed with wisdom through understanding.
2. Work through light blessing the mind (mind blessed with wisdom through understanding)
3. Work of God's transforming life seeing light (blessed with wisdom through understanding).
4. The spirit blessed with wisdom (wisdom blessing wisdom through understanding)
5. The word through knowing blessing the mind (mind blessed with wisdom through understanding)
6. Knowing through the spiritual word of God blessing life (understanding)
7. God's life sees knowing blessed with wisdom through understanding.
8. Will of God, light of God, God's light blessing wisdom through understanding.
9. A will blessed with knowing the will of God blessing spiritual understanding (blessing wisdom through understanding)
10. blessed through a self of loving understanding (blessing wisdom through understanding.)”

“Levels of understanding?”

“That's right. Now the story of Abram, Hagar and Ishmael is basically just saying from God's self knowing God's life and the spirit of God's will (God's knowing) you get blessed with spiritual understanding, a life of God through God's purpose. The story was the vehicle that carried it just as Chapter 19 the birth of Moab and Ammon for it is saying that from God's purpose seeing wisdom you get life seeing God's self and God's life(life seeing light.)”

“Right,” Jack said, “And the rest of the stories, are they similar?”

“Basically. In Chapter 20 Abimelech stands for God's self blesses life through God's purpose and spiritual will but you can look into it another time.”

“And Isaac blessing Jacob?”

“Blessed with understanding God (God's will) and knowing through self and work of God's spirit (Rebekah) you get blessed with God's will seeing self though there might be some historical knowledge buried in there too.”

“Really?”

“Well I wouldn't quote me on it but I reckon it was an evolutionary shift in consciousness of some sort. Could be from Neanderthals merge with cro-magnum or could be the shift from understanding to wisdom, I'm not sure.”

“Yes you can get a lot from it, definitely worth pursuing.”

“It will give me something to think about this afternoon, keep the cold at bay.”

“I don't know it seems to be warming up a little now.”

“It shouldn't be too bad I suppose well as long as I'm not up on the roof again. I tell you that wind cuts right through you.”

“Yes,” Nigel said laughing, “It's no place for the old.”

“Alright, alright,” Jack said with a laugh, “Mind you it's alright for you stuck in those warm offices.”

“Not this afternoon I'm back with the Site Engineer for a couple of hours. We've got to make sure that the stilts are level before you can wrap around the protective coatings on the legs.”

“What, how do you know this?”

“I overheard it in the office and when that's done we've got to grout them in before they can concrete around them.”

“A busy afternoon then so this protective coating works, what does it actually involve?”

“Oh its easy don't worry about it. You cut it from a roll and just wrap it around the legs. Its supposed to be 500mm wide and as the roll is a metre high you just cut it down the middle. It doesn't matter if it over laps so you don't have to be too fussy with the measurements.”

“That doesn't sound too bad and at least it's on the ground and away from the wind. And the grouting?”

“A different kettle of fish you've got to mix it in a bucket with some water and pour it under the legs.”

“That doesn't sound too bad.”

“It will probably take a couple of buckets each leg and looking at the amount of legs that want doing that's quite a few buckets.”

“A couple of buckets each leg are you sure? I mean we are only taking it to the top of the base plate aren't we?”

“Yes but there's quite a hole that wants filling under the base plate, you'll be surprised.”

“Yeah right,” Jack said thinking it a wind up, “Well anything is better than litter clearing and as you say it's getting warmer.”

“We'll soon see it's time to go back.”

They both left the van and went back to the site office and got the jobs that Nigel had described. Jack took to it with gusto and had it finished within an hour. He even had time to check under the base plates and see the holes that Nigel had mention. He could not guess at the size though as the base plate covered most of it though it did leave a gap to pour down. Nigel had finished around the

same time so they both started grouting together. He had been right in the estimation of the amount of buckets they were to need and as they had to mix them by hand it made for a hard afternoon. By the end of it they were only half way through it and as they drove back Jack mentioned it, "You were right about the amount we would need, and it's surprising where it goes."

"Oh there's quite a hole underneath you'll be surprised. Well it looks like tomorrow mornings sorted."

"Should keep us warm then."

"They say that the weathers going to pick up a little now. Hopefully it won't be too bad tomorrow."

"Hopefully," Jack said and they pulled up outside his flat, "Got time for a brew?"

"Not tonight I've a couple of things to do. Right then, so same time tomorrow?"

"May as well," Jack said with a laugh, "It keeps the wolf from the door, well just about anyway."

"True," Nigel said and drove off. Jack went inside and made himself a cup of tea. Before the kettle had chance to boil the door knocked so he left it and went to answer the door. He let Jill in who greeted him with a kiss and by saying, "I came around at dinner but you were out."

"I'm sorry about that I was working."

"You got another job or are you still on the roofing one?"

"No the roof's done. The agency phoned back."

"So you're in the money then?"

"Oh yes, rolling in it. So anyway how did you get on at the week end? No mischief I trust."

"Party, it was more like a hospice. We dropped your mate off by the way and he said he would give you a ring sometime next week, just to keep in touch."

"Ah great, thanks."

"So what did you get up to whilst the cat was away?"

