

The Lost Principles

Chapter 1

Denver 1983

I discovered them in an old desk, musty and yellowed. They had fallen behind one of the drawers, might have been there for years. Seven pages with the titles "The Rosicrucian Doctrine" and "The Seven Cosmic Principles" alternately across the top. Probably copies from the text of a book. They immediately appealed to that side of me often at odds with business, the part that wants to delve into the past and the unknown, the part that feels disconnected from life. Old pages, strange ideas....I don't need these distractions...just when my career is going well, mused Michele Stone. Yet I am drawn to those words.

The phone interrupted her thoughts.

"Michele, Jack Oak here. Sorry to bother. Jonathan Dell gave me your number, hope you don't mind."

"I usually don't talk to clients at home, Jack, is something wrong?"

"I know you met with the Cimarron Oil people yesterday and I just wanted to thank you for your help. J. Dell & Co will be the perfect underwriters."

"I haven't even reviewed the project or made a decision to recommend it yet," commented Michele, annoyed at his assumption and surprised that he even knew about her meeting with Mike Johnston, the president of Cimarron Oil.

"Oh, that's fine. You'll be impressed, and I have a favor to ask. Would you be on the Board of Directors? We want someone with experience in the market, and your credentials are strong."

"Oh, come on, Jack. I don't add anything to the company. First, I know nothing about oil and gas other than what I have learned as a stockbroker at Dell. Second, I have no other corporate experience. My background is in education. I don't see how that looks impressive in a prospectus. If you're trying to influence my

decision, nice try, but it won't work," she continued, more perplexed than ever. She reflected on the meeting with Mike, remembering that while she had been impressed with the properties, something about the new company didn't seem right.

"Wait, Michele, I'm not trying to flatter you. Your Ph.D.'s impressive. You've got a good reputation and, if you don't mind, the fact that you're a woman doesn't hurt. People like to see an intelligent, balanced and diversified board," pressed Jack. "I have a potential Questionnaire I'd like you to look at and then, if you decide to join us, you can fill it out."

"Join you? I didn't realize you were on the board."

"Well, I'm not actually, just a large shareholder."

Michele pushed, "How large, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Large enough to have some say in choosing board members," Jack replied. "I'll see that you have the form tomorrow," he continued with persistence as if he were going to do exactly that regardless of her answer, "and could we meet after the market closes to discuss it? I think we should get to know one another."

Grimacing and hoping the annoyance wasn't apparent in her voice, she reluctantly agreed. "All right, how about the Café Promenade at 4:30?"

"Good choice. I love that place. 4:30 it is. And you can bring the completed Board Questionnaire. See you then. Have a good evening, Michele," and he hung up as she barely managed, "Bye."

Great, she thought, now I have to look at that business plan before tomorrow, just what I feel like doing. First, though, think I'll take a few minutes and review my notes on the first two of the Seven Cosmic Principles. I'm not going to let Jack Oak ruin my entire evening.

"As above, so below" is the Principle of Correspondence. I've heard this before, doesn't seem to be anything new. What is true on one level is true on other levels, such as what is true for humanity is also true for each individual. Microcosm and macrocosm, or what applies to the universe also applies, on a smaller scale, to people. "All things are interrelated." Any confusion in the world reflects confusion in each country, as well as confusion within individuals in each country. A war represents conflict within participating countries and within citizens of that country. "Parts cannot be separated from the whole." Prison inmates reflect society, as do Good Samaritans. "Everything and everyone is connected." Understanding ourselves is one way of understanding the world.

"Nothing is separate." I like that. To think that the same rules apply to all is comforting. This means there are general, universal principles that are valid all the time, everywhere. These transcend the idea of specific human-made rules. If, according to the Principle of Correspondence, everything is connected, what the church teaches should relate to what may be an even higher truth. A higher truth than any church dogma, now that appeals to me. The Catholic Church is too confining and any other church just another version of the same, should be fewer rules and rituals.

The Principle of Law and Order relates to the old adage that "What goes around, comes around." Again, not new information and not difficult to understand. "A cause and an effect, with no chance or haphazard events." "Everything happens for a reason." "A reaction to every action." These ideas seem right, yet different from what I've been taught. Wonder if, in fact, there's any evidence of such beliefs beyond the Rosicrucians. But now, guess there's a "reason" I have to read the Cimarron business plan instead of pursuing these Principles.

Michele was at the office by 7:00 the next morning. Jack Oak, apparently, had been there even earlier. A copy of the Board of Directors Inquiry Questionnaire lay in her mailbox.

