

JACK'S SH-T

So why should you give a shit about this?

There are some people who find you, at a time of in your life when you need them most and sometimes don't want them most. Particularly because they cause disruptions in your life. And force you to open yourself up to different and, in application or theory, higher moralities. Different moralities which make that all important and central commandment in life of 'Just Do the Right Thing' a more complex task that you initially thought possible. Making you embrace more than avoid struggle, and bypassing bliss, happy or comfy for...something else. Heralded in by a person who knows the system, who is, or in this case was, too interesting and intelligent to present his own lesson to the world.

Recorded historical fact is that Socrates never wrote anything down, one of the theories for such being that he was dyslexic. But the reality was that it was his student Plato who was charged with and took on preserving for the world in print what Socrates said and knew. Much like the engineer in Zorba the Greek who told the tale of Zorba to us as he was being taught himself.

So, without further ado, let's see if what I tell you about Jack is the truth he wanted you to know about him, and the discoveries he made about and in the world connects with you. A 'breaking good' story about an initially 'bad' man that goes beyond the narrowed and soul limiting definitions of 'good' and 'bad'. And how, in their own ways these two extremes owe their existence to each other in the cause of something "Forward and Upward". As we attempt to use our human limbs to fly rather than desperately hold onto the ground in front of us.

As for who and what I am, and became as a result of knowing Jack, that is, for the moment anyway, irrelevant. Let's please keep it that way, for now anyway.

The Beginning

Jack was evicted from the comforts of the womb in North East Philadelphia. It was a matter of either not paying the rent to his maternal landlady there, or maybe because he got tired of listening to her rantings on about the problems of life while nestled in her belly. Or maybe he really did want to see if the stories his mother told him about the wonderful world outside were fact based fantasy or gullibly believed bullshit.

In any case, the donor for the other half of Jack's genetic program, or 'suggested life plan', was, as we will call him now anyway (as we want to avoid being sued by ghosts for slander or inaccuracies) Bob. Bob was a working class man who struggled to keep his family fed, watered and sheltered whose ability to do so was no less than a miracle. He saw, experienced and absorbed horrific atrocities in the War of the Pacific in Iwo Jima and Okinawa, some of which he passed on to Jack and some he didn't, or couldn't. But, one element about stories and lessons from father and son as they exchanged roles as student and teacher is that...the world is a hard, cruel and challenging place. And that even in the best of relationships there are more secrets we keep, and memories that get distorted than what we accurately, or openly, share. Such is...humanoid life. Maybe not so with dogs, cats and horses say to each other in their various languages while feeding their own faces with kibble, pate or grass.

But, we are at the top of the food chain. Advanced enough to, when we can, and because we can, bash the heads of everyone below us, eat their flesh and devour their entrails. Unlike the domesticated dogs that merely growl at other canines to stay away from the feed bowl or horses who kick towards, but not into, competitors for the best access to the communal hay bail. And....bashing heads in was what Jack, as he grew up, was good at.

It started in the playground sandbox when a playmate took Jack's favorite shovel, though at the time he stopped at giving his competition a bloody nose. Suppose taking out an eye or a fistful off teeth would have been too much of sanguineous red 'coolaid' treat. Then as Jack got into high school, desiring the affections and approval of girls more than the friendship of boys, along with discovering what his penile organ could do other than pass urine, he discovered that the quickest way to get to and stay on top of the food chain was to crack open skulls on the grid iron rather than compete in the classroom for who is the smartest. And, as long as you knew how to protect your own knoggin and learned how to numb the pain of getting wacked by others with toughing it out, booze or weed, sacking the quarterback or knocking him on his back after he was somehow able to get rid of the ball was...fun. Particularly if he was smaller than you, or more 'academic' than you were. And, truth be told, the 'I want YOU because you are the real winner here' from the head cheerleader and all of her girl friends, made you feel proud. Like a man. Like an American. An American who

would be expected to go into combat one day like your father did against the bad guys to prove your manhood. Be it bad guys overseas, or Niggers, Commies and other law breakers here. After all, a badge is a badge. A license to be who you want to be and do what you want to without having to pay fees for being 'expressive'.

It was the time of aspiring hippie Pacifist Einsteins and Musicians vs. Redneck Greasers. Both sides embraced the All American Credo that if you're not number one, you're number nothing. That 'we are all in this together as equals', be it in the Cause of International Peace and shared Prosperity or a WASP Pax Americana was something the teachers read out of books. And as Jack knew way too early, those who couldn't do teach. Besides, there was only ONE leader of the Peace, Love and Harmony band as well as the Lynch mob that kept America safe from Commies, Niggers and Fags. And as for the latter, being a fag, such was what was the thing that Jack's father, and most importantly mother, were constantly on guard for with regard to their only son becoming.

The quickest way to get Dad's approval and Mom's love, was to use force to make yourself heard. To be on the top of everyone's game. And if you didn't measure up to being top in everyone's game, of course what you did was to change the rules, or intimidate the maker of those rules into feeling like shit. Yes, Jack learned that it was indeed cool to be cruel to anyone, mentally and physically. And, hey, it wasn't Jack's fault, as he and his tribe considered it anyway. The poor blacks who infiltrated his neighborhood deserved to stay in their place. And the Commie leftist whites, born with silver spoons in their mouths who came in from New York City, were stuck up shitheads who would make Jack a nigger serving dog if he let them. And the long as well as short haired fags were the most dangerous of everyone else. Even if it was the new fashion for men to grow their hair like the Beatles and others did to get, so they say anyway, the attention and affection of the most beautiful women, and bearers of their sons.

It was, and maybe still is, a world where the thing that angered men most was being laughed at by women. Women feared the fist of a man more than any psychological insult that would make them destroy their own self esteem.