"Well I wouldn't say that you were that bad," Jack said with a laugh and then taking a more serious tone, "Anyway who are you calling a mouse?" before laughing again and saying, "Not a lot really. Oh I got a house."

"Sorry?"

"Yes that Alan we did the roof for. He left me it."

"What," Jill said thinking he was joking, "Just like that?"

"Yes it surprised me too," and went on to tell her the story. After he had finished she said, "Well I can see the logic I suppose. And this Nigel, he didn't want it?"

"Says he's already got one."

"That's quite a mate you've got and quite a lucky weekend too."

"Anyway where's my manners. Do you want a cup of tea?"

"Yes go on then. Wasn't it cold earlier, we had a job starting the car this morning I can tell you. Thought we'd end up stuck in Gloucester."

"So what time did you get back then?" Jack said switching the kettle back on only to find that it had switched itself back off for the water inside was still boiling hot.

"About dinner time."

"And you came straight round. I'm amazed."

"Well I like the tea you make," Jill said with a laugh, "Once I've found what brand you're on you won't see me for dust."

Jack made the tea and brought it back into the living room. Passing Jill her cup he said, "It's just lucky I hide the box it comes in then."

They talked some more and Jill left at around eleven for she had work the next day. Jack went back to bed not long after hoping that Nigel would be right about the weather picking up.

2. Jack Daw

Tuesday morning saw Jack up and checking the chill of the outside air. Much to his relief Nigel had been right for it was pretty mild outside. He made himself a cup of tea and let his thoughts drift back to Jill. He smiled to himself as he remembered the joke about the tea and said to himself, "You wouldn't see me for dust," before laughing quietly to himself. He could see a future with Jill for their natures seemed compatible and in truth he was starting to fall quite deeply for her. The very thought of her filled him with joy and gave him a deep feeling of satisfaction, even more than he had, had for Pauline and that had been very strong. Nigel's arrival and his knock on the door brought him back to earth though.

Jack let him in and poured the tea, "So what's new?" he said as he passed him the cup.

"Well Chillin' called last night."

"Has he found those other verse?" Jack said in surprise.

"No they're long gone. Something else has come up though."

"Something else?"

"Yes, he doesn't quite know what it is."

"Sorry?"

"It's like a thought that won't go away. When I stand alone I'm as good as the next man."

"What? Isn't that a contradiction in terms?"

"Well yes that's what I thought. I wrote it out anyway and this is what I got," and passed Jack a piece of paper. Jack took it and read it,

"Spiritual love through light- blessed with understanding wisdom(God's light transformation) God (God's purpose)sees light and blessed with life, God's understanding will sees (seeing transformation) God's understanding (spiritual wisdom through light and insight)wisdom- a life of God's light."

After he had finished reading it Jack said, "Well it seems pretty clear. It's saying that through enlightenment the spirit of purpose is blessed with life and this gives you loving spiritual wisdom, a will of God's understanding and a life of God's light. So what does it actually want doing to it?"

"I'm guessing a title."

Jack let his mind go blank and said, "Self reliance."

"It would fit. When I stand alone could be interpreted as when I stand on my own two feet."

"Yes I can see that so as good as the next man could be interpreted as, as good as anyone."

"So when I stand on my own two feet I'm as good as anyone. Yes it fits quite snugly."

"I don't quite know how it would fit in with the loving spiritual wisdom though," Jack said putting a dampener on the occasion.

"Well self reliance comes from the spirit of knowing. I don't know if that's any help."

"Only if enlightenment is the spirit of knowing but I can't quite see it."

"Knowledge of the divine," Nigel said and thought a while, "Yes why not. Enlightenment gives you a channel to the divine or the spirit of knowing for you have access to the collective conscious. That would make it a life of God's light."

"Yes, when you put it like that. Anymore?"

"No it was just the one. Beside we had better make tracks as we've got some grouting to do."

"Don't remind me," Jack said and they went on their merry way. They arrived on time and got straight to work. Ten o'clock saw them half way through and in good cheer as they sat in the van.

"Yes it's not going badly," Jack said, "And what about the weather. It's still January and you'd think it's more like spring."(Mind you the way the seasons are shifting by the time this gets published it just might be.)

"I know what you mean. It's not bad here really is it?"

"No it's alright. Strange set up though."

"Sorry?"

"Well I don't know how they know where they are. Everything is sub contracted. I was talking to

one of the ground workers earlier and he told me.”

“I guess that’s how they do it with these big jobs.”

“Must be if I remember rightly it was the same on the last job. The steel erectors come that far they have to stop at a local hotel and go back home at weekends. Imagine that?”

“Well you would have thought they would have got someone a little closer to home but I guess they have their reasons.”

“It turns out that we are the only locals here. The shutterers come about 40 miles as do the scaffolders, the ground-workers and concreters.”

“Sounds a good life they must be raking it in.”

“Must be it would be good to travel as well. Yes I could quite go for a life like this.”

“I don’t think Jill would,” Nigel said with a laugh.

“No probably not,” Jack said with a smile, “She thinks it was good of you to let me have the house by the way.”

“No skin of my nose, in fact it would probably have been a burden. No, you are welcome to it.”

“Well thanks anyway. Are we on for a game of pool tonight?”

“Yes why not. I don’t think I’ll be drinking though, not with work tomorrow.”