How did he do that? Did he drop it off before we even talked, she wondered. I hate it when people assume I'll do something before asking. This whole project and Mr. Oak are starting to irritate me.

Lisa, her assistant and ever-pleasant early person, arrived as Michele headed up the stairs, chiming, "Good Morning."

Calling her by the often-used nickname, Michele responded, "Hey, Lise, I've been asked to sit on the board of Mike Johnston's new company, Cimarron Oil. Jack Oak is involved and called to ask me last night."

"You don't sound overjoyed. Isn't this a big deal, being asked?" Lisa asked.

"No, it seems more weird than anything else, like I'm being railroaded. I don't like that."

"Trust your gut," the ever-practical Lisa quipped.

The day was a usual one at J. Dell & Co of answering constant phone calls and trades, running down to trading and managing to appease most clients with the stock and price they wanted. Michele made a note to ask Jack at their meeting if he wanted \$5000 of the latest new issue. That was as much as she had for any of her

best clients. She realized that after working with Jack for two years, she had never met him, and she was anxious to see what this man looked like. But it was those pages that kept her occupied as she tried to plow through the letters and other mail stacked on her desk. "As above, so below" and "Cause and effect" kept running through her mind.

"Why don't you go ahead and leave for the day, Lise. I'm going to stick around. I have a 4:30 meeting with Jack Oak. Ever meet him?"

"No, he's one of the few local clients I haven't seen, that's odd, isn't it? Be sure to let me know what he looks like, he's always so pleasant on the phone. Sounds cute. And, this is...," Lisa hesitated, "business or pleasure?"

"Business only," responded Michele.

Lisa just laughed as she packed up for the day. "It wouldn't hurt for you to have a date. You and Jim have been divorced for over a year. You work too much, never go out and rarely ever join Tom and me for a drink. You need to have some fun," she commented as she walked out of the office.

"Yeah," replied Michele sarcastically.

At 4:25, she headed downstairs to the Café Promenade, housed on the basement level of the same building. She and her ex-husband Jim had many meals and drinks in this small, French restaurant. The food was excellent; her favorite was the baked escargot, served in warm, melted butter with pastry caps. Since this wasn't where brokers normally met for drinks after work, the restaurant provided a quiet and yet very public meeting spot.

As the maitre d' greeted Michele by name, she glanced around, searching for a man who might be Jack. The restaurant was never crowded at this time of day, so she wasn't concerned about connecting with him. As she was about to respond to the inquiry of "Meeting someone, Ms. Stone?" since that was her recent routine, she was aware of a man approaching her. He was tall and thin with a distinguishing full beard and mustache, looking very confident and self-assured. Dressed in a tailor-made pinstriped suit that fit him perfectly, accentuated with a white, initialed shirt adorned with gold cuff-links, he was the picture of success. He strode towards her and introduced himself, "Hi Michele, I'm Jack," without any hesitation.

She was immediately at ease with this man, although she wanted to keep alert around him. She could tell that would be difficult as she gazed into his small, but intense, deep blue eyes. Before she could respond, he had taken her arm and

steered her to a table, taking charge and making it clear that he knew this place and everyone knew him. She thought it odd that she had never seen him here before.

Settling at the table, he questioned her choice of drink as the waiter appeared. "I'll have the usual, Scotch and water on the rocks," he boomed, "and the lady will have?"

"The usual, a glass of the house red," filled in Michele, speaking directly to the waiter and avoiding Jack's stare.

"We finally meet," started Jack, "I can't understand why it has taken me two years." His sincerity amused Michele who just smiled.

"Jack, before I agree to be on the Board of Cimarron, tell me more about the company's history and your involvement," began Michele, trying to keep this meeting professional.

I can be on dangerous ground, she thought, with this man who already makes me feel unsteady. Not a good sign. Only one glass of wine. My judgment gets a little cloudy when I'm in the company of an attractive man and too much alcohol. A long year since my divorce and the romantic and sexual encounters have been too few.

Jack's comments pulled her back to the moment, "Come on, Michele, let's get to know one another before we launch into business. Relax a little. It isn't as if you don't know me. After all, I have been a very good client for years."

"A 'very good client,' I see," interrupted Michele, "rather sure of yourself, aren't you?"

"Not when it comes to you," he admitted readily.

