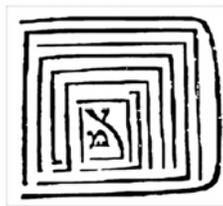




(For Mad Men Only)

BY

DOC BENTON



Dedicated to Allen Billy Crider

“You made me a better person.”

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Chapter 1

Doc Benton had just finished the new sign for his office door, and he was pretty pleased with the way it looked:

Doc Benton, PhD

Public Dick

“Solving Tomorrow’s Mysteries Today!”

Doc Benton has a PhD in mathematics, and he taught in community colleges in Texas for several years up until just a few years ago when he retired. As a mathematician, Doc had specialized in group theory which is a branch of higher abstract algebra. However, when asked about it by his clients, he would just say that it’s the mathematics of symmetry and permutations and that it’s also the mathematics behind Rubik’s cube. That answer was usually satisfying enough for the ordinary person who is still wondering how a mathematician can ever say something like " $x = y$ " when anyone with a lick of common sense knows that x is x and y is y and therefore x is not y . However, one of the most unfortunate things about the universe is that common sense often does not apply.

Back in the small town in Texas that Doc and his wife, Shoshan, had once lived in, Doc had struck up a friendship with the local sheriff and had even taken to helping the sheriff use Doc’s huge intellect to solve many of the local crimes. As Doc saw it, the trick to helping the sheriff was to make him think that he had really done it all on his own. Doc knew better, but, of course, the sheriff had his own opinion of who the brain of the operation was. And maybe the sheriff was right.

Since retiring, Doc and his wife had moved to Arizona, but nonetheless, Doc greatly missed his friend the sheriff. These days there are a lot of stories in the news about lawmen and lawwomen who abuse their power, but the sheriff that Doc knew was different from that. He was a good and upstanding example of the best of the human race, and he took seriously his duty to protect and to serve. In particular, he rarely used his

weapon, and he never ever shot anyone in the back while they were running away. The sheriff's first line of defense was always talking. He was one of the good guys, and Doc missed him terribly. Nevertheless, Doc knew that Arizona was the place where he was now supposed to be.

In retirement, Benton got diddly from the social security administration plus squat from the state's teacher retirement system. In fact, given how little he got in social security, he was often a little bemused when members of Congress who were going to get six figure salaries when they retired would stand up and pronounce that social security payments would have to be reduced if we wanted the system to remain solvent. "Maybe if we just built one less big weapon each year, then the government could use that money to keep the retirees alive," thought Benton to himself. Of course, for now that's probably just wishful thinking. Fortunately, Doc Benton had also been much better at investing over the years than his fellow baby boomers, and as a result he currently had over \$1.5 million dollars in investments. And while that may sound like a lot, it might have to last him and Shoshan for two or three decades, and their future is also dependent on decent annual returns in the market. What goes up can also come down. Most recently, the bears have been bad to the bulls, and as a result the market has been sputtering for several months. There were some months during the past year during which Benton made over \$30,000, but then there were others during which he lost over \$50,000. As usual, the stock market is either boom or bust. But as Doc Benton keeps telling his wife, "I have enough money to last us until we die because once I run out of money, we die!" It's hard to argue with logic like that.

To supplement his retirement, Doc finally decided to put his sleuthing skills to good use, and so he opened up his own detective agency. Of course, most people in such a position would call themselves private eyes, but as Doc saw it, he was here to serve the public and so he used the word "public" instead of "private." And as for the word "dick," that word has had multiple meanings throughout history, only one of which refers to detective work. Nonetheless, Doc Benton suspected that all the various meanings of that word had

applied to him at one time or another, and so he felt a moral obligation to own up to it.
And if anyone ever wants to argue the point, he's always happy to dicker!

Chapter 2

Doc Benton believes in multiple realities, possibly one for each path not taken in this one. And in one of those realities he suspects that he is an illegal alien from the planet Krypton who came to Earth with powers far beyond those of mortal men. However, instead of donning a pair of blue tights and a cape, he works much more discretely and in the shadows. More specifically, in the dark of the night, he dons attire that looks more like something that the 1930s sleuth the Shadow would wear, and he then flies to the nation's capital. There, from a safe perch some distance away, he uses his heat vision to burn to a crisp the brains of those members of government who routinely engage in corruption and lies. However, unlike Superman's glowing red heat vision, Doc's is in the infrared range and is invisible to human eyes. Thus, no one notices anything until a Congressman suddenly complains about the excessive heat in the room. Furthermore, it usually takes at least a week after having their brains fried for any of their staff to notice. That's what happens when you don't use much of your brain to begin with. And then after about a month, the whole public suddenly notices that the government across the board is functioning much better as a result of the brains of brainless idiots being eliminated. Consequently, no one has any real complaints about Doc's clandestine activities in that reality. And the end result is universal healthcare, free college, and world peace. In what Doc calls Reality Prime that's just a fantasy, but in another realm that follows different laws of physics, it just might be true. Nevertheless, it's probably a very good thing that Doc doesn't have superpowers in this realm or even own a gun. Neither *God* nor nature nor the world of men should ever make it too easy for one person to take another person's life.

Chapter 3

Doc and Shoshan had moved from Texas to Arizona for one simple reason. Doc had cancer, cannabis could cure it, and the state of Texas, unlike Arizona, is a real dick when it comes to medical marijuana. Thus, Doc and Shoshan packed up their bags and moved to Scottsdale where Shoshan had been born.

To be specific, Doc has prostate cancer, but the good news is that it is non-aggressive and very small in volume. Thus, Doc and his urologist, Dr. Buns, opted for a treatment plan called “active surveillance.” In other words, keep an eye on it, and don’t do anything drastic unless things take a turn for the worse. This seemed to Doc and his urologist to be the best course of action since surgery on the prostate can have a lot of unintended consequences. In particular, Doc’s father had been operated on for prostate cancer, and he never ever regained full control of his bladder after that. And that certainly isn’t how Doc wants to wind up if he can avoid it. He has no desire to depend on Depends. Thus, he did a lot of research on what alternative treatments might help, and he reviewed dozens of statistical studies. These days physicians like to say that they practice “evidence based” medicine which is just their way of saying that they do whatever the statistical studies say they should do. However, Doc has far more experience in the field of statistics than most medical doctors, and so there may actually be times when he has a better understanding of what’s best to do when it comes to statistics-based treatment recommendations.

Doc was particularly excited about studies he came across on cannabis as a cancer treatment. In a nutshell, he learned that the body contains two types of receptors for the cannabinoids in marijuana, CB1 receptors and CB2 receptors. The CB1 receptors are usually found in the brain and nervous system while the CB2 receptors are found in the other organs. Overall, these receptors are part of what is now known as the body’s endocannabinoid system, and it appears that the primary purpose of the endocannabinoid system is to keep the body in homeostasis, or in other words, on an even keel. And that is why marijuana has so many medical applications. When used properly, it helps restore a

lot of systems in the body to balance. Doc was looking forward to a little balance in his life.

When he first got his medical marijuana card, Doc was surprised at how much it looked like a Sam's Club card, and when he went to a nearby dispensary, he noticed how civilized it is to buy marijuana legally and openly over the counter. But because of the impediments to research in this country, he had to try several different strains and several different ways of dosing until he found what seemed to work best for him. In the end, he settled on a form of concentrated cannabis oil that is known as Rick Simpson's Oil or more simply by the initials RSO. His usual method of treatment is to take a drop of RSO on the end of a toothpick late at night twice a week. Generally, Doc takes a preparation that contains just as much CBD as THC. This is because CBD tends to inhibit the ability of the THC to bind with the CB1 receptors in the brain, and this results in an experience that is more relaxing for the body and less hallucinogenic. Once every week or two, however, he'll add to this dose a drop of high THC Rick Simpson's Oil in order to provide a little extra stimulation to the brain. In particular, this helps the brain build new pathways, and psychologically it seems to clear out a lot of the more neurotic patterns in the brain. The only caveat is that the amygdala, which controls fear and the fight-or-flight response, also has a lot of CB1 receptors in it, and thus, an excess of THC can also result in a few hours of anxiety. Again, the antidote to this is to always take a good dose of CBD along with THC since CBD suppresses the tendency of THC to bind with any receptors that might cause anxiety, and generally speaking, these two cannabinoids enhance the beneficial functionality of one another. As Doc Benton often says, "No THC without CBD, and no CBD without THC."

It's been a few years now since Doc has been taking RSO for prostate cancer, and even though his prostate is now the size of a small asteroid, his cancer seems to have dropped to almost non-detectable levels. Additionally, Doc has observed many other benefits to cannabis use. It is a natural analgesic and anti-inflammatory. As you get older, chronic pain tends to creep up on you so slowly that you don't even realize it's happening. However, when you take some cannabis and sleep like a baby for the first time in years,

you suddenly realize just how much pain you've been carrying around. Furthermore, many of the ailments of old age are a byproduct of inflammation in the body, so a substance that simultaneously reduces both pain and inflammation is a godsend for senior citizens.

Now this doesn't mean that cannabis can never be misused, and there is certainly a lot of potential for abuse. In particular, neither cannabis nor alcohol are good things for teenagers to use recreationally. Teenage brains are still developing, and we don't know for sure what the long term effects of using cannabis at such a young age are. And besides, teenagers have much more important things to focus on like math and literature and learning to write well. Thus, at that age, it's much better to use math to get high!

Cannabis can turn off the left brain for awhile and enhance the functioning of the right brain, and that is something that many in our society are sorely in need of. Many of us live under what Doc calls the tyranny of the left brain. Our left brains analyze and interpret reality for us, and while that is very useful, the left brain, nonetheless, likes to erroneously convince us that it knows the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. However, if we don't use our right brains, too, then we're basically just a half-wit. The right hemisphere of the brain also has a lot of valuable things to teach us simply by allowing us to observe reality in a way that is different from that of the left brain. However, if one becomes the stereotypical stoner as depicted in the movies, then that is also not so good. If you use only your right brain and never your left brain, then you're still just a half-wit!

The bottom line, as Doc Benton sees it, is that marijuana is a medicine that people use for recreation while alcohol is a poison that people use for recreation. Also, it's not good to combine alcohol with marijuana. That combination just seems to bring out the worst in both substances. As Doc's peers frequently said back in the good ol' hippie sixties, "Drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana together is like pissing into the wind!"

Chapter 4

Shoshan and Doc ran their detective business out of their home, and since they're both retired, they didn't see that much business and they didn't care much one way or another about the lack of a steady stream of clients. It was just something fun to do to bring in a little extra cash. Hence, whenever they weren't being so Sherlocky, they had plenty of other things to occupy themselves with. Doc usually alternated between studying mathematics, guitar, and rabbinic literature while Shoshan would engage in political commentary on twitter. And in this pursuit, Shoshan had been quite successful. Unlike Doc, she generally responded to people with very well thought out logical arguments, and this has resulted in more than one member of Congress deciding to follow her twitter feed. Additionally, a few well-known celebrities like Seth MacFarlane and His Royal Highness Prince Harry of Great Britain have also begun following her. The strength of her logic is changing the world for better! As for Doc, he usually responds to political opponents with the phrase, "Eat shit, Mother Fucker!" That expression always seems remarkably clever to him at the time, but it's doubtful that it has really changed the world for better.

In retrospect one might look back on this particular work day and ask, "Why is this Monday different from all other Mondays?" This Monday was different because she walked in. A woman in her mid-thirties. Attractive, intelligent, and poised. And rich, very rich.

"May we help you?" said Shoshan.

"I'm looking for a good dick," replied the woman.

"Then you've come to the right place," said Shoshan with a smirk on her face before passing the conversation over to her husband.

Meanwhile, Doc was tempted to imagine that all sorts of double-entendres were being made, but instead he kept his composure and assumed that they were just talking about his ability as a sleuth for hire.

“And who might we be addressing?” said Doc.

“My name is Trulee Strange,” replied the woman.

Again, Doc was tempted to respond with something like, “I know you are, but what am I?”

The woman, however, quickly continued with some clarification. “That’s T-r-u-l-e-e, Trulee, and Strange is my surname. I’m a direct descendant of the 4th Baron of Strange.”

“Well, it’s certainly a pleasure to meet you, Miss Strange,” said Doc. “What can we do for you today?”

“I’m looking for a missing person, someone who has been missing for a very, very long time, and I thought you could help me,” replied Miss Strange. “I’m looking for *God*.”

Doc paused for a minute and then said, “Have you looked behind you?”

Chapter 5

Doc was actually very aware of the Strange family history because he himself was also a direct descendant of Roger Strange, the 4th Baron of Strange. He also knew the story of where the “Strange” surname came from. According to an ancient tale known as “*The Romance of Fouke le fitz Warine*,” a noble man in England from the time of William the Conqueror decided to arrange a jousting tournament in order to find a suitor for his niece, Mellette. Young men came from all over England in hopes of winning Mellette’s hand, and one guy named “Guy” came all the way from France to participate in this tournament. Furthermore, since Guy was a stranger in a strange land, the locals called him “Guy the stranger.” Well, as luck would have it, Mellette fell in love with Guy, Guy was victorious, and the two were soon married. Additionally, because everyone referred to Guy as “the stranger,” he came to be called “Guy le Strange” and then latter simply “Guy Strange.”

Doc had always liked this ancestor and the surname “Strange” because he thought it legitimized aspirations he had of calling himself “Doctor Strange.” And he also thought briefly about telling Trulee Strange that he was a distant cousin of hers, but then on second thought he decided that this was on a need to know basis only, and right now she didn’t really need to know. And so Doc made a contract with her, but kept that little tidbit of ancestry information to himself for now.

Even though Trulee Strange was quite wealthy (She was the answer to Doc’s perennial questions about his own royal ancestry: “Where’s my castle? Where’s my wealth?”), Doc, nonetheless, never charged anyone more than he and Shoshan needed. Thus, his only fee was \$50 a day for labor plus \$1.50 per day for lunch at Costco. That was all he needed. A little extra cash plus a hot dog and Dr. Pepper from Costco. Anything beyond that would be just pure greed.

“I’ll be happy to take your case, Miss Strange. This may take some time, maybe over a year, but you won’t be disappointed. When it comes to *God*, you can rest assured that I’ll find the little devil!” uttered Doc.

“Good,” said Trulee Strange. “As soon as I saw you, I knew you were a dick who wouldn’t let me down.”

Chapter 6

Doc and Shoshan both have Jewish ancestry, Doc's being matrilineal while Shoshan's is patrilineal. However, they are both descended from several other peoples, too. Doc also has a lot of English, Scottish, Irish, French, Spanish, German, Moroccan, and even a little bit of Choctaw in him. In particular, he and Shoshan are descended from many of the kings and queens of England, Scotland, and France. Doc used to be quite proud of his royal ancestors, but now that he knows more about their history, he knows that many of them were little shits who were responsible for a lot of crimes against humanity. Many of his ancestors, both royal and non-royal, lived violent lives that involved a lot of killing until they, too, got killed. Thus, if Doc can just make it through this life without killing anyone, he'll call it a success!

There are a few highlights from Doc's ancestry that he does, nonetheless, enjoy for various reasons. For example, he's a direct descendant of Lady Godiva, the woman who rode naked through a town on a horse in order to protest taxes. He's always admired her for that just as he's always been perplexed by most people's attitudes toward the human body. A person who prefers to be naked is generally called a "nudist" and is seen as far from the norm. However, Doc sees things just the opposite. He would argue that not wearing clothes is what is normal for creatures on this planet, and rather than creating words like "nudist," he thinks we should perhaps be talking about "clotheists" to describe those that are uncomfortable with their physical husk. In any case, he greatly admires his ancestor Lady Godiva, even though he himself often sings, "I don't look good naked anymore!"

Another ancestor he likes is William Marshal who is known as the greatest knight that ever lived. He was the living embodiment of the ideals of chivalry, and he brokered the agreement between King John and the barons of that time that became known as the Magna Carta. William Marshal joined the Knights Templar in his old age, and he is interred in Temple Church in London, England. Doc and Shoshan are hoping to make it there someday.

Doc is also a direct ancestor of William Sinclair who built Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland, and Shoshan is descended from William Sinclair's sister. According to the story in the popular novel "The Da Vinci Code," Jesus and Mary Magdalene got married and had kids, and the Sinclair (alternatively St. Clare) family of Scotland was heir to this bloodline. So if you believe this tale, then that would make Doc a direct descendant of Jesus. Well, that may make things a little awkward for Doc at the synagogue, but he's decided he can live with that!

Doc is also one of those rare Jews descended from about thirty Catholic saints, but upon doing a little digging, he found out why. We usually think of a saint as someone who attains that position because of unmatched piety and loving kindness. However, many of Doc's non-Jewish ancestors wound up as saints simply because they gave a lot of money to the building fund! This occurred during the early days of the church, and a lot of his ancestors at that time were rich enough to pay for the building of a church in their metropolis, and sainthood seems to have been their reward. However, one of the saints in his family tree that Doc truly does admire is Saint Margaret, Princess of Wessex and Queen of Scotland. She really did devote her whole life to treating the sick and helping the poor.

If you spend a lot of time on genealogy, then you eventually realize that once you get back around a thousand years, it gets hard to separate fact from fantasy. One case in point is Doc's ancestry that goes back to the House of Wessex, the first royal house in England. These kings were of Saxon descent, and the ancient Saxon Chronicles traces their lineage from England back to Saxony in Northern Germany, and ultimately to the *God* Odin, himself. Consequently, Doc is simultaneously a Jew and a descendant of a pagan *God*. Again, that does make things a little awkward at the synagogue, but nonetheless, he manages. Plus, he really enjoys all those movies about his Uncle Thor!

DNA evidence suggests that Doc's German Jewish roots extend eventually back to the Jewish Berbers of Morocco. According to legend, after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, some of the Jewish survivors of the Roman siege made their way

straight across Africa to Algiers and Morocco. And many of those who made it to Morocco eventually adopted the lifestyle of the Berbers, thus resulting in tribes of Jewish Berbers. Doc often imagines his ancestors singing “The Riff Song” like Gordon MacRae in the movie “The Desert Song.”

Once Shoshan and Doc got back around 300 years in their respective family trees, they began to discover a lot of common ancestors, and even when they didn’t have ancestors in common, they often had ancestors who were friends of one another. For example, two of their ancestors came over to this country together on the Mayflower. Another pair, “Mad Jack” Oldham and Robert Seeley founded the town of Wethersfield, Connecticut, together. And back in England at the trial of Guy Fawkes for the crime of trying to blow up parliament and the king, Doc’s ancestor was the judge and Shoshan’s ancestor was the prosecuting attorney. Guy Fawkes didn’t stand a chance! For Doc and Shoshan, though, all these ancestors and ancestor friends that they have in common are just another way in which the universe is trying to show them that they are connected and belong together. As Doc experiences it, every thing in this universe is connected with everything else, and that’s what’s going to enable him to eventually find *God!*

Chapter 7

Doc was certain that he had met *God* before because if he hadn't, then how could he possibly know that *God* exists? Thus, as Doc saw it, giving *God's* existence the benefit of the doubt was tantamount to believing that he and *God* had actually crossed paths before. All he needed to do was to simply remember when and where. Consequently, Doc prepared to embark on a procedure known as *recapitulation*.

The technique of *recapitulation* had been described to the public a long time ago by the late author and anthropologist Carlos Castaneda. It involved meticulously remembering and reviewing everything that had happened to you in your life. Of course, when Doc was young, he hardly saw this as a spiritual practice. To him and many others of his generation, spiritual practice involved chanting in Sanskrit and mentally repeating a mantra and raising one's kundalini to the point of spiritual orgasm. To a young man of twenty, the value of remembering one's life was not immediately apparent. However, as an old man, Doc now saw tremendous value in this and other practices that he used to discount. The reality is that we're all pretty screwed up in a million different ways. In fact, upon realizing that he is currently the best, brightest, and most intelligent version of himself, Doc has also realized that this means that all of his earlier selves were pretty much assholes in one way or another. Thus, to advance spiritually we eventually have to undo a lot of the internal knots we've tied ourselves in, understand the mistakes we've made, and eventually let go of all the fear and anger that we may be holding onto, and that's what *recapitulation* does for you. It forces you to face your own actions and to admit who you really are. And if in the process Doc finds *God*, then so much the better.

The stories of Carlos Castaneda and his alleged adventures with the Yaqui shaman Don Juan were very popular in the late sixties, seventies, and much of the eighties, but today's generation of millennials seems to have largely forgotten his existence. Most millennials have also forgotten many other things that were integral parts of the culture that Doc grew up in such as who Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were. The typical young person that Doc encounters is as ignorant of our cultural history as they are of the quadratic

formula or how to solve a second degree polynomial equation by completing the square. That ignorance really bothered Doc when it came to millennials, but on the other hand, he was also very pleased that the millennial generation seemed, on the whole, to be far more liberal and less divided by race than even his hippie generation of the late sixties was. Doc grew up in the days of segregation in the South when they would even have separate water fountains at stores for blacks and whites. He vividly remembers being at the local grocery store with his older brother when they were both preschoolers, and his brother would drink from one water fountain and then the other and then exclaim, “I don’t get it. They taste exactly the same!” And that is the beauty of little children. They often see truths that adults work hard to bury, and the truth here was that just as there was no difference between the waters coming out of the two fountains, there is likewise no racial difference in humans with different skin colors. To call someone with darker skin a different race is as stupid as calling blond or red haired people a different race. It’s just dumb and it has no support in genetics. But anyway, while the millennial generation is far from perfect, so was his own baby boomer generation, and like it or not, the time has come for the job of taking care of the world to be passed on from the baby boomers to the millennials. Doc hopes they learn well both from what the baby boomers did right and from what they did wrong. And Doc hopes they also learn about the quadratic formula and Fred and Ginger. Some things should never be forgotten!

As Doc sees it, the act of *recapitulation* or remembering things is also a form of time travel. As Doc often says, “The secret to time travel is to first realize that time does not exist.” To the vast majority of us, the passage of time is a given, but a few physicists, led notably by Julian Barbour, have now come to the conclusion that time does not exist, and Doc further realized that that’s also what makes time travel possible. In other words, if all that exists is “now,” then time travel simply involves recreating the “now” that you experienced at some point in your so-called past. Of course, recreating every single nuance of the past is quite, quite difficult, but it is fairly easy to recreate some aspects of the past, and that results in what Doc calls “partial time travel.” For instance, Doc doesn’t have the power to recreate every aspect of some scene from the early seventies in Austin, Texas, but if he buys and plugs in a lava lamp, then he’s already halfway there!

The more parts of a point in time he recreates, the more he has traveled back to that time. But in *recapitulation*, it's all done in the mind, and hopefully his memories will lead him to *God*.