“No, nor me. Those hangovers seem to last a lot longer these days.”

“True, a couple of cokes should do me I think.”

“Right, so what do you reckon, around eight?”

“Sounds good to me. Did Martin tell you what we’re doing next?”

“Er Martin. No.”

“It seems there was an architectural error on the roof and we’ve got to concrete some trenches.”

“What?”

“I didn’t get the full story but it seems it was concreted to the shuttering instead of under it so when the shuttering was removed it left a two inch gap next to the wall.”

“Seriously, and how much trenching are we actually talking about?”

“Down one end and one side of the middle wall should be quite some distance.”(At this point I ought to mention that the building was nearly the size of a football pitch.)

“You’re telling me. That’s a lot of mixing to do.”

“And two sets of ladders to climb,” Nigel said rubbing it in, “Should make for quite an afternoon.”

“That’s a lot of climbing. I hope my legs are up to it.”

“True. Oh by the way about that verse. If you decode self reliance it comes out as understanding (through God’s purpose). The word knows through God’s purpose (blessed by God’s light)-will through. So I guess that ties it up as the spirit of knowing.”

“Yes, hope he gets some more as I quite like that. Unusual though wasn’t it.”

“Yes it certainly passed the time. We ought to see if he’s up for a game of pool tonight.”

“Well I could do with the competition it’s getting too easy recently.”

“We’ll see,” Nigel said with a laugh, “I’ll call him now then,” and dialed his number. “Alright Chillin’ are you up for a game of pool tonight?”

“Afraid I’ve made plans,” Chillin’ said, “Anna’s coming over.”

“Oh well never mind. Oh I’ve had a look at that thing you gave me,” and went on to tell him what they had come up with. After he had finished Chillin’ said, “Really. I got something else by the way though I’m not sure if it’s not just a joke.”

“Sorry?”

“Well it goes, ‘what ends in ‘X’ and starts with foreplay’. To me that sounds like sex.”

“Yes I see what you mean. I’ll take a look at it anyway and let you know what I come up with.”

“Sound I’ll catch you later then,” and hung up.

Nigel told Jack the verse and Jack said, “It sounds more like a joke than anything else.”

“That’s what I said. I said that I would take a look at it anyway as you can never be sure.”

“Well true, though it won’t be just yet as they’re coming out again.”

“Back to it then,” and they both went back to work. The time went quickly and by dinner it was finished. As they sat in the van Nigel said, “I wrote that joke out by the way.”

“What. When was this then?”

“When you had to go to the toilet I thought it would save standing around.”

“Oh right. Beats mixing I guess.”

“It didn't take that long,” Nigel said with a laugh and passed Jack a piece of paper. Jack read, “Spiritual love-God's wisdom through light transformed. Understanding love blessed with spiritual wisdom-insight.

God's light transformed understanding wisdom (God's knowing wisdom). Understanding love (blessed with spiritual wisdom) the word sees knowing. Through the word (God's purpose) God blessed.”

Jack looked at it for quite a while before saying, “I can't see it tying in.”

“Does it make any sense?”

“Well it's the spirit of insight. The first part is anyway. God's wisdom through light transformed would be its understanding and by understanding God you get insight. The second part, God's light transformed understanding wisdom would be enlightenment. God's knowing wisdom being knowledge of the divine. It is also saying that by understanding God you get the spirit of knowing. It finishes with through the word God is blessed.”

“Two levels of understanding then. Understanding and loving understanding. Will and Self. Has it got a title?”

Jack let his mind go blank before saying “Self satisfaction.”

Nigel wrote it down and passed it back to Jack who read “Understanding-through God's purpose the word understands God's wisdom. Blessed with understanding (the word) God's will (wisdom blessed) sees light.”

After he had finished he said, “It's saying that through God's purpose the word understands God's wisdom or basically by your choice of purpose you get your level of understanding. Now by your understanding of that wisdom you get your understanding of God though I still can't tie it in with the joke.”

Nigel thought a while before laughing and saying, “It start with enlightenment and ends in insight.”

“Sorry?”

“Enlightenment alerts you to your purpose in life, you could say that it is your pre-match warm up and insight is symbolised by the letter X.”

“Fore-play, yes I can see that. You could even see the match as the murgence of spirits so it wasn't sex then.”

“Understanding through insight, I don't know.”

“But self satisfaction what has that to do with insight?”

“Contentment. You get it through peace of mind. Loving spiritual wisdom gives you this peace of mind by getting rid of the emotional turmoil.”

“Oh right. Yes I can go with that one.”

“See what he drags up next then,” Nigel said and then looking out of the window, “Looks like it's time to play.”

They left the van and went straight up to the roof to ascertain the job. “It's miles,” Jack said down heartedly.

“It's only about 75 metres,” Nigel said much to Jack's surprise.

“How do you work that out?” and then, “What do you mean only?”

“Well the building measures 84 by 33 metres,” Nigel said getting into his flow, “We're going down one end and roughly halfway down the other so 42 added to 33.”

“And how do you know this, the size of the building I mean?”

“The Site Engineer told me. It looks like quite a few buckets anyway.”

