

## CHAPTER NINE: JACK'S REVELATIONS

"I can change your life. I can help you win the lottery!"

I had stopped by a convenience store for a quick snack. He had cornered me on the way out while hitting me up for a beer.

"I'll make you a deal. You buy me a beer, and I'll reveal the secret of the universe."

"I'm in a hurry to get back to my work."

He leaned over me and hunched his body into mine. I wasn't looking for a confrontation. But I pushed him back.

"Are you afraid of me? Are you afraid of the truth?"

"I needed some inspiration. I went in and got the beer. Then I handed it to him.

"Not one for yourself?"

"I'm not really a parking lot kind of guy."

I began to walk away when he called me back.

"No lecture?" he yelled back.

"I thought that you were kidding!"

"So why the beer?"

I tried to be clever, "To set the universe right."

He took a sip from his beer. Then he set it down. He began to talk in a booming voice. He was taking command of the situation.

He made me feel as if I was in math class. I sat on a parking space abutment block while he lectured me.

"Do I have to take notes?"

"No, but you have to listen closely. You have to sketch on the blackboard of the mind."

"Go to it, professor."

"All mathematics is based on movement in time. If you want stillness, seek poetry or philosophy."

His gestures with his arms reflected in the convenience store window as he lectured.

He looked at me, "You are paying attention?"

"Yes, sir."

"You understand about the principle of motion. The universe seeks to be more than it is. It is not content with stasis. It is always in flux. Always in becoming. Even becoming is other than itself. You have to catch the motion like you would grab a mosquito on a summer night. Otherwise, you get caught up in the flow of time. You are bandied about like a little ship in a horrendous storm."

I worked to visualize his description. He danced around the parking lot.

"You are absorbing all this."

"Like a sponge."

"Such is number. It is this excessive force, always exceeding itself. It is everywhere in the universe constantly reaching out. Reaching beyond the beyond. Addition or multiplication cannot contain the full breadth of number. Only the wonders of the cosmos. The mighty oceans. The path of the comet. The flares from the sun. Are you getting the picture?"

I wanted to be an active listener. I wanted to do more than simply nod my head.

“You think to yourself how can it be number if it cannot be measured. If it cannot be used to count. But all its uses only capture the partial essence of this all-encompassing form. It is the form that projects outside of itself.”

“Sure it does!”

“Feel the power!

“I am going along with it.”

“One and then one more. It moves from deep inside the soul.”

“Let the soul sing.”

Perhaps, I was too overtaken to grasp what he was saying. But he was encouraging. Maybe this was the only way to learn. I was coming outside of my mind. I felt everywhere.

“This is not philosophy. If you feel as one, then there must be one more. Always in motion. You are losing the count. Time is moving too fast. You need to match its verve. Like a tired race horse, you need to catch up.”

“I am propelled into the universe greater than I could ever be.”

I saw images of numbers. People picked lottery tickets based of their birth date or their anniversary. Numbers that they knew personally.

He screamed his challenge, “That is never going to work. Wherever you are, you have to be other than you are.”

He got me to conjure up a surer method. I could feel the patterns of the stars. Marks displacing the constellations. He held his hands up to the sky.

“Number makes me fly. I can see it all. Look at it!”

I looked up too.

“The lecture is just beginning. Write on your fingers with your finger.”

I was the dutiful pupil. I followed his lead.

“Hallelujah!”

“You cannot end without beginning.”

“I am ready to start again.”

I was ready to be born again. I embraced the sense of renewal.

“We can begin the second lesson. This is all about the rhythm of the universe.

Everything vibrates with these expressive waves. The repetition. The sieve to filter what is with what you want there to be. This is how we shape the world. We use our fingers, our ways of counting. Counting again and again.”

He continued, “We were lost in the waves. Tossed by the forces of the universe. Now we are the force that stretches out from one end to another. The wave sweeps everywhere like on an endless sea. You cannot completely visualize. But you can feel its eternity.”

“Amen!”

“In the heart of the cosmos, there are these electro-magnetic radiations. You can feel their pull. They go all through the universe. They weave in and out. This is how number connects to number. It is the great connection. The single divisor. How you really pick your chosen number.”