Before getting started, however, Doc decided to make a stop at his neighborhood marijuana dispensary to pick up some medicine. In particular, he wanted to try a new strain called "The Doctor" which on the marijuana periodic table is just abbreviated as "Doc." He's quite sure that this strain was named after him, and, furthermore, Doc often felt that one of the best things about being a senior citizen was getting 10% discounts on both tacos and marijuana. He certainly didn't want to let "Marijuana Monday" and "Taco Tuesday" go to waste!

Chapter 8

Doc prepared himself for time travel back to seventies, and his first task in this preparation was to turn on his lava lamp. This particular lamp had a silver base, and it contained white wax floating in a blue aqueous solution. These were what Doc thought of as Jewish colors. Blue and white as in the Israeli flag and also many prayer shawls and then silver in representation of the moon. The ancient rabbis saw Judaism as being symbolized by the nighttime, silver, and the moon, while many other cultures have more of a correspondence with daytime, gold, and the sun. During the day, the sun is bright, and our focus is on the external world of objects. But during nighttime, the world of exterior objects fades into the background, and we are enveloped in a spiritual stillness, what the ancient rabbis called *hashmal*, “the speaking silence.” In Judaism, the nighttime is a very spiritual time, and to emphasize this, we use a type of lunar calendar while most other nations reckon their time according to a solar calendar. Not that one is really better than the other. It’s just how we roll!

After the lava lamp was well into its thing, Doc sat down in his ergonomic motorized leather reclining chair, moved it into full reclining position, and he then began to recite, “There’s no place like Austin. There’s no place like Austin.” And before you could say “Julie Andrews,” Doc did, indeed, find himself back in Austin, Texas, circa 1970! But before we tell you what happened next, here’s a little background information.

Doc had been interested in meditation and spiritual paths from a very young age, and he had even read the *Bhagavad Gita* while still in elementary school. Nevertheless, it had always been something of just a casual hobby while growing up given that he had never really encountered anyone else with similar interests. However, when he began college in 1970, initially at the University of Houston, it was common to see the *Hare Krishnas* on campus chanting and passing out literature, and for the first time Doc knew that there were people in this world who took spirituality very seriously.

Doc also loved chanting *Hare Krishna*, and frankly, what's not to love? He would often go to the local *Hare Krishna Temple* on weekends to sing and dance and to partake of their free feast of vegetarian Indian food. The chanting and their strawberry incense would envelope him, and while he couldn't say exactly where it transported him, it was a place he liked. One night, the *Hare Krishnas* even invited him to experience a little taste of their own lifestyle by letting him spend the night at the temple and getting up by at least 5 a.m. to spend a few hours chanting. They even gave him his own official *Hare Krishna bean bag* for his chanting beads, his *japa mala*, and Doc still has that bag to this day. So, even though the *Hare Krishna* organization eventually experienced their own internal problems, as do many organizations, Doc still loved that simple life of singing, chanting, and eating free food. Nothing wrong with that!

When Doc was in high school, he and his friend Mikey were sure about two things. Neither of them had ever had a religious experience, and neither of them had ever experienced sex. When Doc moved to Austin, at least one of those things was about to change. Doc was walking one day around the University of Texas campus, just before the start of the fall semester, when he suddenly felt his heart explode with an ecstatic joy and energy. Sometimes this heart joy would be triggered by the beauty of a particular fountain he saw on campus, but whenever he would try to examine this experience rationally, that very effort seemed to shut down the experience, and Doc would then feel a tremendous loss. Concomitant with this encounter was that Doc suddenly understood everything that the poet Walt Whitman had ever talked about. He understood intimately what Walt meant when he wrote in *Song of Myself*:

*I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,
It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd them,
It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the indolent waves,
I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,
Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in fakes of death,
At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,*

And that we call Being.

Yep, Doc knew exactly what Uncle Walt meant, and he knew that as far as religious experiences go, this one was a doozy! The experience of intense light and joy exploding from his heart lasted well beyond the fall semester and it was Doc's very first religious experience, even though some might also choose to characterize it as an episode of manic-depressive psychosis. This is because it is often easier for psychiatrists to understand joy as a disease rather than as a gateway to enlightenment. Either way, though, when it came to his search for *God*, Doc knew he was on the right track!

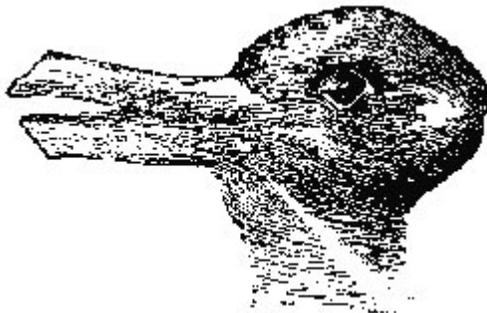
Chapter 9

The cosmic epiphany that Doc experienced in Austin back in the early seventies brought with it several new skills and benefits. In particular, he felt a tangible connection with all things that he had not felt previously. He could think of someone he knew well and immediately connect with them and blend with their being. And whenever they saw him again, there would usually be some sign that they had felt his presence. It was sort of like the movie “Being John Malkovich” where he could see through another person’s eyes and experience what they themselves experienced. However, Doc engaged in such activities very sparingly. For one thing, he felt it was rather rude to barge in without permission, and for another thing, some brains, like Dick Cheney’s, can be very scary places to be! Doc also gained what psychologist Charles Tart referred to as “state specific knowledge.” That is, knowledge that is the direct result of being in a certain state of consciousness, and that is why he suddenly had such an intimate relationship with the poetry of Walt Whitman.

This experience changed Doc and his worldview forever, and more specifically, it gave him a worldview that was quite harmonious with many of the tenets of quantum physics. For instance, in quantum physics every particle can express itself as either a particle or a wave, and Doc, too, now experienced that he could flip-flop back and forth from a wave mode in which he felt connected to everything in the universe to a particle mode where his boundaries were suddenly sharper and more clearly focused.

Quantum physics also predicts that once two particles have interacted they become parts of a single system, and a consequence of this is that even if the two particles are on opposite sides of the universe, then if one “looks up,” the other one will simultaneously “look up.” This correspondence has been demonstrated experimentally, but since Einstein’s *Theory of Special Relativity* assumes that no mass can travel faster than the speed of light, it’s unclear how the particle on the other side of the universe knows immediately what to do. However, Doc Benton felt that this conundrum simply added support to Hugh Everett’s *Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Physics*. In this

interpretation of what's going on, Everett postulated that there never is any transition from wave to particle mode. For example, in the classical interpretation of quantum physics, a particle is first a wave with no definite location in space, but then when we try to make a measurement of its location, the wave collapses and we do indeed find that particle at a specific location. Everett, however, believed that the wave never collapses and that there are an infinite number of parallel worlds, each with the particle in a different location and that our location experiment simply chooses one of those worlds to observe. Thus, it may be the case that when we observe one particle "looking up," as I like to say, then we have simultaneously chosen a version of reality where the other particle that is entangled with the first is also looking up, and it's not really a matter of information traveling faster than the speed of light. It's just a matter of which universe you choose. It's somewhat like the old illusion of the picture that can be perceived as either a duck or a rabbit. If you see a duck, then every part of the picture immediately aligns itself in "duck mode," but if you see a rabbit, then the rest of the picture immediately assumes "rabbit mode." It all happens automatically depending upon which version of reality you pick. Thus, Doc believes in the *Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Physics* along with the caveat of quantum entanglement which says basically that as long as you pick a reality where entangled particles are looking the same way, then everything is completely kosher. Yep, that's what Doc Benton believes because, otherwise, he has no idea how to explain all the quantum entangled messes he's gotten himself into!



Chapter 10

People generally experience time as something that flows like a river and is the same for everyone everywhere except for changes in time zones and, in particular, the state of Arizona which wisely refuses to observe daylight savings time. But aside from these man-made differences, people and Star Trek generally feel that “now” is the same for everyone. However, Doc learned long ago that Einstein’s *Theory of Special Relativity*, which can be explained using only simple high school algebra or, at least, by what used to be taught as high school algebra, is all that one needs to realize that time is not what we think it is.

In Einstein’s theory, which has been well established, everything exists within its own spacetime framework, and there is no universal now. In fact, while one person may see two events, A & B, as happening simultaneously, another person may see A happening before B, and a third person may see B happening before A. In other words, Doc’s present could be another person’s past or a third person’s future! Thus, it’s no wonder that Doc doesn’t believe that time exists, or at the very least that if it does exist, then it is far different from what people think it is.

In Doc’s experience, all that exists is “now,” and rather than travel through time, we simply shift our focus from knowledge of one “now” to another. It’s sort of like if all we could see were two lights that could be either red or green, then there would be only four possible states – (Red, Red), (Red, Green), (Green, Red), and (Green, Green). In this case if we experienced (Red, Red) followed by (Green, Green), and then back again to (Red, Red), some might see this as time travel from the (Green, Green) present back to the (Red, Red) past. However, to Doc it’s just a shift of coordinates within an eternally existing coordinate plane. Furthermore, Doc likes to say that if you just change one of those coordinates, like from (Green, Green) to (Red, Green), then you’ve done a “partial time travel.” And that’s why his lava lamp always helps him travel back to the seventies.

Admittedly, it's difficult to talk about time not existing simply due to the fact that we are hardwired to think in terms of past, present, and future. However, with the help of a little cannabis, a different perception may be obtained. From the standpoint of the mind, the perception of time is a result of the way our brains link one thought to another in order to create a chain of events. However, cannabis tends to weaken these links, and that is why it is good for helping the brain deal with any trauma or negative emotion. With a little cannabis, it becomes possible to disengage from those traumatic experiences, and as they recede into the background, the brain is given a chance to heal. That is just one of the many benefits of cannabis when it is used in a proper rather than a foolish way!

Chapter 11

Probably Doc's favorite place to time travel to is Austin, TX, back in the seventies. Back in those days, Austin was a hippie paradise. Its population was only about 300,000, and the bumper-to-bumper traffic that characterizes Austin today was still decades into the future. Austin had only two businesses in those days – it was the seat of a somewhat conservative state government, and it was the site of the main campus for the University of Texas. Almost all the students at UT smoked marijuana in those days, and those that didn't were usually business majors that you could recognize because they were the only ones who wore a tie and a dress shirt to go to class. Unfortunately, the more brilliant students at UT in those days now often have to work under those very same students who had rejected the hippie way of life. But that's pretty much how it's always been. Those with the greatest interest in making money often wind up making the most money. And as for those of us who are brilliant thinkers, well, as one of my professors was fond of saying, "That and a nickel will get you a cup of coffee!"

For the typical student at UT, the regimen was to go to your classes, learn as much as possible, get around on a bicycle, take a few tokes off a bong once a week, and spend the weekend at Hippie Hollow. Hippie Hollow was a place just a short drive outside of Austin on the shores of Lake Travis where nudity was the legal norm. And there was probably nothing better than sunning on a warm rock out there under the summer Sun with a gentle breeze and warm, clear water. It always reminded Doc of the images of sea lions sunning themselves on a pier in California. Doc and the other Austin hippies were young, naked, and just another part of nature in those days. It was also legal in the state of Texas back then for both genders to go topless, but it may be that it was only in Austin where what was legal was also permitted. Also, the ultimate goal at that time for many of the students at UT was to complete some sort of degree in math or science, and then find a menial job that would allow them to live in paradise for just a little longer. Of course, in the eighties and nineties, Austin did exactly what Joni Mitchell warned us not to do – they paved paradise and put up a parking lot.

Not all of Doc's time in Austin was perfect, though, because, after all, Doc was in his early twenties which meant that he was still going through his adolescence. Thus, he was still pretty stupid about lots of things in those days, and he made more mistakes than he can remember. As Doc often says, "*Anxiety begins at conception, life begins when your head pops out of the vag, and intelligent life begins much, much later, if at all.*" Yep, not everything in paradise had been perfect, and that's one reason why Doc preferred to do only partial time travel where he recreated only the best parts of the past. It all worked out much better that way, and sometimes Doc would even start with a scene from the past, but this time make a few different choices just to start another timeline that he might learn a few things from. But other times he just thinks about that old mom & pop, hippie grocery store that stood on the corner of 9th and Lamar in Austin where he would often go to buy herbs and incense and healthy whole grain breads. What was it called? Oh yeah, Whole Foods! In the eighties, much of the philosophy and culture of Austin began to spread to other parts of the country, and that store went on to become one of the largest retail groceries in the world. Doc certainly didn't see that one coming!

Eventually, though, Doc left Austin by the end of the seventies because as perfect as life there was, it was also somewhat like being in the "land of the lotus-eaters." Consequently, Doc knew that if he was going to make anything of himself, he would have to move to some place more irritating. And at the time, Doc could think of no place more irritating than the constant hustle and bustle of Houston, Texas. Thus, it was goodbye paradise and hello graduate school in mathematics at the place where he first started college, the University of Houston!

Chapter 12

Doc had enjoyed his recent time travels back to the early seventies and to Austin, Texas, and he had thoroughly enjoyed chanting “Hare Krishna” again and re-experiencing his first mystical awakening. And back in the present, he was enjoying just as much the \$50 he was collecting each day from Trulee Strange plus the additional \$1.50 that paid for his hotdog and drink at Costco. However, he was also aware that he had a job to do in exchange for such riches, and so he decided that before he did any more traveling, he should come up with a basic plan of who to interview and what to research as he looked for *God*. Thus, he thought the following list would be a good starting point.

Gods Who Might Help Me Find God

1. Odin (This is a legacy choice since Ancestry.com swears that Doc Benton is a direct descendant of the old Norse God.)
2. Kundalini (It always got a rise out of me.)
3. The Math God (Spoiler Alert: It’s not me!)
4. Abraham (One of the first ones to see God.)
5. Jesus (I’m sure he’s on everyone’s top 10 list!)
6. Yahweh (Allegedly, Jesus’s real daddy.)
7. Moses (Did he inhale that burning bush?)
8. Azazel (Why can’t Denzel Washington pronounce this name correctly?)

9. The *Talmud* (Especially for the People of the Kindle Book.)
10. Wakan Tanka (Never let them see you sweat lodge.)
11. Ramana Maharshi, Nisargadatta Maharaj, and Sri Atmananda Krishna Menon (I knew the son of one of these guys!)
12. St. Francis of Assisi (He wasn't Jewish, but he was smart enough to be Jewish!)
13. Sefer Yetzirah (The oldest extant book on Jewish Mysticism)
14. The Zohar (A multivolume 13th century compendium of the pinnacle of Jewish mysticism.)
15. God as an emergent phenomenon (An intriguing theory by author Nancy Ellen Abrams.)

And if he needed to, Doc would also interview Allah, the Gods of Egypt, Baal Peor, Lao Tzu, and the Buddha.

Well, this list seemed to Doc like a good starting place for his search. Over time (Which he doesn't believe exists!) he might add a bit to the list or even delete a bit. Also, some of these Gods he might interview directly and others he might just look up in the Wikipedia. For those he would interview directly, he would use what he called "instant transmission." This is a term he lifted from the popular anime cartoon "Dragon Ball Z Kai" where the main hero, Goku, has the ability to instantly transfer himself to anywhere in the universe. However, whenever Goku does this, he places two fingers on his forehead and then physically goes to his destination. However, when Doc does it, he just does it mentally. Okay, there have been a few times that people have actually seen Doc suddenly appear in a new location, and there was that one time that he woke up on a couch in a bazaar in Morocco, but his intention now is just to mentally focus on his

destination and then instantly be there with his consciousness and energy while leaving his body behind in a comfy bed surrounded by his own special pillow fort. This is the way Doc usually travels, and in this way he can pretty much instantly go anywhere in the multiverse. However, even though he goes on such travels every night while his body appears to be asleep, he has never failed to note that he always comes back to this universe and his primary body in order to go to the bathroom, and the implication is inescapable to him. Earth is the toilet of the multiverse!

Chapter 13

Doc Benton decided to interview the ancient Norse God known as Odin first. He called this a legacy interview because according to Ancestry.com and the ancient Saxon Chronicles, Odin was Doc's 53rd great-grandfather. Allegedly, the line went from Odin to his son Balder and then to Balder's son Brand, and from there it followed a line of Saxon kings in northern Germany that was later continued as the House of Wessex in England. This line included great English kings like "Alfred the Great" who was very pro-education, and it also included less great English kings like Doc's 27th great-grandfather, Erthelred the Unready. Doc used his "instant transmission" to immediately travel to where Odin's energy was, though, in Odin's terms, Odin would have said that Doc traveled on the *Bifrost*, the Rainbow Bridge. When they met, the conversation went something like this.

DOC: "Hello?"

ODIN: "Yes, Hello, who's there?"

DOC: "It's me, Odin. Your 53rd great-grandson!"

ODIN: "Doc, is that you Doc? Well, long time no see. It's a pleasure for you to come visit me. What can I do for you?"

DOC: "Well, there's this woman that's hired me to find *God*, and so I thought I would start with you. Tell me a little bit about yourself, Granddaddy."

ODIN: "Well, I started out in Asia Minor, you know. I was the leader of a family there, but we eventually got pushed northward by that darn expansion of the Roman Empire."

DOC: "Wait a minute! Are you saying that you are a man and not a *God*?"

ODIN: “I’m saying I started out as a man and became a *God!*”

DOC: “But how is that possible?”

ODIN: “It just is. I started as the head of family that moved into the north country, and as we conquered more and grew more powerful, the people began to make myths and stories about my family as we made that transition from mortals to immortals. And likewise, the pronunciation of our home Asia Minor was shortened to Aesir, and from there it eventually became known as Asgard. And while this may still seem a little strange to you, grandson, think for a moment about your own life. Doesn’t a little boy, a teenager, a young man, and an old man all reside in you at the same time? Similarly, aren’t you simultaneously a physical person and a spiritual presence? In my case, as people fed my spiritual presence with their prayers and supplications, it naturally grew in response due to the interconnectedness of all things. I think these days that people quote quantum physics as the scientific basis for everything being connected, but back in my day long before the development of scientific inquiry, we all knew that we had a dual existence in which all of us simultaneously existed both independently of one another and connected to one another at the same time. Everyone automatically knew and felt that back in my day. Thus, when people prayed for your spirit, it lifted you up and made you the *God* they wanted. You became the creative force they needed. But of course, these days I’m pretty much forgotten, and so my influence on things isn’t very much anymore.”

DOC: “Okay, granddad, I think I’m getting it. But are you saying that you are the ultimate *God*? The *God of Gods*?”

ODIN: “I am saying that I am a *Creator God* that the people created. A demiurge, if you will. I am not the ultimate *God* beyond everything, but at the same time, I am neither separate from that ultimate *God*, and neither are you.”

DOC: “We’ll, I’m going to have to think about that last one for a bit. I’m not yet quite sure what it means.”

ODIN: “In that case, let me give you a little bit more of my history from both Reality Prime and from what you call the world of myth, a place that I just call Other World. My father was named Bor, and my mother was Beltsa. In the beginning, though, there was just nothing, an absolute nothingness that is beyond existence and non-existence and beyond comprehension. Somehow, though, in an incomprehensible way, something came out of nothing. Movement came out of that which cannot move. Two opposites appeared, *Niflheim* and *Muspellheim* that were associated with North and South, dark and light, cold and warmth, frozen water and molten fire, In between these two opposites stood the Void, the nothingness that can’t be known, and on the edge of this nothingness stood *Surtr*, the primordial being that preceded the *Gods*. The interaction of the opposites of *Niflheim* and *Muspellheim* produced the World Tree, *Yggdrasil*, that connected all parts of the multiverse. Additionally, this interaction produced *Giants*, and from *Giants* came *Gods*, and from the *Gods* came the world of men. But of course, you could also say that this works in reverse, too. That men created *Gods* and then stories of how it all began. Yes, you could say that, too. However, there is one thing that is indisputable, and that is that men and *Gods* brought order to the universe out of chaos. Back in the time of *Niflheim* and *Muspellheim*, things were murky, unclear, and very chaotic, much like how you imagine the universe at the moment of the Big Bang. And it is only we, *Gods* and men, who are able to turn this chaos into beauty and order, my grandson. Do you understand?

DOC: I think I do, grandfather. I think I do.

Chapter 14

After talking with granddaddy Odin, Doc sat there for a bit playing with his Rubik's cube and thinking about the things his 53rd great-grandfather had said. He also thought about how the cube is used as a symbol for the universe in many different cultures since it has six sides that correspond to the six directions. In particular, he remembered that in early Jewish mysticism, this cube was associated with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. "*Bezalel knew how to combine the letters by which the heavens and earth were created,*" it said in the ancient Jewish *Talmud*, and the way the mystics described it was as follows. First, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet were divided into three special letters called mother letters (*aleph, mem, shin*), seven more letters that were called double letters because they each had a hard sound and a soft sound just like some letters in the English alphabet, and finally, the remaining twelve plain letters. The mother letters corresponded to water (*mem*), fire (*shin*), and air (*aleph*) which represented two opposites and an interaction between them. This was starting to sound a lot like *Niflheim* (water/mist), *Muspellheim* (fire), and the void between them. In the construction of the cube, though, these mother letters represented three spatial axes – up/down (*aleph/air*), east/west (*mem/water*), and north/south (*shin/fire*). Next, the seven double letters represented the six faces of the cube plus the center of the cube. For a moment, Doc felt like he was learning the secrets of the "Stargate" here. And then finally, the remaining twelve plain letters corresponded to the twelve edges of the cube, thus showing how the Hebrew alphabet can result in all creation.

As is usual, one thing always leads to another, and one revelation leads to another revelation. Since letters combine to form words, creation via the alphabet also dovetailed nicely into *Biblical* stories about how *God* created the world through his utterances, the many times at the beginning of *Genesis* that we read, "And *God* said." This made Doc think deeply about how we use language to create our own version of the world around us and how the notion of creative utterances still permeates our culture even in things such as Harry Potter uttering spells in order to create some sort of effect. Yep, we create the

reality we function in by using a lot of letters and words, or what some may even call our computer code. That's for sure!

Doc also thought about how chaotic things were at the beginning of creation in the Norse myths and how the same sort of notion appears in the Hebrew *Bible*. Most people know the sentence, “*And the Earth was without form and void,*” from *Genesis* 1:2. In Hebrew this reads as, “The Earth was *tohu* and *bohu*,” with the meanings of *tohu* and *bohu* not being completely certain. In rabbinic literature these terms are sometimes rendered as “chaos and confusion.” In that multivolume classic of Jewish mysticism known as the *Zohar*, however, the terms *tohu* and *bohu* are elaborated on by statements that identify *tohu* as a chaos that can't be conceived while *bohu* is a disorderly state that can be perceived, just like the mess of clothes on the floor next to Doc's side of the bed.