Yes, in Jack's world, where immediate results mattered more than excuses, two things were valued. Money and force. Labor jobs in the Blue Collar regions of Phili where you couldn't hire others to sweat for you were easy to find. And besides, like commercials for the 90 percent air and 2 percent nutrient Wonderbread promised, it built strong bodies twelve ways.

And Jack did grow strong in more than 12 ways while at Ben Franklin High. No one was more muscular in body, handsomer to look at with his always in place red hair, and manipulative with people with his chiseled WASP .mouth. He got passable enough grades to get into college with minimal effort, but didn't want to waste his time reading about life rather than living it. Peggy Blackstone, the head cheerleader during football season, and the winner in any beauty or talent pageant she decided to enter, was honored to be Jack's bride. But, to be a man's man, a good father (if he wanted to be, or if Peggy forgot to take her pills) and the kind of son his Dad and country would be proud of, Jack knew he had to make the next step upward.

Jack was a wise guy in training success story. No stranger to extorting lunch money from pansy assed spiks, coons, sand niggers, Jewboys and Commie pinkos students who...well...deserved to be skinny and underfed. And he got paid good money to beat them up when they entered the boy's bathroom, or walked rather than took the bus back home after school. Most importantly, he knew how to not get caught for his 'excesses'.

Jack told me about the day after graduation from High School when he woke up to a 'Greetings' notice from the Uncle Sam. It requested his service in Vietnam, causing him to curse his mother for not keeping him in the womb for a day or two longer so that he could be number 352 in the lottery rather than number 1. Heading to Canada was not an option because it was too fucking cold, that country having two seasons, July and winter. Enlisting in a college somewhere to major in basketweaving, taking courses in American and English literature from professors who knew less about the authors and life than he already did and having to pay out money each day rather than collecting it wasn't an option either. Asking his best bud Bruno to have his mob connected father bribe the docs at the Draft Board to get a medical or psychiatric exemption was complicated, and...would endanger any other big plans Jack had in life. Peggy, theoretically anyway, was carrying Jack's kid. Money, social status and, most importantly, the ability to keep doing what he was good at and enjoyed was required.

One of the most telling things about Jack that he confided in me decades later was that the reason for not going to Vietnam was that 'killing the enemy overseas would not be as fun as beating them up here at home.'

To protect and serve...oneself.

There were two ways to be enforcers of law, order and the status quo in Philadelphia. The first was to join the Jersey Mob. But stories from Bruno about missing uncles who sought an early retirement wasn't in line with Jack's life plan. The second was to maintain the law and be sure you were above any of it was to become a Cop.

Being a Cop was very easy after you dealt with the bullshit of having to pretend to 'protect and serve' the public under the command of overpaid idiots and fellow assholes. It required demonstrating an IQ 5 points above the general public, while hiding the fact that it was really 25 points above any of your bosses. It required physical strength, quickness of action and detachment from any kind of morality that prevents you from doing your job.

The first of those jobs found Jack living gloriously on both sides of the law as a Highway Patrol Motorcycle Cop. The uniform fit him perfectly, making him seem to some as a Knight on horseback, the horse of course being a two legged steed that obeyed every one of his commands. And there were perks far greater than all the free donuts he could eat. Supplemental money came in from other mounted enforcers of the status quo, including the Hell's Angels. Along with addresses of bombshell barbies who he caught, or said were, speeding, to supplement his deserved body needs when or if Peggy, who was aging faster than he was, wasn't available. Then there was the special duty of spotting cars driven by colored and white 'crits' (critters) on I 95, collecting the illegal valuables they had, or planting some of your own on them. Then there was the most fun game of all---inventing evidence against the innocent, or most easily to be declared guilty, wearing them down till they admit to being guilty of anything. Or telling them that their 'best buddy' is about to rat on them and that the first one to rat on his buds would be free to go home with the brand of cheese of their choice.

When looking at some pictures Jack showed me in later life of his glorious youth as a motorcycled Cop, I commented that the outfit made him look like one of the village people. Deferring all of that, he declared that the one smart thing the cowardly suits on top did when trying to recruit enforcers of their will was to give them sharp looking uniforms. Like the SS in World War 2 who knew you could trick nice people into being mean ones by putting them in the right outfits.

As for the American flag insignias on Jack's uniform, he related to me that 'it convinced some suckers that the US is a democratic country where every vote counts and every voice is heard'.

After going above and beyond the call of duty, as well as altering or omitting paperwork as a Highway Patrol Cop, Jack was promoted to be a street cop in the most dangerous neighborhoods in the city of Brotherly Love. Then very soon after, a plain clothes narcotics division officer charged with taking on 'the war on drugs', which superseded, of course, the wars on poverty, disease and violent cruelty. Finding out who the bad guys were and what they were doing was something Jack was very good at. Particularly because he had the advanced and elusive skill so necessary in any law enforcement officer---The ability to sense that 'something isn't right here' when seeing and hearing something on the street that would pass as 'normal' to the non-intuitive eye. To let the raw data enter into your always thinking brain, find its natural slot, then come up with a diagnosis of what is wrong and various options to fix it. Pattern recognition some would say, but I wouldn't. A skill that I, as a physician and aspiring Theoretical Psychologist thought I had, and tried to teach my students. But that is another set of stories

As for Jack, the time came when this working class (at least to himself) hero was granted control of the city. An interesting thing that I'd like to relate is that Philadelphia as a city was at its peak before and during the American Revolution. Ben Franklin created the town as a place of innovation and, relatively speaking, religious and political tolerance. He established there one of the first really truthful, newspapers, in which of course he ghost wrote most of the letters to the editor that kept the journal popular. Later on, Phili became the place where the Declaration of Independence was drafted, under his tutelage, which declared that 'all men are created equal', though owning property and white skin made you more equal than everyone else.