“That is all?”

“This is only the beginning to a new way of being. Casting off all material things and riding the wave.”

He had no misgivings. He was not held back by his psychology. He just let go! More arm waving and more jubilant screaming.

“I want to know the answer.”

“These are spheres moving around spheres. Everything coming together. The intersection of all these lines.

“Everything is radiating from a center, and returning to that center.”

I worked to understand the perfection of this order. All the orbits spinning around each other. The material was immaterial.

He became more excited, almost silly, “This is like a dance. You have to hear the music. And feel the dance in your body. You are becoming exposed to the radiation. It is burning from the inside. That is how the universe pulses.”

I held my hands out.

“I cannot give you what you want. You have to take it for yourself. Reach deep inside!”

His hands moved around in a circle. Like propellers.

“Do you see?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Keep that motion moving deeper and deeper into space. So the waves extend beyond the beyond.”

“Are they still waves?”

“They have memory of themselves.”

“What now?”

“This is solid form. Psychology. Desire. The universe needs to be satisfied.”

“That seems remarkable.”

“It is more than that.”

His smile became wider.

“A new lesson!”

“What now?”

Indeed!

“You can’t sleep here!”

I felt lost. “What are you talking about?”

“There is no rest in the cosmos. The universe is always watching itself.”

“How does it do that?”

“That is the first of its mysteries. Why it glows.”

“Tell me why?”

“It has to escape itself. If the body is diseased, there needs to be a way to rid itself of the disease. Take the cure! Get back to basics. Cast off the curse!”

“How does it do that?” I asked

“Take the cure. You have to realize that you are chosen. Among all the random particles that bounce off of each other, there you are. You are chosen.

“How does that work?”

“Let your true nature stand out. It is without soiling. It is pure. It is without without.”

The journey slowly was making sense.

“Can’t I just do this on my own? Why do I need teaching?”

“You want to know how to pick the numbers.

He momentarily let his crazed side take over.

“I bet you’re wondering, how can I be telling you all this knowledge when I’m still homeless. If I know how to pick numbers, I should pick the stock market and get rich. But they won’t let me in. I am truly among the chosen, but they won’t let me make my selection. I need to eat. I need to play along!”

I was getting skeptical, “Where’s the trick? Where’s the solution? How can I play the numbers just by sheer will. I can’t get rich just because I want to.”

“This is about way more than wanting to get rich.”

“What is it then?”

“It is the great mystery of the universe.”

“You are trying to distract me. Like a con game.”

“I want nothing more from you. You gave me a blessing. Now I want to give back to you.”

Was that all there was too it? This didn’t seem to help. I was losing myself under his spell.

“You can’t be happy if you pursue the trappings of wealth. Find the spirit. To accept, you have to turn your back on your old ways. You have the gift. This is the universe becoming enamored with itself. You have to get out of it before you get into it.”

I accepted the analogy of the parts separating from each other and then joining together to offer an immense fecundity of being. This nugget was his gift. I only hoped that it was more than the alcohol talking.

“I need proof.”

“Haven’t you been following along. Have you got caught in your own self-love. You can’t let go of those things around you.”

“What do you mean?”

“This is all good. This is part of our next lesson. Deep at the heart of our knowledge is a force that burns even brighter. It is the response to the radiation that ripples across the universe. Pure solidity. All that glitters reveals something even more precious. Here is the sparkling idolatry that has built civilizations. There would not be the castles or the pyramids without this inner fire. And it is fed by the conflagration without.”

This seemed like more of a distraction. I was meant to worship the very forms that he had rejected.

“This is material wealth?”

“This is the force that bestows eternity upon everything around. Where all the powers come together in one. The alchemy of the soul!”

“So I can get rich.”

“If you give in to temptation.”

“You told me about a trick to play the lottery.”

“The universe swirls around. And you can learn its patterns. You can see the numbers. And seeing them with perspicacity means being able to touch them. And what you touch lets off a sparkle that mesmerizes. Bow down to your idols.”

He got down on his knees and bowed before me.

I look confused, “You’re losing me again.”

“Sometimes you have to live off the fruits of the spirits. We are physical beings. We cannot simply give ourselves to this cosmic pulse. We need a tangible form to reassure us.”