Again, Doc thought as he played with his Rubik's cube. Doc could usually solve the cube in two and half minutes which is faster than the time it would take for most humans to solve it, but still much slower than the record times that have been achieved by cube speedsters around the globe. But that wasn't what Doc was thinking about. Instead, he was thinking about how there are 43,252,003,274,489,856,000 different possible permutations of the tiny facelets on each face of Rubik's cube and that of all those permutations, only a few represented something pretty or orderly, only one represented a solved cube, and the vast majority of them reflected only chaos and confusion. That suddenly seemed very important to Doc. He suspected that like the cube, the vast majority of the universe was just a lot of random arrangements of atoms and molecules, and that it was only where intelligent life existed that there was the possibility for something more orderly and purposeful. Only beings like humans could create a tiny bit of order in that chaos, an order where art and beauty, men and *Gods*, and *Heaven* and *Hell* could emerge. Thus, order from chaos seemed much more important to Doc than it ever had before, and as a result, he suddenly deemed it important to clean up a bit and to finally pick up those clothes on the floor. Right after he finished some more heavy thinking, though.

Chapter 15

At this point, Doc had an awful lot to think about, but he also felt like he was on the right track in his search for the missing *God*. First, it was starting to seem like a common theme of most creation stories that there were two types of *Gods*, one *God* that is intrinsically unknowable and beyond comprehension, and another *God* that has attributes and actively participates in the creation of the world. Furthermore, another common theme seemed to be that before there were *Gods* and men, all was chaotic and without order. Additionally, the old Norse stories told that a time called *Ragnarok* would come which would be a twilight for both *Gods* and men. However, even after this destruction, the opposites of *Niflheim* (mist) and *Muspellheim* (fire) would remain as would the unknowable Void, the World Tree *Yggdrasil*, and the primordial being *Surtr*, and out of these opposites life would begin anew. In many cultures, the world always seems to be the result of the interaction of opposites regardless of whether these opposites are called *Niflheim* and *Muspellheim* as they were by the Norse, or *yin* and *yang* as the early Taoists called them, or by *water* and *fire* as the ancient rabbis and Jewish mystics called it. Either way, all of these ideas seemed important to Doc's search.

Doc also thought about mathematics because it, too, had something to say about things that are unknowable. In a nutshell, in mathematics collections are called sets, and sets or collections can be of different sizes, finite or infinite. Additionally, it's possible in mathematics to have infinities of different sizes. This is the result of two things: (1) we compare the sizes of two sets by seeing if it's possible to find a one-to-one correspondence between the elements of the two sets, and if it's not possible, then one of sets must be bigger, and (2) given any set or collection, we have a well defined way of creating a bigger collection, and this means that given any infinite set we can create a set that represents an even larger infinity! This is all rather mind expanding, but eventually we hit a problem. Suppose we think about the set of all sets, the collection of all collections, or as I like to phrase it, the collection of everything! Then surely the size of this set must represent the largest infinity possible because it contains everything. But on the other hand, we also have, in mathematics, this procedure for taking any collection and

generating an even larger collection from it. But how can we possibly make anything larger than everything? In mathematics this rude fact of logic is known as *Cantor's Paradox*, after Georg Cantor, the founder of set theory. At the very least, this paradox shows that perhaps not every "collection" can be called a collection without running into some logical difficulties. In mathematics, the way this paradox is dealt with is by sweeping it under the rug. In other words, we set a few rules for what can be called a "set," and these rules allow the existence of lots of infinite sets of different sizes, but disallow the totality of all things being called a "set." In other words, we sidestep the paradox by just agreeing not to talk about that ultimate totality that was causing the problem. The result is a theory of sets that appears to be free of problems and logical contradictions, but that still doesn't explain why we can't talk about the totality of all things. After all, didn't we just do that?

To Doc there was something very deep in all of this. Namely, the notion that the totality of all things is intrinsically unknowable, and this idea of an unknowable *God* appears in particular in Judaism. In fact, one of the sages of the *Talmud*, Rav Huna who lived approximately from 216 CE to 296 CE, once said, "*Whatever things you see are but parts of the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He.*" Huna knew that the totality was unknowable, and Doc Benton knew that, too. And another thing that Doc Benton knew from mathematics and, in particular, from the work of the great logician Kurt Gödel is that not everything that is true is provable within our logical framework. There are an infinite number of things that are true that can't be proven. Consequently, some things you may just have to take on faith. This also seemed to imply that any model we set up for *God* and the universe is necessarily going to be incomplete because the totality is unknowable and there are limits to even what the realm of math and logic can divine. Yep, Doc could feel in his gut that he was on the right track and that these realizations were going to become much more important to him later.

Chapter 16

As Doc continued with his *recapitulation* he thought about all the formal mediation he used to do as a young man, and so he decided to fire up the lava lamp again and make one more time travel trip back to the seventies. Upon arriving in the seventies in Austin, Texas, he remembered again how important a goal spiritual enlightenment had been to him at that time. It's not like he really knew what it meant to be enlightened, but he had grown up reading stories about holy men in India who seemed to be so much more than human, and he had heard that meditation was the key to spiritual growth, and so he practiced it with abandon. Back in those days Doc was fairly limber, and it was easy for him to sit in a half-lotus posture with his spine straight for lengthy periods. He would always begin his meditation with some breathing exercises to relax, and then he would do his *mantra* for awhile. And following this, he would practice a technique called *kriya yoga* that involved a transfer of energy from the base of the spine up to the cranium and the third eye in particular. The results were amazing! Many people go through their whole lives practicing mediation and achieving nothing more than physical and mental relaxation which, of course, is beneficial in and of itself. However, these same people fail to experience the tremendously joyous and ecstatic states of consciousness that are so eloquently described in the ancient writings. Doc, though, was not one of those people. Ever since Doc's spontaneous mystical experiences that had been triggered by the chanting of *Hare Krishna*, Doc has had a talent for mystical and altered states of consciousness. In fact, it was probably the more mundane states of consciousness that were harder for him to maintain.

Back in those days, Doc could spend an hour or so sitting in meditation, and it was just one bliss after another. He experienced some very rarified states of consciousness, and then as he continued, eventually other aspects of ordinary reality would fall away as he would move into states that were even higher than the previous ones. However, after a while Doc began to wonder if there was any final, ultimate end to all of this. Every experience led to a higher one, but would it ever end? Was there any final enlightenment, or was this all just a very cosmic form of masturbation? Doc had an intense desire to

know, and as is often the case, when a person intensely desires something, the universe makes a way. In this case, about a week later Doc was invited to a birthday party for a friend of a friend. When he arrived, the hostess was serving large glasses of iced tea to all the guests. Doc drank his tall glass of iced tea, and while it was very good, he noticed that it had a strange aftertaste that he really enjoyed. Thus, as soon as he finished the first glass, he went to the refrigerator to get a second glass. And then about forty-five minutes later, he knew what that aftertaste was. It was hallucinogenic psilocybin mushrooms. Immediately, Doc felt an inner impulse to leave the hubbub of the party and to go sit out on the front lawn and meditate. Doc very quickly progressed through the higher states of consciousness he was familiar with, and then he tried to go further by forcing his consciousness out through his third eye in hopes of discovering a larger reality. He mentally pushed once, twice, and then a third time, and then there was a “pop” and suddenly “Doc” was gone. Doc was in a place that was no place, and Doc was not “Doc” anymore. He had gone completely beyond duality. There were neither objects nor a lack of objects nor a combination of both nor a lack of both. It was a complete oneness where not even the word “oneness” could be uttered. How long Doc remained like that he doesn’t know because there was neither time nor space nor thought where he was. Nonetheless, he did eventually return to this plane, and when he did the first thing he experienced was like a ripple or lightning bolt that went across the Void, and suddenly he was aware of himself as an observer looking out upon a vast sea of nothingness. And then one by one, thoughts began to slowly appear again until they picked up the pace and came at a rapid progression from one to the other, and Doc opened up his eyes, looked at his watch, and realized that about an hour had elapsed. He then returned to the party for awhile and discovered that his car had a flat tire.

Doc got his answer about where his meditations would ultimately lead, and he knew he had experienced something that few humans could ever imagine. It changed his perspective and the way that he viewed reality forever. Nonetheless, Doc also began to realize that there were downsides to his meditations. For one, the techniques he practiced essentially began with a disengagement from physical reality so that it would not be a distraction, but the problem this created was that it also made it a little bit more difficult

for Doc to function as an ordinary person. It can be hard to carry on a conversation when your mind keeps jumping back to Nirvana. Furthermore, Doc knew in his heart that in spite of his success in these techniques of meditation, he was still spiritually inferior to his Aunt Margie who routinely took care of people by providing a home for anyone who needed a home and food for anyone who needed a good meal. Aunt Margie was always doing things to help others, and Doc knew that in spite of his experiences, she was far more advanced spiritually than he was. Doc had learned something very valuable that night in Austin, but he also knew that there was much more for him to learn.

Chapter 17

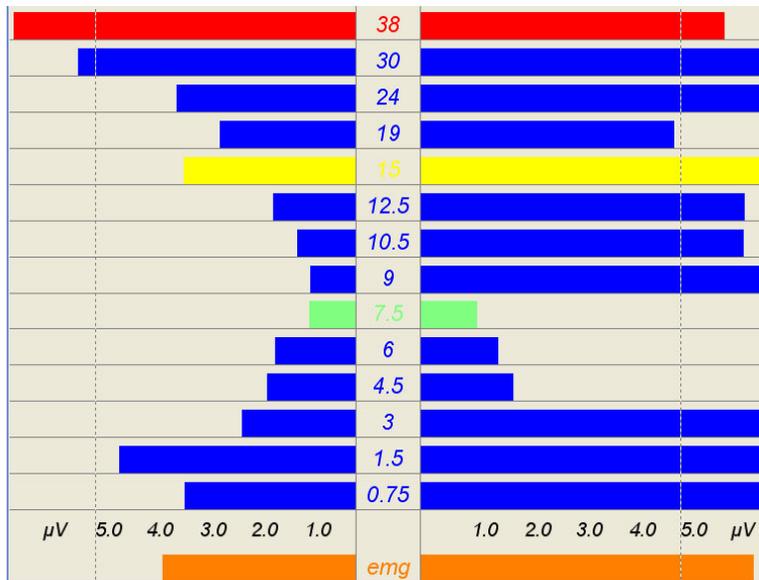
Doc went down to Costco for a Dr. Pepper and a hotdog and to just think about things for a bit. Doc could always think better when he was eating because, otherwise, it seems like he just spent his time thinking about eating. Doc also planned to stop at Taco Bell on his way home and pick up a couple of tacos for Shoshan. Shoshan didn't get out much these days because her pollen allergies were getting worse, and her response to these allergens was much like the way many people respond to peanut allergies. Shoshan had even gone into anaphylactic shock before over airborne pollen, and thus, their house was filled with both whole house HEPA filters and portable HEPA filters that could be moved from room to room. In that way, Doc could keep Shoshan away from most of the pollen, and a few times during the year they would drive down to San Diego for an extended stay where Shoshan could enjoy ocean breezes that were relatively free of the pollens that were deadly to her. Shoshan also had a lot of food allergies, but surprisingly the one place that agreed with her was Taco Bell. She could eat just about anything there without suffering severe digestive problems, and Doc was very pleased that Taco Bell was leading the way in switching from "chemical food" to "real food." The ingredients at their neighborhood Taco Bell were also generally pretty fresh.

While sitting at Costco, though, Doc continued to remember and think about his meditative experiences in the seventies, and those experiences had eventually led him to buy his own portable EEG machine called the Mind Mirror II. It came with a cap with four electrodes that you could attach to your head, and it produced a readout that you could view in either the traditional squiggly line format or as a bar graph. The bar graph was much easier to read. It consisted of horizontal bars stacked vertically on the left and right that reflected the brainwaves in each hemisphere. Additionally, the bars at the bottom corresponded to the slower brainwaves while the bars near the top represented the faster brainwaves, and the length of each bar corresponded to the amplitude of each recorded wave. A simple USB cord allowed the data to be imported into a computer where a software program would show you a real time color graph, and the program could even translate your brainwave pattern into music by letting low notes correspond to

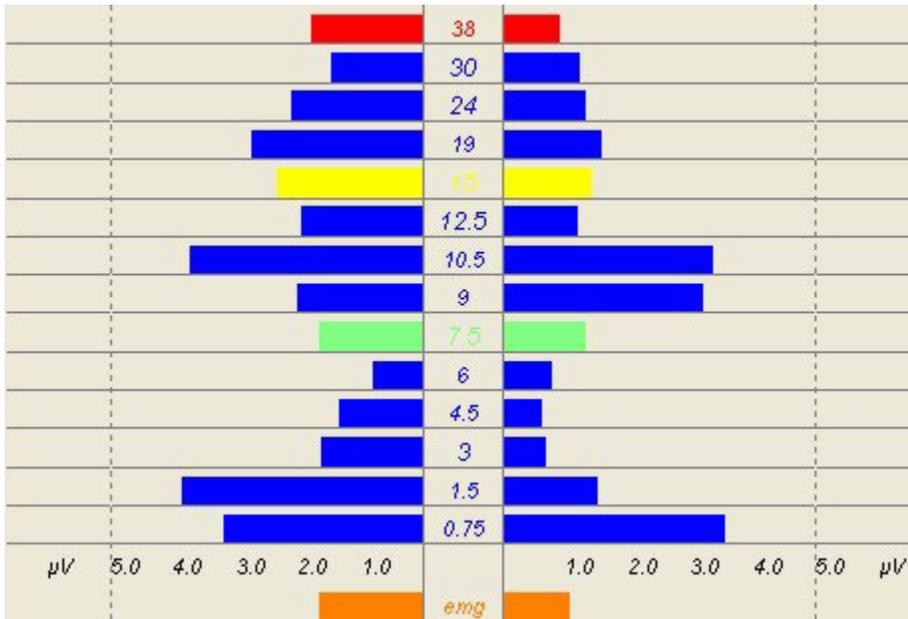
slower brainwaves, high notes correspond to the faster brainwaves, and the volume would correspond to the amplitude of each brainwave. Doc bought this EEG machine back in the days when he was single and could afford toys not only like his EEG machine, but also the flotation tank that he used to own. The flotation tank, known, too, as a sensory deprivation tank, contained several hundred pounds of dissolved Epsom salt, and floating effortlessly in that water for an hour or so would produce a profound state of relaxation. Someone once asked Doc if two people could get in there at the same time, and he quickly replied, “Yeah, if you stack ‘em right!” But the point Doc wanted to make was that once he married Shoshan, both his priorities and his spending habits changed. Doc now followed what he felt was good wisdom from the *Talmud*, “*A man should always eat and drink less than his means allow, clothe himself in accordance with his means, and honor his wife and children more than his means allow.* “

Years ago, Doc had used his EEG machine to capture what was going on with his brainwaves during meditation, and this is what he found out:

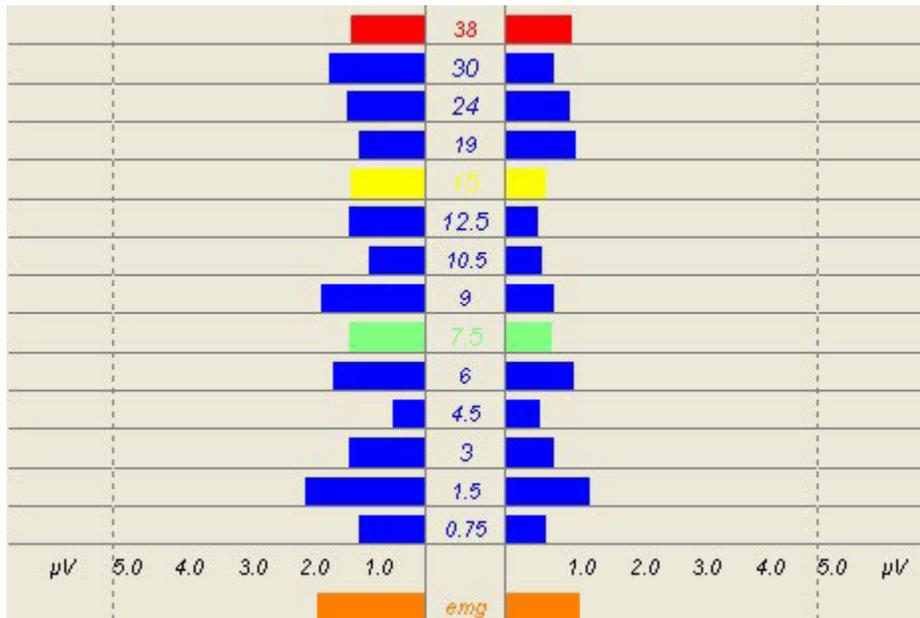
1. First, when he was thinking intently about something, a lot of his brainwaves in both hemispheres would exhibit high amplitudes.



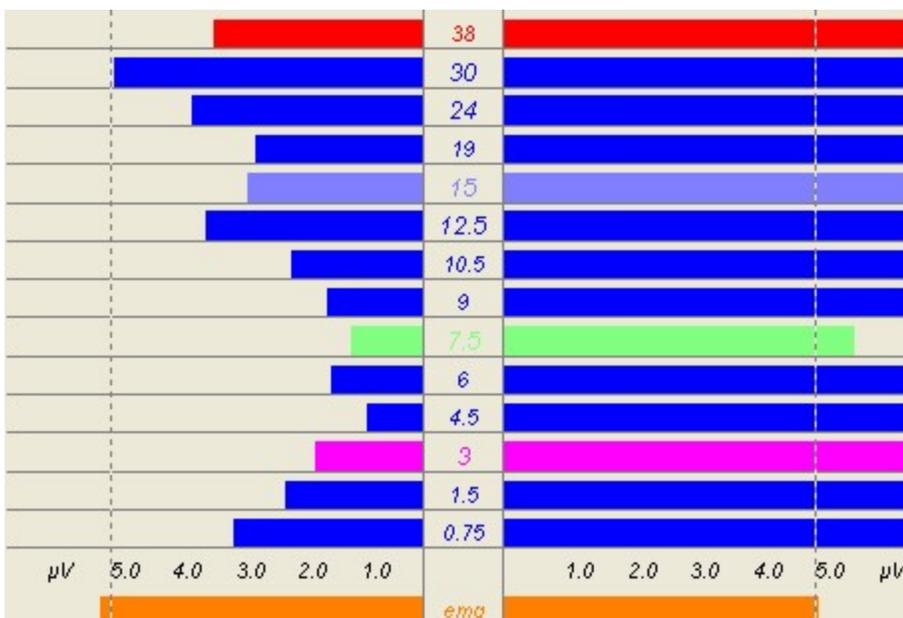
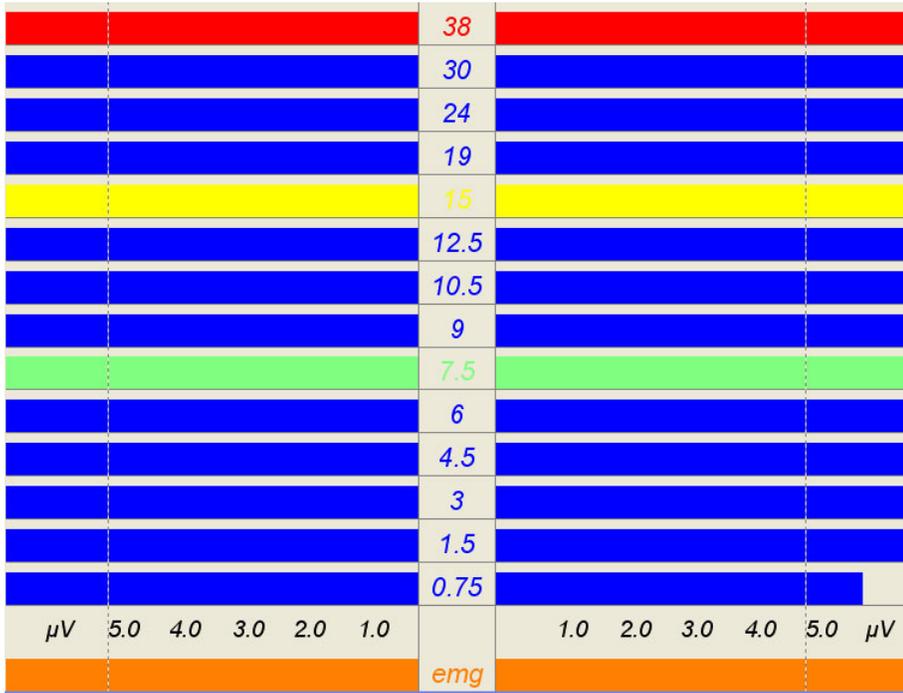
2. On the other hand, if he was doing a mantra meditation, then his brainwaves would assume a very symmetrical pattern that showed increased alpha and theta wave activity.



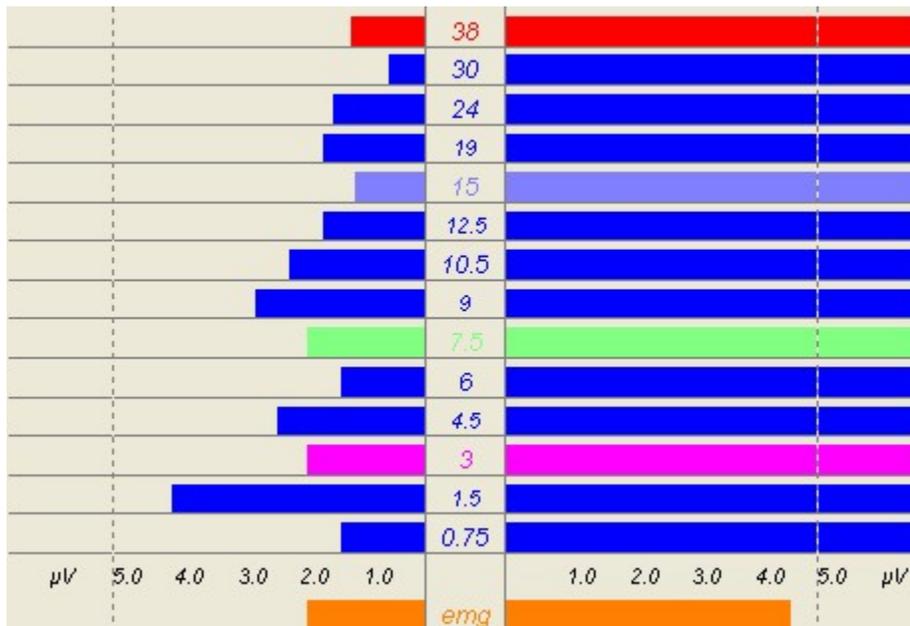
3. And if he was just observing the world without attachment or much thought, then all his brainwaves exhibited a lower amplitude and his brain just seemed to be in neutral, a state that was nonetheless still very enjoyable.