“We'll mix one up each and see how far they go,” Jack said and they both went back down. After

they had mixed the buckets they went back up again and filled as much of the first trench as they could. Much to Jack's horror it had hardly made an impression for although the trench was thin it was quite deep in places. They went back down and did the same and then again and again. Jack's legs were getting quite tired by then and so he started to look for an easy alternative. The roof was only three quarters concreted and as luck would have it the concreters were in that day.

"Any chance of pinching some of your concrete mate?" Jack said to a large thick set man who was guiding the hose, "We've got to concrete those trenches left by the shuttering."

"Sure, take as much as you like," the man said and lifted the hose up. Jack put his bucket under it and it was filled in a fraction of a second. Nigel did the same and they both went back to work.

"Seen how quick that thing came out," Jack said, "It nearly took my arm off."

"Yes there was some force behind it. Amazing contraption though isn't it?"

"Saves a hell of a lot of work," Jack said in agreement. At this point I suppose I had better tell you about the machine. It was like a crane with a pipe attached to it. One end of the pipe went into the crane and the other at the top of the crane's long arm. The pipe was longer than the crane arm and this could be further elongated by attaching pipes to it. The crane was fed by a large concrete mixer and the flow of the concrete was controlled by a small box held by one of the men on the roof.

"We'd better crack on," Nigel said, "For looking at the way they are going they won't be up here for long."

"True," Jack said and emptied the last of the bucket's concrete into the trench. The buckets were filled again and as quickly emptied and this went on for around half the afternoon before the job was finished. Jack and Nigel went back down to the offices to see what was next on the agenda.

"That was quick," Martin said, "And just in time too."

"Sorry?" Jack said.

"I'm afraid the toilets drainage pipe wants unblocking. There's crap everywhere. You'll find the pipes in the green container. Rather you than me."

"Oh well," Jack said and they both got on with the job. It did not take long to do though so they were soon back again.

"I've got some man hole covers that want siting. It might be a good idea to cement them in place so they don't get knocked."

"Sure," Nigel said, "How many?"

"There are five of them. You don't have to be too fussy about the cement either as they will be tarmacked over."

"Right, sound," and Martin took them around the site and pointed them out.

After he had left Nigel said, "Well it certainly upholds Newton's fourth law of motion."

"What?"

"If you stand still long enough someone will put a brush in your hand," Nigel said with a laugh.

"I don't mind being busy it makes the day go a lot quicker."

"I won't argue with that it seems to fly by here."

"I know what you mean. Anyway this should see the rest of the afternoon out."

They both got on with the work and Jack was right with his estimate. They drove back home and Nigel came in for a cup of tea.

"Not bad going today," Jack said as he passed Nigel his cup, "We covered a lot of ground."

"True, we definitely earned our money."

"Well let's be honest," Jack said with a laugh, "That doesn't take much work. So anyway what got you started on Genesis?"

"Genesis," Nigel repeated and went into thought before he said, "It didn't make sense."

"What do you mean the six days of creation thing?"

"One of the things also it was the ages but the real spur I guess was the apple that gave you discernment."

"Oh," Jack said not knowing where he was coming from.

“Well if God had told them not to take the apple they would have not understood what he was saying and even if they did they could not have been held liable for their actions.”

“How do you work that one out?”

“Well think about it, it would be like talking to a couple of zombies. They wouldn't be able to discern what you were saying for a start.”

“I thought it was the difference between good and evil. How would that fit?”

“It works all the way down. Don't forget that before they had taken the apple they could not discern that they were naked.”

“Yes I can see what you are saying but wasn't that symbolic of self consciousness?”

“Oh I did not know that at the time I just knew that it didn't add up.”

“So what happened then?”

“Well I didn't know about the levels of understanding either so I was pretty much in the dark. I think it was the fact that they didn't know they were naked that gave me the breakthrough.”

“Really?”

“Yes to me it was an evolution thing. Animals don't know they are naked and Man was one step up from an animal. Well that was the logic I used at the time. I reasoned that Eden must be the instinctive stage of development and things seemed to get a little clearer. I guess things grew from that really.”

“Quite a journey though. So what do you read now? I mean you seem to know about all the mythologies and that. I was wondering if there was anything left to cover.”

“Oh plenty, there's a world full of knowledge. I'm on the Book of Life at the moment.”

“Life?”

“Yes it's surprising what you find when you look deeper into things.”

“Really, you mean like fate and all that?”

“Well I was thinking more about life in general. Take us as an example.”

“Us?”

“Yes, where we are working at the moment.”

“The office complex?”

“Think of the offices as the levels of consciousness. Underneath is the car park or the sub conscious and above is the roof or spiritual consciousness.”

“Well I suppose so though that's not much reading.”

“Oh it goes deeper than that. It can work with the jobs you do around the site. Take picking litter for a start. Cleaning away rubbish, the groundwork would be emotional, the offices mental and the roof spiritual.”

“I can see it though I don't see how it fits in with life. Well unless you perceive the building as your personal self but that would be silly.”

“Not really, it seems to make the day go quicker as you see it as your personal purpose. Try it, you'll be surprised.”

“What about the toilet blockage then. I mean what could you possibly make out of that?”

“Well if you have a blockage you are not properly grounded so by unblocking it you ground yourself for you've cleared the channel that gets rid of your negativity.”

“I can actually see that. What about the other stuff we did then, anything in any of them?”