During the 19th century, the city of Philadelphia became more like a town living off its old reputation. New York was booming with money. Washington DC with power. But someone had to keep the lights on in the town where terrified upscale European immigrants lingered upon reaching America. Phili became a place where disillusioned Western pioneers who galloped westward and hit a brick wall hobbled back East to settle into something they were used to. And kept it continued as a town known more for cheese steaks, a gridiron Eagles and home for 'Rocky' than literary or scientific accomplishment. With the exception of Cold Case, no television show filmed in or portrayed its stories in Philadelphia, as its population diminished along with the quality of those people counted in the census.

A new brand of criminality took over the once hallowed cobble stone streets of Phili with its special brand of cruelty and deception. In the ritzy, and privately protected suburbs such as Cherry Hill, legal crime flourished. As for anywhere and everyone else, it was every schlep for him or herself. Having a kind heart in the inner city got you killed if you wandered into the wrong neighborhood. Everyone except those highly skilled in corruption collected two bits for every dollar of honest effort they put into their work, or labor. There were in truth more empty rumbling bellies in town than fast food filled ones. But, there was one business that was booming besides regret---dope, some of it harmless, some of it addictive, some of it deadly. Obtaining such maintained the illusion that life was ok, or perhaps better. Particularly when life in reality was a lot worse. Becoming a distributor of 'happy juice' was the most lucrative profession in Phili. And, as some might say, such was a job where you gave mentally tortured people what they really wanted. While they were alive to enjoy it anyway.

For whatever reasons, Jack didn't get happiness, or relief from mental misery (the worst kind, which is not measurable, yet should be) from drinking, toking, tripping, shooting up or inhaling white snow that allowed you to leap frog from the sweat soaked gutter to the top of a mountain into your own private Aspen ski resort. He was blessed with the strength to endure, or perhaps easily understand, the challenges that life gave you. If you were too weak, or lazy, to pull yourself up out of poverty, you deserved your fate. In his consciousness was the credo that poverty and addiction were things that YOU let happen to you. They were the natural punishments for not doing what your family assigned you to do. I am not sure if in those early days Jack pitied those 'pathetic' souls or hated them. In any case, he considered them 'expendable'. Subhuman. Nay, NOT human. Such was the prime requirement to be promoted to plain clothes Narcotics Division. Using any means available to put those 'crits' into jail, the hospital or the morgue was, after all, putting them out of their misery.

'It's a dirty job but someone has to do it'. Yes, even in the most noble of professions such is true. And the way Phili was going, the way the cancer of violence, robbery and narcotics, the upper ups in the City of Brotherly Love needed a special posse. Jack and his new buds were deemed 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocolypse', their official name, the 5 Squad. The kind of smart, strong and 'silent with regard to how we got things done' squad that is immortalized on screen and film. Of course those fictionalized Cops did nothing on the streets as front line plain clothes cops to fake evidence, intimidate witnesses and obtain bribes that any uniformed 'boys in blue' or DAs did back at the Precinct headquarters. And, of course, on their boards back at headquarters they posted pictures of suspects, victims and perps which no real smart law enforcement officer would do. And, or course, cases on the tube were solved within 24 hours.

How empty Jack's pockets were when beginning each shift, and how full they were afterwards, that was a detail that he never shared with me. As a matter of real fact, such was a situation that none of the Horsemen shared with each other. There was no shortage of favors which were obtainable from greedy, scared or so easily intimidated female perps (and witnesses). But Jack told me that he 'wanted to keep some of his karma clean'. I suspect that much of that, at the time anyway, was about not wanting to get an STD from one of the wenches who came on to him, or whose favors could be purchased very cheaply. Or maybe he really did love his wife Peggy. A woman who he told me very little about until she left him, for reasons that it took me years to figure out and weasel out of him.

The horsemen seldom went out alone to clean up the streets of their beloved, and sucker-infested city. And when they did, the leader of every 'Mission to save the city from criminals, drugs and violence' was decided by a coin toss, usually tossed in the air by Karl Steiner, whose German root back to the Hessians in 1776 as well as the Fatherland in 1933. Karl was the older brother Jack never had, constantly boasting about the superiority of the Aryan mind to his non-Aryan Brethren. Karl was smart enough to restrict his insults to those of racial profiles other than his fellow Horsemen but often gave into the temptation to crush the skulls of the 'little fish' before they could lead him to the bigger fish. Jack tried discretely to teach Karl to be a little more patient with the little fish. Of course, the promises made to little fish were seldom kept. And that Texas Ranger motto of 'we always get our man' had to be maintained, even if that man had as little to do with any drug deal or murder than the Mench in the Moon. But, as any effective enforcer of Law and Order knows, putting 4 innocent perps into the system for each one that was guilty is just collateral damage for, of course, the greater good.

Jack's smarts were biological as well as psychological. He knew where and how hard to inflict blows on the human body that produced the most pain, with the least evidence left behind. And to obtain the most information available. Such did, in reality, lead to cleaning up the drug, violence and murder situation in Phili to a far greater level than the Mayor was able to promise. The Big Fish on top were exposed. Too many of them. Most of whom lived with, and as, 'respectable citizens'.

What goes up, goes....elsewhere

It was part of the cycle, going back to the days of Kings hiring privateers to do what their regular army and aristocratic officers could not do. Getting rid of their enforcers, one at a time so they could proceed with the business of Empire building anew. With new pirates.

The Feds decided that it was time for the Four Horsemen to be put to pasture, or turned into hamburger. Morey Manelli was Jack's best friend in that hand picked and privileged squad with whom he would share more secrets than with any other human being, even Peggy. The more than dynamic duo went on a deep sea fishing weekend off Chesapeake. They caught many fish. Got great tans. Ate and drank like kings. Told great stories about their too often neglected families, and how they would make things better for them at home.