4. However, during those moments of meditation when he would just completely disappear and merge with an indescribable bliss, the amplitudes of the waves in his right brain would go off the chart and sometimes the waves in the left brain would do the same.



5. But what was most interesting to Doc was that when he was studying something like mathematics or rabbinic literature, every time he had an “aha” moment, the brainwave signature was exactly the same as when the world disappeared into oneness. And this made Doc realize that every time we have a big epiphany, there is a moment during which we and everything else disappears. For a brief moment, there is only the “aha,” and then following that moment our left brain works to make sense of the right brain’s latest revelation.



Again, Doc was making good progress. His *recapitulation* and time travel had reminded him that he knew how to merge into a Oneness beyond duality, that the basic pattern for duality is one thing opposite another along with interaction between the two opposites, and that reality is never what it appears to be. And that was the item he was going to investigate next!

Chapter 18

Two things that Doc had read this past year that had made an impression on him were some scientific papers by Dr. Donald Hoffman, a professor of cognitive science at the University of California, Irvine, and the book “*A God that Could be Real*” by Nancy Ellen Abrams. Both of these authors had provided Doc clues as to the real nature of reality, and, hence, their ideas were probably going to become more important to him as he continued his search for *God*.

Professor Hoffman had cleverly postulated something that we all kind of already know. Namely, that the universe we see isn't the universe that is there. Or as Dr. Hoffman explains it, what we see is pretty much like the user friendly desktop that we see on a computer screen, and just as what goes on inside the computer is vastly different from that easy-to-use graphical user interface, so is the real universe very different from the interface that our brains have created. However, Professor Hoffman has taken this argument one step further. By using software to run hundreds of simulations, Dr. Hoffman has been able to show that a species that develops a user friendly interface has a distinct survival advantage over species that don't. And that's why we see the world the way we do!

Dr. Hoffman also believes, like Doc does, that the primary stuff of reality is consciousness and that matter is a byproduct of consciousness rather than the other way around. In this regard, both Dr. Hoffman and Doc Benton are non-dualists, believing that consciousness is all. However, Doc Benton likes to distinguish between what he calls “hard non-duality” and “soft non-duality.” In hard non-duality, all is One, consciousness if you will, and the world of multiplicity is ultimately just an illusion that the One has created for itself. In many respects, as Doc sees it, the world is like a dream, and we certainly have no qualms about accepting elements of a dream as being composed of and created by consciousness. However, Doc also says that the difference between our waking reality and a dream is that we want Reality Prime to be more stable. Thus, before we come to this realm, we have to sign a license agreement saying that we will abide by

things like Newton's Laws of Motion so that things don't just change willy-nilly like they do in a regular dream. A little appropriate regulation of reality allows us the freedom to do most things we'd like to without losing control and everything going crazy! In contrast to "hard non-duality," though, there's also Doc's theory of "soft non-duality." To Doc, this theory says that Reality Prime comes first and that consciousness is a byproduct of matter. However, soft non-duality also goes on to say that in spite of that, all of our experience occurs in consciousness, and so for all practical purposes, we should act as if only consciousness exists. In other words, even if it isn't true that all is consciousness, we still have to act as if that is true in order to arrive at what is still the only enlightenment possible for us. Doc primarily believes in hard non-dualism, but he could definitely live with soft non-dualism.

As for Nancy Ellen Abrams, Doc saw her not only as a brilliant author and thinker, but also as the wife of an equally brilliant thinker, physicist Joel Primack who is one of the founders of the modern theory of dark matter and dark energy. In recent years they have written books together and lectured together, and they often like to talk about what they call the "double dark universe." Doc always likes to think that this means a universe filled with double dark chocolate. But aside from that, Doc had been extremely impressed with her book "*A God that Could be Real.*" That didn't mean that Doc agreed with everything Nancy Abrams had written in that book, but it did mean that he found it very thought provoking and that it had made quite an impression on him.

In that book, Nancy Abrams describes her Jewish atheist past and the type of *God* that she doesn't believe can exist. In particular, she doesn't believe in any sort of *God* that could violate quantum physics or relativity, and that led her to construct a specific list of properties she doesn't believe a *God* can have. Specifically, she doesn't accept that:

1. God existed before the universe.
2. God created the universe.
3. God knows everything.
4. God intends everything that happens.
5. God can choose to violate the laws of nature.

Nonetheless, at one point in her past when she participated in a 12-step program to help her with an eating disorder, she discovered that she was unable to make any progress until she did, indeed, surrender control to a higher power as the program protocol required. And this got her to thinking about what kind of *God* could exist.

In the end, Nancy Ellen Abrams did find a *God* that she could believe in, and it was a *God* that was based on the principle of emergence which may be defined as what happens when the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For example, our own physical bodies easily illustrate this concept. Our bodies are composed of cells, and yet it is doubtful that any of those individual cells understand in the least that they are part of a larger, more intelligent whole. In that regard, the human body is an emergent phenomenon, and traditional scientists would also explain consciousness as another emergent phenomenon that appears once a brain has reached a certain level of sophistication. In Nancy Abrams' theories this argument can be extended to suggest that *God*, too, is an emergent phenomenon. In other words, just as the interaction of countless cells results in a physical body, so do the interactions of numerous people result in a *God*. So in a nutshell, *God* exists, but it is we who create *God* and not the other way around.

Doc didn't agree entirely with this point of view, and that may be because, as he suspects, humans are hardwired to believe in a deity whether one exists or not. Nonetheless, the concept of emergence did bring many things into focus for him. For example, our original ego and personality that develops during the first few years of life seems to be an emergent phenomenon that takes place in the brain, and when we reach puberty, another emergent phenomenon, the teenage brain, seems to supersede the original one. That was something that Doc certainly believed. However, when it came to consciousness or awareness itself being an emergent phenomenon, Doc felt that there was definitely another side to that coin, and that other side went back to the very origins of quantum physics.

It's been said that the essential mystery of quantum physics is the double slit experiment, and if you Google "double slit experiment," then two things are likely to pop up. The

first might be an explanation of the double slit experiment as when a man has sex with two women at once, and if this pops up, then there will also be several pictures and videos available for you to look at. But after looking at all the photos and videos, you will then notice some links involving quantum physics, and in quantum physics this is an experiment that shows that atomic particles are simultaneously both particles and waves. For example, if you fire a particle like a photon at a wall with a single slit in it, then a second wall set up as a detector for where the photon winds up will indicate that the photon behaved exactly like a particle when it went through, and most of the hits on the other wall will be directly opposite the slit.



However, if you fire the same photon at a wall with two slits, then the photon will now act like a wave that passes through both slits simultaneously and creates an interference pattern on the wall on the other side. Curiouser and curiouser!



Even though the photon goes through the two slits as a wave, when it hits the second wall, that wall records a definite location for the photon. In other words, at that point the photon is acting like a particle again, and this transition from wave mode to particle mode is what physicists call the “collapse of the wave function.” And here’s where

consciousness comes in. A question that early quantum physicists wrestled with was when exactly does the wave function collapse? The answer that the majority of them gave was that it collapsed the moment that a conscious observer looked at the instruments to see what happened, and this suggested that it is we who cause wave functions to become particles again, and, through our observations, it is we who create the universe. Consequently, as Doc saw it, consciousness is woven into the very fabric of what we call reality, and he thought, in spite of the fact that it takes a sophisticated brain to vocalize sophisticated thoughts, that some sort of basic awareness was as fundamental to reality as were protons and electrons, and that this awareness develops more complex modes of expression as mental development occurs. Hence, Doc believed in much of Nancy Abrams' theories, but he also felt there was more even if he couldn't justify that belief scientifically.

And then there were all the things that routinely happened in Doc's life that also seemed to be beyond what science would accept. For instance, Doc often felt the presence of people who were not there physically, and at times Doc felt that there were other people that could feel his presence, too. And then there were the voices. Lots of them. Doc routinely heard within the voices of relatives and friends that had died, the voices and presence of guardian angels and spirits who were there to guide him, and the voice of his own higher self frequently giving him advice on what to do. Doc heard these voices all the time, and if he went to a psychiatrist, he's sure that the psychiatrist would diagnose him as insane. Doc, however, preferred the term "alt-sane."

Chapter 19

If *God* was created by men, then it was probably time for Doc to visit the person who invented the first monotheistic *God*. In other words, time to visit Abraham. This time, however, Doc didn't need to do time travel or instant transmission. Instead, he just needed to do a little *recapitulation*. In other words, just remember. This is because in a past life, Doc had belonged to Abraham. He had been a servant of Abraham, a young shepherd boy in his tribe. Back in those days, a servant was more like a slave, and a slave was more like a servant. This is reflected in *Biblical* Hebrew where the same word can be translated as either slave or servant, and back in the day of Abraham, it meant something in between what we would call a servant or a slave today. So let me explain. Back then it was hard to get by on your own, and so people and families often attached themselves to wealthier folks who had the resources and the means to take care of you in exchange for your labor. You were a slave in the sense that you then belonged to that wealthy family for life, but you were also a servant in the sense that you still retained your personhood. You weren't someone that could be whipped and abused at a whim like the men who were made slaves in the early history of America. No. You still had some rights, but you also knew that you were part of this family for life, and for all practical purposes you were part of Abraham's tribe.

Doc had always been a little ambivalent about reincarnation. On the one hand, he saw it as *God's* witness protection plan. Every time you reincarnated you got a fresh start. No one remembered who you were, and even you weren't supposed to remember who you were. But on the other hand, reincarnation seemed to presume the existence of something tangible called a "soul" that was passed on through the ages from body to body as easily as transferring a thumb drive from one computer to another. Doc wasn't too sure about this, but he also wasn't unsure about it either. Instead of being something tangible like a vessel, perhaps the soul was more like a computer program that got passed around. Doc really wasn't sure how it all worked or even if it worked at all, but the one thing that he was sure about was that he hadn't completely forgotten all his so-called previous lives.

Whether it was the same soul or not, he was sure that there were past lives that he was connected with, and one of those past lives left him with memories of Abraham.

As previously noted, Abraham had been the head of the family that Doc belonged to, and Doc remembered him as a strong leader. You felt protected by his strength and stature, and at the same time, you certainly didn't want to challenge him on anything. He was a powerful figure. He was also a man who had broken with his own family and traditions in order to gain a stature in history as the founder of the first, great monotheistic religion. He came about this epiphany as a result of being trained as an astrologer back in the ancient city of Ur in what is now known as Iraq. As a person that dabbled in astrology, he often stayed up late at night measuring the positions of the visible planets in order to set up a horoscope. However, unlike others, Abraham also looked beyond the planets and beyond the stars. It was the unbounded vastness of space that called to him, and as he stared at it, it began to change him. It unlocked something vast and infinite and unbounded within him, and through this he realized that there was something infinitely greater than the physical idols that his culture had always prayed to. Furthermore, an inner voice began to communicate with him out of this void, and because he couldn't become a new man in the culture he was raised in, this voice one day told him to go and leave his homeland, to go to a new land. To be more precise, the voice actually said *lech l'cha* which is ancient Hebrew that literally means, "Go to yourself." Thus, Abraham and his wife and his servants left their homeland, and Abraham began his journey within.

In addition to the practice of sitting outside in the evenings and staring at the sky until the unbounded infinity without woke up a similar unbounded infinity within, Abraham also had a special stone called the *tzohar* that he had been guided to. One of the properties of this stone was that it was filled with light, not a physical light, but a spiritual light. Thousands of years later, the rabbis would describe this as the light from the first day of creation which was different from the light of the sun and the moon and the stars that were created on later days. The rabbis said that this first day light was a spiritual light that *God* later hid away for the righteous. But whether you believe this rabbinic story or not, it was certainly the case that the *tzohar* could fill you with a spiritual light that could

bring you knowledge, healing, visions, and communication with divine beings. Today the *tzohar* is known as a quartz crystal.

Not many people these days really know how to utilize a quartz crystal correctly, but Doc remembered the things that Abraham had done, and Doc copied them. When he was younger, Doc used to often sit cross-legged on a rug holding his favorite crystal in his left hand, and when the crystal became activated, he would feel a warmth in it and a thick viscous light that would travel up his left arm into his brain resulting in a great expansion of consciousness. At times, Doc would also arrange additional crystals in a Star of David pattern all pointing to the center where he sat, and this resulted in an even more powerful flow of this divine light. However, eventually Doc quit using the crystals so much for several reasons. First, the crystals could put a strain on the nervous system, and if Doc wasn't careful, he could feel like he was about to explode, and that could make him feel very irritable. And second, Doc eventually evolved to a point where he didn't need the crystals anymore. His own inner light ultimately became all that he needed, and to travel anywhere he wanted, it was simply a matter of focusing his attention. But even so, he's never forgotten those days with Abraham.

When he was a servant of Abraham, Doc was known by the name *Reuven/Riven*, and he spent his days as a small shepherd boy tending one of Abraham's flocks. One day while sitting on the rocks watching the flock, a little girl from a neighboring tribe sat beside him to talk, and soon, their visits became a daily occurrence. The little boy and the little girl loved to talk with one another, and their life was perfect until the adults found out about their friendship. For reasons neither of them could understand, children from the two tribes were never allowed to be together because each servant was supposed to find a mate within their own tribe. Children of Abraham's tribe had to marry children of Abraham's tribe, and children of the other had tribe had to likewise marry their own. But it was not a rule that children as young as *Riven* and the girl could understand, and all they knew was that powerful forces were pulling them apart even though they knew that they were supposed to be together. And not long after that, *Riven* contracted a fever and died. But before he passed, he vowed that he would someday find the girl, his soulmate,

again. As strong as the adults that had separated them were, he knew that love was a force even more powerful, and he knew that it could ultimately bend space and time and change universes until they were once again reunited. The little girl's name had been *Shoshan*, and he knew that no matter what it took, he would eventually be with *Shoshan* once again.

Chapter 20

“Good morning,” said Shoshan as she ambled in from the bedroom. Shoshan tended to be a late morning riser while Doc was an early morning riser. Thus, Doc had already been up for a couple of hours and was still sitting in his ergonomic motorized leather reclining chair sipping coffee and catching up on the morning news.

“Good morning,” said Doc, “Did you sleep all right?”

“I slept like a baby,” replied Shoshan.

“More like a babe,” thought Doc silently to himself. It had been almost fifty years since they first met in this lifetime, but she was always the same beautiful young woman he first laid eyes on when he was twenty. “Well, fix yourself some tea and relax,” said Doc. “I’m just about to get back to work on trying to find this *God* dude.”

And so he did. Doc had covered a lot of ground, and it was now to time to reevaluate once again where he’s been and where to go next. As Doc saw it, he had experienced a lot of different states of consciousness in this lifetime, one of which was an ultimate state that was beyond everything and which, hence, could not be transcended by anything. And yet his mind still tended to make a distinction between being there and not being there. Every other state aside from that one that the psilocybin mushrooms had shown him always had something in it that could be surpassed. Some states of consciousness seemed far from his concept of love, unity, and holiness while others were closer, but they were all merely way stations as he saw it, and while he felt closer to his goal, he still wasn’t sure who *God* was. And for that matter, it still seemed like *God* might be as much a creation of ours as we are of *God’s*. And how did awareness fit into all of this? It seemed like an intrinsic part of the universe and so surely it, too, must have something to do with *God*. At the moment too many thoughts were swirling around in Doc’s head. He knew the pieces of the puzzle were coming together, but they weren’t quite there yet. He was going to have to do some more interviews, and since he had just finished exploring

the founder of monotheism, Abraham, he thought it was time to move on to the next great figure in the history of the Jewish people, Moses!

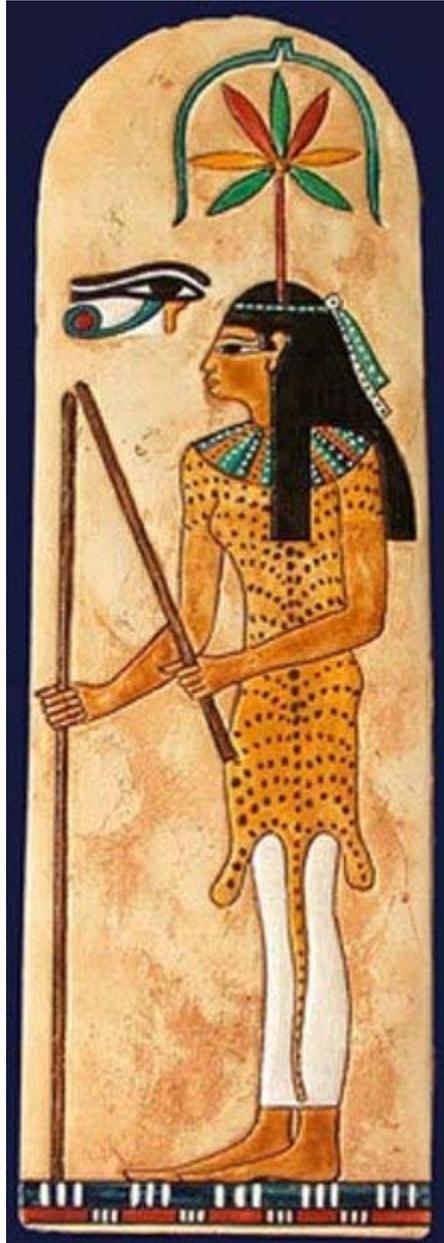
Chapter 21

There was one big difficulty in interviewing Moses. Namely, he didn't exist! Or alternatively, maybe too many versions of Moses existed. The fact is that there is no historical evidence for the existence of Moses outside of the account in *Exodus* that scholars can point to. Consequently, it is most likely that Moses is a composite character that reflected the inclinations of various groups within the early Hebrews. Thus, there was a conservative Moses that had a person stoned to death for carrying wood on the Sabbath, and there was liberal Moses who would plead the case of the people before *God* that they not be destroyed. There was also silent Moses who had a speech impediment and who needed his brother Aaron to be his spokesman, and there was very verbose Moses who would never shut up. However, there was yet another Moses who was the one that Doc was most interested in, and this was an image of Moses that was very obvious to him, and yet all the sages and commentators before him had missed this particular Moses entirely. The Moses that most caught Doc's interest was the one that he called "Stoner Moses."

There are a few people who are aware that beer was brewed and enjoyed back in ancient Egypt. According to the ancient religion of that land, it was *Osiris*, the king of the underworld, who taught the Egyptians how to make beer. However, probably as a result of its popularity, beer soon attained its own patron *God*, a female deity known as *Tenenet*. She was also the *Goddess* of childbirth, and Doc wondered if this was because the women of that time might have, perhaps, drunk beer to help ease the pain of giving birth, or maybe both childbirth and brewing beer were considered tasks performed by women in those days. Whichever one it was, if either, he wasn't sure. However, he was sure that only a small number of people ever thought about the ancient Egyptians brewing beer, and even fewer were aware that the ancient Egyptians also had access to cannabis.

The use of hemp/cannabis/marijuana in ancient Egypt goes back to at least 2000 BCE, and it was used medicinally for a variety of ailments including pain, inflammation, glaucoma, hemorrhoids, vaginal bleeding, depression, and cancer. Pretty much a lot of

the same stuff that cannabis is used for today. Furthermore, traces of cannabis have even been found in the mummy of Ramesses II, the pharaoh often associated with the Biblical account of the Jewish exodus from Egypt. Additionally, the ancient Egyptian *Goddess Seshat* appears to have a marijuana plant growing out of the top of her head.



Seshat is, or was, the ancient Egyptian *Goddess of Wisdom*. She was later replaced in that regard by the Egyptian *God Thoth*. “Just another example of a man taking a job that

rightfully belongs to a women,” as Doc would say. *Seshat* was the *Goddess* of writing, accounting, architecture, astronomy, astrology, surveying, building, and mathematics. She is often depicted holding knotted cords for surveying that were undoubtedly woven from hemp. Also, a suggestion that the ancient Egyptians knew that there were psychoactive strains of cannabis is found in an old coffin text that states, “*Seshat opens the door of heaven for you.*” Additionally, she is associated with the passage of time, and anyone who came of age in the late sixties knows of the ability of cannabis to distort the perception of time.

Doc felt that when you put the pieces of this particular puzzle together, it is pretty clear that a Stoner Moses existed, and the clincher for him is the story of the burning bush. As Doc said, “Let’s see. Moses comes across a burning bush, and it seems to take forever to burn? Hmm, I wonder what kind of bush that could be?” It seemed to Doc that Stoner Moses most likely came across a cannabis plant, inhaled as it burned, and the result was the well known phenomenon of time distortion that often accompanies marijuana use. Doc, himself, had experienced that on several occasions, though in his case it’s usually some paranormal TV show investigation that seems to last forever as soon as his medicinal dose of cannabis kicks in. In any case, given the history of the known use of psychoactive substances for religious reasons, it would be foolish to discount the prospect that the burning bush on Mount Sinai might have been cannabis. Additionally, consider the cloud that followed the Israelites during the story of the exodus from Egypt. In many accounts this seems like a cloud generated by *God* that *God* speaks to Moses from, but in other accounts in *Leviticus*, this cloud is clearly identified as being generated by incense. Furthermore, the *Talmud* even says that a special “smoke-raiser” had to be added to the incense in order to make it rise straight up and cover the *Ark of the Covenant*. And don’t forget the story in *Exodus* about how Moses’ face was beaming so much that he had to put a veil over it. To tell the truth, Stoner Moses wouldn’t be the last person to have a silly grin on his face after inhaling a little weed.

The possibility, and maybe even the probability, that Moses was a stoner both intrigued and delighted Doc the more he thought about it. If Moses had indeed spent time in Egypt,

then he would have surely been aware of the effects that inhaling cannabis could have on a person. Of course, back then people weren't able to put it in the scientific context that they do today, and so their perception could easily have been that this was an incense offering that elicited a certain response from a deity. Additionally, it was no surprise to Doc that the deity in ancient Egypt originally associated wisdom was female. The same pattern is observed in Greek mythology where we encounter *Athena* as the *Goddess of Wisdom*, and likewise, even in the *Bible* in *Proverbs* we have *Wisdom* identified as a female that *God* uses to create the world. Generally speaking, there is a long history of what we now call the intuitive right brain as being identified with women and the analytical left brain as being identified with men, and it is the non-analytical wisdom of the right brain that is often seen as purer and closer to *God*. In this regard, Doc noted that it was written in the *Talmud* that Moses saw through a "clear glass" while all the other prophets saw only through a "dim glass." Yep, it was clear to Doc that Moses was more in touch with his right brain than was any other prophet among the Israelites, and it seemed quite likely to Doc that this was due to the ritual use of cannabis by Moses. A lot of the evidence seemed to be pointing in that direction. However, if this likelihood were ever accepted as true, it would certainly result in a seismic shift in world religions!

