



Jack Shit

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Chapter 1

Insanity

He was sitting there. The deed was done, but he was still just sitting there. We watched as he shifted his attention from one thing to the next, sitting there quietly on the toilet, waiting for something to grab his attention.

He was a holy man. He didn't know it yet, but we chose him, we made him. He had been touched by the Gods.

And as he sat there waiting, we conjured up a life-changing surprise for him. Jack Reagle breathed out the last breath of his old life, sitting quietly on the throne – on *his* throne – without any expectations other than to take a nice and relaxed, satisfying dump.

Suddenly, a feeling in his exit hole made him sit up and hold his breath.

Jack breathed out, and mumbled to himself. 'Probably something I ate...'

Then it happened again. It was as if something was trying to push its way out. It disturbed him deeply.

‘What the...!’, he inhaled.

Something was trying to get out, and it wasn’t any of the usual suspects. Images flashed through his mind, of tape worms, scarab beetles, and maggots crawling out of his ass. A cold sweat started pearling on his brow as he reached for the toilet roll and pulled off a wad of paper. Lifting himself up a bit, legs spread, he looked down while reaching around with the wad.

The thing in his hole was no fantasy; he could feel something wiggling now, squirming from side to side. Jack groaned nervously as he moved in with the wad, wanting to grab the thing, whatever it was, by the head and pull the fucker out.

‘Oh God,’ he cried softly, nauseated by a momentary flash of insight. He had a full-blown, instantaneous vision of the absurdity of what was happening to him here and now. In that single moment, he looked upon himself from the outside, hovering over his own butt in the bathroom of his apartment, while the rest of the world, like clockwork, went around its normal and sane business, and all the planets and all the stars did their orbital deeds. Then Jack collapsed back into his own little space, clutched the wad of paper, and groped between his cheeks.

‘Raaahh! Ouch!’, he yelled, more out of surprise than pain. “It” had pinched his pinkie, making him yank his arm forwards and stand up straight. Bewildered, and sweating profusely now, Jack panted as he grabbed for the walls. But the thing kept wiggling, more insistently now, forcing him to sit down again. As soon as he sat down and parted his cheeks, a great and regal voice rang out:

‘Dude!’

‘Huh?’ Jack’s left eyebrow, and really the whole left side of his face curled up stupidly.

‘Dude, relax!’ the voice from his ass said. ‘I’m trying to get out here!’

-

Something snapped in Jack’s brain. His sanity shattered into a million fragments. ‘A voice in my ass. There’s a fucking voice in my ass!? What the hell!’

Of course we had planned this part of it. There’s nothing us Gods love more than a man brought to the brink of insanity, only to be nudged over the edge ever so subtly by something as unreal as a rectal spokesman.

And over the edge he went. Jack, who was normally a closet genius, who could rationalize anything as if he were Sigmund Freud himself, totally lost it. There was nothing to explain this. He had felt *it*, he had heard it speak. The only thing he could do now was manage a chortling, burping, tear-stained mess of a laugh. He was hysterical, and totally clinical.

Chapter 2

Autopilot

‘Ah jeez, not this again,’ the voice from Jack’s ass lamented.

The bathroom had become a scene of opposites. Up there, in his mind, dwelled the fragments of his sanity - built up over decades of life in a less than sane world - now scattered about like antimatter in a physics lab. And down below there emerged a fresh mystery, weird enough to send a crazy man insane. Jack was hysterical, frothing as he laughed, a painful sight to see. But the ‘thing’ was calm, slightly annoyed, and above all, it was painfully present.

‘Jack, can we please get the hell off the toilet? It’s nasty down here!’, the voice boomed. But reasoning with an unreasonable person is of course a waste of time, and sure enough, Jack wasn’t listening. He had broken into a sullen sob now, and mucus flowed from his nostrils. Just a little while longer and he’d be catatonic, if not in shock.

‘Okay, alright, I’ll wait,’ the thing said wisely. ‘Jeez...’

And wait he did. They sat there together on the throne, the mighty king fallen, and the jester without an audience.

It was dark before the piercing ring of Jack's cell phone broke the silence. It was a tune he'd uploaded into the phone himself, something eerily appropriate to the situation. It was Beethoven's Fifth.

'Ta-ta-ta-tunnnn....Ta-ta-ta-tunnn...,' the cell phone droned.

Somehow, Jack heard it ring. Or at least, some primordial part of his being heard it, and responded out of habit. 'Meursh...slssshh,' he drooled as he wiped his face, stood up, and pulled up his pants. Before the underwear went up, the voice from below managed to pip a squeak and say, 'Hey, wait!', but it was no use.

Jack was up and off the throne, and headed for the phone. This was good stuff. We watched in anticipation, wondering what this deranged sloth of a man could accomplish on the phone in this situation.

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The phone was lying on his desk. He picked it up, hit the answer button, and lifted it to his ear.

‘Hi Jack! Hey, are you there? It’s your mother calling!’

Jack loved his mom, had always had a great relationship with her. But now all he could manage was a fart.

‘Jack?’, his mom said, with a hint of that mother’s instinct creeping into her voice. She could feel something was wrong, and he hadn’t said a thing yet.