“Grouting the columns would be strengthening of understanding and the protective wrap would be protection from the elements.”

“Sorry?”

“Demonic possession,” Nigel said with a laugh, “Although when you are asleep it would be astral traveling and finally the roof, filling the gaps by cross referencing which would be the concrete.”

“Well at a push. You forgot the man-hole covers.”

“Inspection chambers. You brought some things into the light.”

“I suppose so,” Jack said with a smile, “Well if it gets us through the day I suppose.”

“Each to his own,” Nigel said with a laugh, “Try it you never know. Anyway I’ll get off and get ready for tonight. I’ll catch you later.”

After Nigel had left Jack thought about what he had said. He did not think that Nigel actually believed it but saw how it could make the day go better for it would give him a fresh interest in the work he was doing.

“Each to his own,” Jack said as he put the kettle back on.

3. Jack Pot.

Nigel duly arrived on time and they soon found themselves being served at the bar. "So what about pool then?" Jack said, "Do you see anything in that?"

"You losing."

"No I mean like with the offices."

"Oh," Nigel said with a laugh, "I've never thought into it really. I'd have to think about that one."

"You do while I set them up," Jack said and took his drink over to the pool table. Nigel fed the juke box and soon they were set to play.

"So what did you come up with?" Jack said and took the break.

"Give us a chance."

"Maybe in the first game," Jack said with a laugh.

"I saw by your break," Nigel said returning the slight, "No I only reckon it works with works of creation."

"Why's that then?"

"Just a guess really I haven't got a clue. So are you interested in it then?"

"I'm not sure. I can see it making the day go quicker but I'd feel foolish doing it."

"Well it's up to you," Nigel said, thought awhile and then said, "Alright the pool. You are the imagination and I am the will. Your balls are demons and mine are virtues leaving the black as the Soul."

"Imagine if that was for real that would be some game."

"Play it that way. In fact as there is nothing down we may as well re-rack and toss for break."

"Alright then," Jack said re-racking, "You're on."

They tossed a coin and Jack won so Nigel got to break. "Before we begin we must have creation."

"What?"

"The big bang," Nigel said and cannoned the white into the pack. Nothing went down but the white was left in a safe place, "And so we start as equals," and stood back from the table. Jack tried a long yellow to the top left but missed and left Nigel with a fairly easy pot to the middle pocket, "It looks like lechery is just about to fall," and sure enough it did. It had been quite a messy break so he had nothing left to follow. Jack took his shot and cut a yellow into the middle pocket.

"And you've got my faith," Nigel said. Jack went on but left the next yellow over the pocket without potting it. Nigel took a fairly easy shot to the bottom left and said, "There's sloth," before going on to miss the next. Jack took the one covering then pocket and said, "Fortitude." He had left himself snookered but managed to get out of it. He did not put anything down so next it was Nigel's turn. He took an easy pot to the bottom right and said, "Pride." He lined up a shot to the middle left and another quickly fell, "Envy." His next shot just rattled on the bottom left hand pocket and so Jack got a turn. He cut into a little cluster of yellows and two went down. "Humility and hope," Jack said before going on to take the next shot. He missed a fairly straight shot to the middle bag and said, "Close game."

"Not for much longer," Nigel said and put one of his down, "Avarice I do believe." He then followed on to put another down, "And gluttony, just one left Jack," and put it down, "Anger."

"Are we still finishing on a double?"

"We do live in God's reflected light so I guess the black has to be rebounded."

"Good, that looked a pretty easy shot to the middle."

Nigel missed the pot and so Jack got another go. His first went down easily and Nigel said, "Patience." He then took and potted a straight yellow to the bottom right. "Temperance," he said as he moved to the last yellow. He took and potted a straight double to the middle and said, "Charity and it looks like the game is over." He lined up a fairly easy double on the black but missed the pot. "Ah well," Nigel said and potted the black only to see the white follow it though.

"So what happens now?"

“You're purified,” Nigel said with a laugh.

“No, I mean did I win?”

“Yes, but so did I. Did that make the game go any better?”

“Well yes I suppose it did. I'm not sure about the building side of it though.”

“You've got nothing to lose and it will keep your mind occupied.”

“Yes but taking it personally, that sounds like some sort of madness.”

“Taking it personally?”

“You know the jobs you do, comparing them to yourself.”

“Well anyone's,” Nigel said in confusion, “I think there must be some sort of misunderstanding. I'm talking about the building as the purpose. By serving it you help it to be created so you take an interest in what its stage of development or level you are on. You just compare it to a mind that's all.”

“Oh,” Jack said with relief, “I thought you meant you personally.”

“You could do I suppose but then you would only get the little picture and probably a lot of negative thoughts. No look at the big picture and see what else is happening around you that's one level and the other how your personal purpose fits into it. The job you are doing in the scheme of it.”

“Oh right. Sorry I misunderstood I thought you meant that the building was your personal self.”

“My self is what I serve. I think we were just at cross purposes for a moment.”

“So how would you actually go about it then? Through the levels of understanding?”

“You could do. It would be a bit long winded I suppose. I do it through the levels of wisdom. The first stage would be the ground work, setting the place out; the erection of the basic frame, fitting the pre cast concrete floor and the rest of the concreting. The second stage would be the roof and pipe work and enclosing of the office and the last stage the inside.”

