

A  
QUESTION  
OF  
BALANCE

(Chapters 1-2)

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## *Prologue*

*Nay Prometheus,  
Hand me not thy flame-*

*The embers that thou givest,  
Ignitest not a fire within,  
But rather a chill.  
Dreaded darkness doth surround thy dying cinders.*

*Rage on against Jove's judgment.  
'Tis thy struggle that inspires  
The spark within to burn a blaze  
Far brighter than any handed torch could light.*

## ONE

Dr. Gold picked up the small statuette and leaned back in his leather chair. He had been given the fertility goddess by a patient he had treated for impotence. He did not really like the ceramic antique; its female form was virtually unrecognizable due to its grossly distorted pregnancy. However, he kept it on his desk as a reminder that therapy really could work. It was at times like this when he needed the trophy for the self-confidence that all his diplomas and certificates of distinction could not provide.

Gold set the statuette back down on his desk and looked at his calendar. He noticed his 6:30 appointment was a new patient, Jeremy Light. He could not remember who had referred Light or how long ago he had called to make the appointment. Gold glanced at his watch, realizing that he had only a few minutes before the appointment to call home and tell his wife he would probably be late. Gold always had new patients complete a patient information sheet and both the Suicide Probability Scale and Psychological Screening Inventory. Although that only took about twenty minutes, new patients were usually quite anxious and Gold never liked interrupting their first session to say that their fifty minutes were up. There had even been times when the first interview had gone on for more than two hours. *When the floodgates open, you must be ready to steer the boat, not close the dam.*

After telephoning his wife, Gold took a new patient folder out of his top left drawer and his clipboard with a pad of unlined white paper. He straightened his tie, popped a Tic-Tac into his mouth, and walked over to the reception room door. He felt an

odd sensation as he grasped the doorknob, but he shrugged it off as quickly as it came and opened the door.

A man, who looked to be in his middle to late thirties with neatly parted jet-black hair, was seated with U.S. News & World Report in his hands. He was wearing a black Hugo Boss suit with an exquisite black diamond patterned burgundy Hermès tie. A matching pocket square complemented the outfit perfectly. Gold noticed, somewhat sheepishly, the enviable shine on Light's black Bally shoes.

“I'm Dr. Steven Gold, won't you come in please.”

## TWO

Light set the magazine down on the table and stood up, his deep blue eyes making contact with Gold's. Light offered his hand as he walked into the office. Gold noticed the neatly manicured hand and the silver ring on the middle finger. It had some black markings on it, squiggles or maybe some kind of writing but Gold could not make any sense out of them and he didn't want to be caught staring. Gold felt slight a shudder when he grasped Light's hand. *Must be the flu coming on*, he thought to himself.

Light sat down on the overstuffed club chair next to the couch, crossed his leg comfortably, and began to study Gold's office. "You have some beautiful art here Dr. Gold."

"Thank you. My wife insists it's much too gloomy for a psychologist's office..."

"Oh not at all." Light interrupted. "It's quite stimulating. Isn't that an Acheulian fertility goddess?"

"Why yes it is, it was a gift from a patient I treated for impotence."

"Obviously a success story. Hmmm, Nebuchadnezzar and Newton, yes I've spent many hours in the Blake rooms at the Tate. 'Woman Seated in the Underground,' Moore isn't it? Yes, I thought so."

"That's an interesting original over there. I don't recognize the artist but it's certainly intriguing; a fascinating display of imagination tempered by technique. It looks like Seurat but not one that's been cataloged and I am somewhat of an expert."

"My wife will be thrilled. She thought I should have at least one bright picture in my office so she painted it for me when I first moved my office to Brentwood seven years ago.

Why don't we go ahead and get started. I'd like you to fill out this information sheet as well as these two short questionnaires. They'll give me a great deal of information in just a short time. After that, we'll spend the rest of our time tonight discussing some the issues that you'd like me to help you with."

Gold handed Light the information sheet and inventories along with a clipboard. Light began writing immediately and Gold took this opportunity to examine him further. *Hmmm, left-handed.*

Light wrote meticulously, diligently filling out each item in handwriting that looked as if it had been printed on a laser printer. He did not pause at all, nor did his dark blue eyes wander during the task.