‘Krrffffff..’, Jack gasped absently.

‘What’s going on sweetie?’, his mom queried softly.

‘Beuhh...’

‘Oh lordie...Jack what’s wrong? Sweetie I’m coming over right now! Just stay there, okay. I’m on my way,’ she said, and hung up. She knew something was terribly wrong. Jack, on the other hand, couldn’t tell shit from a donkey, and he just stood there with the phone in his hand.

By the time his mom, Judy, had gotten to his place, Jack was lying in a fetal position on the floor of the bedroom. He was nursing the phone, rocking back and forth, and made a particularly disturbing impression on his poor mother when she walked in.

‘Good heavens Jack, you’re a mess!’, she exclaimed. Her adult son lay on the floor like a terrified infant, cradling

the cellphone, with a completely absent look in his eyes and snot drooping down his face.

Jack's mother reached down and touched him on the shoulder. He flinched for a moment and bared his teeth. But then he looked up, and tears welled up in his eyes. Now Jack reached out, and whimpering softly, he clasped his arms around his mothers' feet.

She tried for a while to get Jack to speak, but nothing changed. Reluctantly, she gave up and decided Jack needed to eat and drink something. She fixed him a glass of milk and a bowl of soup, and then ended up having to feed him herself. She held him gently, caressing his head, and whispered to him as if he were a child.

'Now Jack,' she finally said when she was done feeding him, 'You're going to have to tell me what's come over you. I know you can't talk, but I want you to try somehow, okay?'

It may have been the familiarity of his mother's voice, and the restorative powers of the meal he'd just finished, but Jack did somehow manage to communicate. He held up his arms limply, questioningly, as if to say 'I just don't know.' Then his eyes turned towards the bathroom.

‘What’s that?’, his mother quizzed him. ‘The bathroom? What’s in the bathroom, Jack?’

Jack snarled like a velociraptor, but there was no fear in his eyes. As his mother got up to investigate the bathroom, he leaped to his feet and tried to stop her. There was a firmness to his grip, much more suited to his character than the whimpering he’d done on the floor just an hour earlier.

‘Jack, what’s the matter? Why can’t I look in the bathroom?’, his mother asked in fright, though clearly glad he was coming back to himself a bit.

‘I’m going in there,’ she said determinedly, even as he shook his head vigorously to warn her.

‘I’m going in.’

Chapter 3

Denial

‘Huh? There’s nothing in here!’, Jack’s mother exclaimed after stepping inside.

‘There’s nothing in here!’, a strange voice echoed her words.

Judy whirled around in astonishment. ‘Who was that? Who said that!’ she yelled.

‘Mmmm...mbl...t...wass...me,’ Jack managed to grunt, trying to cover for the voice in his ass. He had come back to life right on time, spurred by the inborn fear of being thought insane if his mother were to find out about his sphincter-bound visitor.

‘Jack!’ Judy shrieked, ‘You’re back!’

‘Ah, uh...I...I’m fine, yeah... I’m okay,’ he said in a weak voice.

‘What happened to you Jack, you’ve been unresponsive for hours! I found you crying on the bedroom floor.’

‘Ahh, it’s a long story ma,’ Jack said as he scratched his ass nervously.

‘I’m really tired now, I think I need to rest,’ he said while looking at her askance. He was obviously trying to get rid of her, to not have to confront the fact of his psychotic episode.

Since we weren’t ready for her to know about it yet either, we gave Jack a helping hand.

‘Alright,’ Judy said,’ but I want you to go to bed right now, and promise me you’ll see a doctor in the morning.’

‘Oh aye, I will ma, I promise,’ Jack sighed with relief. He’d handled that pretty well, he thought.

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After his mother had left, Jack decided to take a shower. He washed his face, and slowly relaxed in the hot steam. He couldn’t remember his black out, let alone that he had been on autopilot for hours. But he knew something had happened to him, something terrifying.

Jack let the stress of that night wash out of him, and got into bed without giving his ass another thought.

As he slept, he dreamed of all sorts of creatures popping out of all of his bodily orifices, of smirky little demons pricking his behind with their pitchforks, and of a snake whispering things into his ear.

Jack woke up to the sound of the mysterious voice whispering in his ear, just as the snake had done in his dream.

‘Duuude. Dude, wakey-wakey; I’m still here.’

In his semi-slumbering state, Jack flicked at the sound as if he were shooing a fly.

‘Hey! Stop that,’ the voice said. ‘Jack, Jackie boy, we need to talk.’

SLAM!! Jack crashed his fist into his crack, and the voice was gone. And now he really was awake.

Deciding to follow up on his mothers’ advice, he made a visit to his doctor downtown. Once there, Jack tried to explain what was bothering him.

‘Doctor Gruber,’ Jack said, ‘I’d like you to have a look at my rectum. I think I might have a tape worm or something. I

felt something move there yesterday while I was on the john, and it scared the bejezus out of me.'