“Yes right. Anyway do you want another game of pool?”

“What are we playing for this time?” Nigel said with a laugh and just then the door opened and the thought of pool went out of the window for a short while.

“Chill er Neville how are you?” Jack said on seeing him.

“Fine,” Chillin' said, “Anna I would like you to meet Jack and Nigel (or was it Jack and Nory.) A tall slender girl with short brown hair stepped forward and said, “Hi, dad said you did a good job on Alan's roof.”

“Er thanks, Jack said, “Would you like a drink?”

“A pint of lager would go down well,” Chillin' said with a laugh.

“Yeah right,” Jack said laughing, “I was talking to your better half.”

“Sounds good to me,” Anna said.

“Right,” Jack said and got them in. They sat down at the table next to the pool table and Nigel said, “So what brings you here. Not that you are not welcome that is.”

“We decided to go out for a drink,” Chillin' said, “Thought why not come here and I'll introduce Anna to you.”

“To kill two birds so to speak,” Jack said and then to Anna, “Do you play pool?”

“Occasionally.”

“You don't play for a team do you?” Jack said remembering back to Jill.

“No,” Anna said with a smile, “I'm not that good.”

“What about a game of doubles then?”

“Sure,” Anna said and looked at Chillin'.

“Fine by me,” Chillin' said and got up. Jack set the balls up and said, “Right toss for break,” and this was duly done. Chillin' got to break and to cut a long (winded) story short the same thing happened with the first game. This was noticed by Jack though he said nothing.

“Unlucky,” Nigel said to Anna who had taken the final shot, “Not a bad game.”

“No it was pretty close,” Chillin' said, “I told Anna about that stuff. I hope you don't mind.”

“Not at all,” Jack said, “Not worth mentioning.”

“Well it got me interested,” Anna said, “Very in fact. Pretty unusual though. When I stand alone I'm as good as the next man. Stuff like channeling I'm pretty keen on.”

“Oh right,” Jack said.

“Chillin' was also telling me about those poems, I reckon he would make a good poet.”

“Alright, alright,” Chillin' said getting bashful.

“No seriously.”

“It turns out that Anna can channel,” Chillin' said.

“Not as good as yours though. Yours seem to go a lot deeper.”

“Really,” Jack said with fresh interest, “So what sort of stuff do you bring down then?”

“Strange sayings really. Nothing like Chillin's. You wouldn't really want to hear one.”

“No I'm interested, seriously.”

“Well the last one was this. Love dwarfs by comparison that's why I'll second that emotion.”

“What?” Nigel said almost spilling his drink, “That's amazing, have you anymore?”

“Er yes a couple. I didn't think they were that good though.”

“If they are like that they will be.”

“Well one was sort of a joke. Space is where you are not, time is where you should be and the other, and well I don't quite know what it is. Two circles of levels that go on for infinity.”

“I think the last one sounds like life,” Jack said, “That figure '8' thing.”

“Yes,” Nigel said and then to Anna, “Any thoughts on the matter?”

“Well the second one might be something to do with philosophy, you know the time and space thing but as to the other two.”

“Oh,” Nigel said and went deep into thought, “Do you mind if I write them down?”

“No help yourself,” so Nigel wrote them down and then said to Jack, “Any thoughts on a title for the life one?” Jack let his mind go blank before saying, “Self containment” and Nigel wrote that down before writing the title and snippet out long handed.

“Wisdom (love) seeing will-Blessed with knowing will God's purpose understood through seeing the word. God's purpose through loving (through God's purpose understood) spiritual wisdom (God's wisdom)-will sees through understanding (seeing the word)

and

“Understanding (through God's purpose) the word (will seeing light, wisdom) God blessed with light, life through light (wisdom).”

“It's the spirit of life,” Nigel said, “Life through light and the symbol of infinity.”

“Not much else to say on it really,” Jack said, “You get God's purpose through understanding wisdom and through spiritual wisdom you see through a will of understanding. It's also saying that through God's blessing you get God's purpose and a shift in consciousness to understanding. The second part is saying that through understanding the word your Soul gets enlightened and that is its life.”

“Amazing,” Anna said, “So what about the time space thing?”

Nigel wrote it out and Jack said self fulfillment” so he wrote that down as well. After he had finished he showed them this.

“Understanding the word, God's will, and blessed with understanding spiritual love through knowing and blessed seeing love, God's knowing through light seeing wisdom.

Wisdom blesses life through blessed understanding (spiritual love through knowing) and blessed seeing love, spiritual understanding. Seeing love transformation to God's purpose-self through.”

And

“Understanding (through God's purpose) the word (the word-love), God's purpose. The word blessed with God's purpose, life through light will.”

“I think this might be two spirits this time, Nigel said, “The first one love and the second purpose.”

“Yes,” Jack said, “It's saying that through understanding love you get God's will and with this

understanding you get blessed by the spirit of love. It is also saying that with this blessing you get God's knowing, that would be love. The second part is saying that through seeing wisdom it blesses your life through spiritual understanding which is the spirit of purpose's transformation. The second section says that by understanding love you get God's purpose and with it a spiritual life."

"Yes," Chillin' said, "But how would that actually tie in with the time and space thing?"