Upon Jack's presenting himself to Peggy, along with a cooler-full of fish that he would clean up after taking a long shower himself, there were two men in black suits behind him. They played tapes of Jack talking with Morey about 'business'. Along with some doctored tapes and photos featuring Jack having been pleased by no less than 5 mistresses. Evidence that shocked, and horrified Peggy. Which her two kids believe as well.

"Brilliant work," Jack told the arresting officers as they led him to their green sedan. "But, one thing I'd like to know is how you got Morey to turn on me."

"Tax evasion charges," the head Officer informed Jack.

"That got Al Capone 20 years in the slammer," the second banana sunglassesed shithead wearing a badge on his lapel and crucifix around his neck added. "And which will probably be dropped in this case."

I recall when Jack told me about Morey, that his first instinct was to kill this Judas who convicted him to a lifetime of various crucifixions. But that there was something inside of him that said Morey was....weak. And that other voice inside saying that the Feds wanted Jack to think that his best friend turned him in to save a few thousand bucks on his tax return. They wanted Jack to turn into a vicious animal who would be openly prosecuted for doing on the spot for assault on his old friend or the arresting officers. No, Jack would not give these pigs the satisfaction. He was smarter than that. And, for the moment, strong enough to use his brain rather than brawn.

Change of residence

The wheels of justice did indeed turn as they were supposed to, according to the rules of the people on top rather than the consent of those on the bottom. Or maybe, as some would say, the mandates of the have and have nots were both served. Jack was sentenced to a decade in the slammer which, for most convicted Cops, would result in a visit from the Grim Reaper within the first year due to death sentence inflicted by fellow convicts. Despite the protective measures put in place for keeping him away from convicts who he put away, or was asked to put away.

As a person who has never been incarcerated, and still lives in constant fear of being so, I wonder....With all of the money put into building prisons, keeping people locked in them and maintaining programs that claim to 'rehabilitate' whoever is released from the system, maybe, just maybe, someone would shuffle some funds into designing a penal system whereby new entry members can go 'inside' with a new name, new slate and to 'roommates' who don't know them. And when asked 'what are you in for?' perhaps the newbie prisoner should be coached in saying 'littering'. And as for the details of that littering, maybe some respect from fellow inmates could be obtained by saying that 'I shit on the governor's lawn after he passed a tax bill that put me and everyone I knew one step closer to the poor house.'

But, gods forbid, such situations didn't exist for Jack. Or...maybe they weren't designed to. Jack's initiation into the prison system involved him being stabbed on no less than 8 occasions. When I, as a resident doctor doing community service, asked who did it, Jack refused to give out any names. When I asked WHY it happened, throughout the winces and moans of me pulling together flesh that had been torn apart by blunt objects made sharp (and thankfully not too infected), his answer...'karma's a bitch, doc.' Such led me to ask more 'why' questions of this prisoner who, according to the laws of biology and physics, should be dead.

We took an interest in each other far more than our job descriptors allowed. I somehow admired him. And I think, at first, he pitied me. Most particularly because of the lack of living that I did in my comfortable upbringing. One which was non-expressive, boring, lifeless procedural and humorless. "Dull Out Disease" he called it. "Spread by being too goddamn fucking technical, or even more so by being too 'goshdarn fudgeing' technical. Thinking that

‘above all do harm’ will somehow always lead you to being effective at being good. And confusing being good and nice with being Alive big A inside.’”

I never did anything wrong, I think, but did I ever do anything right? Or Assertive? I trusted that people who said they were good were good. And that when people did bad things, they still deserved some...goodness. Such is why I volunteered to do duty as a doc in an underfunded prison rather than a ritzy suburban hospital. Doctor Sam Nielson, my supervisor, told me that veteran prisoners are manipulative and that bleeding heart docs aren't. He seemed to be more interested in getting himself promoted out of his job than doing it well. And drove a far better fleet of cars than could be afforded with the wage of a public service doc. But, that's part of another story.

As for my situation with Jack, he knew more about the recreational and addictive properties of medications than I knew about the medical fairy tales (otherwise known as mechanisms of action) regarding how they were of benefit to the patient. But there was one thing I was very interested in...the anatomy of cruelty. Jack was the most intelligent prisoner I ever met as a doctor. There wasn't any author I read who he didn't know, and understand, better than I did. And how what they wrote related to what we had to deal with most....the world today.

There was a question that haunted me that I never asked Jack. Why did he enjoy doing bad things to people as much as I got satisfaction from doing good for others? He did ask me once, if I ever experienced the rush of bashing my fist into human flesh. I related, and confessed, that I did feel 'redemption' every time my right fist hit my left arm. And as for the musical accompaniment to such, there was the 'garbage song'. 'I am garbage, I am a piece of shit, I should die'. Who taught me that musical number, I never knew. But Jack suggested a change in lyric and tempo. He recommended slowing the latter down, saying that THEY are garbage, THEY are shit. He held back on 'THEY should die.'

Reversal of Roles and Identities

So, why was Jack becoming more of a doctor than a patient? Maybe because of someone else. Groosky was his name. Black, semi-literate, poor, unemployable (for the kind of wages

I get anyway), the perfect combination to get the maximal sentence for possession of crack with, of course, intent to sell. Two decades out of the womb and he was already locked into the big house for as many more to come. Someone whose profile I recalled for when he came in with a 'twisted gut' accompanied by 'bloody trots out of the ass' that turned out to be food poisoning, the human and biological source of such I he said he couldn't identify.