'Olrite,' the doctor said in his thickest German accent. 'Plees, to remoof yorr pants, und bend over ze table here. I vill just greb mein medical toolss here. Sehr gut. Yes, I often use an enema to flush the little guy out, or ozzerwise ze foreceps to pooll it out. You see, ze tapeworms zey love to eat fresh banana. So, I always have one ready. I wave it in front of zem till ze cute little head pops out, und... QUATSCH!,' he shrieked, 'I grab zem!'

'Hah, hah,' Jack laughed nervously, 'right. I think maybe I'll go for the eh, the banana then. Is it gonna hurt? I mean, is the tapeworm going to fight back, or should I have an x-ray first to see how long it is?'

'Herr Reagle,' the doctor replied, 'zere is no reason to worry. Ze tapeworm is not visible on x-ray, and it will not be aggressive once it smells ze banana. Now please, I am ready to proceed.'

What a scene. There stood the German quack with a banana pointed at Jack's naked ass, fishing for a nonexistent tape worm. You can't come up with this kinda thing; even us Gods like to see where things will go on their own sometimes.

But now it was time to get the show on the road; remember, we had plans for Jack, divine plans.

'Alrite,' the doctor said, 'let's see if we can catch ze little bugger,' and he waved the banana with a purpose. 'Come on, come on, rrauss you little geschwanzenfuhrer!' he mumbled.

After about thirty seconds of this, with Jack getting increasingly uncomfortable with the situation, the doctor leaned forwards and said, 'Okay herr Reagle, I sink it vill almost come out n...-'

'Shhhhlurp!'

'Aahh, what was that!' Jack yelled.

'Mein got, ze banana ist gone!' the doctor cried.

Doctor Gruber got up close to see what was hiding in Jack's rectum when all of a sudden, something flashed out and poked him in the eye.

'Ouch!'

'Doc, what's going on, can you see it yet?' Jack said, his trembling voice betraying his anxiety.

But then the strangest thing happened. As the doctor rubbed his eye, he looked down with the other at what had just lunged out at him from Jack's ass. It was a snake-like creature, with the color of an albino, and it had the head of a python. It was muscular, powerful, with fierce eyes, and it could just as easily have escaped from the first pages of the Bible as from Jack's bottom. The creature flowed forth from his anus, over a meter in length, and as it rose, it began to speak.

Chapter 4

Questions

'I tell you the truth, that was a fantastic banana,' the snake thing said.

Doctor Gruber fainted instantly.

A cold shiver shuddered through Jack's body. His eyes froze wide open, and his stomach sank as low as it could go. Normally speaking, Jack would break wind in response to this kind of primordial fear, but there was an unholy albino reptile in the way of his gas.

'Jack,' the thing spoke, 'could you please ease up on your sphincter? I'm chokin' back here!' Jack could feel it squirm uncomfortably as it hissed into his ear.

'WHAT....THE.....FUUUUUCK!!' Jack screamed. He lunged forwards and snatched up a scalpel from the doctor's instrument trolley. His feet firmly planted, he whirled around on his own axis to face the buttsnake. 'Fucking hell,' he exclaimed as he stood face to face with the thing. Their eyes

locked, Jack's wild, insane stare meeting the quizzical, electric, and profound look of the snake.

'Not real,' Jack mouthed, breaking off the stare. Then, as the snake approached him so that Jack could stand and see him without having to contort himself, Jack lashed out with the surgeon's knife. He put a vicious gash below the thing's head, and it bled like any living beast would: dark red blood came spurting from the wound. But the look on the snake's face didn't change, nor did it react in any perceivable way.

Emboldened by the sight of blood, Jack took the snake in his left hand and hacked away at it near the base. It still remained unmoved. Jack, on the other hand, gargled with glee as he wielded his tiny sword. He was screaming now, like a knight gone berserk in the bloody frenzy of battle. Finally, the last sinews of the snake were severed and the thing dropped to the floor, lifeless. Jack was covered in blood, his hands, his pants, and a puddle beneath his feet coloring the scene gruesome in an otherwise sterile office.

Of course this kind of violence rarely goes unnoticed in a doctor's office. No sooner was the beast vanquished than the secretary came barging in. She gasped and clutched her breast. 'Oh my God!', she squealed, elongating the 'o' of God for a good five seconds. She was a buxom blond, obviously the eye candy for the horny old doctor. But she was no ditz.

Surveying the situation, she saw a patient with his pants down, blood dripping from his hands, and a fully disturbing look of ecstasy on his face, drooling over a big white snake lying in a puddle of blood at his feet. Doctor Gruber was slumped on the ground a good three feet to the left, without any visible traces of blood on him.

‘What happened? Is the doctor...where did that snake come from? Are you okay, sir?’, she asked, addressing the only other responsive creature in the room. Jack looked at her, then at the doctor, and then at the snake.

‘I...I killed it. I killed the monster. I...’ He dry-heaved for a moment. ‘Areuh...I think the doc is alright, he just fainted when he saw the snake. It, it, it came out of nowhere,’ he lied, ‘and I killed it with the scalpel. It’s over now.’