"You are matter and where you are not is space," Nigel said with a laugh, "No space stands for understanding the word God's will through. The word is love and by understanding it through experience you get God's will. Now in this case not stands for light seeing wisdom, the Soul being the light and wisdom is the level that it feeds on, the spirit of love. Time is wisdom blessing life through and this is what gives you your purpose or where you should be, the spirit of purpose."

"Oh right, I can go with that so what about the last one then?"

Nigel wrote it out long hand and Jack said, "Self awareness," so he also put that down. When he had finished it read.

"God's purpose sees love through spiritual transformation

God knowing (the word understood) - self blessed with will of God's life.

The word-God's knowing blessed with understanding (seeing light)

Spiritual wisdom-God's wisdom spiritually understood.

Love blessed (Blessed with God's purpose)

God's purpose-understanding (through will seeing light transformation) spiritual wisdom (God's wisdom) through life seeing wisdom blessed (seeing light)

And

Understanding (through God's purpose) the word, God's love, God's knowing through light and understanding understood."

"Wisdom and understanding," Nigel said, "But not in that order, well necessarily."

"Well the word understood is God's knowing," Jack said, "And this gives you a will of light and a spiritual leaning. The word is love and it's made up of God's knowing or knowledge of the divine and its understanding. Spiritual wisdom is God's wisdom that has been spiritually understood and through this transformation you see God's purpose. Now the second part. Through enlightenment or the light transformation you get understanding and this gives you God's purpose through spiritual wisdom or God's wisdom which is love blessed with God's purpose. The last part, you know God through understanding light."

"And the sentence?" Anna said.

"Dwarf stands for loving transformation-God's knowing word" Nigel said, "So love transforms by comparison is the spirit of understanding. Comparison could either be the level of understanding on one hand and cross referencing of texts on the other. And the second part stands for understanding through will seeing light transformation. The spirit of wisdom transformation on one hand but it is also the spirit of love's on the other for enlightenment is knowledge of the divine or knowledge of love."

"And you got all that lot from those phrases," Anna said, "I wasn't sure if Chillin' had explained it right when he told me."

"Oh it's surprising what you can find when you look more deeply into things," Nigel said and on that profound statement we must leave the story and let time take them to each of their purposes. A word of caution to leave you in confusion though. When you look too deeply into anything don't take it too personal as it can lead to a lot of needless negative thoughts. With that in mind you too could live happily ever after.

3a.Fruit of a Jack rabbit

**From the star that shone eternally I am the twinkle that has come to be
From the apron strings of a mother's heart I am the child that grew and would never part
From the universe for eternity I am the ship that could sail any sea
From the library of eternal bliss I am the memory of our first kiss
From the broken back of a disused plough I am the pain that suffered from the bough
From the jungle that's been hot and dried I am the lion returned without his pride**

or in other words-

1. Spiritual wisdom-Through understanding wisdom God knows spiritual wisdom (God's wisdom spiritually understood seeing light) and through wisdom and knowing the light of God, God's purpose. God's purpose blessed with God's life.
2. Spiritual wisdom-Through wisdom loving (blessed with light) work-God's purpose. Through spiritual wisdom (God's spiritual wisdom) God's understanding will sees life and wisdom sees self through the word (knowing sees life).
3. Spiritual wisdom-Through God the word sees light. Understanding wisdom (knowing blessed with light) will of understanding. Seeing the word God's life sees spiritual wisdom. Through knowing spiritual understanding and God's knowing wisdom, blessed with God's life.
4. Spiritual wisdom- Through spiritual will (blessed with God's purpose) transformed to spiritual wisdom (God's wisdom) will of knowing. Through love (God's light transformation)- love sees loving God's purpose transformed (light through love) and knowing the word (God's knowing wisdom) the word known sees life.
5. Spiritual wisdom-Through loving light (blessed with love) and knowing (understanding through), the word sees knowing through wisdom and knowing light (blessed with wisdom blessed) blessed with God's life.
6. Spiritual wisdom-Through spiritual understanding of (blessed with the word) spiritual wisdom (God's wisdom) will sees love (God's purpose transformed), understanding sees loving God's purpose (light blessed with understanding) through God.
7. Spiritual wisdom-Through God's purpose (blessing self) God's knowing blessed seeing the word. Through wisdom and knowing the light of God (God's purpose) self of God's purpose through understanding (blessed with God's life).
8. Spiritual wisdom-Through life and life seeing knowing (blessed with the word) loving knowing (the word blessed with knowing). Understanding wisdom work blessed with understanding. Understanding the word knowing sees life.
9. Spiritual wisdom-Through self of knowing (seeing work through light) self of God (Will of work). Seeing the word, God's transformation blessed with understanding (loving understanding). Through transformation the word (God's purpose) sees loving spiritual will (blessed with God's life).
10. Spiritual wisdom-Through the word God blessed with light (spiritual wisdom). God's wisdom understood understanding love (the word). The word (through knowing)-Through transformation the word knows (sees life) spiritual wisdom. Through self seeing loving spiritual will the word knows (sees) life.
11. Spiritual wisdom-Through blessed loving light will of God's purpose through spiritual wisdom (God's wisdom)understood(self)and through light spirit sees wisdom(God's light transformation) transformed into knowing(blessed through knowing)-blessed with God's life.
12. Spiritual wisdom-Through God's purpose blessed seeing light (knowing through light) loving light. Through transformation love blessed with spiritual wisdom sees loving spiritual wisdom. Blessed with understanding the word knows (blessed with transformation through).