“You can’t eat gold.”

“But you can impress those who harvest wheat. You can build your own castle.”

“And I can watch it fall.”

“You can become human. You can learn your weaknesses.”

“So much for spiritual enlightenment.”

“The delights of the body can take you closer to the delights of the soul.”

“But you told me that none of that is real.”

“It isn’t. You are counting on a mystical union with what hold together the cosmos. But along the way, you have to keep track of your journey. This is a physical thing. You can’t escape the body until you have fed the body.”

“Am I supposed to fast?”

He pointed at me, “You are supposed to live.”

“I want to live!”

“Amen.”

He became effusive.

“The wealth of kings awaits you. Proclaim your empire.”

“I am trying to hold myself together.”

Had I really progressed beyond my earlier doubts? It was dark. We were desperate. Had we acquired the power to see something more potent?

“You know what happened to those who adored the golden calf?”

“That is a story to strike the fear of the Lord in you so you don’t explore your treasures. Those who have it tell those who don’t so no one will try to take away what they have.”

I made a fist, “So there is something that I am supposed to take away.”

I could appreciate how the alcohol gave an ethereal glow to the expanse that lay before us. This wasn’t just a convenience store. It was a portal to another world.

“The answer is in yourself.”

“I wasn’t looking for self-help.”

“That isn’t what I’m talking about. Beyond idolatry. That is our topic. The only way to move beyond the power without is find the power inside. You have to realize that you are a wonderful person. And you have to let that knowledge radiate throughout your being.”

“I’m not sure if I should feel wonderful.”

He grabbed me by my shirt and shook me.

“I the foundation of your being, you have to feel it. You have what it takes. You! You have what everyone else wants.”

“A few bucks. I’m only a pizza delivery guy.”

“But what’s your dream. What are you working on? You have a dream that you can share with the rest of the world. You have your own gold.”

“This is a convenience store.”

“It’s not about this. The parking lot. What you see before you. You’ve been in an airplane. You’ve watched the city. It is full of strange luminescence. You can know that same

phenomenon in yourself.”

“Do I need to drink more?”

“You need to concentrate. You have no idea of the power that you hold within.”

I needed his reassurance.

“You have been watching my reflection in the window. Look at yourself. You recognize that face, that profile. You are in the know. You have met the mirror of self-admiration. You cannot acquire anything in the world if you don’t know yourself. Things are out of your grasp. But deep in yourself, there is this understanding of the contours of the universe. You know how to travel in cosmic space. You know how to project anywhere. Behind the glow, there is this geometry. And you can study the combination of reflections. You can adjust the focus. Let the recognition find its eternity.”

I did what I could to keep up. I felt my hands moving everywhere simply to keep up. He was showing me the limits of these lines of force. How I could use it all to my advantage. I started to feel more alive.

“Don’t be afraid to embrace your desires! You are here to have fun.”

He had made me strong. I jumped up and down as if I was a boxer in training.

“Take a lap around the parking lot,” he advised me.

Here I was in the middle of the evening trotting around. I was one spectacle.

“Am I ready, my brother? Can I fly?”

“You can fly?”

“Really?” What was he inspiring inside of me?

“You know your limits.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“You want to take off. Let yourself go.”

I spread my arms out as I ran around the parking lot.

“How’s my form?”

“Like an eagle”

With my hands, I gave him a sign that I was okay.”

“You like that. The world is your oyster.”

“I love it.”

“Well, let it all go. It has only led you astray. You have taken all these blessing for granted.”

And he stamped his foot on the ground.

“Cast it all away. Destroy the palaces. If you are going to get to heaven, you need to work harder. Know about the corruption in the soul. You have to be eternally sorry.”

“Why? What have I done?”

“You haven’t done enough. You have been distracted by the pleasures of the flesh. You must eat of his flesh. You must sustain yourself by the spirit.”

“I did that. Then you told me to have a good meal.”

“Now let that meal come flowing up.”

“I’m not going to make myself vomit.”

“This is just a way of talking. You have to make the poisons come up. You have let the poisons in.”

“What poisons?”