‘Sir,’ said the secretary, whose name was Susanna, ‘you’re covered in blood, are you sure you’re alright?’ Jack nodded, and she turned her attention to the doctor. Gruber had indeed just fainted, and she lay her hand on him while whispering his name. ‘Doctor Gruber, Doctor Gruber, please wake up.’ No response. Suddenly, she flicked her wrist and struck the doctor across the face with the back of her hand. ‘GRUBER!’, she yelled; and then she transformed back again to being the sweet buxom secretary. As the doc groaned and slowly came to, Susanna turned her head back and smiled

fiendishly at Jack. There was something conspiratorial in her look. No apology there, just secret gaiety.

The doctor groaned again, and felt around for his glasses. 'Zat felt good,' Gruber exclaimed. 'Wait!', he shrieked. 'Achtung! The snake! The banana went right into your rectum, herr Reagle!'

Susanna looked up and giggled.

'It was a snake!', Gruber shrieked. 'In your rectum!'

Horror befell him and his assistant, and Jack, taken aback by the Doctor's accusatory tone, felt the instinctual need to get the hell out of there. He snatched up the snake, pulled up his bloody pants, yelled 'You people are crazy!', and ran out of the office.

Jack jumped into his car, flinging the floppy snake onto the passenger seat. He drove straight back home, threw the carcass in a dumpster, and got into the shower. Again.

'What the fuck...', he mumbled, rinsing the blood off his body.

And as he rinsed himself, Jack hesitatingly reached his soapy hand into his crack, and felt the now familiar sensation of a snake again. 'Oh, God.'

'Hey Jack! This isn't getting any easier for you, is it buddy?' the snake thing said.

Chapter 5

Prophecy

‘Hold on now Jack, don’t flip out on me again.’ The thing, back in one piece, still smoothly protruding from his ass, took action to keep Jack together this time. It snaked around and locked eyes with Jack again, but this time its gaze had something strange and commanding.

‘Ka! Be still, ka,’ it said. ‘You are calm, ka, you are in control, ka, you are ready to speak with me now, ka.’

Mesmerized (ka?), Jack felt his fear and insanity subside. He was looking at the snake, really seeing into its eyes now, and it was like looking into the eyes of a wise old man. It wasn’t just a snake; there was a real presence in this reptilian visage, with more profundity than most humans Jack had ever met could muster.

‘Ka?’ Jack asked childishly.

‘Never mind that’, the snake said, still holding his gaze. ‘Jack, it’s time we talked. You have obviously noticed my

appearance, and have found it rather disturbing. Hear me now; do not be afraid. I am here to help you.'

Hearing this, we Gods broke out in laughter. 'I'm here to help you,' one God cynically squeaked in imitation, and we laughed some more. 'Fool!', another God scoffed with his scruffy mustache.

'Who...who are you?', Jack asked humbly. 'What are you?'

'I,' said the snake, 'am Foafduk. I am a demon.'

Jack drew in his breath. 'A demon? And you're here to help me?' Jack, still hypnotized, asked unsurely.

'Yes. I was sent by the Gods to help you. You must come to remember who you really are, before it's too late. You see, Jack, you are no mere human. You are from another dimension. You are a God. You are the son of the dark lord, the king of demons, the Devil himself! Sent to Earth to stop the second coming of Christ!'

A dark glow played across the snake's eyes.

'Ah! It can't be!', Jack gasped.

'Nah, you're right. I'm kidding,' the snake chuckled. 'I'm not a demon. And you're not the antichrist. I am...a

figment of your imagination, trying to show you that you've gone bonkers. You've become schizophrenic Jack, and we're gonna be buttbuddies till the day you die! Hah hahaha! You've gone bat shit crazy!

'Uuh, uuh...wha, wha, wait a minute,' Jack protested. 'If I'm bat shit crazy, then how come I'm not laughing? Shouldn't I be laughing hysterically?' he said querulously.

'Ey, very good, Jack. Very good! I say,' said the snake, 'there's a decent head on those shoulders after all. I was kidding again. You're not crazy, just as long as you're able to control yourself when crazy things happen around you.'

Jack smiled dumbly. 'So I'm not crazy, you're really real?', he asked.

'Well... Let's not go there for now. First, let me fill you in on a little bit of history. Come, let's get dressed.'

~

Once dried and properly robed, Jack nestled himself behind his computer. The snake spoke, and Jack listened obediently.

'You are not the first man I've visited, Jack. I have come and gone over the ages, under different names, helping

men found new religions, cultures, and civilizations. I have been the inspirer of man's evolution, sent by the Gods to inhabit a chosen man's body.

'Two thousand years ago, I gave counsel to a Jewish man named Jesus. Before that, I was the daemon whispering into Socrates' ear. I manifested with the Pharaohs, the Mayan kings, the Vedic priests, and the Sumerian priest-kings. I was with Arthur, and Gandhi, and Ashoka before he became Ashoka the Great.

'I was the brain behind Ein...'

'- Wait, wait. Hold it for just one second, uh, snake..'

'I have no name yet in this incarnation. You may choose one for...'

'Beanstalk! Can I call you Beanstalk?', Jack said enthusiastically.

'Hm. If you must,' the snake sighed.

'Uhm, right, okay. So Beanstalk, I'm just wondering out loud here, but – we're you really around when all these people lived? And were you really a snake coming from their behinds?'

'Yes.'

