

Chapter 1

He stared at a white glazed ceramic cat that his wife had bought.

We create our own reality, Teacher said. Our beliefs mold the world. Try to make that cat change shape.

He concentrated on imagining the cat turning its head and *willed* it to happen.

*No! Using will-power is how you **physically** manipulate objects, Teacher said. You must **believe** the cat is turning its head.*

He concentrated on *believing*.

And, as if made of rubber, the cat smoothly turned its head and stared at him.

“Agh!”

The cat snapped back to its original ceramic self.

The question is not why magic happens, Teacher said, It is why it doesn't happen more often. You've partially answered that: it's fear of the world dissolving into chaos. Fear that every time you tell a person to 'drop dead,' they will.

Stories like The Monkey's Paw show wishes fulfilled, he thought, but in the worst way possible.

It reflects guilt at 'getting what you don't think you deserve,' Teacher said. But there are deeper issues involved.

God doesn't want us to usurp him, he said.

Nonsense! Teacher said. What you call God is not an egotist. The Universe is the least egotistical consciousness I've ever encountered. You know ... the biggest dog is the calmest. The universe's calm is terrifying at times. It would love it if you usurped it. Without losing your mind, I mean!

Are you an egotist?

A little, Teacher said.

Losing my mind? he said.

Being the universe is a bit beyond your capacity right now. I'd laugh if I could. Oh ... I am laughing. My mother thinks it's charming. My father thinks it's indigestion.

He recalled the first time he'd "met" teacher.

It was in a dream.

"Call me teacher," Teacher had said. "In two decades I will teach the world,"

"Why not now?" he'd asked

"I can't talk."

"What *can* you do?"

"I can wave my arms and fill a diaper with the best of them. My mind works even if my brain doesn't. Want me to teach you?"

"OK."

"You're in for a bumpy ride!" Teacher said.

"What would you know of a bumpy ride? You were just born."

"I've lived many lives," Teacher said. "Some were very bumpy rides indeed."

"You remember them?"

"Better than I remember yesterday," Teacher replied.