"Ya gotta let me go back to my cell before Groosky is assigned a new cellmate, Doc," Jack begged of me when I sewed up his most recent laceration. "We...need each other. He opened me up to becoming something else...something that scares and sustains me both at the same time."

There was something in Jack's normally 'I can handle anything because I have to' eyes that said something about Groosky had changed him. Changed him into something that was completely different than what he was before. Something he needed to become but didn't want to become. The most logical thing for me to do was, yes, to have a long talk with Groosky. Fortunately, or maybe not fortunately, Groosky turned every conversation about him into something about me. His kind eyes lured me into trusting what was behind them, sharing every secret I had, even the ones I didn't know about.

When it comes to people in need of health care and doctors, doctors are the boss. They hold the power of life and death in their hopefully not money grubbing hands. But when there are more than one doctors, the head doc holds far more than the power of life or death over his or her subordinates. Careers as well as Callings come into the mix. I'm not saying that Sam Nielson was a bossy doc. But there wasn't a single time when in the presence of a patient that he didn't 'quiz' me on the diagnosis and treatment, making me feel small and ineffective to the patient. And if my assessment of what went wrong biologically and what can be done about it was different than his, I would be degraded to less than a janitor. Then he would assign me to that patient, who sought opinions about his condition from the nurse, his fellow hospitalized inmates and any visiting cockroach before asking mine.

In order to get Groosky's trust, and honest answers regarding his connection to Jack, I had to see this 20 something poster child recipient of life's bad luck alone, and being sure that I didn't let him deflect the conversation to things about me yet again. Having graduated from medical school five years later than 'Doctor Sam' did, I used the technology card. I informed my boss, and in some cases anyway, mentor, that there was a clinical trial going on regarding unique neurochemical imbalances in drug addicts and those with addictive personalities, and

that Groosky was randomly chosen from the prison populations in no less than five states run by 'Atlantian Pharmaceuticals'. And that I was asked by the Pharm rep to interview him.

Nielson gave his approval for such, very enthusiastically, saying that 'prisoners should be used as guinea pigs to develop and test drugs that law abiding citizens will benefit from.' The only condition he laid on me was that 'if this new company's latest drug works or their diagnostic marker is real, and it gets to market, I get told about it before you tell the company running the trial.'

Of course, there was no such entity as Atlantian Pharmaceuticals, but I do admit that I thoroughly enjoyed informing 'know it all Nielson' (as he was called behind his back by everyone) about the research I did with 'eligin 3' while I was doing independent study at Harvard and Yale. And blabbering to him about the biological basis for the mechanisms of action of the mythical drug, some of those mechanisms of action actually being real, and beyond the scope of Nielson's medical knowledge.

So, I was given permission to bring Groosky to what I considered as my medical clinic, after Neilson left for a golfing weekend. Officially it was for a medical exam and blood work. Unofficially, it was to see how Groosky and Jack looked at, and into, each other. It was Jack who shot questions at me, particularly when I asked Groosky about his addiction to crack, which I needed to fill in the fake forms Nielson would be asking for. To every question I asked Groosky, Jack interjected an answer. They included--- "That's personal, doc." "His business not yours" and the one that hit me hardest, "You were born with a silver spoon in your overfed mouth, he had to struggle to get week old bread from the fucking bakery". And finally..."Everyone's addicted to something, so tell me and Groosky what you're addicted to that pulls you back into the black hole of stagnation, non-productivity and self-destruction?"

Did I owe Jack or Groosky an explanation? Yes, and no. But I owed it to myself to come clean about it. Something that was...odd, but just as prosecutable in any professional hearing or courtroom. "It's....this," I said to Jack, picking up a pair of clippers. "Getting a hard on when I see someone, ideally a woman who doesn't want it, getting a buzz cut. Or...." I hesitated.

"Doing it on yourself?" Jack surmised, as I pushed my shaking fingers through my thick, long top knot.

“Ain’t so bad,” Groosky added running his fingers over the stubbled kinky hair atop his head. “It grows back.”

“Memories of past lifetime as an SS orderly at the concentration camps?” Jack proposed.

“Or being a Buddhist monk?” Groosky added.

Jack then asked me about other fetishes and phobias I had, Groosky riding tandem with his own remarks about them with a natural rhythm that rivalled Burns and Allen, Abbot and Costello as well as Hawkeye and BJ on MASH. It included my fear of heights, birds and clowns. I can’t say that the two life-taught uncertified shrinks got me to the inner truth of where those phobias came from. But they got me closer to untying those knots in my brain circuitry so that I could perhaps drive over bridges, visit an aviary and attend a circus without overdosing myself with Xanax. It felt right to be a patient rather than a doctor. Until Neilson came in, unexpectedly.

“What are ‘these’ doing here?” my boss sneered regarding Jack and Groosky.

“Getting healed, and healing,” I replied.

“And what is NOT in here?” Neilson said, throwing me a cardboard box missing medications. “It was full this morning. Schedule one and two medications that...”

“---Were not taken by Doctor Nick,” Jack said, in my defense.

“Or sold to any ETs who morphed their way into these walls to take back to their leader,” Groosky offered. ”

“Or sold on the streets to get gold chains they could use as rocket fuel,” Jack added. “So they could go home, or high tail it to...”

“---Guard!” Nielson shouted out.

Four behemoth COs came into the room. As they walked towards me, I self-observed every muscle in my shaking body tensing up. And as they pushed me aside, I felt my teeth clench when seeing handcuffs on my two new friends, pulling them out the door.

“They didn’t do anything!” I shouted out to Nielson. “And I didn’t do anything either!” I continued, piecing together that Nielson blamed shortages of drugs on inmates and COs he didn’t like. Both of whom were transferred to other facilities, so I heard. “And if you’re thinking what I think you are, or did what I think you did,” I put forth, boldly. “Because YOU have a habit, that’s biologically based, Sam” I advanced, attempting to be helpful.