'So, why exactly do you inhabit men's assholes?'

'I...'

The snake cut himself off, then continued;

'It's complicated, Jack. It's just the way it's always been done. Here, let me show you.'

All of a sudden, Jack's hands were moved to grab the mouse, click, and then type on the keyboard. In a flash, his hands had typed out half a dozen url's. Each webpage showed some ancient and esoteric depiction of the snake.

There was the snake coming down the Pharaoh's head ornament; twisted around the staff of Hermes; joined with a jungle bird to form Quetzalcoatl, savior of the Maya's; and there he was, coiled at the base of the spine in a Hindu depiction of the spiritual body.

'You see, Jack,' Beanstalk said, 'I have been the "other half," the hidden voice of wisdom throughout history. There have been many prophecies to foretell of my coming. And yet I have always been the secret of the ages; none have known the truth of my existence but the bearers of my body, and anyone else initiated into my circle has long since been forgotten. I have spoken from the shadows, whispering in men's ears, helping them create a path for others to follow.'

'What about the Garden of Eden? Was that you?', Jack queried.

'Hell no! That story was blamed on a snake by humans who couldn't face up to their own mistakes. They kept buck-passing the blame for the Fall of Mankind until it ended up being some animal's fault. As if! You humans fucked that one up all by yourselves.

'But you see Jack, there has been a tradition for thousands of years. The Gods foretold of the time of my coming in every great era of history. Prophecies, dreams, visitations by angels. This happened every single time.

'Except now. There was no prophecy to place me in your ass, Jack. Something is different this time, and I don't like it. The Gods are up to something.'

'What Gods?', Jack asked, and

WHOOSH,

they were standing, or rather floating, in a dark empty space, infinitely large. Jack could feel nothing around him; no gravity, no air, no breeze. Nearby, a light show of different colors and hues seemed to be huddling together, occasionally darting outwards or across in a flash of blue, red, purple, yellow or green. Coming closer, Jack could discern forms in the lights.

'*These Gods,*' said Beanstalk, and the lights were upon them, squirming around to get a look. Jack saw dozens of eyes, hundreds, staring at him from the strangest bodies. The Gods were constantly changing form, morphing light bodies, becoming everything Jack had ever seen on Earth and in his dreams. Pigs, dogs, elephants, rocks, rivers, amoeba, forks, pyramids, gaseous invertebrates, and all kinds of men and women. He saw Jesus and Buddha holding hands, Julius Caesar, Jimi Hendrix, and random Amerindians, Neanderthals, babies, and trash collectors. Each form lasted less than a split second, and yet each God somehow had a distinctive character. Jack saw them, and felt as though he'd known them intimately all his life.

'He knows us!', said one God.

'Do you know us, Jack?', asked a Goddess. 'Jack!' 'Jack's out of the box,' said a toddler God. One by one all the Gods piped in, and the multitude of voices, shrieks, and noises started to repeat one thing in unison:

'Jack, Jack, Jack, Jack...'

Chapter 6

Expansion

Jack awoke in shock. He was propped up against a tree in the park next to his apartment building. The sun was up, kids were laughing, and two ladies were walking their dogs nearby. Jack was struck by the peacefulness of it all. He'd just had a terrifying and confusing confrontation with a host of Gods in a vacuous dimension, and yet here everything was still chirpy, radiant, and unawares. The world was still just growing along its usual track.

Jack felt something turtling in his underpants, and figured he'd head inside for a crap and some pancakes. But just as soon as he got up, the snake came slithering up to his face.

'Hey Jack, you going somewhere?', it asked. 'Thought you'd relieve the urges and go to the toilet?'

'Eh, well yeah. I hope you don't mind,' said Jack.

'I tell you the truth, Jack, you needn't go to the toilet any more. Not while I'm here. Any time you feel the bodily

urge, it is because I am sending you a signal. A message,' the snake explained.

'Sooo...what, you eat my shit?', asked Jack.

'Jebus, no, don't be so crude! Your feces get absorbed and converted into my body. And to prevent me from growing too large, I regularly shed my skin.'

'Wow, okay. So I'll never have to poo again. I gotta say, that's kind of a relief. I can't stand wiping all the time, you know, especially after you've eaten some Mexican...'

'Yes, thank you Jack,' Beanstalk interrupted. 'Jack, do you remember anything that happened last night? Do you remember the void, and the lights?'

'Hell yeah, I remember!', Jack said loudly. The ladies with their dogs stopped talking for a moment to send him a nasty glare.

'I remember the 'Gods'. Creepy bunch, all morphing and crowding around me. What was that place? And how did I end up here?'

'That,' said the snake, 'was the dimension of the Gods. The overseers of this universe. Not the creators, mind you. Think of them as a confederation of aliens that are watching

Earth. You see, Jack, while you sit here in the shade being mortal and prone to the whims of chance and nature, the Gods are over there watching over everything you do. Sometimes they're happy to watch and see what you do; sometimes they interfere with fate, and end up sending a snake out of your ass. What's more, some of the Gods like you, but some really hate you. They just want to see you fail and suffer. But the ones you really gotta watch out for are in between; the tricksters, who merely want to stir things up and cause chaos.'