Gold took advantage of the situation to study Gold's ring further. He moved a little closer to try to make out the markings he had noticed earlier. As he leaned forward, he thought the markings looked familiar, but he could not remember where he had seen them before. Suddenly he felt a flash of heat run through his scalp as he realized that Light had been watching him examining the ring.

"Would you like to take a closer look?" Light said as he slipped it off his finger and handed it to Gold.

"Uh yes, thank you. It's quite interesting; quite heavy too. The markings look like Hebrew or Arabic."

"Aramaic actually," Light said while Gold fidgeted nervously with the ring trying to divert Light's eyes away from the beads of sweat he could feel forming at his temples. "I'm not sure what it means but that's what I've been told. I just like the design... and it's sentimental, a gift from my father."

"Uh, let me turn the air conditioner on. It gets a little stuffy here after the building closes down." Gold stood up and walked

over to the thermostat. He felt Light's eyes follow him and he was upset with himself for losing both the authority and his composure in this new relationship. "Are you about done?" he asked and then mentally chastised himself for this passive-aggressive attitude.

"Just finished. Here you are." Gold took the papers and sat back in his chair scanning them quickly to find out who had referred Light. He noticed that the item was left blank. He read further and saw that there was no one listed as an emergency contact.

"I notice that you left the emergency contact line blank. I only ask for a person in case you should have any type of medical emergency or accident. Of course all of our communications are completely confidential."

"Yes, I have no doubts about that. I'm new to L.A. so there really isn't anyone to notify; I'll be careful." Light smiled. He seemed quite likable but there was definitely something about him, something buried deep inside that made Gold feel uncomfortable about excavating.

*Fear is a reaction to the threat of loss. Loss of what? Control? His or mine?*

"You mentioned your father before, is he still alive, do you want to put his contact information?"

"We're not on speaking terms any longer so I really don't think that's a good idea. I'll just leave it blank if you don't mind."

Gold didn't notice anything extraordinary about Light's responses on the SPS and the PSI. But that disturbed him as well. He didn't expect him to be suicidal, but the PSI didn't even hint at psychopathology. No depression, neurosis, emotional discomfort, not even an elevated lie scale. No one

had a flat profile, especially not someone seeking psychotherapy but the defensiveness scale indicated it was valid.

“Why don’t you begin by telling me what brings you here?” Gold said as he leaned back slightly to try to make himself comfortable. He expected the seductive cerebral dancing that all patients perform in their first interview. *Therapy is a kind of sneaking up on people with a mirror and showing them what they’re doing. People never worry about what you find out, just what you’re going to do with it.*

Gold postulated that the initial stages of therapy—trivial problem solving and trust building—were not therapeutic. They encouraged the patient to become familiar with the therapist and the resulting transference blocked the therapeutic relationship as there were expectations, and therefore fears, of the therapist’s reactions. Gold preferred to deal with the issues, not with the personality.

*People only change when they are forced to, not when they are invited to.* Like all of the great psychologists, Gold’s theory of personality had its foundations in Gold’s own psychoneuroses. He hated to dance, both literally and figuratively.

“I’m not happy. I’ve never really been happy. Perhaps I’m being unrealistic wanting to feel loved or wanted. But it seems that all I can ever remember is people not liking me. They seem to always have misconceptions about me and distrust of my motivations.”

Gold was silent for a moment and then after recovering from his shock at so direct and thoughtful a response Gold gently prodded, “Go on.”

“People think I’m evil, antagonistic. I’m not evil, just misunderstood. If anything, I’m apathetic. I try to mind my

own business but if someone asks me something, I answer... honestly, sometimes too honestly. I get the feeling that people don't really want to hear the truth. So they get upset and accuse me of lying, projection right?"

"I'm not quite sure I understand you. Who thinks you're evil?" Gold set aside his notepad to pick up the PSI again, surely he must have made a mistake in scoring it.

"Pretty much everyone who meets me. I've been honest with you but not completely honest; my legal name is Jeremy Light... but my given name is Satan."