My boss took in a deep breath, pondered a whole lot of option behind his averted eyes, then fired venom into my too wide open eyes. “I’m Doctor Nielson! Head of this hospital. And YOU are...”

“...Fired,” I surmised, taking off my stethoscope, handing it over to Sam like it was a sword at the end of a battle where I surrendered to save my own men and scalp.

“Or worse,” Nielson said. “Depending on what the investigation shows. But...” Nielson broke into a sadistic laugh, made more frightening because it was about ME this time. “Worst that can happen, you share a cell with Jack and Groosky. Write a book between the three of you that will never be published, and certainly not read by anyone who matters.”

After forfeiting my lab coat, I was allowed to walk out the door to the clinic, then the prison gates. I felt naked, or about to be naked.

Change of Venue, Job Descriptions and Callings

Weeks passed. I tried to get paying work as a doctor in no less than 10 clinics, including volunteer operations where the pay was minimal wage. Overdue bills became final notices

accumulated in the mailbox, then a subpoena to appear in court. But amongst the mail I did get was an offer from a lawyer to defend me for free. From the firm of Jack Baird and Groosky.

So, to get out of jail, I sought legal advice from those who were behind bars. It was all legal. Jack's experience as a Cop working with lawyers to put people into jail and Groosky's street experience in putting blame on people who were guilty, or who needed to be shown to be guilty, was invaluable.

Together, we got the goods on Nielson. Not enough to put him away, it was enough to make him seek work, position and power elsewhere, leaving me as the provisional doc at the prison. A position which I used to work with Jack and Groosky to help people with drug addiction rather than punish them for seeking pharmacological relief from the agonies of poverty, physical pain, learned helplessness and hopelessness.

It was a pooled endeavor, involving old drugs that I knew about and new ones I developed, along with talk therapy and, of course, Jesus from Jack and Groosky's end.. Or Buddha. Or Allah. Indeed, I started to believe and feel Jesus entering sessions with drug addicts when his name was mentioned. Or not mentioned.

As for my part of the project, I felt myself becoming one of those 'formulators of psychological theories' regarding the physiology of cruelty, the pathology of addiction and the neurochemistry of learned helplessness. Until a new warden took over. A new boss who, for reasons she never revealed, fired me from my job, released Jack on early parole and transferred Groosky to another facility. One where, so I heard from Jack, he was resolved to serve out the rest of his 10 year sentence by being of service to fellow inmates, and COs in need of counseling. A situation which, as Groosky said, allowed him to be 'of more use on the inside than being a visitor from the outside.'

So, Jack and I were free. But free to do what? I was free to write books describing how prisons really worked, or didn't work, for rehabilitation along with the inalienable right to get countless numbers of rejection slips from publishers. And of course I was free to create blueprints of new biomedical devices and molecular drawings drug formulations which lacked funders. Jack was free to apply for any counseling or security job he wanted, which he went after enthusiastically. He was rewarded with a plethora of 'you don't quite fit out criteria' notices from smiling officials hiding behind large desks and secured pensions. Why each of

our attempts to earn a living legally were quenched, I did not know. But perhaps the question was not 'what' is on our records that made us un-hirable was the wrong one to ask. It was more like 'WHO' was blocking us from making money in a world where, theoretically anyway, there are a million ways to make money. The most obvious answer to that would be, for me anyway, Sam Nielson, MD, Ph.D. For Jack, well, he told me stories about dirty Cops and powerful Politicians who he knew too much about, neglecting to relate anything except their first names.

Then, one day, when we were sitting at a bar after a long day of pounding the pavement, the soles of our shoes nearly worn down to nothing, I was presented with a flask of 100 year old ooze from my Greek grandfather's home town. The bartender then delivered a large bottle of 80 year old Scotch bearing the address of his Scots-Irish bootlegger grandmother in keeping with Jack's ancestry. On the back of the labels were the same messages for both of us. "More of that to come if you consider my offer," they read, mine in Greek, Jack's in Gaelic.

I asked the bartender who it came from. He pointed to a woman at the end of the bar, a middle aged woman with long black hair, brown eyes and a face that, as I commented to Jack, 'looked familiar'. He replied, as he poured himself a glass of the whiskey, 'they all do'. After downing the better part of his shotglass, then sampling some of my ooze, Jack wrote something on a napkin, gave it to the bartender and, with as much disinterest as he could muster, requested that it be given to the mystery woman.

I asked Jack what was in the note. His reply, 'our counter offer.'

It was a strange way to bargain with a woman who reminded me of the dream mate who I let go when I was 19 and, as I saw in the few family pictures Jack showed me, was a spitting but significantly older image of his now ex-wife.

The woman read the note, smiled, then made a phone call. Approaching us from behind was a tall man dressed way too well for the establishment we were in, reeking of musk cologne, whose shadow we could feel. I could, anyway. He laid a business card in front of Jack. Upon looking at it, Jack knocked on the bar, informing him that I should get a card as well.

The name on the card was K. David Hillary in gold print that stood out from the page. His company, 'Davinos International Conglomerates' with Swiss addresses in German, Italian and French. He handed Jack a passport. Asked if I had one. I told him that I let mine lapse. He said 'no problem', handing me another one with my name on it. And picture. One in which I had a large mustache, which he gave to me from his pocket.

And on the other side of the Pond....

Davinos was one of those companies that was too rich and effective to be featured in Fortune 500. A non-offensively multifaceted company that was, of course, located in a neutral location where everything gets done but no one notices it. A place where effective business is done personally and professionally, without fanfare, emotional excess or....yes, humor. Talking here about Switzerland.