Jack thought about this for a moment. 'So, where is that dimension? How did I get there, and how did get here?'

'Well, Jack, remember I was sent by those Gods to cohabit your body with you. I still have one foot in that dimension, so to say. It is not here or there; it is everywhere and nowhere, inside you and all around. The fact that we were sent back into the park, under the tree...well, I suppose they have something planned for us,' said the snake.

'What, like I'm gonna start a new religion right here in the park or something?' Jack scoffed. 'I can't do something like that, you know. I'll lose my job, my friends. I'll starve! Plus nobody would believe me anyway. They'll think I'm crazy. And there's more than enough bullshit religions around already. I don't know anything new.'

SKRRRIIAAAA!! All of a sudden, a menacing squawk pierced Jack's ears, and a wild ruffling of feathers beat around his skull. He felt a pair of talons sinking into his occipital ridge, slowly clutching into the soft flesh of his brain.

Flailing about like a madman, Jack groped and stumbled and batted at his head. He felt the bird that was attacking him, but pulling at it only caused a shearing pain in his head. SQUAW, SKRRI!!! the bird shrieked.

At the same time, the snake was hissing with laughter. It coiled right around Jack's waist and squeezed tight so that Jack rolled to the ground wheezing and wincing with pain. After the snake had subdued him, the bird, whatever it was, calmed down as well, and the grip on his brain subsided.

'Ha, ha ha! I guess that's what the Gods had in mind. It's the eagle of illumination! How you doin', buddy!', Beanstalk said. Squawk!, the bird returned.

Releasing his grip, Beanstalk continued;

'This is the unnamed eagle, Jack. Unnamed eagle, this is Jack. Look, if you keep beating at it and get all worked up, it's gonna get all worked up too and keep beating at you with its wings. Best to stay calm and mindful and it won't bother you.'

'Rochle, rochle...!' Jack scraped his throat before taking a deep breath. He felt his head again with his hand, and touched the feathered beast. 'What the fuck is going on now?' he said carefully. 'There's an eagle in my head?'

'Yes, but don't worry, it doesn't talk. It only squawks now and then. I've worked with him before. You could say it's the Quetzal to my Coatl; the Sahasrara to my Muladhara; the unnamed eagle to my Nidhogg. Look it up; every spiritual and mystical tradition will show you a set of higher and lower Gods, creatures, or spirits. A bird and a snake, the highest and the lowest; Christ and Lucifer, the dove and the serpent. Obviously, we don't always get along,' the snake chuckled.

'Which is why the Gods have made sure I can't reach it, and it can't reach me. In fact, what we've had to do every time so far was to work together, to bundle our energies and our interests for the greater good.'

Jack sat up against the tree again, eyes closed. It was all getting to be a bit too much for him; a snake in his ass, a bird in his brain...

'Why the fuck is this happening to me?', he moaned.

Two tiny paws leaned into his belly, and as Jack looked down, he was looking into the cute and slightly cocked eyes of a squirrel on his tummy.

'Skreh?' it peeped.

Chapter 7

Synchronicity

'Ratatosk! Buddy!', the snake exclaimed. 'Hey, Jack, this is Ratatosk, the mythical squirrel. His job is to relay messages and insults between myself and the unnamed eagle.'

'Great,' said Jack. 'Why don't you show me how it's done,' he said with a cynical measure of defeatism in his voice. The squirrel was still staring at him, with a playful smirk on his squirrely face.

'Sure!,' said the snake, and it whispered something into Ratatosk's ear. The cute little rodent nodded, then scampered up Jack's torso. With its squirrely mouth closer to Jack's ear than he would have liked, it delivered the first insult: a piercing 'RRIEH!' right in Jack's ear.

'Good God,' Jack winched, his ears buzzing from the shrill squeak. Of course the eagle couldn't leave the insult unanswered, and it sent another 'Skrieh!' back down. This went on for a few minutes, the squirrel scampering up and

down, squeaking and pawing with its tippy toes on Jack's increasingly tense body.

'FFFFUUUCK!' Jack finally snapped. All three beasts froze instantly. 'Is this supposed to ease my mind? Or teach me some spiritual truth? I'm going nuts all over again here.'

'Reh?', Ratatosk squeaked at the mention of nuts.

'Oh, right,' said Beanstalk. 'Sorry Jack, it's just we haven't seen each other in some time....and you know how easy it is to get stuck in old patterns.'

'Look,' Beanstalk said sheepishly, 'the thing is, like I said, there was no warning for any of this to happen. No prophecy, no plan. We've got no purpose here, as far as I can tell. Right now we're just a struggle in your mind, while we should be helping you to find a direction for your soul. I'm real sorry about this.'

With things a bit calmer now, Jack got to his feet and started walking through the park.

'So,' he said, 'you don't know why you're here, or the unnamed eagle or the squirrel' – 'Ratatosk' – 'right. And because you have no purpose here, you're making things worse than they are?'

'Yep,' the snake concurred.

'Right on. So I've gotta find a way to reign you guys in,' said Jack. As he spoke, they came up some kids riding ponies in the park.