Do You Know What it is Yet?

Well I could have called it the house that Jack built but it was an office and I did not hang around to see the outcome. This was not because I ran out of names for there are still a few to play with. Black Jack when he had to do the roof, Jack Hammer, Union Jack, Jack in the Box, Steeple Jack, Jack Saw and made the last one either Jack Boot or Jack In depending on the flow of the story. I could even have took a more lateral line and used Jumping Jack Flash, Jack Ass, Jack Pike, Car Jack, Flap Jack, Natter Jack and ended up with Jack Shit. No I stopped there because I like to come off when I'm winning and one you've hit the Jack Pot it is downhill usually after that.

Now you have had the two circles it is the three concentric ones. Three levels of wisdom, three levels of consciousness and three aspects of the self. A triad of triads and to pick your way through it would be a minefield but I am prepared to cover my ears and go stamping around.

Three levels of wisdom. You saw that in the decoding of the seven spirits. Wisdom would be the snippet, spiritual wisdom, Jack's explanation of it and loving spiritual wisdom Nigel's decoding of it. Three levels of consciousness, the inner plot, the physical and mental work that they did and three aspects of self. Nigel, Jack and Jill. Chillin' and Anna were the inner guides as Chillin' stands for Spiritual will blessed with God's purpose (God's purpose blessed with light) and Anna stands for God's light, light of God, the spirits of wisdom and understanding.

Now a little bit about the word of caution. I have given you the titles of the possible directions it could have gone but now it is time to elaborate a little. The repetition of the game of pool could have triggered off madness through him looking too deeply. Whilst black jacking the roofs stepped wall he would have realised that from above it would look like a letter edged in black. His fear of mental death would come to the fore as the symbolism would not be lost on him for he would reason that losing his ego was him losing his identity. Any bad job that came his way he would take to heart and over rationalise it to a negative end. He could have been trying to unblock the waste pipe once more and lose the pipe when the last rod was accidentally screwed off. (Oops, sorry about that Marc) and to rationalise that would truly be the road to damnation. You see in the pursuit of wisdom you can actually go too far. You could end up writing this in long hand (I mean the whole book) and then rewrite the revision again and again. Bare that in mind as it could save you a lot of stress. One last philosophy on life, "Life's a bitch but I'm a dog so I say f#### it," or God's purpose blesses the word- Through understanding God's self (blessed with wisdom)
1. Spiritual will. 2. Self of God (wisdom blessed with life). 3. God's transformation sees understanding. 4. Will sees blessed understanding. 5. God blesses the word. 6. Loving will of work blessed with wisdom.

And finally.....

For God to create life all He has to say it 'be' and it's injected with life, God's life in fact. So everything with life is blessed by God's life symbolised as 'I am'. Now God is the great I am (a will of knowing through God's wisdom blessed with God's life). Incidentally life stands for God's purpose blesses the word through and that is what gives the word its life, its purpose to serve.

I am (the essence of our being) is the same from the common weed right up to the greatest man, it is existence, nothing more. It is Heracles himself for spirit through knowing God is the essence (the I) and God's purpose through understanding is God's life (am). It is the spirits of life and love at their most basic. As you evolve further you get to level two, so from life and love you get understanding and from this discernment(level 3) from which you get level four(wisdom) and start to become a little more spiritually aware(level 5). Level 6 kicks in and the spirits of wisdom and understanding merge in a dream. You have an out of body experience (it can only be done in a dream) and lose your subconscious fear of death. You reason that as you have left your body (from the solar plexus) you therefore must live on. This is the start in the shift in consciousness that culminates with God's blessing (level 7) when you meet your maker and your old self dies. Level 8 happens at the same time for you now have a channel to the divine and you get the spirit of knowing. You are now an enlightened soul and in need of a purpose (level 9). This is quite a testing time for you have three choices (pride, anger and love) and though you are enlightened you are still ignorant of this so you might pick the wrong one by mistake. Choose love and you get to level 10, insight or loving spiritual wisdom. You are now an enlightened soul with a purpose to serve with all seven spirits intact. Level 11 is the start of the cleansing process so it is a time of contemplation that culminates at level 12, experience or true understanding.

Back page cover.

The Nature of my Being

- I am** **The ability to adapt quickly to new situations and turn them to my advantage.**
- I am** **The ability to plant seeds to alter consciousness at a later date.**
- I am** **The ability to see the good in any given situation and take strength from my being.**
- I am** **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.**
- I am** **The ability to recognise that although I might suffer hardship whilst I keep on the path of light temptation has no hold and fate will be in my favour.**
- I am** **The ability to see past the vanity of ego centred life and recognise the truth in any situation and act accordingly but only with love in my heart.**
- I am** **The ability to put my trust in God and relinquish my Soul should that be required of me.**
- I am** **The ability to give my Self without negative consciousness as to the outcome of this transaction.**
- I am** **The ability to realise that no matter what has gone before me has no hold over me now.**

I am- The ability to believe in my Self