Chapter 22

It was time for Doc's bi-weekly dose of cannabis, and like Stoner Moses on Mount Sinai, he was looking forward to it. He never took very much because too much could actually diminish some of the beneficial and pleasurable effects. Consequently, he took just a small drop of RSO with a 1:1 ratio of CBD to THC on the end of a toothpick at 8pm, and then he knew that by the time he went to bed at 10pm that the cannabis would have finally passed through the liver and made it to his brain.

The immediate effect of the cannabis was that he felt slightly removed from perceptual reality. It was as if his brain had taken two steps back from Reality Prime, and he could watch it in a more disassociated way as if he were merely watching a movie instead of being a character in it. The cannabis also seemed to slow down time and weaken the link between one thought and another, and without his thoughts being so tightly bound together in a chain, every moment was experienced as its own eternity. Another effect was that Doc was able to breathe better and more deeply. This is because THC dilates the passages in the lungs, and in fact, it was for years the primary treatment for asthma in this country during that period of several decades during which cannabis was legal and used by doctors as a medicine. Doc also felt great relief from that chronic pain that creeps up on you as you get older, and these days both his brain and his body felt years younger due to the decrease in inflammation that cannabis produces. As Doc says, he has an achy, breaky body that is "over the Hillel," but cannabis has made him feel young again. And, of course, it is also likely a factor in the disappearance of Doc's prostate cancer, even though he can't prove that with certainty.

This time, however, Doc had a new revelation from the cannabis. He felt a strong sense of a female that existed on a higher plane. Not a female human, but rather a cosmic presence that seemed female in nature. It was the same thing that was identified as *Seshat*, the *Goddess of Wisdom*, by the ancient Egyptians and as primordial *Wisdom* by the *Biblical Hebrews*. It was female, and it engulfed him in a nurturing love like he had never experienced before. And in so doing, it showed him the path that humanity should

take. It was a path of oneness and connectedness with all things. A path where every little thing both nurtures and is nurtured by every other thing. It was a path to ultimate knowing and understanding of the multiverse and one's place in it. It was the path to the world to come. And it was not the path that the world is on today.

Chapter 23

Since Doc had engaged with both Abraham and Moses, he felt that the next person he should visit ought to be Jesus. This was a little awkward for him because Doc was a Jew and, frankly speaking, not necessarily a big fan of either Christianity or Jesus. Still, at the same time, he knew that Christianity had produced many great leaders and luminaries and that no one single religion held a patent on *God*. It just wasn't his particular way, and thus, it was with a little trepidation that he went knock, knock, knockin' on Jesus's door. His conversation with Jesus went something like this, and as often happens, everything that Jesus said had this weird tendency to appear in red:

DOC: "Hi, Jesus!"

JESUS: "Hi, Doc! I'll be with you in just a minute. I'm finishing up a twitter war with Caiaphas. Here's what we have so far:"

@CaiaphasHighPriest – Liberal Socialist Jesus thinks you should give all your money to the poor. No incentive to work. Sad. Doesn't understand that rich people are JOB CREATORS!!

@JesusSonOfGod – Pharisees, Sadducees, and Priests! Get back to basics Moses taught. Law was made for man, not man for law. Get with the program!

"Okay, Doc, I'm done. What can I do you for?"

DOC: "Well, Jesus, I'm on a search for *God*, and I've got a few questions."

JESUS: "You've got questions, and I've got answers. Ask what you want!"

DOC: "Okay, first of all, how much of what is written in the *Gospels* did you really say?"

JESUS: “Hardly a word! Think about it. Those *Gospels* were written at least six decades after I lived. Do you really think they were able to create an accurate record of my life in those days?”

DOC: “Well, then are any of the things they say you said accurate?”

JESUS: “Sort of. A few things. For example, you remember that thing about light I was supposed to have said, “*I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life?*” Well, that was actually a mistranslation. What I actually said was, “‘*I AM*’ is light of the world: he that followeth ‘*I AM*’ shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.””

DOC: “Well, that’s good to know, Jesus, but what does that actually mean?”

JESUS: “Remember *Exodus* 3:14? That’s the part of the *Bible* that I call the ‘Pi passage’ because Pi is approximately 3.14. You gotta know math to be a carpenter, right? But anyway, that’s also the passage in the *Bible* where Moses asks *God* what his name is, and *God* answers, ‘*Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me unto you.*’ Now the big question is what is meant by I AM? Well, think about it. Usually when we use that phrase we have an object attached to it like when we say ‘I am happy’ or ‘I am Jewish.’ Those are expressions that pair perception itself with an object of perception. However, if we just say ‘I am’ by itself, then we have only the perceiver without any associated object of perception. Get it? We’re saying that *God* is pure awareness without the entanglement of an object. In other words, *God* is being. Period and nothing more. Furthermore, your awareness is your beingness, and it is the *God* within you. That’s what I said and what I was trying to convey. Of course, as usual, people who didn’t understand it just turned it into something totally *meshuggah*.

And here’s another thing I actually said, “*The kingdom of Heaven is within you.*” Remember that one? I was trying to tell people that Heaven is a state of consciousness,

not a place. And likewise that means that Hell is also a state of consciousness. We literally create our own Heaven and our own Hell

And here's one more thing I really said, "*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*" "

DOC: "And just what the heck did you mean by that?"

JESUS: "Simple. Your eye is your awareness. That's what you see with. You see with awareness. And if your eye is single, or in other words, if you overcome duality and experience oneness, then your body will indeed be full of a divine light. Remember in *Psalms* 104 where it says that *God* wraps himself in light like a prayer shawl, and then again in *Psalms* 18 where it says that *God* made darkness his secret place? Well, both things are true. Our awareness is our light, but it's also like darkness because we can't see it directly the way we can everything else. But as we focus our attention closer to our awareness and away from objects, we automatically begin to experience more light, more oneness, and more joy. And that's what it's all about!"

DOC: "That clears up a lot of things, Jesus, but let me ask you about a few more items. In particular, what about the miracles?"

JESUS: "Mainly exaggerations and distortions. For example, that whole feeding of the multitude? Well, what really happened was that we asked everyone to bring whatever food they had and share it with others. We were introducing the concept of a potluck supper and how if we share, then there's plenty in this world for everyone! That's the real miracle. When we share and give to others, then there's always plenty to go around!"

Now regarding those healings I'm supposed to have done, there is some truth in that, but the real truth is that everyone who is sick feels better whenever someone takes the time to go visit them. It wasn't anything special about me. I was just trying to teach something that everyone should do, and the rabbis of the *Talmud* also recognized this when they

wrote that a person who visits the sick takes away one sixtieth of their illness. It's all about overcoming duality and then helping and sharing with others. That's all it is, bro!"

DOC: "WOW! You are amazing, but let me ask you about the resurrection and when you are coming back?"

JESUS: "Well, first of all, there was no resurrection the way people usually think of it. The real truth is that those guys missed me, and in some ways that caused them to imagine that I had come back or that someone else they saw was really me. But on the other hand, it's also true that a real connection between two people is something that transcends the usually restrictions of time and space, and thus, in a very real sense there was communication between us after I died. But people experience this sort of thing all the time. It's actually very common for people to receive communications from or feel the presence of their loved ones after they have passed, and the same sort of thing happened, too, when I passed.

Now as to coming back, I've actually come back several times physically for a visit, but when I do, I usually come back as a fish. I like to do that because that generally means I get to spend my whole time swimming at a beach, and then since I have a short life, I don't have to worry about overstaying my visit. But then, of course, if you want to talk about simply my presence returning, well, the truth is that it's been here all the time just as is the case regarding your own presence and that of others. We're all waves that extend from one end of the universe to the other. This is also in the *Talmud* where the rabbis stated that Adam originally extended from one end of the universe to the other, but when he sinned, he was diminished. Or as you and your quantum physics buddies might put it, Adam went from his wave mode to his particle mode. The truth is that we're all just consciousness, and we're all simultaneously both a wave and a particle. I'm just a little bit more aware of this than the average person."

DOC: "So what was your goal in your life as Jesus?"

JESUS: “I just wanted to get my fellow Jews back on the right track, and to a large extent I did. I may have died, but my message of reform was ultimately taken up by the rabbis of *Talmud* who did a lot toward reconstructing Judaism the way it ought to be. For example, thanks to those rabbis, we no longer execute teenage sons for being rebellious, capital punishment is frowned upon, ‘love thy neighbor’ is seen as the essential message of the *Torah* (They got that one directly from me!), and we give to *God* by giving to others. Plus, I’m really excited about some of the things I see happening in Reform Judaism these days.”

DOC: “Maybe you should write another *Gospel* just to set the record straight.”

JESUS: “Actually, maybe you should write it! Just go through the four *Gospels* that are already there and pick out what you think are the things I actually said. I’ll even guide you as you do it, and we can call it, ‘*The Gospel of Doc.*’ And personally, I think Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Doc has a nice ring to it!”

DOC: “Well, Jesus, as usual it’s been ... enlightening!”

Chapter 24

Doc had to admit that his visit with Jesus had been enjoyable and a bit of an eye-opener. Still, Christianity wasn't his way. Granted that it works for many, but Doc thoroughly loved Judaism, albeit a very liberal Judaism. Doc loved the depth of thinking that many of the rabbis over time exhibited, and Doc felt that all the ethical and behavioral advice found in Judaism made him a much better person. And Doc had no problem per se with the progressives of any other religious path. If anything, he felt it was the ultra-conservatives of all religions that seemed to cause a lot of the trouble and intolerance in the world. Consequently, he had one additional commandment that he added to those already found in the *Torah*, "*Never let religion get in the way of doing what's right.*"

Besides Jesus, there was one other Christian that Doc had been recently impressed by and that was Saint Francis of Assisi. Doc happened to come across some of his writings online, and it wasn't long before Doc was muttering to himself, "*If he isn't Jewish, then he's smart enough to be Jewish!*" In particular, Doc liked the following statements that Saint Francis had made:

"Go out and preach the gospel, and if you must, use words!"

"What is it that stands higher than words? Action. What is it that stands higher than action? Silence."

"The journey is essential to the dream."

"What you are looking for is what is looking."

The first two quotes above served as good reminders to Doc that actions often speak louder than words, and beyond even good actions is a holy silence that it is important to know how to enter into. Doc was also delighted by the third quote above. It really seemed to emphasize how much we need to go through certain experiences in order to

attain whatever our goal is. But the most intriguing quote of all to Doc was the last one, “*What you are looking for is what is looking.*” Again this seemed to be yet another reminder that the key to his quest might be to look at that which does the looking, to focus on consciousness itself, the I AM. It also reminded Doc of something he had read years earlier in the *Sefer Yetzirah*.

The *Sefer Yetzirah* is the oldest extant book on Jewish mysticism, and Doc is one of those who feels that it was written between 200 CE and 300 CE. The title is usually translated as either “*The Book of Creation*” or “*The Book of Formation*,” but Doc likes to translate it a little more loosely as “*The Book of the Assembler*” because it essentially focuses, in a very abbreviated way, on how we create or assemble reality and how we can meditatively return from a reality of multiplicity to oneness. Back during this time period there were two types of mysticism within Judaism that were known, respectively, as the *Work of Creation* and the *Work of the Chariot*. In the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the text covers both something-from-something creation and something-from-nothing creation. The former amounts to just making a permutation of what is already there in order to do things like transform a messy room into a clean room. And ever since Doc had realized that the natural tendency of the universe is toward randomness and disorder, he placed a higher priority on keeping things at least moderately straight in his life. The second type of creation was something-from-nothing creation, and according to Doc, this is what happens every time we have an insight or “aha” moment. Insights seem to just suddenly appear out of nowhere, and yet when they do, they change our entire reality. According to the way Doc would translate the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the stages of something-from-nothing creation, when initiated by the individual ego, are decreeing, shaping, combining, weighing, and exchanging. The first four steps in this process correspond to (1) saying to yourself, either verbally or as an act of will, that you are going to do something, (2) mulling over in your mind how to accomplish it, (3) combining the pieces of the puzzle in your mind until that “aha” moment happens, and (4) making it real. The fifth step in the process, exchanging, may be a little harder to understand, but Doc has reached that age where it makes perfect sense. To explain, imagine that you have learned how to assemble the parts of a tree together in your mind and finally see them as a whole named

“tree.” Then the final step is to be able to separate in your mind the concept of tree from the rest of the background so that you can still see trees in different contexts with different backgrounds. Generally, we learn as children to do this step so automatically that it seems hardly worth mentioning, but as Doc got older as a mathematics professor, he did indeed find it harder to recognize his students if he saw them in an environment different from the classroom. Thus, “exchanging” refers to trading one background for another and still being able to identify the same object.

We might also consider emergent phenomena as a type of something-from-nothing creation. This covers things like the ego emerging from the activity of the individual cells in the body and the brain or like the giant red spot on Jupiter emerging from the activity of several weather conditions. The five steps of something-from-nothing creation listed above refer to creation by the individual ego, but whether we are talking about ego centered creation or weather phenomena on Jupiter, it’s still a matter of pieces of a puzzle coming together to form something greater. It’s still something-from-nothing.

The *Work of the Chariot* is named after the chariot in the visions of the prophet Ezekiel, and this branch of early Jewish mysticism focuses on meditative journeys. And in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, one also finds a very terse description of a very old technique of Jewish meditation, a technique that very few today know of or understand.

“Ten declarations of constraint. Restrain your mouth from speaking and your heart from thinking, and if your mouth runs to words or your heart to reflections, return them to their place. Thus, it is said, “And the living beings ran and returned (Ezekiel 1:14),” and upon this word a covenant was cut.”

Doc refers to this technique as *running and returning*, and he describes it by noting that usually our attention is running toward objects, but at the actual moment of perception, everything returns back to consciousness. In *running and returning*, the technique is to merely switch your focus from the object (running) back to the consciousness that observes the object (returning). But this also seems very much like what Saint Francis

meant when he said, “*What your are looking for is what is looking.*” And again, Doc had much to ponder.

Chapter 25

Doc's thoughts turned to mathematics again, as they often do. As a child, Doc had become very good at mathematics because, unlike the other children, he was at the time too dense to realize that math was something he should be afraid of. The other kids got that message, but as for Doc, it just went right over his head. Thus, when adults told him to solve twenty-five math problems before tomorrow, he did. And the more he practiced math, the better he got at it.

But today Doc wanted to use mathematics to think about both everything and nothing, and Doc's experience had always been that nothing could bring clarity to a subject like mathematics. In math, "nothing" is usually represented by the null or empty set which is denoted by \emptyset , and in set theory it is described as the collection that contains no elements. To Doc the idea of the null set as a "collection about nothing" always sounded like it should be an episode from *Seinfeld*, and, indeed, there were mathematicians here and there who would periodically ask, "How can we call it a collection if nothing is in it?" Still, the notion of the null set is just as useful in set theory as the concept of zero is in arithmetic. Often times we have to talk about what two collections have in common, and when they have no overlap at all, then the best way to describe that is by saying that their intersection is the null set.

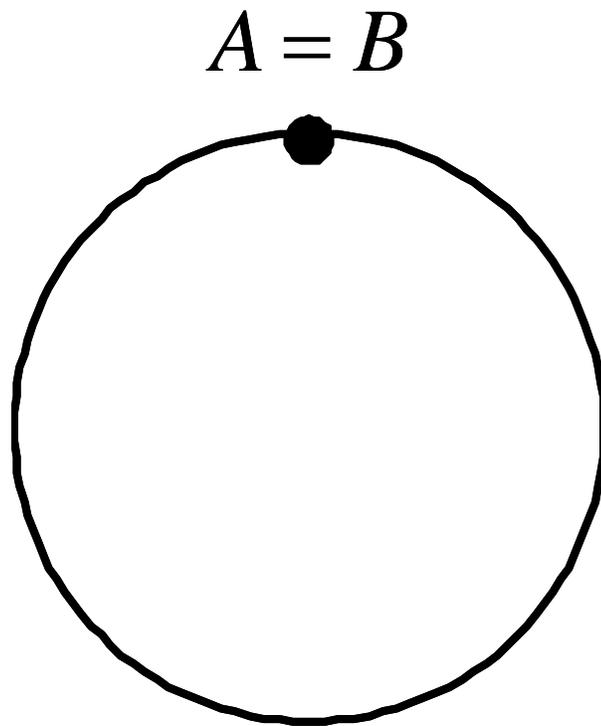
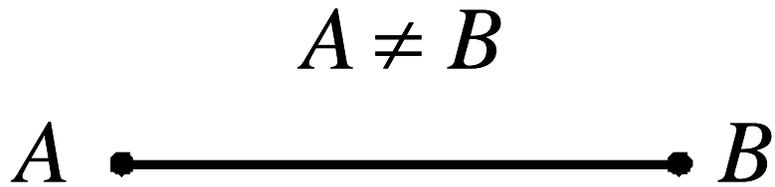
However, what caught Doc's attention today is that whenever we talk about the null set, it's usually with respect to some "universal set" or equivalently, "universe of discourse" that is denoted in mathematics by U . For example, if we are talking about the collection of objects in a box, then our universe of discourse is the box, and the null set in this case would correspond to an empty box. But as Doc realized, all of our discussion is then just with respect to the box, and even if the box is empty, the box still remains. It's not a complete emptiness. Thus, Doc began to contemplate the idea of an absolute rather than a relative nullity, an emptiness in which nothing would remain afterwards.

As Doc saw it, an absolute nullity would have to go entirely beyond the subject-object dichotomy. In a relative nullity, like that of the empty box, you can empty the box, but the box remains, and emptiness exists only with respect to this limited universal set called “box.” Absolute nullity would have to be very different because nothing would be allowed to remain afterwards. And that means that there would not be even the perception of an observer left over. Everything would have to be surpassed and transcended, and without an observer to even observe “nothing,” all you could say is that things now neither exist nor don’t exist, nor a mixture of both concepts, nor a lack of both concepts. Without the observer and the observed, nothing at all can be said. That would be absolute nullity. Mind boggling!

At the other end of the spectrum, though, is the “collection of everything” or the “union of all things,” and as Doc had previously noted, this is an idea that leads to paradoxes and contradictions in mathematics, and, thus, it’s a notion that wound up being banned from formal set theory. However, today Doc realized that the way in which the word “union” is used in mathematics is not always identical to the way “union” is used in ordinary speech. In mathematics, for example, the union of two sets or collections simply means that you combine two collections together to get a larger one. So, for instance, if Doc combines his five marbles with Bills ten marbles, then they get a larger collection of fifteen marbles. However, even the etymology of the word “union” hints at another meaning. The English word for “union” comes from the Latin “unio” meaning “oneness,” and this is not quite the same thing as combining two collections to get a larger collection. Instead, it hints at the two becoming one, two things being united into a single whole. This made Doc think of *Mark 10:8*, “*So the two will become one flesh so that they are no longer two, but one.*” And this also made Doc realize that there is a way to describe in mathematics this other type of union, the type of union that results not in a larger collection, but in the “*two becoming one.*” In mathematics, this type of union is called a *quotient structure*.

In modern mathematics, the idea of a *quotient structure* might be the single most important concept because it is routinely used to create new objects from old by

essentially dividing or canceling out the differences between certain parts. For example, if you have a piece of rope with two ends and if you then divide out the difference between the two endpoints, thus making them one, then you change your piece of rope into a closed loop.



In a similar way, if we take the counting numbers, $\{1,2,3,\dots\}$, and divide out the differences first between all the numbers divisible by 2 and then all those not divisible by 2, then we arrive at a new reality with just two objects, *even* and *odd*. Doc realized that *quotient structures* were at the heart of the reality we perceive. For instance, when we

learn how to see a set of separate pieces of wood come together to form a “chair,” we are simply dividing out what kept the pieces separate from one another to begin with. Carrying this even further, Doc realized that every insight and “aha” moment we have is also an example of our brains creating a *quotient structure*. We even speak in terms of the pieces of the puzzle coming together, and when they finally do, we’ve once again created a *quotient structure* by dividing out in our minds whatever kept them separate in the first place.

And now Doc asked himself the obvious question. “What would happen if I took the union of all things? Divided out all differences between everything? What would be the result?” The more Doc thought about this, the more he realized that this absolute union would be exactly the same as the absolute nullity that he had thought about earlier. In the “*two become one*” type of union, all differences between things would be obliterated, there would be no distinction between observer and observed, and once again the subject-object dichotomy would no longer be present. Absolute union would be no different from absolute nullity, and Doc realized that he had discovered “*the void that contains everything.*” Doc represented this symbolically by writing $\emptyset = U$.

Chapter 26

Doc decided that he should also make a time travel trip back to the early eighties. The eighties were the last decade to produce a lot of music that he liked. He was never that interested in the songs of Madonna, but the new wave songs of the early eighties along with some others really spoke to him. In particular, there was “Whip It” by Devo, “Lawyers in Love” by Jackson Browne, “Call Me” by Blondie, “She Blinded Me with Science” by Thomas Dolby, “Sweet Dreams” by the Eurythmics, “Hungry Like the Wolf” by Duran Duran, “She’s Got Bette Davis Eyes” by Kim Carnes, and “Total Eclipse of the Heart” by Bonnie Tyler. All great songs from the eighties, and songs from back then usually came bundled with great music videos. Doc had also enjoyed some songs from the nineties, but virtually nothing after that. He really feels no connection with the songs that are popular today, but the early eighties were a gold mine of both visual and audio surrealism and creativity for him, and thus, there was no better way for him to time travel back to this period than through listening to a few of his favorite songs.

Doc wanted to go back to the eighties because that’s when he met some traditional Native American medicine men. Some were quite well known like Rolling Thunder and Wallace Black Elk and Chief Leonard Crow Dog, but the ones that he learned the most from were lesser known, a full-blood Kiowa medicine man named Heart and a full-blood Cherokee medicine woman named Nakai. The most important thing Doc realized after meeting these traditional healers and ceremonial leaders was that they had a way of viewing nature that was very different from the one he grew up with. For the most part, the culture that Doc grew up in considered nature a thing, and every manicured lawn of grass in his old neighborhood was surrounded by a cage of concrete. “In the White Man’s world, we keep nature in cages,” said Doc to himself. However, to these Native Americans that he met, nature was alive, intimately connected with us, and responded to us once we recognized its sacredness, and these leaders helped Doc connect with his own Choctaw ancestry, and they helped him to experience and find holiness in the external world in ways that he had never imagined.