'Reign him in, Jeanie,' he heard the instructor say. 'Remember to let the animal do what it wants, unless it gets too cheeky. Just show it where to go.'

'Heh, heh. Nice coincidence,' said Jack.

WHACK. The eagle beat him over the head.

'Dumbass, ' said Beanstalk.

'Huh?'

'Dumbass. Do you know where that word comes from?'

'No?', Jack said, annoyed.

'From the Middle East. It refers to people who aren't paying attention to what's going on around them. Dumbass – that's you.'

'What are you talking about, Beanstalk?' Jack asked quizzically.

'That coincidence just now, with the tiny horse and the tiny human on top of it – you said 'reign in', and the instructor said 'reign in' right after. What in the fifth sun's name do you think a coincidence is? Shut up – I don't want to hear it. You're going to say something about chance, luck, probabilities, or accidents. Eagle, is Jack a dumbass?'

The bird seemed to agree, because it gave Jack another good wallop over his skull.

'God! So what then? What is this about?'

'Jack, you've got a snake, an eagle, and a squirrel on your sorry carcass now. It's time you started paying attention to the stranger things in this world. This 'coincidence' – or anything you refer to as chance – is not some meaningless occurrence in your boring life. It is yet another message from the Gods. It's intervention. You're supposed to pay attention to it and learn something from it.

'I'm talking about synchronicity Jack. Meaningful coincidences. Everything in the universe happens because it is meant to happen - because it is designed to happen - but only sometimes do you humans notice it. Because some events stand out. You noticed this one. Now learn the lesson.'

'Okay,' Jack mulled it over. 'So, she said what I said. What's the lesson then, that I've got to learn to be like a horse rider, at one with my beasts – my body?'

'Right. You got that already. Okay, dude, well then, let's see how far you can take the concept.'

'No problem,' Jack smiled. 'Remember, I'm the one who's chosen by the Gods. All I've got to do is point myself in their direction, and synchronicities should happen automatically.'

'Now be quiet for a moment, the eagle is trying to tell me something.'

Jack stood still on the crossroads in the middle of the park and closed his eyes. His head felt like it was swirling around in circles, slowly lifting him from the ground. The swirling stopped and he opened his eyes. Jack's confidence was growing. Stepping out of the park, he came upon a street with little shops.

'I think this eagle does more than you give him credit for,' Jack said. 'Watch what he just taught me.'

In fact, it wasn't the eagle that was speaking to Jack. We had spoken through the eagle, to get Jack ready for the next episode. The Gods were still playing with him.

'Hmm, let's see. We should start with something ridiculous. You know something that I've always wanted? To have one of those tritons like Neptune,' Jack said. 'A triton like Neptune's got, please.'

Not a split second later, Jack walked past a dumpster with a toy triton sticking out of it. He pulled it out, and then pointed it at the nearest shop. It was a shop full of toys and trinkets, the useless kind that you'd never think would sell enough to keep a store in business.

'Okay! Time for some fun. You know what force of nature I fear the most? The one with the most ridiculous, random power? Lightning!', Jack said, and a flash struck the store with a blast. The squirrel flipped. People ran around screaming in fear. The shop started burning, and all the plastic toys melted, belching out a toxic cloud of smoke.

'Those are some nasty dark clouds. If only we had some rain!', Jack said, and as he stepped into the store, the sprinklers went off. The toys started to solidify again, but were now melted together into a giant conglomerate of plastic animals, robots, and a children's tool set. It was as if some nut case had played volcano in his children's playroom.

The snake looked at the scene in disbelief.

'That, my dear Beanstalk,' said Jack, 'is synchronicity at its finest. Everything is happening at once, and I am all of it. So I can get everything I want, when I want. As long as I know that I want it. At least, that's what the eagle said. And it works!'

The shopkeeper, an old neurotic fellow with a panicked look, came storming out of the back room. 'Oh all the Gods, this is terrible! Shiva, Vishnu, Ganesh, what misfortune have you brought upon me!' he clamored, shaking his head in all directions.

Jack put a hand on the man's shoulder, and as he looked at the man, the eagle's wings rose, the squirrel pulled his paw up like a hunting dog, and the snake uncoiled from his waist.

Jack wielded the triton. Then he had eight arms, and the head of an elephant. Each hand held a different object, from a knife to a shell to a drum. 'Namaste, mister Mandir. You, sir,' said Jack, 'have been visited by misfortune because the Gods are displeased with your plastic shit. Mend your ways.'

Jack left the man in a mute stupor, then took to the street again.

'Let's try it again,' he said. 'We need some more interaction to see how this works.' Turning around, a lady bumped into him in her rush.

'Pardon me,' she said disinterestedly. She was carrying several flashy bags with new designer clothes.

Now Jack transformed into a male model, wearing the low-cut v-neck shirt of a brand she had just bought. She looked up, saw him, and blushed. Then he became the designer himself, with a little cigarette and a silly mustache.

'My pleasure, madam,' Jack said. 'I only hope some of your good taste has rubbed off a bit on me.'

'Oh my!' the lady chirped, deeply impressed, her cheeks thoroughly blushing. She was ready to worship him.