Taken aback by his honesty and seeming vulnerability, Michele responded with a smile, thankful that the drinks arrived to serve as a distraction to her embarrassment, a feeling that annoyed her. She studied his face. Is that a sincere response or is he just trying to impress me?

Damn, she thought, I hate this part of the initial game of dating...and this isn't even a date.

"In the time I have known you, Jack, I never remember you being one for social pleasantries. Most of our transactions were pretty much business. Here's to finally meeting a long-time client," proposed Michele, trying to take back control of the meeting.

Lifting his glass to her toast, Jack laughed as if he appreciated her maneuvering, "I guess you're right, Michele, but let me start changing that. How long have you been in Denver?"

It was hard for her to remain distant with his charm. She began relaying a brief version of meeting her second husband when she lived in Arizona and moving to Denver to be with him.

"It was a whirlwind, fast and wonderful romance," she reminisced, "and we were together for eight years. Jim was a broker. He introduced me to the market and I was hooked. And you?"

"You are divorced now, is that correct?"

"Not so fast, I told my story. Your turn."

"Fine, if you answer my question on divorce," countered Jack.

"Yes," Michele answered quickly to avoid any further mention of the subject. She wasn't about to discuss a still too painful and emotional topic with a stranger.

Jack began his story of a stint in Wyoming, selling time and temperature signs to banks, "I traveled the entire state visiting all the small towns, a very lucrative business. Then I launched into public relations before coming to Denver. My kids were here and I wanted to be closer to them. I started in venture capital once I saw the money being made in the oil and gas stocks."

"I didn't realize you were doing that," Michele observed, "I assumed you were still in publicity."

"I changed this past year. You may have noticed that my trading declined. I've been busy structuring new projects and getting a piece of the action," explained Jack.

"I've always been interested in that aspect of the market," Michele interrupted.

Smiling, Jack quickly suggested, "I'd be glad to tell you anything you want to know over dinner."

"Not tonight," Michele said curtly.

This is feeling much too comfortable, she thought, even with only one drink. I can't have dinner with him, my defenses aren't that strong.

Trying to soften her words, she explained, "I have a prior commitment. In fact, I need to be leaving by 5:30."

Jack, looking genuinely disappointed, countered with, "Then how about a movie this weekend? There's a new one out, "Top Gun," with Tom Cruise. Have you seen it?"

She said, "No, but I love flying and I love Tom Cruise," walking into his trap before catching herself.

"How about Friday night? I'll pick you up about 7."

Knowing this was too fast, Michele shook her head, "Sorry, I'm busy this weekend, perhaps another time."

"I won't accept 'No' for an answer. I'll call and try for the following weekend. Think about it," challenged Jack.

"I will," Michele said gently. "In the meantime, back to business. I wanted to hear more about Cimarron before I agree to be on the Board. Since our time is limited today, could you just get some more information on the properties for me?"

"That would be my pleasure. I'll drop it off tomorrow. Then we can talk," Jack offered.

"Good. Next topic, I have \$5000 worth of our latest new issue for you. Here's a copy of the prospectus."

Jack stopped her, "I'll take all you have. No need to read anything. Whatever it is, I want some. Dell's underwritings are strong."

"They are, which is good for all of us. I wonder how long this crazy bull market will last, though. And \$5000 is all I can give you," she said.

"Just thought I'd ask," he chuckled.

Michele motioned for the waiter to get their check. "Oh, no, you don't," Jack complained as she opened her purse, "I invited you. My treat."

Five minutes later they were walking out of the door. Despite his protests of being a gentlemen and wanting to see her home, Michele headed to the street and Jack to the parking lot. Waiting for the "Walk" signal at the corner, she realized how tense she had been for the last hour. Despite being on guard, however, she had enjoyed herself.

Oh yes, Michele thought, this man could be very dangerous. His presence seems to be all around me still, and I'd love to see "Top Gun." Wonder if he knows I fly or just happened to mention that particular movie. Unanswered questions concerning Mr. Jack Oak.

Arriving at Brooks Towers, she checked her mail, picked up the assortment of letters, flyers and magazines, and headed to the elevator. Exiting was the same man

she remembered seeing the day before. A little unkempt, he didn't look like the usual Brooks tenant. His eyes briefly met hers with a harsh stare before he quickly averted his eyes. Ignoring him, she quickly entered the elevator. Living alone, even in a building with a security guard on duty, she had learned to be wary.

After hitting the 42nd button, she remained lost in thought as she rode to the top floor and stepped off the elevator. Approaching her apartment, she stopped. The door was wide open.