Much of what Doc learned from Native American medicine people consisted of intangibles that were difficult to put into words. Nonetheless, there were also some specific skills that were passed on. From his Lakota teachers, Doc learned the proper way to build a sweat lodge and the prayers that must be sincerely made along the way, and he also learned about the pipe ceremony. The Kiowa medicine man Heart, though, was the teacher that Doc spent the most time with, and he was a frequent guest in Doc's house. Heart was not a perfect person, however. The ancient rabbis frequently said that every human being has both an inclination toward good and an inclination toward bad in their heart, and Doc's friend Heart was no exception. He was a bit of a trickster at times, but nonetheless, he also had much knowledge and many fine qualities. Consequently, Doc preferred to remember the now departed Heart only for his good points and not for his failings. When they were together, Doc often felt like they were a modern day Laurel and Hardy, and more than once Doc caught himself saying, "Well this is another fine mess you've gotten us into, Heart!" There were four skills in particular, though, that Doc picked up by hanging around with Heart – how to listen to fire, how to listen to thunder, how to contact someone through water, and that the best way to bless someone is often by giving them a gift. These days Doc thought about how many ancient Israelites might have said exactly the same thing.

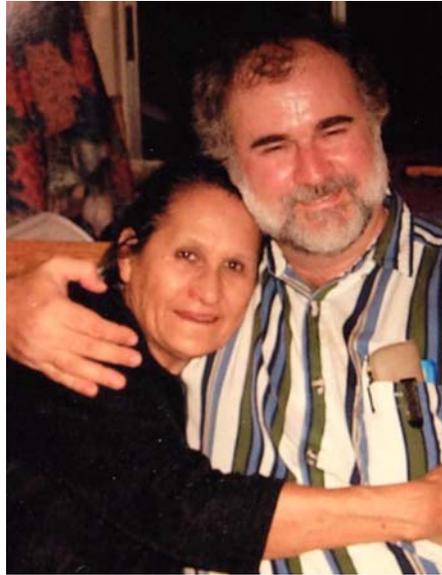
To listen to or read the fire is not that hard. We all tend to do it to some extent every time we notice that a fire looks angry or that a fire looks warm and nurturing. The fire is talking to us all the time, if we but listen to it! Also, we find the same practice in the Hebrew *Bible* where *God* speaks to Moses and the Israelites from the fire on Mount Sinai, or where the prophet Elijah seeks *God* in I *Kings* 19:12 and finds him in a still, small voice that is proceeded by a fire. Yep, hearing *God* speak from a fire seems as Jewish as it is Kiowa. To do this today, all you need to do is heat up some coals in a coffee can, and then when they are glowing red hot, you can pour them into a fire pit or a small BBQ pit. Next, you should make a prayer and throw an aromatic herb like cedar or sage or sweetgrass upon the coals in order to sanctify your endeavor. And when that's done, you can poke at the coals with a stick as you ask questions, and then you listen inside your head for the answers as you merge with the fire. And that's how you read the coals!

Heart taught Doc to listen to the thunder, and similar practices are also found in ancient Judaism where *God* generally spoke either from out of fire as a small voice or loudly through thunder. Again, we can all hear thunder, and we even distinguish at times between a gentle, rolling thunder and other types of thunder that are closer, louder, and much more threatening. But regardless of what you call it, thunder, just like fire, is always speaking to us, and we just need to learn to listen. Recently, Doc was out on his back porch listening to the thunder, and it told him that some big changes are coming in the world very soon. We shall see. We shall see.

Doc's teacher Nakai was a very dark-skinned, elderly Cherokee medicine woman who, as Doc put it, had an incredible x-ray vision. And Nakai knew it! She often chuckled about how easily she could see to the very core of Doc. Nakai was also the most righteous person that Doc had ever met. She and her husband Bud were poor their entire lives, and yet they gave to and enriched more lives than Doc can imagine. When Doc first met Nakai, he was walking along a path when she suddenly took his arm and said, "We have walked together before, many times in many lives, but tell me, why do you keep going off to the side?" Nakai had gone straight to Doc's core, and quickly saw how easy it was for something to distract Doc from the path that he should be walking. Consequently, Doc had a lot of respect for anything Nakai told him. Doc also considered Nakai to be his primary care physician. Twice a year, Nakai and her husband Bud hosted a medicine wheel gathering at their place, and about a hundred or so people would gather out in her backyard and wait their turn to get doctored by Nakai.

Once during those days when he frequently saw Nakai, Doc was teaching a math class when he suddenly felt something hit him that left him feeling very dizzy and disoriented. Fortunately, it was his last class of the day, and he managed to muddle through the final fifteen minutes, and then he headed home. Once he got home, around 3pm, he went to bed and immediately fell asleep. In his sleep, he had a vivid dream in which he saw Heart and another medicine man that he didn't know working on him. The other medicine man pointed to something embedded in Doc's left side, and Heart said, "Yeah, I see that!" Because of what they had discovered, they decided that they needed to take

Doc to a third medicine person that was even more powerful than the two of them. Thus, they all boarded a bus that made one stop at a pow-wow that was along the way. They got off the bus at the pow-wow, and that's where two bad things happened. First, Doc got separated from Heart and the second medicine man, and second, Doc saw a table with some men sitting at it that were sneering at him, and he immediately knew they were the ones who had caused his illness. His only hope was to board the bus again and hope that he found Heart and the other medicine man waiting for him there. Unfortunately, they were nowhere to be seen on the bus, but Doc did see a friend that he knew from Nakai's medicine wheel, and so he went to her and gave her a hug. And that's when he knew that he was in really deep trouble. The being he hugged looked like his friend, but there was no soul in the body, no warmth, and Doc knew then that this was simply a demonic presence of some sort that had disguised itself as someone he knew. The bus started up again, and Doc sat down next to the demon awaiting what seemed like an inevitable end. But just when he thought there was no hope, the bus driver stood up and walked back to where he was, and then the bus driver suddenly transformed into Nakai. The demon beside Doc yelled, "Get away, you witch!" Nakai replied, "I only witch those who do the witching." And then Nakai held up her hands, and a purple light came out of them directed at the demon. The demon screamed, and Nakai took Doc's hand and led him to the front of the bus. When they got to the front, however, it disappeared, and there were steps that led down into Nakai's living room. Doc stepped down into her living room and said to Nakai, "Thank you for saving my life." Next, he woke up covered with sweat, looked at the clock, and saw that it was 3am in the morning. He had been sleeping and dreaming for twelve hours. Doc never told Nakai about the dream, but a couple of months later he was out in West Texas for her medicine wheel. When she saw him, a sly smile crossed her face as she asked, "Am I going to have any more trouble with you?"



The final story that Doc remembered from his travels with medicine men was about the time he met Chief Leonard Crow Dog. Doc had never seen Crow Dog before, but he had heard that he was visiting the area. Thus, when Doc saw a man with an exceptionally large aura walking down a path, he was sure it was Crow Dog. The chief had formerly been head of the Native American Church which held peyote ceremonies for Native Americans, and because Heart had once himself been a roadman or ceremonial leader for those peyote meetings, it was easy for Doc to recognize the aura of someone who often led such ceremonies. Thus, Doc went up to the man and asked him if he might be Chief Leonard Crow Dog. The man smiled and nodded that he was, and then the man invited Doc to two ceremonies that he was holding that night. The first was a rarely performed Lakota ceremony known as a Yuwipi ceremony, and the second was a Native American Church peyote ceremony. Doc didn't feel any particular need to do peyote. He had tried it once back in the mid-seventies, and it had ultimately been very pleasant. But it was only after sending the expected projectile vomit everywhere in the bathroom of the house he and his brother were renting that he felt a tremendous amount of love and joy filling his heart as he returned to his bedroom to watch the latest TV episode of MASH. Like Doc said, it had ultimately been very pleasant, but he felt no compulsion to do it again. Still, being asked to participate in it by someone as prestigious as Chief Leonard Crow Dog was not unlike the Pope coming up to him and asking him to take communion. Even

though he is a Jew, out of respect for someone like the Pope, Doc was sure that he would respond to such a situation by saying that he would gladly eat Jesus if he could just spread a little cheese on that cracker first. And so it was with his encounter with Chief Leonard Crow Dog, and he looked forward to eating Peyote Jesus again.

First, though, he attended the Yuwipi ceremony. To perform this ceremony, a room is completely sealed so that no external light can enter. Next, the medicine man has his hands tied behind him with leather straps, and then a blanket is thrown over the medicine man and that, too, is secured with leather straps. Following this, the medicine man is carefully laid down on the floor, the lights are turned off, and singers and drummers begin to chant. After the chanting has gone on for awhile, the participants sitting on the floor typically begin seeing flashes of light all around them, and they feel things bump them and softly brush against them to take away this or that pain or ailment. And so it was at this ceremony. And then when the singing stopped, the lights went back on, and Chief Leonard Crow Dog was sitting cross-legged on the floor with the blanket folded up next to him and all the leather straps bundled together to form a big ball. Now Doc could understand how the person tying the straps could keep it loose enough so that Crow Dog could easily untie himself during the chanting, but there was no way he could explain all the flashing lights that were close to him and surrounding him, nor could he explain the bumps and brushes that occurred. The participants were sitting on the floor, packed like sardines, and it is not likely that any person or persons could have walked through that mass in pitch darkness and manually created all the effects without tripping over someone. It just wasn't possible!

The peyote ceremony started shortly afterwards, and what was ironic to Doc was that even though the state of Texas prides itself on being tough on drugs, they were the ones that provided the peyote for this ceremony. The Supreme Court had ruled that it was legal for Native Americans to participate in ceremonies of the Native American Church, and since peyote is indigenous to Texas, the state government provided, rather discreetly, the sacrament for these ceremonies. In this particular ceremony, several people were seated on the ground, this time inside a large tent, and as the singers began chanting the

peyote songs and banging the water drum, Leonard Crow Dog began to pass around a bowl filled with a peyote paste. After awhile, many people began to throw up, the usual reaction of the stomach to peyote. However, Doc wasn't one of them. Instead, the spirit of the peyote appeared to Doc inside his head and started laughing. The spirit then said to him, "You don't really need to take this anymore. You do such creative work with your mathematics and other studies, you have so many "aha" moments, that you're basically in the peyote state all the time. You don't need my plant power anymore. You're already there!" And so he was.

Doc enjoyed his time travel back to the eighties both for the music and for the chance to revisit his Native American relatives. And Doc also learned one very important thing. Regardless of where *God* is hiding, *God* can be found just as easily outside himself as inside himself. Perhaps *God* was hiding everywhere.

Chapter 27

There are four different plant hallucinogens that Doc has used so far during his brief sojourn on planet Earth. One is cannabis which he now uses bi-weekly for his health, another was psilocybin mushrooms which he had been given without his knowledge at a birthday party back in the seventies, and a third was peyote which he no longer has any need to take simply because what most people experience with peyote is now Doc's normal state of consciousness. That sometimes causes confusion for Doc since he often has a tendency to assume that everyone can see auras or feel their interconnection with all things. In particular, he often assumes that everyone feels a tingly light at the top of their skull that fills their body, nurtures their soul, and connects them with a larger reality. In fact, he is usually downright shocked when he discovers that many people have no idea what he is talking about. Occasionally, though, some other people will see Doc's own aura and the light around his head. Shoshan saw it when she first met Doc back in their early twenties, and that's how she knew that Doc was the one. Doc's medicine woman teacher and former "primary care physician" Nakai, also saw it, and she once told Doc that, as he walked up to her, she saw this great light surrounding him. But of course, it was one of his teachers from graduate school who put this all into perspective for Doc by telling him that that and a quarter would get him a cup of coffee.

The fourth plant teacher that Doc has taken is also one that he won't mention by name. And that's not because it is illegal, but because it is so powerful. He just wouldn't want it to be used by someone who is not ready or mature enough for it. Doc first read about this plant in a journal article about the use of visual and auditory rhythms to entrain certain brainwave patterns. In passing, the author of the article mentioned that there was a plant that could automatically put you into a meditative state without any effort on your part. It sounded both very intriguing and very innocuous to Doc, and so he legally purchased the plant through the Internet. What he didn't count on, though, was that (1) this plant was actually the most powerful hallucinogen known to humanity, and (2) he had far more receptors in his brain eager to shake hands with this teacher than most humans out there. Thus, one drop of distilled essence was all it took to send Doc into another universe. Doc

tried this substance about three times, and it really did give Doc the ability to bend reality with his bare hands. About fifteen minutes into a trip he would find himself at what he called the multiverse's shopping mall. From that point he could travel to any universe or parallel world that he wanted to. The active substance in the plant tended to loosen the bonds in the brain that held our usual reality together so that one could, if they wanted to, form an entirely different reality. And he did. However, the next day, Doc would always feel like his brain had been hit with a sledge hammer. Consequently, Doc decided that he should save the rest of this magic potion for the end of his life. That way he might be able to make a fully conscious exit from this world when the time came. Yep, that seemed like a good idea as long as this current reality didn't go south somewhere along the way.

As for cannabis, however, Doc had come to the conclusion that that was all he really needed either for health or recreation, and every time he took his Rick Simpson's Oil, he would learn something new. The psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich wrote extensively in his lifetime on how trauma gets stored within us physically as body armor. We all have thousands of tensions in our muscles that are burying all the slings and arrows we have taken over time. However, Doc's experience is that cannabis unties these knots that we have worked ourselves into. Indica strains work to heal the body, and sativa strains work to heal the mind. When Doc became a medical marijuana patient in his mid-sixties, he felt as if a million nanobots had been released into his system in order to effect repairs. Now, though, after a few years of this therapy, much of the repair work has been done, and the effects are less dramatic. Still, once a week he will take some RSO with a 1:1 ratio of CBD to THC and then at another time during the week, he'll take some RSO that has a 1:3 ratio of CBD to THC. For adults who do not have a particular medical problem, however, he recommends what he calls the "Stoner Moses solution." In other words, work hard with your analytical left brain for six days of the week, and then let your intuitive right brain take control one day a week by imbibing a single drop of 1:1 ratio Rick Simpson's Oil. Doc frequently rails against what he calls the tyranny of the left brain, and if all adults followed this regimen, he's sure that the world would be a better place. People would spend one day a week healing themselves and getting back in touch

with an important part of themselves that they've long ignored. Lovers would know what it means to truly merge with each other, and everyone would learn to let go of the hang-ups that consume so much of their time throughout the rest of the week. Yep, the world would be a much better place and everyone would be both healthier and happier. In fact, the only losers in this scenario of responsible adult cannabis use would be the liquor companies and the pharmaceutical industries. Consequently, they tend to favor the status quo. And that's why we can't have nice things in this life.

These days, Doc would never do a street drug like he did back in the seventies. That's because there is no assurance of either quality or purity, and something bought on the street could be dusted with all sorts of harmful substances. The reality is that many plant drugs can be very beneficial when used in the proper way, but you don't want to complicate your life through carelessness. As it says in *Proverbs 6:58*, "*Can one go on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched?*"

Chapter 28

Doc didn't sleep very much that night. His mind was just too active tying loose ends together. He was sure he made a lot of progress that way in his search for the missing *God*, but the toll it took was that around noon the next day he had to suddenly announce to Shoshan that he had an urgent need to sink into a deep, deep sleep. And so he did, sleeping for four hours from 1pm to 5pm. Not only did he slip into a very deep state of sleep, he also slipped into a very deep state of dreaming where everything seemed much more real and much more solid than in a regular dream.

In Doc's dream, he had taken a flight from Scottsdale, AZ, to Dallas, TX, to take care of some business, but along the way he wound up in some unknown small town outside of Dallas. And to make things worse, Doc had no memory of how he had gotten from the airport to this town, and he had also lost his backpack and his cell phone. Everything about this town was very bland. It seemed like the time of day was twilight, and the colors did not have the usual vibrancy of either a dream or standard reality. The food also was bland and for all practical purposes, completely tasteless. It might keep you alive, but that was it. It wasn't incredibly hot or humid, but neither was it cool, and there was no air conditioning in town. Additionally, at night he noticed that several people would position mattresses next to one another on a large ramp in a stadium, and that's where they would sleep. Everything about the town was bland and colorless, and Doc had no idea how he would ever manage to leave it. There was, however, one silver lining to this place. Every single person there was extremely kind and very eager to help you and share what they had with you. But for now, Doc was trapped there, and he escaped only when Shoshan ran her fingers lightly over his lower leg in order to awaken him for the evening news.

Later that evening, Doc thought back to his dream, and he arrived at a few conclusions. First, he decided that the place he visited in his dream was somewhere in *Hell*, but it wasn't really designed to torture people. Instead, it was designed to teach people. Everything in that reality was so dull and bland that the only way any happiness or joy

could be found was through helping others. And once this lesson was learned, the inhabitants did everything they could to assist others because in the process, they also created joy for themselves. Doc decided that this world was what Durante degli Alighieri, or Dante, might have called the second circle of *Hell*, and he noticed that *Hell* seemed to be more of a teachable moment than a punishment. At least this one taught people that the only way to find real joy was through being kind and helping one another. Doc was also certain that the first circle of *Hell* was a small third rock from the Sun known as Earth. There was just one unanswered question, though, in Doc's mind. Does *God* create these *Hells*, or do we create our own *Hell*? Or is it the case that we ourselves are *God*?

Chapter 29

One of Doc Benton's go-to actors when he wants a good flick to watch is Denzel Washington. Denzel is one of the finest actors of his generation, and, like only a handful of other people in Hollywood, he rarely does a movie that fails to entertain. However, even though Doc enjoyed Denzel's movie "Fallen" about a detective that explores murders that are being caused by a fallen angel, there is one thing in the movie that always makes Doc cringe. The angel's name is Azazel, and throughout the film they keep pronouncing that name as ah-ZAY-zuhl instead of the correct Hebrew pronunciation of ah-zah-ZEL. In Hebrew, the accent falls on the last syllable nine times out of ten, and so this mispronunciation has always disturbed Doc. Particularly since he has seen other Hollywood productions repeat the same error. But in the grander scheme of things that is just a minor irritation, and Doc would much rather see a Denzel Washington movie than not see a Denzel Washington movie.

The name Azazel occurs in the *Bible* in *Leviticus* 16:8, "*And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for Azazel.*" Among other things, this passage is the origin of the modern English term "scapegoat." But there are also some other things that Doc finds interesting about this passage. First, Aaron is essentially flipping a coin to decide which goat will be sacrificed to *God* and which one will be sent to Azazel. As a mathematician, Doc notices that this is basically what is known as a probabilistic experiment, an experiment whose outcome is determined by chance as opposed to deterministic scientific experiments where we expect the same result each time. Probabilistic experiments have long been used as a method of determining *God's* will, and, in theory, they allow *God* to communicate with us without violating the usual laws of physics. The second thing to ponder in this passage is just who the heck is Azazel? The rabbis of the *Talmud* describe him as a desert spirit, but that's where their understanding of this entity seems to end. It is at this point that Doc reminds himself that the commentary by the rabbis took place several thousand years after the time of the alleged exodus from Egypt, and, thus, Doc suspects the rabbis are pretty clueless about

what is really going on. Fortunately, Doc's Native American relatives seem to have a better understanding of the situation.

Doc has known more than one traditional Native American who was rather puzzled by the *New Testament*, but who felt very much at home with the stories of the wanderings of the Israelites in the *Old Testament*, stories about a nomadic people who, like them, lived close to the earth. Such people are generally aware of two things – (1) that you don't take without giving, and (2) that the world is filled with spirits. Even the rabbis of *Talmud* conceded that there were spirits in the world, and they even debated who would be friendlier to humankind, the indoor spirits that inhabit one's home or the outdoor spirits that reside in the fields surrounding one's property. Either way, to those who understand nature it is clear that Azazel is a spirit of the desert and that the Israelites are traveling through Azazel's abode. Consequently, one must offer something to Azazel as a show of goodwill. That's just good manners!

In the civilized world, we've pretty much driven out other entities such as bears, coyotes, and powerful spirits, but Doc is sensitive enough to sense their presence when they are in proximity. And that's why he doesn't like to drive to northern Arizona these days. There's still a lot of wilderness and reservation land belonging to the Navajo and Hopi up there, and Doc feels the presence of those wilderness spirits. Furthermore, they don't seem to particularly like him. Doc isn't completely sure why they don't like him, but he suspects it has something to do with that drop of Choctaw blood in him. The Choctaw were one of the so-called *Five Civilized Tribes* that quickly adopted many of the beneficial things that European civilization had to offer, and the Choctaw resided on the Gulf Coast in an area now occupied by states like Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Hence, the coastal spirits of the Choctaw are different from the desert spirits of northern Arizona, and this seems to be the root of a natural clash. In any event, Doc doesn't want to have bad luck as a result of inadvertently upsetting some desert spirit. It's often better not to tempt fate if one can avoid it.

In addition to demons without, one also needs to be concerned about the demons within. According to the ancient rabbis, every man's heart contains two inclinations – the inclination to do good and the inclination to do evil. This latter inclination would probably be termed the “shadow” by the late psychoanalyst Carl Jung. Jung generally thought of the shadow as the complex that results from all our repressed fear, anger, pain, and general desires to do things that society does not accept. And our shadow often has the biggest influence on us when we try to wall it off and pretend that it doesn't exist. That's what makes it the strongest! To weaken it, you have to first acknowledge its existence and then, if you can, embrace it and direct it with your light.

Doc is well aware of his shadow, and over time he has let go of much of the pain and anger that it once contained. One of the tools that Doc has used for this is *recapitulation*, systematically reviewing his life with regard to both the good he's done as well as the bad. Another tool he's found very helpful is dream analysis. In the *Talmud*, the ancient rabbis wrote that, “*A dream not interpreted is like a letter unread.*” Interestingly, since Freud was raised as an orthodox Jew, it's almost a certainty that he was taught this *Talmudic* passage in his youth. Additionally, those same rabbis also noted that dreams are often a blend of both truth and nonsense, and a person needs the good sense to separate one from the other. As a result, even though Doc takes every dream with a grain of salt, he's still found this nightly realm to be a great source of insight into himself and his own behaviors. A third tool Doc uses for dealing with his shadow stems from the discoveries of psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich. As mentioned previously, Reich realized that every injury we experience, whether physical or emotional, leaves a scar on the physical body. In particular, emotional scars create physical tension or armoring that serves to block our feelings in order to shield us from pain, and this results in a very physical version of our shadow. To deal with this pain, there has to be a deep relaxation of those tensions in order for our life essence to be able to flow freely again. And in order to accomplish this, cannabis has been a big help to Doc. It can gradually, over time, eliminate those stored bodily tensions, and as these emotional scars are released, they often manifest as dream messages right before leaving the body completely. Cannabis has a remarkable healing ability in that way, and it can also help one disconnect current thoughts from the negative

influences and sway of the past. At this stage in his life, Doc fortunately knows a lot about how to use cannabis in ways that are beneficial both physically, mentally, and spiritually. Doc also knows that if he wants to find *God*, he will also have to first use the techniques outlined above in order to face his own shadow. And so Doc did. “And from here on out,” he thought to himself, “It’s just me and my shadow!”

Chapter 30

Doc was getting closer all the time to a comprehensive understanding of *God* that he could finally present to his client, Trulee Strange. However, before he would be finished, he knew that he would have to take a few more trips. This next one would be a time trip back to Austin in the late seventies to the time when he met a mathematician named Padmanabha Menon.