Davinos invested in many ventures, including biomedical devises, new pharmaceuticals and herbs that worked better than synthesized drugs. The company had the ability to bypass the usual regulations for testing the safety of new remedies. Such is why David was interested in me coming into the company. But one condition was that Jack would be instrumental in other aspects of Davinos. Such included a sure fire method for people to invest their life savings so their retirement could be an upscale experience rather than downsizing inflicted by life on most of those doomed and/or blessed to live past 90. My health promoting miracles would keep them alive past the big 90, Jack's assistance in them building their portfolio would insure that the later part of life was Golden years rather than Rusted decades. And...the unifying economic formula that only David knew worked. Indeed, Davinos was so efficient that the company redefined currency several times, pulling out of one form of wampum with big time winnings before the next investors who came in lost their shirts. Competition at its best! Which worked until...three retirees came into the office in Geneva.

One of them thanked me for the drug that enabled him to beat MS, or at least keep it at bay. Another was thankful for my cardiovascular detection devise to extend the triple bypass beyond the 15 year 'guarantee' offered by the surgeons. The remaining senior citizen beat cancer for the third time aided by, as she said, 'the good Lord providing her with the work I did with interleukin and applied bio-elective fields, which finally made it into press due to Davinos inventing a new University in which I was an Associate Professor.

The trio of senior citizens were thankful for good health, though they were lacking one thing--the money to use it. Each one of them were now broke, thanks to the investment program they entered with Jack's recommendation.

I confronted Jack about it. He confronted David, who was out of town, just as more investors who lost everything overnight came into the office. "It wasn't me," Jack told me regarding the reason why hard working citizens lost their money in the privacy of his office, a perceived privacy anyway. "The mathematics of David's stocks said that they couldn't fail," he said.

"And the mathematics of his own portfolio?" I asked. "And yours?" I considered asking, but didn't. Not yet anyway.

"Hmmm..." Jack said, contemplating something. "I knew this very theoretical physicist in the grey bar motel who, well...." He didn't tell me any more details. "I'll give him a call. Give HIS formula to the right people and bank accounts and..."

How and why Jack was able to extract money from David's account and relocate it into those of the people he robbed, I didn't know. And didn't ask. But as for Jack's personal account, when we went out for lunch for three weeks he kept asking me to pay the bill. And ordered less food each time for himself.

But there was one question I needed to have answered. "Groosky," I said while I filled my gullet with hamburger and Jack tried to trick his stomach into thinking it was filled with chips and taco sauce. "Is there any way we can bring him over here, or start something between the three of us somewhere else?"

"Yes to the latter," Jack said. "After we do what we have to do with, and to, the former."

A Noble Experiment

The headlines I read when returning to the US three weeks after leaving Davinos featured David in a scandal that landed him in jail. Groosky's early release from a 'three strikes and you're locked in for the duration' was facilitated by another deal Jack initiated. As for the hows, he said. 'if I told you they'd have to kill you'. Who the 'they' was, well, another explanation of that I probably didn't want to know about and couldn't understand.

There was one thing that Groosky and Jack were experts in. Groosky was a master at selling drugs. Jack had been an expert in seizing them, selling them to selected bidders, and planting them on suspects who had not yet accumulating enough misdemeanors to be arrestable for a felony or two, or three. As for me, my focus was still on finding the endorphin that made you an instrument of evil and the one that made you a channel for Enlightenment and, as only one of its expressions, kindness. So, we found a warehouse that was producing 'designed to be broken just after the warrantee ran out' computers, and converted it into a laboratory for me, and a rehab center for everyone else in the world.

When trying to solve a problem, logic says to figure out what caused it. As for drug addiction, according to Jack, for those who get 20 year sentences, the main cause of being hooked on dope is poverty. One gets more money selling crack than being a clerk at the 7/11 dispensing crackers. Or a priest selling communion crackers which, if you believe in them, lands you in a comfy portion of strawberry fields. For those with six figure bank accounts who get probation or three weekends in a county private jail cell the major reason for being a servant of the pharmaceuticals is boredom. We made money doing the right thing, till we tried to do more than the right thing which landed us with sharing canned beans from the dollar store. Such was the inevitable fate of a rehab and counseling center that only charged people what they could afford, or said they could afford anyway.

The Cost of Doing the Right Thing

I was at a loss as to how to make money, particularly while doing the right thing. So, logic dictated that the opposite might be true. How to make money doing the 'wrong' thing? Wrong being based in being clever and bad rather than wise and 'good'. Way too much 'good' did I have, the evidence of such being how I was ripped off for any medical devises or treatments I sent out to the world. With business partners who were all about business and not healing. It was a world, after all, where patients were called 'health consumers', even by

nurses, the last refuge for those who cared about people rather than being fascinated with diseases.

‘Why can’t we create our own Davinos here in Secaucus, New Jersey?’ I proposed to Jack and Groosky after we all came out of the bank, having cashed in three years of our retirement money to keep Atlantian Rehab and Research center going. I pointed out that no one is going to take care of us if we have the misfortune of living till we are in our 90s, to which Groosky said ‘God and life will,’ his remark. ‘Or our fellow humanoids will,’ Jack’s reply.

They both then gave me the ‘sparrow’ speech. The one where Jesus said that the sparrows keep coming back to roost every spring with what Mother Nature supplies them with, and that we are more important in the heavenly Father’s heart than those birds, so, why worry about it?”

I pointed out that Mother Nature was a far distance away from Secaucus, New Jersey, industrialization even with ‘eco restraints’ still making it the smelliest exit on the New Jersey Turnpike. But, they laughed it off.

I somehow felt scared for my own short and long term financial picture, and intensely responsible for Jack’s and Groosky’s. And had to do something desperate, or at least very different, internally and externally.