'Here, now let me rub you too, but the wrong way,' Jack said, and he turned into a bum, giving off a foul stench of beer, urine, and sweat. This sent the lady back in a recoil of disgust. 'Get away from me!' she yelled hysterically, running off.

'No need,' Jack said to her back.

'You know what,' Jack said resolutely, 'I think I've figured it all out now.'

And WHOOSH, he was back in the dark void again. The light beings gathered around again, carefully this time. Jack let them come, floating comfortably in the dreary emptiness.

Chapter Eight

Gods

‘Gods!’ Jack proclaimed. ‘I know your game!’

A shock wave passed through the luminescent spirits. An oozy booger thing rolled up and said, ‘What do you know, Jack?’

‘I know everything.

‘I know you chose me, for no reason, to carry the spiritual force of the masters of history. I know you have been watching me all my life. The assholes amongst you sent me the snake, to literally scare the shit out of me. The nice ones sent me the eagle, to balance the earthly wisdom of the snake. And the tricksters sent me the squirrel!’

‘Skweh?’ the squirrel chirped.

‘And I know,’ Jack continued, ‘that I have become just like you. I saw all of you transforming. I’m one of your faces, and with the spirit guides you sent me, I learned to change my face like you do. I can become any God, any man, woman, beast or thing; I can become anything somebody else wants to

see in me, and make them feel good inside. Or I can become what they dread the most, and terrify them.'

'Right so far, Jack,' said the ooze, who had now become a swan. 'But that's only a part of the truth. You said you knew our game. So what is it?'

'Huh! Your game. I didn't know why at first, but you Gods said I knew you, and that I was out of the box. Well, there's your game, ma'am! Jack in the box, the surprise, the synchronicity. Snake told me everything. You watch, and when you're tired and bored with us humans, you interfere. You send messages and signs to fuck with our minds.'

'Snake! Eagle! Squirrel!' the swan, who was now George Bush Sr. said, and the beasts departed from Jack's body to rejoin the Gods.

'And why, Jack, do we play this game? Why do *you* play this game? Did snake or eagle tell you that?' said what was now a Native American wise woman.

'Uhm, well no, I don't know.'

'That's right! You don't know! Eehihihihhi!' the God, in the form of the snively rat from Jabba the Hutt's lair, laughed.

“Now you will know the truth,” a pair of dice told him, and they rolled up between his feet. They exploded like grenades, enveloping him in smoke.

A big fat Cheshire smile ranged into view through the smoke, bursting into a million fragments of gold. Each of the fragments reflected a million transforming forms. Then they collected again into two arrows, which came straight at him. It seemed like they stood still in time, but Jack couldn't move. The arrows pierced his eyes. They turned him inside out, pulling at his skin with the frills at the tail of their shafts. Once pulled all the way through he was inside a new 'outside', which used to be his brain.

Here Jack saw a bottle with a universe in it. There was a little boy trying to pull it from the bottle. The boy looked up, and had the same Cheshire smile on his face as the cloud.

An enormous motherly figure walked up to the boy, shaped like the Venus figurines from the Stone Age.

“Jack, son, stop playing with the cosmos, it's bed time,” she said. Then she noticed him, and said, “Oh Jack, you're back already.” Then she blew him a primordial kiss, and Jack was back in the void again. George Bush Jr took him by the arm and said,

‘You see, son, you've been at it for a while. You play the game same as all of us, and you do it because you don't know any better!’

‘You mean...I, I'm a trickster?’ Jack said incredulously.

‘Remember what snake said?’ said a whiskered fish with a southern Chinese accent. ‘First, that you were the devil incarnate. Then, that you were nuts. Then, that you were a purposeless prophet of evolution.’

‘Eh, sort of, yeah?’

‘Well, it's all true! You *are* one of us – you sent yourself down to Earth to become Jack Reagle, unprophecied non-savior of the twenty-first century. You wanted something new, something postmodern and crazy. You wanted the body, mind and spirit of the Gods to be a living trickster, to put on a hell of a show for the rest of us!’

‘Shut it!’ Jack lurched and grabbed the God, who was now an alpaca, by the throat. “I remember now! I had only just gotten started! Send me back! I remember everything now. I *am* everything. I *know* everything! I am a GOD!

‘Wait a minute Jack,’ a chocolate cake Goddess said, but Jack wasn't listening.

‘Snake, you sonbitch, I know it all! I’m gonna do some crazy shit down there. Send me back!’

And WHOOSH, Jack was at home again, sitting on his toilet. He could feel the power flowing through his veins. He stood up, grinned a toothy grin, and reared his head back in laughter.

But then his memories started to fade. He could feel them go pop one by one, as if someone were pulling them out of his brain. ‘No, no, no no!’ he yelled, and he sat down again as his world came crumbling down.

Finally Beanstalk came slithering out of his ass again.

‘Rraahh! What the ffuuuck!’ Jack exclaimed.

‘What, you don’t remember me, Jack?’ Beanstalk said.

‘Waah! I don’t know what the fuck is going on!’

Beanstalk smiled a desolate, Cheshire smile.

‘That’s right, Jack,’ the snake said, slowly returning to his den. “You don’t know Jack...”

The End