Hid delivery was cataclysmic, “You! You! You! You are the problem! You dirty boy!” He held his hand up to slap me, and I was barely able to dodge his motion. I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to get out of there. He wanted me to share his insanity.

He reached to hold me, and I stepped back.

“Are you afraid of me?”

“You are scaring me?”

“Monster, you should scare yourself.”

“I don’t need a parent constantly berating me.”

“You need someone to keep you in line. You have been tolerant of your own perversions.”

“I do what I need to.”

“You are a nosy little mother fucker! You stand back in judgement of everyone. But you never take a chance on anything. You feed off of the failures of others. But you are the failure.

“Is this part of the lesson? Or have you become unhinged?”

“Self-admiration leads to self-satisfaction. That is the ruin of empires.”

I surveyed the parking lot, “This empire is definitely at the edge.”

“Are you getting it?”

“Your abuse? I’m not sure what you want.”

“You abuse yourself all the time. You give into your pleasures. Your sex drives. Your desire for wealth. You can never have enough. You are feeding the dark creature inside.”

“Whatever you say!”

“It is not what I say. I speak the truth.”

The apple had remained on the counter too long, and it was starting to oxidize.

“You feed the body, but the soul is destitute.”

“You told me to indulge.”

“And now I am telling you to let go.”

I could sense the toxins being purged from my body. I stood perfectly still in front of him.

“Before you came here, you had no inner calm.”

“So I can remain like this.”

“Only if you continue to exorcize your demons.”

“Another amen to you!”

“Hallelujah.”

The journey was still underway. We could not rest on our laurels.

“Maybe I should get something to drink.”

“You have to drink at the font of knowledge.”

“Whatever!” I told him.

“You have heard about the money changers in the temple.”

“Yeah!” I was ready for him to make me feel lower in his eyes.

“They realized something deep about the power of transformation. That is our next step. Learning how to extend our grasp again. In a new way. Concentrated way. Make a fist. Feel that power. Now let it go. Let the power float off into the cosmos. That is stupendous. We are

letting that power travel to the outer reaches of the universe. We are putting our stamp on the world.”

“Yeah, yeah.”

“At any hour of the day you can ring up Tokyo. You can talk to London. You can hop a plane to Singapore. You can track these hidden numbers. All this is moved by money. More than gold. More than the dollar. There is a passion that you can embellish. Add to the flow. And draw water from the river.”

“You are losing me again.”

“Wealth becomes greater when it is transmitted. Like knowledge. We develop a manufacturing technique in Akron, and they apply it in Thailand. Money changes hands because ideas are being exchanged. Ways of affecting the course of the mighty river.”

“Like the Salton Sea.”

“Not these weird detours. But in the flowing currents that connect together. The Mississippi of the mind.”

“The internet?”

“So be it. Your electronic highway. The equations that propel our desires around the world. The microwaves. The cell phones. Transmitting energies. It pulses in the blood stream. We are part of the eternal flow. Because we have made it ourselves. We have counted it all. The money changers.”

“No down side.”

I was ready for him to lay a fist in me.

“Enjoy it while you can!”

“It is fleeting.”

“The currents in the nervous system reflect the energies that power our massive telecommunication network. It all zings because there is value behind it. Money on money.”

“I can touch it.”

“You can become part of the flow. You can feel it inside.”

“What is the down side?”

“There is no up and down. You are being flipped around.”

“I go topsy turvy.”

I imagined myself laid out on the concrete.

“Can I get up now.”

“You can stand erect, human.”

“All done?”

“Hardly!”

“What more do I have to learn?”

“The universal language.”

“Is it love?”

“It is frequency. It is the vibration of all the all.”

“More gibberish!”

“The money changer can feel the ebb and flow. But they are like a surfer. It just takes one bad wave. One wipe-out. You need a hedge. Something to help you to ride the rough times.”



“How do I do that if things are too calm to propel my way into the flow?”

“You are catching the drift.”

“If you have more to tell me, then I am ready to hear you.”

He arched his left arm to form a closed curve when it touched his chest. Then he reached inside with his right hand, “This is like your dreams. The gel that holds it all together. And you dig in and pull out meaning from this mass.”