Padmanabha Menon did have a degree in mathematics, but he was known to his followers simply as Gurudev. He was the son of Sri Atmananda Krishna Menon who today is considered, along with Ramana Maharshi and Nisargadatta Maharaj, to be one of the giants of non-dualistic philosophy in 20th century India. Ramana Maharshi often recommended to his devotees that they ponder the question “Who am I?” while Nisargadatta Maharaj attained his realization through contemplation on the thought “I AM.” Sri Atmananda, however, recommended a variety of techniques in order to help his followers reorient their thinking and realize the true nature of their reality. The folklorist Joseph Campbell had met Atmananda on his trip to India, and had been extremely impressed by him. And when Atmananda died, his followers found that same deep realization in his son, Padmanabha. Consequently, his son inherited the family responsibility, and he became known as Gurudev.

For a while, Gurudev would come to Austin once a year so that people in America could ask him questions. One of his father’s students, Raja Rao, was a philosophy professor at the University of Texas at that time, and he made the initial arrangements to bring Gurudev to this country. However, unlike the pop gurus that were prevalent in the sixties and seventies, there was a screening process for people who wanted to attend Gurudev’s talks because the people involved only wanted there to be serious seekers at such an event.

Doc had taken a class from Raja Rao on Mahayana Buddhism, and he also once worked for a psychologist, Dr. Baugh, who, coincidentally, was also a student of Gurudev’s. And

it was because of Doc's continual interest in yoga and meditation that Dr. Baugh told him about Gurudev and then sponsored his request to be allowed to attend the talks. There was a school in Austin named after Atmananda, and the talks were usually held in an auditorium on the school grounds. When Doc attended his first talk, he was hoping that he would see an elder man walk out onto the stage while smiling and maybe carrying a bouquet of flowers, and that this wise man might look out over the audience, see Doc, and then say, "At last, my primary disciple has arrived!" However, none of that happened. Instead, a scrawny old man that looked rather pissed at the world came out and sat in a large chair, and he then fidgeted a bit while waiting for the first question. Doc had read some short works by Atmananda, and so he knew that one of the main techniques likely to be recommended was to let each thought take you back to pure awareness. In other words, instead of focusing on the perception of the object, let each perception make you more aware of what is perceiving the object, and in that way you begin to become established in pure awareness itself. And indeed, this was the frequent recommendation of Gurudev, and to Doc it was identical to the method of *running and returning* that he had read about in the *Sefer Yetzirah*. However, something else then happened that went beyond what you could learn just from reading books. There was a lull in the questions one evening, and as everyone sat there in silence, Doc suddenly became aware of a deep stillness that went beyond just sitting still. It was a stillness that was deeply spiritual. It was a stillness in which both space and time were momentarily suspended. It was a stillness that went beyond pain and pleasure and anything else that Doc knew. But the one thing that Doc did know was that Gurudev was both the source and the very center of this stillness. Thus, Doc knew then and there that Gurudev was the real deal and that he knew how to walk his talk. The experience also made Doc think of a ballet analogy, and perhaps that was because former New York City Ballet principal ballerina Violette Verdy also regularly attended these talks. Regardless of the reason, though, Doc knew that you could read all the books in the world on ballet, but until you actually see a ballet, you can't have any real understanding of what ballet dancing is supposed to be. Similarly, without seeing someone who has actually walked the path, it's difficult to understand where this *direct path* to realization as taught by Atmananda and his son is supposed to lead. However, Doc now saw it, or as he put it, "A moment to

experience plus another forty years trying to understand what you experienced.” Doc was finally closing in on *God*.

Chapter 31

Things were coming along nicely. As Doc saw it, if something was true, then it was going to pop up in several different places, and one of the things that popped up fairly regularly was the advice to focus on awareness. Doc saw this advice in the words of Saint Francis who said that what you're looking for is that which is looking; it turned up in the ancient *Sefer Yetzirah* that described the *running and returning* technique where you focus on the awareness that is perceiving the object rather than the object itself; and it also turned up in the teachings of the 20th century sage Sri Atmananda who described what Doc called *running and returning* as the *direct path*. This technique also seemed to be at the heart of vipassana meditation that some of Doc's Buddhist friends practiced. And then there was the instruction to focus on "I AM" which appears not only in *Exodus* 3:14, but was also the path to enlightenment used by Nisargadatta Maharaj in 20th century India. Yep, it was all starting to come together, and Doc felt that there were just a few things left to explore before he put together his findings for Ms. Strange. First, though, Doc felt it was time to pause for a minute to do his "blessing practice."

Doc knew that it was necessary to both give back to *God* and to give to others. In the *Talmud* it says, "*To enjoy this world without a benediction is like robbing the Holy One,*" and Doc certainly agreed with this. However, Doc's favorite scriptures also said, "*He who gives kindly to the poor lends to the Lord; and that which he has given will he pay him back (Proverbs 19:17),*" and also, "*To You, silence is praise (Psalm 65:2).*" Thus, Doc would offer praise back to *God* through silent meditation, and Doc would give to others on a physical level by having some money automatically withdrawn from his bank account each month and given to the local food bank. There are a lot of good charities out there, but Doc figures that first and foremost, people gotta eat. Plus, he knew that just about every dollar he contributed to the food bank would go to feeding people, and while the amount he regularly donated would pay for a lot of meals, it was still at a level where he would never miss it.

In addition to helping people on the physical level, which he saw as his and everyone else's duty, he also tried to help people on the non-physical level. To do this, he would think about as many people as he could and then briefly visualize them surrounded by a loving light. He would usually endeavor to do this both quickly and anonymously. He wanted to help people, but he also did not want to get entangled with their problems in the process. But if he could briefly add a little light to their lives or give them a boost in some way, then so much the better. Sometimes the people he thought of might contact him in day or two to say hello, or they might just simply give him a bigger smile the next time he saw them. That, of course, doesn't prove that actual contact was made, but on the other hand, there was that time in graduate school when he was sending blessings to all the people he worked with, and when he got to work, the mathematics department secretary told him that when she woke up, she saw Doc's smiling face floating for a moment above her bed until it just dissolved like a Cheshire cat. And from this experience Doc knew that one thing was certain. There was still a lot of stuff going on in the universe that science hadn't yet figured out how to explain!

Chapter 32

Doc's favorite book of the *Bible* was probably *Ecclesiastes*. Many saw this book as the reflections of an old man who was terribly depressed, but Doc saw it differently. He saw in this book the writing of a wise elder who had reached a point in life where he knew what was important and what wasn't, an elder who knew what mattered and what didn't.

The speaker in *Ecclesiastes* is often referred to in English translations as "the Preacher," but the Hebrew name of this speaker is "Kohelet." The ancient rabbis explained that this was just another name for Solomon. Furthermore, they said that "Kohelet" came from the Hebrew word *hikahel* which basically means "to assemble." Solomon was known by this name because, according to the rabbis, he was able to assemble the teachings of the *Torah* in ways that the people could understand. It's said that Solomon was the first teacher to use parables to help explain his teachings. It's also said that Solomon was able to put "handles" on the *Torah*. Doc liked this metaphor because we use similar figures of speech today. For example, when we understand something, we say that we can "grasp" it, and when we have trouble understanding something, we often say that we can't get a "handle" on it. Thus, Solomon assembled the teachings for people and made handles for the *Torah* so that they could grasp it, and that's why he was known as Kohelet.

Probably the best known verse in all of *Ecclesiastes* is the second verse of chapter 1 which is usually translated as "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." That translation, according to Doc, is a very, very bad translation of what the Hebrew is actually trying to say. Its origin is the *Latin Vulgate*, the translation of the *Bible* into Latin for the common folk to read, and in the Latin version of the *Bible* we read, "*Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas.*" Thus, it's easy to see how this came over into English as "vanity." Still, as Doc looked at these words he couldn't help but think of a statement from the *Talmud* that says that he who does an exact translation is a liar, and he who adds to a translation is a blasphemer. The word "vanity" may be an exact translation of the Latin "vanitas," but what this verse says in the original Hebrew has nothing to do with being a vain person.

In Hebrew this passage reads as “*Havel havelim, ha-chol havel,*” and the root of the word *havel* is *hevel*. This word essentially means “vapor” or “steam,” and it can also be translated as “breath.” In other words, Kohelet is trying to say that everything is just a bunch of hot air that lacks substance! Vapor of vapors, all is vapor! The ancient rabbis tended to pair this verse with another one from *Ecclesiastes*, verse 12 of chapter 6 that says, “*For who knows what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spends like a shadow?*” This suggested to the rabbis that the reality we see is like a shadow, and consequently, they came up with a story that is remarkably similar to Plato’s cave allegory.

“As a shadow of what? If life is like the shadow cast by a wall, there is substance in it; if like the shadow cast by a date-palm, there is substance in it! ... Samuel said: It is like the shadow of bees in which there is no substance at all.”
(*Ecclesiastes Rabbah I:3*)

To many this passage may seem very cryptic, but Doc knew that the key to understanding it was to realize that walls and date-palms were metaphors for something that is permanent or eternal while a swarm of bees, on the other hand, represents that which is fleeting and transitory. Thus, according to this interpretation of *Ecclesiastes*, everything in this physical world is a shadow or reflection of something that originates in the non-physical world. However, most of what we see or encounter is just a reflection of some passing condition like the irritating traffic that we might encounter on a freeway, and as such, it is a “shadow” that lacks real substance. In other words, it’s just a bunch of hot air that we shouldn’t get upset about or too attached to. But on the other hand, there are other experiences that are a reflection of something permanent and eternal, something divine and like *God*, and these kinds of shadows or reflections, which are far fewer in number, do have substance, and these are the shadows worth paying attention to. Doc knew that if you ask someone to list those things that are really important in life, they would often come up with things like “love” and “peace” and “oneness,” and Doc agreed that these were, indeed, things that had substance. The author of *Ecclesiastes* comes up with his own short list of what is worthwhile, and it includes the joy you get from the

food you eat, the spouse that you love, and the joy and satisfaction that comes from doing a good job. These are all things that have substance. But as Doc noted, *Ecclesiastes* also tells us that most things in this life don't have substance. Most things are just a bunch of hot air. Or again, reality is not real.

Ecclesiastes is part of the "wisdom literature" of the *Bible*, and this literature often endeavors to explain the deeper meanings of life. In this case, *Ecclesiastes* notes that quite often bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people, and the book tries to explain why this happens. Part of its explanation, as Doc saw it, was that most of what we consider good or bad doesn't matter to begin with. Most of what we see lacks substance just like the phantom images seen in a dream, and even when something bad happens to us in a dream, it doesn't matter because once we wake up we know that it wasn't real. It was just a dream. In a similar way, *Ecclesiastes* says to us to not get so upset over things which aren't real.

The *Book of Ecclesiastes* also takes a very cyclic view of our physical world. As it says, "*The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to its place where it rises again.*" Hence, a great part of the explanation given by *Ecclesiastes* regarding the seeming injustice in the world is that much of it happens simply because physical reality is cyclic. It's inevitable that good times will be followed by bad times which will be followed by good times, and if most of it is just hot air to begin with, then there's no reason to get upset by it. And that was how Doc lived his life these days. Granted he knew that there were evils that one should always take a stand against, but he also knew that, for better or worse, this world was simply a more stable dream, and the elements of it that he focused on the most were those that were shadows or reflections of *God*. Things like love and oneness and helping his fellow human being. The rest, such as Star Wars and twitter wars, just didn't seem as important to him.

There were a few other passages from *Ecclesiastes* that also caught Doc's eye. One was from chapter 1, verse 7, "*All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place from where the rivers come, there they return again.*" Doc noted that if you

replace the word “sea” with “awareness,” then this sounds an awful lot like the meditation method of *running and returning* that is found in the *Sefer Yetzirah*. The rivers represent the perceived world, and all these perceptions return to the sea of consciousness which then gives rise to new rivers which return again. Doc knew he was getting into deep stuff.

One final thing from *Ecclesiastes* that meant a lot to Doc was chapter 3, verse 11, “*He has set the mystery of the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work which God has made from the beginning to the end.*” Doc realized that there’s a lot to this verse that can only be understood if you know the original Hebrew. In this verse, we find the Hebrew word *olam* which can be translated either as *world* or as *eternity*. However, the word *olam* is not spelled in the usual way. Instead, it is spelled as the word *olem* which means *hidden*. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for *heart* can also be translated as *mind*, and additionally, since every Hebrew letter is also a number, it can be seen that the Hebrew word *olem* has the same numerical value as *hikahel*, to assemble. Thus, when Doc put it all together, he realized that there is something in our hearts and minds that assembles this reality for us while at the same time hiding the larger reality that is its origin. Or as Winston Churchill might have said, “*It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.*”

Chapter 33

Doc was just about finished with his investigation. Everything was coming together nicely, and there was just one other text of ancient wisdom that he wanted to explore just to make sure he hadn't left anything out. And the name of that ancient text is the *Zohar*.

The *Zohar* was first published in the 13th century, and it is often viewed as the crown jewel of Jewish mysticism. Also, according to legend, the *Zohar* was written by the *Talmudic* rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, but no serious *Zohar* scholar accepts that story. The original document was written in Aramaic, and a linguistic analysis of the text indicates that it was indeed composed in the 13th century in Spain by Rabbi Moses de Leon.

As a publication, the *Zohar* spans several volumes, and it is difficult for many to understand because it assumes that a reader has an in-depth knowledge of *Torah*, *Bible*, *Talmud*, *Midrash Rabbah*, *Bahir*, and *Sefer Yetzirah*. Plus, on top of all that, the text is written in broken Aramaic with several other words borrowed from the Spanish of that time, and even in an English translation there can be many odd figures of speech that are difficult for the casual reader to decipher. It can be like diving into Old or Middle English and trying to figure out what the heck they are talking about. Nonetheless, even though there are parts of the *Zohar* that still look like gibberish to Doc, there are many more parts that Doc recognizes as examples of deep mystical insight. It's those passages that Doc now wants to take a closer look at.

"We have been taught that all this differentiation of the Divine Personality is from our side and relative to our knowledge, and that, above, all is one, all is set in one balance, unvarying and eternal, as it is written: "I the Lord change not" (Malachi 3:6)."

(Zohar II: 176a)

Well, there you have it. A clear statement of non-dualism from the *Zohar*. A statement that all is really one, and it is only our own minds that create duality. Doc felt like he was on his way to a bingo!

“It is written: And the intelligent shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness like the stars for ever and ever (Daniel 12:3). There was indeed a “brightness” (Zohar). The Most Mysterious struck its void, and caused this point to shine. This “beginning” then extended, and made for itself a palace for its honor and glory. There it sowed a sacred seed which was to generate for the benefit of the universe, and to which may be applied the Scriptural words “the holy seed is the stock thereof” (Isaiah 6:13). Again there was Zohar (brightness), in that it sowed a seed for its glory, just as the silkworm encloses itself, as it were, in a palace of its own production which is both useful and beautiful. Thus by means of this “beginning” the Mysterious Unknown made this palace. This palace is called Elohim, and this doctrine is contained in the words, ‘By means of a beginning, IT created Elohim.’”
(Zohar I:15a)

This passage contains several confirmatory points that are important to Doc. First, he noticed the mention that everything began with just the Void, something inherently unknowable and mysterious. And then somehow this Void created out of itself a world that could be known, a world known as *Elohim*. In Judaism there are several different words for *God*, and the two main ones are the one which is never pronounced but is spelled in Hebrew as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, and then there is the second primary name of *Elohim*. In earlier rabbinic literature, *Elohim* is associated with *God’s* justice while *yud-hey-vav-hey* is associated with *God’s* mercy. However, according to the *Zohar*, this second name for *God*, *Elohim*, seems to also represent not only an active, creative *God* that is simultaneously partially revealed and partially concealed, but also the world and the entire creation. Furthermore, Doc was already aware that the very first phrase of the *Bible*, “In the beginning,” could also be translated in other ways, and the *Zohar* pursues one of those alternate possible translations to come up with the statement, “By means of a

beginning, *IT* created *Elohim*.” Ergo, the unknowable *God* had created the knowable *God*. Doc could feel that bingo getting closer!

“Then he said to me, ‘Master, the Holy One, blessed be He, had a deep secret which He at length revealed at the celestial Academy. It is this. When the most Mysterious wished to reveal Himself, He first produced a single point which was transmuted into a thought, and in this He executed innumerable designs, and engraved innumerable gravings. He further graved within the sacred and mystic lamp a mystic and most holy design, which was a wondrous edifice issuing from the midst of thought. This is called MI (Who?), and was the beginning of the edifice, existent and non-existent, deep-buried, unknowable by name. It was only called “Who?” It desired to become manifest and to be called by name. It therefore clothed itself in a refulgent and precious garment and created ELEH (these), and ELEH (these) acquired a name. The letters of the two words intermingled, forming the complete name Elohim (God). When the Israelites sinned in making the golden calf, they alluded to this mystery in saying ELEH (these) are thy Gods, O Israel’ (Exodus 32:4.) And once MI (who) became combined with ELEH (these), the name remained for all time. And upon this secret the world is built.’”

(Zohar I:2a)

Again, Doc could see that this passage from the *Zohar* was packed with lots of stuff. First, it confirmed that whatever there was before creation, it was both existent and non-existent, and the *Zohar* refers to it here simply as “*Who*,” the question that can never be answered. In Hebrew, this word is written as *MI*. Also, what can be known is called “*these*” in the *Zohar*. *These*, this and that, refers to what we can actually see and make sense of, unlike *Who* which is entirely unknowable. However, the Hebrew letters for *these* can be combined with the Hebrew letters for *Who* in order to spell *Elohim*. Consequently, *Elohim* represents an aspect of *God* that is partially revealed and partially concealed. In other passages from the *Zohar*, *Elohim* represents both the *demiurge*, the creator *God*, and the creation itself. But beyond this creator *God* is the truly unknowable

God that never changes. Furthermore, the *Zohar* points out that the sin of the Israelites in building the golden calf was that this idol represented only material things (“*These are your Gods.*”) without also containing the essential, unknowable creative force represented by *Who*. Doc knew that bingo was imminent!

“That point is called ‘I’ (Leviticus 19:30), and upon it rests the unknown, the Most High, the unrevealed One which is TETRAGRAMMATON (yud-hey-vav-hey), both being one.”

(Zohar I:6a)

Is there such a thing as a double bingo? If so, then Doc felt like he was just about there. The passage above showed that the *Zohar* asserts that the most sacred name in Judaism for God, the *yud-hey-vav-hey* which is also known as the *TETRAGRAMMATON* or “four letter name”, is not only the name of the most unknowable version of God, it is also the very awareness that sits behind the “I,” the center of our individual self, and furthermore, the *Zohar* claims that the individual self, appearing as the “I” that observes, is in actuality identical to the most high God.

“It is written: “Thou hast been shown to know”, that is, shown by the angel to the Holy One, in order to know, to understand, to penetrate in this world to the mystery of the Faith, the mystery of the Torah. And he who, having come into this world does not study the Torah to know Him, better were it for him that he had never been born; since the only aim and object of the Holy One in sending man into this world is that he may know and understand that TETRAGRAMMATON is Elohim. This is the sum of the whole mystery of the Faith, of the whole Torah, of all that is above and below, of the Written and Oral Torah, all together forming one unity.”

(Zohar II:161a)

BINGO! This is it! This is what Doc was waiting for. In this passage the *Zohar* states that not only is the unknowable God that we represent as *yud-hey-vav-hey* or

TETRAGRAMMATON the exact same thing as the more revealed *God* called *Elohim*, but knowing and understanding this unity is the whole point of our existence! Furthermore, since *Elohim* also represents the creation, this means that everything we know is actually the unknowable *God*. This is the main thing that Doc was hoping the *Zohar* would confirm for him, but there were still a couple of more passages that Doc wanted to highlight.

“AND YE SHALL DO (MAKE) THEM. After walk and “keep” have been mentioned, why does it also say “do/make?” Because he who “keeps” the precepts of the Law and “walks” in God's ways, if one may say so, “makes” Him who is above.”

(Zohar III:113a)

Doc found this statement absolutely amazing. Is it true that we make *God*? It seemed to Doc that this could not be referring to the *God* which is beyond both existence and non-existence, the *God* that is inherently unknowable. This could only be referring to the *God* that we give characteristics to like *Elohim* in Judaism or *Allah* in Islam or *Odin* in Norse mythology. These are surely the one's we create, and if we follow good ethics and proper behavior, then the *God* we create will be a good and ethical *God*. In particular, this reminded Doc of the kind of *God* that Nancy Ellen Abrams had postulated in her book *“A God that Could be Real.”* Additionally, perhaps we also in a sense “make” the unknowable *God* when we learn to create ultimate unity in our minds, and while this may all seem a little paradoxical, all Doc can say in response to that is, “Welcome to my world!” Doc was used to living with paradox.

And now, there was just one more passage from the *Zohar* that Doc wanted to examine.

“Once there was a man who dwelt among the mountains and was a complete stranger to the ways of townsfolk. He sowed wheat, but knew no better than to consume it in its natural condition. One day he went down into a city, and there a loaf of good bread was placed before him. He asked what it was, and was

informed that it was bread and was meant to eat. He ate it and liked it. "What is it made of?" he said. They told him "Wheat". Later, he was given fine cake kneaded in oil. He tasted it, and again asked: "And this, of what is it made?" The same reply was made as before: "Of wheat". Finally, he was treated to some royal confectionery, flavored with oil and honey. Once more he asked his question, and obtained the same reply. Then he said: "In sooth, I have all these at my command, because I eat the essential constituent of all, namely wheat." Thus, through his untutored taste he remained a stranger to all these delicious flavors, and their enjoyment was lost to him. Even so it is with those who stop short at the general principles of knowledge because they are ignorant of the delights which may be derived from the further investigation and application of those principles.'"

(Zohar II: 176a-176b)

When Doc was little, he imagined achieving enlightenment and then spending the rest of his life sitting on a mountain top in meditative bliss. The mystics in Judaism, however, saw a more realistic goal. According to the *Zohar*, enlightenment is not the end, but the beginning of a creative life. Once we understand the oneness or essence of all things, then we should endeavor to see how many variations we can create from that oneness. As long as we are in a physical body, we should function as co-creators with the *Life of the Worlds*. We should, as the *Zohar* suggests, go through life with a sense of unity above while enjoying creative diversity below. Or at least we should do that for six days a week. On the seventh day, we might follow the words of Rabbi Bob Dylan, "*Everybody must get stoned!*"

Chapter 34

Doc was basically ready to meet with Trulee Strange again for the final reveal, but before he did, he wanted to take one last trip. Not too long ago, one of Doc's best friends, Billy, had passed away, and he wanted to visit with him one more time. Billy's wife had passed away a few years before he did, and to tell the truth, Billy had never felt complete after his wife had died. His wife's name was Julie, but he always called her "Jules." And like Doc and Shoshan, Billy and Jules were true soulmates.