At the universities I studied at, you could learn about anything if you applied yourself. Except, of course, how to make money. ‘There are a million ways to make money,’ Jack claimed so many times when the subject turned up. ‘You just have to be in the right frame of mind to see where you can find it,’ Groosky would add, in tandem with a musical rhythm that my two ‘professors’ sang so well together.

“Or steal it?” I finally dared to ask Jack, and Groosky at our thanksgiving dinner at an alfresco public park table over a feast of three day old bread and close to rancid turkey slices. “We live in a capitalist world where if one person gets richer, another gets poorer,” I pointed out. “And, no pun intended, competition trumps cooperation in the marketplace. At least with respect to material gains and loses.”

“True enough,” Jack replied. “But how much money is worth depends on how much it goes around.” With his self-taught wit and instincts to understand things about the world that didn’t get into the text books, he presented the argument that if money is not spent, it becomes worthless. And that the illusion of soon to be obtained wealth more often than not leads to such becoming a reality. After which he stated that in the interim between envisioning an upscale economy and obtaining it, one has to learn how to do more with less.

Such was a typical discussion with Jack. If you made one point, he would, for the sake of making things ‘interesting’, take the opposite position on the issue at paw. And somehow show the validity of both points of view. But, my growling belly said it was time for me to take initiative. Or Jack’s projection that we would take our innovative techniques to assist people with addictions and societal-induced poverty ‘to the streets’ would involve us living with them on those concrete slabs.

A few days later, while the lights were still working in the warehouse we had rented and were only two months behind paying rent for, I recalled tales Jack told me about the ‘bad old days’. When he was a bad-ass were loaded with stories about how those who worked outside of the law were never in want of anything. Except, of course, more money, since rich fucks were always desperately in need and want of more money. It was a game they played and became addicted to. But one thing that was most common with regard to how the money was ‘earned’---‘Sell the people what they want, and stop giving, or offering, them what they need.’

I went through the lists of blueprints in my overstuffed desk at home as well as the inventory in my head regarding medical devises and treatments that are more about giving people what they want rather than life enriching and extending things they needed. Was there something you could offer people that they wanted that was diametrically opposed to what they needed? Something they would pay top dollar for now, that would not involve their lawyer suing you about later? The initial joy of recreational pharmaceuticals was already taken, with us as well as our competitors being able to make money on opiod addicts who wanted or needed to kick the habit.

The Magic Solution

There was something else that only a neuroscientist could come up with--Composing music which would make them bob their heads to a jingle and buy whatever toxin it promoted. A specific formula of notes which would feed the ego with empty calories, leaving the brain and soul empty. And, so I told myself, if it went too far, you could always feed them Mozart or Beethoven to bring them back to normal again. AND there was something else in this scheme. The bigger or meaner the ego of the 'lab rat', the more you would inactivate their earnings in the marketplace. Yes, it would be a service to humanity. A way to make assholes and shitheads on top of the financial totem pole broke, insane or, perhaps, convertible to become one of 'us', on 'our' time table of course.

I studied the most catchy jingles for the most useless products I could find. Along with marching tunes for Armies that suffered the most losses in the most futile wars, the Russian and Nazi German marching tunes matching most closely the formula I came up with. Yes, a scientific investigation into cajoling people into doing what they least wanted or needed to do. So you could make drowning people plead with you to pay top dollar to buy more water.

But such an invention would be used eventually to get people in need to sign up for our detox programs and buy my medical devices. Both hook them in with what they want and give them what they need later. The tunes needed a voice, which was provided by Groosky after I convinced him to lend his voice to the songs. Indeed, his singing voice made Paul Robson sound like Bob Dylan on crack and quaaludes. Jack was against the idea, saying that it would fall into the wrong hands. 'The worst of the worst', he warned me.

It was then that I got a call from Morey Manelli, one of the 'Four Horsemen' who, with Jack, had 'cleaned up' the drug problem in Phili by arresting and convicting the innocent and sometimes the guilty, in the service of the rich and powerful. The rat who wore a wire so that the Feds could arrest, and convict, Jack. Of course, Morey didn't introduce himself as such to me. I believed that his real name was Pastor Orville Russell. And that he would insert lyrics into the songs that would trick people who did so many wrong things in the service of Satan into devotees who did the right thing for Jesus, and, most importantly, humanity. And...our rehab center. But, a condition of being funded for this money making endeavor was that Jack would not be told about it.

It worked. We could sell anything to anyone. Until Jack saw one of Pastor Russell's infomercials. He informed me about who Morey really was, forgiving him for wearing a wire that was used to frame him. But, Jack thanked Morey for giving him the chance to see, first

hand, what life was like at the bottom of the totem pole. And claiming what Socrates said... 'Wisdom leads to compassion, ignorance inevitably produces cruelty'.

As to how to halt that cruelty....I had to take responsibility for what I did for short term monetary gain, which led to things far worse than any economic depression. Morey saw to it that I confessed my roll in arming no less than ten countries run by dictators with musical weapons that enabled them to sacrifice most of their own armies while nearly decimating the civilian populations of neighboring countries. Law suits DID come in for overuse of products people wanted, because we told them they needed them. And, I landed in jail. Visited by Jack, and, after having been pardoned for his part in the musical scam, Groosky.

What goes around...hits you in the face

Time passed in an interesting way for me in the grey bar motel. But I didn't find a Groosky. I had to find Groosky inside myself. Which I eventually did. Jack, who had obtained a law degree while I was earning other unofficial diplomas of life, arranged for my early release, which I didn't deserved. But I took it. Since, after all, redemption is possible for everyone. Except, maybe, people like Morey Manelli. And Doctor Sam Neilson. Some things, and people, you can't fix. But, you still have to try.