“So we do! Tell me what I need to notice. What is new?.”

“You want to learn how to get by on the power inside? You want to be better than everyone else?”

“I want to learn what you are willing to teach me. How to survive in lean times?”

“By wanting less, you can get more.”

“Is that all that you have to tell me? I ‘m sorry, but I can’t buy you another beer.”

“Do you need one for yourself?”

“Hardly.”

“Are you happy?”

I nodded.

“What are you happy?”

“I have my wits about me.”

“I often do not. I have lost my direction. I am beyond hope. A little crazy. But I can still hold it all together.”

I wondered how difficult it was for him on the street. I was definitely taking advantage of his situation. There was really little that I could do to help. And I had anointed him a spiritual visionary.

He raised up his right hand, “You want to talk prophecy. That is different than predicting who is going to win the lottery. It is a fine art. It demands more than seeing the future. It is all about finding someone who can accept the destiny that the future holds. That is a far different cry.”

“Is this about money?” I asked.

“This is about sanctity!”

“And money is only an impediment to the sacred.”

Did I really believe that?

“You don’t feel that you are taking advantage of me.”

“How is that?”

“I jump up and down in this parking like some circus performer. And you pretend that I am revealing the wisdom of Moses to you. I’m not something that I’m not. Us homeless guys don’t have special secrets.”

“What have you been telling me?”

“Mumbo jumbo to get more money from you.”

“Seriously. Have you been yanking my chain.”

“What do you want? Financial advice. What I have to say, you don’t want to hear.”

“Are you going to tell me how to beat the odds in hedge funds?”

“I am going to tell you what is wrong in the commodities market.”

I answered quickly, “Too much stuff.”

“Quit being an asshole. You are being an asshole. It’s speculation. People making a quick buck off of food and oil. Acting as if it’s a crisis that gets it started. Like a bad harvest. But that just gets the ball rolling. It’s all a way to drive wages down and prices up. Squeezing the little guy. That is what causes homelessness.”

“How do we retard the speculation bubbles?”

“You need an angle.”

He shifted his focus again.

“It is all about the secret forms.”

“What are form? Like Plato?”

“These are the mysteries of the universe. Like the magic triangle”

I needed him to clue me in more.

“I can I know these forms if I can’t see them.”

“You can see extraordinary balance in the universe/”

“I am most balance when I can sleep.”

“You can sleep.”

I had a comfortable apartment. I didn’t need much more than that. Turn off the lights, and I existed.

“No feelings of guilt.”

“What should I feel guilty over?”

“Me!”

“What?”

“Have you found the bones?”

“What bones?”

“The ruin of civilization.”

I imagined him pulling chicken bones from the dumpster.

“These are the bones of the new dinosaurs, Mr. Smith.”

“Right oh, Jack!”

“You are the relic.”

“How does that work?”

“Bones, you are just like me. You travel from house to house begging for a living.”

“I deliver food to people.”

He was not going to let me off easy. I was the last part of his lesson. I needed to reform if the world was going to be a better place.

“You are there to poison people.”

I wanted to defend myself. But what was the point.

“You are a monster,” he continued. “You deliver at night when people shouldn’t be eating.”

“Don’t you live off night eating?”

“See where it has got me. Can you read the signs. Do you know what the fossils are saying?”

“More cliche.”

“Do you want a solution?”

I realized that I had made Jack into some kind of mystic. I was only exaggerating my

own ambitions.

“You are gratifying your own desires for notoriety. Look at me. Do you really think I can tell you about the future.”

“You promised to reveal secrets.”

“What I can do for you is give you the chance that you need to be someone. To write about more than lust and tawdry love stories.”

“What is my new subject?”

“Degradation. Being destitute. You could be just like me. You could lose your place. You could be living in your car.”

“I’d deal with it.”

“Don’t you have any pride?”

“I wish that I had more than I did.”

“You’re asking me to rescue you. You are stupider than I thought.”

“I do what I can.”

“I can give you hope. Buy a beer for yourself, and I will tell you.

“What?”

“That hope is at the bottom of the bottle. A code for a contest that you can only see when you all the beer has floated down to your stomach.”

“That is your great secret.”

It is a beginning.”