Doc was at that age where several relatives and friends had already left this Earth, and he had carefully observed what had happened in each case. When his grandmother had died, both Doc and his brother had been able to strongly feel her essence filling the visitation room, and they were puzzled why the adults could not sense this. Doc's parents, in particular, were filled with fear when they saw the lifeless body of Doc's grandmother, and they held each other tightly as they cried. When one of Doc's uncles had died, however, it was a different story. His last few days had been filled with both physical pain from his cancer and also with the ton of morphine that the doctors had given him in order to dull the pain. Consequently, he didn't even know that he had died. In his consciousness, he was still reliving the pain of the cancer even though he didn't need to, and it was only the good wishes of all the people at his funeral that had helped him move beyond that state of self-torture.

A lot of people that Doc knew that had died went first through what Doc called the "whirlwind." This was identical to the Tibetan concept of the *bardo*. But what was really going on, as Doc perceived it, was that when we die, those knots that we have previously tied in life in order to hold in all the hurt and anger that we have experienced, well, they suddenly begin to unravel. And as a result, those negative emotions get released all at once. This experience is what some religions call purgatory. However, after one finally lets go of all that negativity, then the soul is ready to move on. In Jewish mysticism, the soul moves first through the *Cave of Machpela* where the patriarchs of Judaism are buried. To Doc, this seemed to be mythically equivalent to the tunnel that

people who have undergone near death experiences often encounter. And at the end of this tunnel, in the Jewish version of events, it is not Jesus, but Adam who greets them and then says, "*I broke one commandment. How many did you break?*"

Following both the whirlwind and the experience of the cave and the being of light, the soul then arrives at the celestial *Garden of Eden*, and it resides there at a level corresponding to whatever level of understanding the soul had attained while on Earth. There many would stay until they decided once again to incarnate upon the Earth.

For some people, the afterlife is like a beautiful Hobbit village from *Lord of the Rings*, but the more spiritually advanced one is, the more the afterlife becomes just a realm of light. And at the higher levels, souls abandon bodies all together and just intermingle as beautiful balls of lights. And at still higher levels, they are just balls of white, silvery light that merge together with one another in oneness.

Doc's friend Billy had been an award-winning author in his most recent lifetime, but more importantly, Billy's life had been filled with one act of kindness after another. Doc had never seen Billy in a really bad mood, and Billy had been well known for his generosity in advising and mentoring other authors who were just getting started. Consequently, many people loved Billy, and when he passed, there wasn't much of a whirlwind for him to endure. When you're surrounded by love, you're protected from all sorts of things.

When Doc caught up with Billy in the afterlife, he noticed that Billy was wearing a long, tan tunic and sandals and that behind him were a large pair of traditional angel wings. And by his side was his beloved Jules, his wife and soulmate.

"Hi, Billy," said Doc.

"Doc! What are you doing here? Are you dead already?" said Billy.

“No, I’m just here for a visit. But what’s with the outfit? I thought you would be floating along like a ball of light by now?” said Doc.

“Oh, I can definitely do the light thing,” said Billy. “It’s just that I really enjoy the comfort of a loose fitting tunic. Plus, chicks really dig the wing span!”

Doc immediately knew that by “chicks” Billy really meant Jules.

“So to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?” queried Billy.

“Well,” said Doc, “I’ve been writing a book and I thought I could use a little help.”

“Yes, I know all about that,” said Billy. “The afterlife is in some ways like being in outer space. You’ve got a much bigger perspective on things, and thus, I not only knew that you were writing a book, I’ve been helping you write some of it!”

“Really,” said Doc. “What parts did you write?”

“The good parts,” said Billy with a smile.

“And what parts did I write?” asked Doc.

“The not so good parts,” replied Billy, again with a sly smile on his face.

“Well, I certainly hope the good parts include the whole book,” said Doc.

“Don’t worry,” said Billy again with that smile. “They do.”

At this point, Jules stepped in, and the human forms of both her and Billy began to dissolve as they merged together into a single, magnificent silver ball of light. Doc then realized that they existed as separate beings only for the joy of becoming one again, and

that after residing for awhile in a higher plane of oneness, they would once again return to the idyllic place where Doc had been conversing with them. But for now, that ethereal silver ball began to disappear as it progressed to an even higher level.

“I’ll see you later,” said Doc to Billy who now seemed far away.

“No, I’ll see you soon,” said a voice without a body back to Doc.

Doc smiled broadly as he wondered what Billy had meant by that.

Chapter 35

Doc had arranged a meeting in the food court at Costco for the final reveal, and Trulee Strange showed up at Costco right on time just as Doc was getting hotdogs and Dr. Peppers for all. Their local Costco also graciously provided a gluten-free bun for Shoshan's hotdog. Back in the previous millennium, Shoshan had been diagnosed with celiac disease which turns wheat into a deadly poison for you. And when this ailment first became active in her, few doctors had even heard of it and, thus, it was very hard to find someone who could arrive at the proper diagnosis. However, she now did well on her restricted diet even though Doc was always quick to point out the irony that the standard Jewish blessing for their meal praised *God* for bringing forth bread (and gluten!) from the Earth. Doc often thought that *God* must have a special like for irony because it occurs so often in the real world.

“Good morning,” said Doc to Trulee. “I’m so glad you could join us. I’ve taken the liberty of putting some mustard and relish on your hotdog, so please, let’s sit down and begin. I have, indeed, found *God* for you, though it may or may not be the *God* you wanted. But in any event, I’m ready to begin. However, this will be a long explanation, so please pay close attention.” And so Doc did begin to explain, and as promised, it was a long but thorough explanation.

“Let’s start with what we know, and that is that we are born, we develop a sense of personal identity, and if we develop normally, then we all feel that there is a real world out there, separate from our self, that we are able to manipulate. Furthermore, we generally feel as if we are some type of spirit that sits inside a shell of a body, and from our vantage point in the brain, we engage with this exterior reality. That is the common experience, but the real truth is that it is all wrong!

What we actually experience is simply a user friendly interface created by our brains in order to help us deal with the world more effectively. It is no different in that respect from the point-&-click desktop that you see on your computer. What reality really is, we

cannot see directly, and we may never know. However, there is another reality we can become aware of, but to do that we essentially have to reprogram our brains. We have to unlearn the usual way of perceiving things and replace it with a different way.

The usual way of viewing reality that we learn to accept as children is very useful, but it is not perfect. There are flaws in the system. We learn from relativity theory that there is no such thing as a universal flow of time that is the same for everyone, that all of spacetime exists at once, and that in the mathematics of Minkowski Space that time can be converted into space and vice-versa. We also learn from quantum physics that everything has a dual nature as both a particle and a wave. We learn from quantum physics that we can experience ourselves not only as a localized entity, but also as a wave that extends both through space and through time, and that we can blend with and be part of all the many other waves out there. Furthermore, it's not just modern science that reveals the cracks in our perceptual system. Even ancient philosophers like Zeno of Elea were aware that our view of reality is not correct, and so that's why Zeno proposed a series of paradoxes whose contemplation could lead one to a different mode of perception. Additionally, there are all the personal experiences that people have that tell them that their model for reality is incomplete. There are all those times that people receive a message of some sort from a loved one that has departed. There are also those times that we know with certainty that we should walk down certain path, and then something wonderful happens when we do. There are also times such as when I was driving in to Houston for the final defense of my doctoral dissertation, and when I prayed and asked *God* to send me a sign, a migrating golden eagle immediately swooped down and glided right in front of my car. And there is also the time when I was out of town and greatly missing Shoshan, and so I visualized my arms wrapped around her. And when I did that, she immediately felt a male presence in the bedroom, saw the mattress beside her depress as if someone were in it, and then she felt surrounded by the purest love imaginable. These are just a few examples of the types of experiences that people have that can't be explained by the usual model for reality, and that's why we need to examine our reality more closely. The usual perceptual system is flawed, and we need to examine the cracks in that system in order to arrive at a deeper truth.

So, let's begin our examination by looking at bit more closely at the so-called dichotomy that seems to exist between consciousness and matter. And this brings up the perennial question of which came first. Does matter create consciousness, or does consciousness create matter? The usual theory of science is that consciousness is an emergent phenomenon that occurs when a brain reaches a certain level of sophistication. However, one thing about that theory that has always bothered me is that it seems to mean that a universe was in existence for billions of years before anyone could observe it, and without an observer, without a witness, it might as well not be existing at all! It always seemed very bizarre to me that a universe would exist without any awareness of its existence until one day consciousness suddenly popped into being in some creature's brain. Very bizarre, indeed!

The counter argument, though, is that consciousness came first and that it is our awareness that created the universe of matter. In this theory, the world is like a dream, and in a dream we certainly have no problem believing afterwards that all the objects we saw were creations of our own awareness. However, if reality is just a dream, then it is also a very stable dream. Things don't change willy-nilly like they do in the dreams we have while asleep, and that suggests to me that before we enter this reality version of a dream that we have to, in a sense, sign a license agreement that says that we will abide by a few things such as Newton's laws of motion. Just a few conservation laws here and there is all it takes to create a dream in which change can take place, but not too fast.

So which version of the world is true? Does reality create consciousness, or does consciousness create reality? Based upon quantum physics, I'm going to say that both theories are true. Quantum physics suggests that consciousness is required for a wave function to collapse, and I suspect that consciousness is built into the warp and woof of the universe just as much as electrons, protons, and neutrons are. Of course, that doesn't mean that an electron has a name and a sense of self in the same way that humans do. Something like that requires a sophisticated computer like the brain for consciousness to interface with. Nonetheless, I do believe that basic, wordless awareness exists at all levels of reality, and that what we call reality is driven to find more and more

sophisticated forms of expression for this awareness. Now some may say that this theory will lead to all sorts of contradictions and paradoxes, and to those I simply quote Walt Whitman from *Song of Myself*:

“Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself. I am large, I contain multitudes.”

The truth is that if you want to understand *God*, yourself, and the universe, then you have to be willing to embrace paradox. And when you do, then you will understand that what you previously saw as opposing views are really just two sides of the same coin.

Our brains are hardwired to both develop in certain ways and to perceive in certain ways. At an early age, we develop a sense of self and personal identity, and again, we can see this as an emergent phenomenon. However, even before this sense of self emerged, awareness was already present. In the medieval classic of Jewish mysticism known as the *Zohar*, three levels of a person’s soul are identified, and the personal identity that emerges in us as toddlers seems to correspond well with what these Jewish mystics called the *nefesh*, the most basic level of personhood. However, around puberty another soul begins to emerge that the Jewish mystics called the *ruach* and which I call the “moral soul.” Again, this is an emergent phenomenon, and this moral soul corresponds to the greater awareness of others that suddenly emerges and that gives us the opportunity to express love and compassion in ways that we were unable to comprehend before. The final level of the soul that the *Zohar* discusses is called the *neshamah*, and this is the soul that emerges when we learn to spiritually connect with the greater cosmos. It is a soul that can perceive states of cosmic joy and those things that we designate as holy. Unfortunately, many people never reach this state. This third soul seems to emerge in perhaps less than half of the population, and we have all seen those people who seem to become less evolved and less aware as they get older. And this is indeed a missed opportunity.

I agree to some extent with Nancy Ellen Abrams that *God* is an emergent phenomenon that we collectively create just as the individual cells in our body create us or as unaware ants create an anthill. I also believe that we are hardwired to create a *God* to believe in. However, I also believe that beyond the *God* we create, there is also that which is intrinsically unknowable and inconceivable, an unperceivable Void from which all that we do perceive emerges, and that, too, is *God*. However, this is the *God* that we can't create since one cannot create that which is beyond existence. This is the *God* that is hinted at in ancient Judaism as the *God* that cannot be named, and this is the *God* that the Jewish mystics sought a deeper understanding of. This is the *God* that we are ultimately programmed to seek.

I often think of reality as a coin with many different sides. From the perspective of one side, time flows for us from past to present to future, but from the perspective of a different side, all things exist at once. Similarly, on one side of the coin I am an individual entity localized in space and time, while on another side I am a wave that extends throughout all of space and time. It's all a matter of which perspective you choose at the moment. Likewise, you can see either matter creating consciousness, or consciousness creating matter. But regardless of which perspective you choose, what's important is that the path to *God* or ultimate enlightenment remains the same. Even if you staunchly believe that matter creates consciousness and that there is no life after death, you will still have to take the same steps in order to arrive at the cosmic oneness and wholeness that you seek.

And so now we come to the question of what exactly do we need to do to find *God*? How do we somehow perceive that which is unperceivable? To answer this, I'll describe the steps I took when you first hired me. It occurred to me right off the bat that there is the *God* we know, the *God* that all religions create in their image and give characteristics to, and then there is the *God* we can't know, the one that we can't perceive directly. I thought that surely this latter *God* must occur in our daily experience in some way, and then I realized that the one part of our experience that we can't experience directly is the very awareness that witnesses all our experiences, the observer within. Thus, I began to

practice an ancient Jewish meditation technique that I call *running and returning*. This is a method where instead of focusing on the object of perception, the running of awareness toward the object, you focus upon that which is perceiving the object, what we call the returning of the object to awareness. At first, I would try and sit cross-legged upon my couch with eyes closed while I did this, but the only result was that I would fall asleep. But then I tried to do it with eyes open and without withdrawing from the world. I tried to do it 24/7 in all states of consciousness, and that's when everything changed.

No matter what was taking place, I would always remind myself to focus on the observer rather than what was being observed, and one of the first consequences was that this immediately created a certain amount of detachment from the object. Furthermore, since our usual mode of perception results in duality and multiplicity, focusing on the act of observation itself did just the opposite. I began to experience more feelings of both love and unity as I came closer and closer, so to speak, to the observer. Furthermore, I could do this with all perceptions, both pleasant and unpleasant. It did not matter if there was peaceful music playing in the room or the noise of a child screaming. Regardless of the perception, it still led me back to that unknowable perceiver. As it says in *Ecclesiastes*, "*All rivers run into the sea.*" All perceptions lead back to the perceiver. In most methods of meditation the focus is on achieving a peaceful or joyous state of consciousness, but in *running and returning* that doesn't matter. Whether it is a good or bad experience, you can still use it to lead you back to the perceiver, and thus, nothing is a distraction once this method is mastered

Initially when I began this method, I would sometimes experience anxiety, and from modern science I now know that this is because some of the same receptors in the brain that are associated with feelings of joy and euphoria are also found in that part of the brain that controls the fight-or-flight response. However, with perseverance, one can learn to bypass these states of anxiety. Also, I do suspect that this is what is behind the ancient *Biblical* dictum that fear is the beginning of wisdom. I suspect that my ancestors practiced this technique millennia ago, and that they, too, had to learn how to pass beyond the gate of fear. And part of the trick is that if you do experience fear, then let

that, too, point you back to pure awareness. And as you do this, your state of consciousness will change again.

I have to admit, Ms. Strange, that my own consciousness has changed and evolved quite a bit since taking on your case, and for that I owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude and thanks. There have been many things I've learned along the way. For example, I realized that the key to enlightenment lies in reprogramming our brain and in tricking it to begin to perceive reality differently. I started with letting each object take me back to that which observes the object, but then I quickly realized that the observed and the observer are really just a single whole. We have the thought that the two are separate, but there is no observed without an observer. They are one thing, not two. Just as the light of the sun is part of the sun itself, so is everything we observe inextricably linked to the observer. For example, what we see as inside and outside of ourselves is just an illusion. We are really more like a mathematical *Klein bottle* that takes a twist through a higher dimension so that its inside is exactly the same as its outside. And so it is with us. This thought that some things are inside us and other things are outside of us is just a thought and nothing more. It is a part of our programming that can be changed. Similarly, the thought that my consciousness is separate from someone else's is also just an illusion. Change the programming and you will see that there is only one awareness behind everything, and that it is only the individual mind that separates things into different parts. Thus, as a quantum wave, it becomes impossible for me to tell where I end and Shoshan begins, and we often have the experience that we are but a single awareness.

Whenever I witness a negative emotion, I immediately begin to focus on the place within me where that negativity is known, and that begins a process that restores me to unity. Also, if I practice this method of *running and returning* as I fall asleep, then that tends to transform deep sleep into the ultimate state of enlightenment, that of undifferentiated consciousness without an object. Actually, it's not that deep sleep has changed, but rather the last thought one has before disappearing into deep sleep. That's what changes. For the average person, the process of going into deep sleep involves gradually turning down the volume of the brain more and more until sleep occurs, and consequently, deep

sleep is associated with a state of ignorance or knowing nothing. However if your last perception before disappearing into deep sleep is that of ultimate love and unity, then deep sleep becomes for you that ultimate state consciousness without an object where all is one. Sometimes, too, you will enter this state while awake, either for a flicker of a moment or for a more extended period of time. However, you may also find yourself more frequently at this point which is described in the *Zohar*:

“Close by the border shall the rings be, for places for the staves’ (Exodus 25: 27). The “border” is a secret place accessible only by one narrow path known to a few. It is, therefore, filled with gates and lit with lamps. This is the future world, which, being hidden and stored away, is called misgereth (border, literally. closed).”

(Zohar I: 31a)

Do you see what is being said here? Some of the time we will indeed disappear completely into oneness, but most of the time we may, like the staves, be there right on the edge of the enlightenment abyss. But of course, there are other times that you will realize that even this distinction you are making between being in the abyss versus being on the edge of the abyss is just another thought that can be transcended. Once you fully realize that there is no real difference between seeing objects and not seeing them, no difference between the world of perceptions and the world of *Nirvana*, then you will have fully reached your goal. Then you will know the *God* that cannot be named. However, once you have this realization, then know also that this is not the end of your journey. Remember that Solomon did not just sit on a mountain top meditating after he found wisdom. Instead, after he found wisdom, he built the Temple in Jerusalem. Thus, enlightenment is not the end of our creative life, but only the beginning, and if any of what I’ve said today seems contradictory, then remember that this is only because our brains are initially wired to interpret reality in a different way, and since we have to describe things using the language that the brain has created, that often results in paradox!

As I said earlier, my path began with the practice of *running and returning*, but sometimes people have to begin in a different way depending upon their own propensities and predilections. Not everyone has an immediate awareness that what is doing the observing is unknowable. If this is the case, then I recommend starting with those things that evoke perceptions of love and unity within you, because those perceptions bring you closer to your true self. Likewise, some people are more adept at experiencing a holy state in nature, and that is also a good starting point since ultimately there is no difference between what is inside us and what is outside of us. And then there are others like Ramana Maharshi who began with the interrogative, “Who am I,” or Nisargadatta Maharaj who used the phrase and Hebrew *God* name “I AM” as a way of focusing attention on consciousness. Still others like to focus on the moment between two thoughts as a method of arriving at that which is unknowable. That, too, is good. However, one friend of mine several years ago suggested that if someone is unable to grasp what it means to look at that which can’t be seen, then they might begin by trying to focus on what’s behind their head since that is an area that is blind to our vision. Thus, I’ll end this discussion with the same thing I said to you when you first told me that you were looking for *God*. Have you looked behind you?”

Trulee Strange had listened very patiently as Doc gave her his report, and now she gave that knowing smile that indicated that she was very pleased with what she had heard and that she now understood exactly how to find that which she had been searching for. She thanked Doc and Shoshon, and she gave them both a hug as she departed. And as she walked out the doors of Costco, that smile was still on her face as the words of author Conrad Aiken floated in her brain – “*Cosmos Mariner, destination unknown.*”

Chapter 36

Trulee Strange went on to practice the technique of *running and returning* in the exact same manner that Doc had described, and she achieved the exact same result as Doc. And after her enlightenment, she, too, was ready to approach the world with a renewed sense of purpose and creativity. And as for Doc, he took one more time travel trip. But this time he went far into the future. The current world that Doc lived in had a population that contained a significant segment that promoted hate and division among people, a segment that was more interested in their own gain with no concern for the welfare of others as a whole, a segment that denied the results of science and the reality of global warming and, consequently, just diddled as the world burned. Doc didn't like the current state of the world, and he wanted a glimpse of what the future might look like.

Doc used his expanded awareness to travel far into the future, and he arrived at a place where, as explained by the *Many Worlds Interpretation of Quantum Physics*, the world had indeed split into two. Prior to this split, humanity was in truth ravaged by the terrors of climate change and global warming. The oceans rose and swallowed small islands and coastal cities. Storms became more intense, and many cities on the East and Gulf Coast of America were now abandoned. And wildfires were everywhere. The food chain, of course, was also affected. Whether in the ocean or on land, food was scarce and difficult to find. And it was near impossible to grow food in mass quantities anymore because of all the changes that had occurred. As a result, many people died, and many others tried to flee to other countries where the results of climate change were not so severe. However, those in America trying to flee south found that they were stopped by a massive wall that someone had built. And so for awhile, things on planet Earth were very bad. And that's when reality split.

When the split occurred, those that were filled with hate and fear continued on in a world that reflected that same hate and fear back at them. It wasn't a pleasant world to be in, and Doc didn't want to waste anytime sojourning there. Instead, he went to the other world. This world was a parallel reality that those with a higher sense of the cosmos and

the importance of human dignity and kindness wound up in, and this is the world that ultimately repaired itself from the damage that began in Doc's time. The price of admission to this world was kindness, and so all the problems of the previous world were not currently present. And in many respects, this new world was like one of the lower levels of the *Garden of Eden* that the Jewish mystics used as their description of the afterlife. In the language of the New Agers of the eighties, it existed at a higher vibration.

The new world that Doc saw was peaceful, beautiful, and harmonious. Science and technology existed, but not in the way that they had before. The connection that has always existed between people and nature was more tangible than ever before. Consequently, there did not seem to be a need for a formal government. Everyone automatically understood what should be done in any situation, and then they just did it. The global population, of course, was much smaller, but it was also much more harmonious. People lived in harmony with one another, with the animals, and with all of nature. Cannabis and hemp provided much of the medicine and other materials that people needed, and the science that they had was what we would think of as a mixture of modern day science and magic. No longer did science exist at the cost of the environment. Cell phones, in particular, were no longer needed because everyone automatically felt their connection with the whole. Women no longer struggled in childbirth, and the ground was no longer cursed before man. All life was connected, and all was good and beautiful and creative. It was paradise.

While Doc was frequently worried about how things were going in his present time, he had seen two different futures. One was an ugly one where people suffered greatly from the sins of the past, and the other was a paradise that had been created by the group enlightenment of its inhabitants and where new people entering were greeted by a sign that said, "*It can always be this way.*" Doc had no doubt regarding which future he and Shoshan would ultimately choose.



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