

A MAGICAL JOURNEY  
WITH CARLOS  
CASTANEDA

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*Margaret Runyan Castaneda*

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**A Magical Journey with Carlos Castaneda**

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Don't write in stone or write in wood,  
that I was honest or that I was good,  
But write in smoke on a passing breeze—  
Seven words and the words are these:  
Filling more than a volume could,  
*He lived, he laughed and he understood.*

—Don Blanding, *My Epithet*

## *Introduction*

Carlos looked at me with those big brown eyes that looked like ebony almonds. He was in an impish mood. He whispered, “Oh, Missa Runyan, I will start a revolution that will last beyond our lifetime—and you are a part of it!”

He laughed. It sounded almost inhuman, like the cawing of a crow. “Carlos, you are crazy!” I said. Then he picked me up and slung me over his shoulder. I hit him with my purse. We fell down laughing. I was hooked by this diminutive man who would become my husband.

One of Carlos’s good friends during his early days in Los Angeles was Lydette Maduro, a chubby, dark-eyed Costa Rican who lived in Los Angeles with her mother. He called her Nanecca and saw her frequently prior to the end of 1955. It was Lydette who brought Carlos to my apartment in December 1955. Mrs. Angela Maduro, her mother, had made two cocktail dresses for the Christmas holiday season for me. Carlos accompanied Lydette on the errand. He sat silently in the corner while I tried the dresses on to see that they fit just right. The dresses were beautiful. One was blue peau-de-soie with a dropped waist line and Chantilly lace fitted top with rhinestone straps. The skirt was puffed at the bottom like pantaloons and quite short. The other dress was a mandarin silk brocade with Chinese motifs on it. They fit perfectly. As Carlos and Lydette were leaving, she stepped outside the door and with Carlos beside her she said, “Oh Margarita, this is my friend, Carlos from South America.” He smiled at me—said nothing and they turned and walked away.

I closed the door, stood there overwhelmed by the look he had given me. My head pounded while my mind was thinking over the encounter. I couldn’t get him out of my mind; I felt the look he gave me was a sure sign he would call soon. However, he didn’t.

Shortly after that, I went to the Maduros to pick up the dresses. They were ready for a final fitting. Before leaving my apartment, I had an intuitive impulse or hunch that prompted me to do something unusual. I wrote my name, address and telephone number in a book by Neville Goddard, *The Search*. I planned to give it to Carlos if the occasion arose.

My arrival at Lydette's house unexpected caught her off guard. Carlos was there (which proved my hunch was right). The cocktail dress was lying on the bed. Carlos and Lydette were talking and didn't notice I was there 'till I cleared my throat and said, "Hello, Lydette." She turned towards me startled, while Carlos just smiled. She said, "Carlos, mother needs your help in the kitchen."

As he left the room, Lydette smiled and said sweetly, "Next time, call before you come."

I knew she was hopelessly in love with the man she told me was only a friend of the family. She needn't worry though. I would never fall in love again. It was the only thing I was certain about. Still I felt nervous. I wanted to run.

Of course I couldn't run. I had come to try the dresses on and take them with me. I had parties to attend. Then she said they were not quite ready. "I'll come back," I said, "when would be a good time?" "Mother will call you," Lydette said. Then with a change of mood she became friendly and talked about our times in the past, things we did with Carlos and her brother that I dated who had been killed in a revolution in Costa Rica. I had spent many happy times with their family.

As Lydette showed me to the door, she said, "You really like Carlos, don't you?"

"Well, he seems nice," I said.

"I warn you, beware of him, he has *power*..."

"That little man? Lydette, he only comes to my shoulder."

"Not physical power," she whispered. "He can charm your soul, he is a *curandero*."

"A what?"

"Shaman, a magician."

I looked at Lydette in disbelief. Carlos looked more like an Indian with a youthful face, than a wizard. "I'm sure he's a magician," I said to humor her, because I didn't believe a word she said.

"I am right," she said. "I know what I believe is true and you will find out too, if you're not careful."

Believing she was trying to scare me away from the man she considered her property, I said, "Don't worry, Lydette, I'm not very attracted to Carlos."

I wanted it to be true, but something was happening to me, I don't know what—but I sensed this was not my last meeting with Carlos.

"I think you are lying, Miss Runyan," Lydette's eyes said, then she walked me to the door in silence.

We stood there a moment, Lydette on the threshold, and I on the step. Suddenly, Carlos appeared beside Lydette smiling broadly—his teeth looked like pearls. "Goodbye, Missa Runyan," he said, stepping forward, extending his hand. It was then I slipped him the book from my purse, Neville's, *The Search*. Inside I had written my telephone number and address. He tucked it under his arm out of Lydette's view and returned to the house. Lydette waved goodbye. I walked along the sidewalk to the bus stop, and sat down beside an old lady with a shopping cart full of bottles. She asked for a quarter. My hand was shaking as I looked in my purse. Something had happened to me at Lydette's house. What, I did not know—but it was exciting.

As the bus rumbled up Vine Street and onto Wilshire Boulevard, I looked out at the city lights and saw Carlos's face reflected in each of them.

He had my number. I will not try to call him, I told myself.

But it was to no avail. Deep down I knew we would meet again. So I visualized his face and whispered a silent message: *call me*. Then the long wait began...

Thus began my magical journey with Carlos Castaneda.



Margaret Runyan Castaneda, 1954



Mother and I-

The dress is the one I wore on my first date with Carlos, 1956



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PART ONE

*Beginnings*

# 1

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In sleep that night, the dream returns. He's alone on the desert again, barefoot and frightened and looking for the strange force they call the ally, which is sort of a spirit guide or psychic being. It's something Carlos must somehow find and defeat as a final ritual of passage. So he is out here in the middle of this forsaken wilderness, just wandering around among the shrub and the waterbarrel cacti, marooned, searching, one man alone in the wasteland. And the only thing he can think about is the twelve years he's spent getting here. Twelve years as a sorcerer's apprentice, twelve years learning the ritual and technique, one-fourth of his life preparing for this moment...*this existential moment!* Twelve years!

And absolutely nothing is happening. Nothing. Not even the lizards are out yet. A vacant silence has settled over the place. There is nothing but the shrub and the cacti and the shadows rolling back away from the dawn. It's as if Carlos has been out there forever, when suddenly, he sees something—a man, a huge, towering hulk of a man with thick arms rising out of the shadows. He's dressed in a dark jacket and a pair of double-knits with a red bandanna tied at the throat, which seems so ludicrous in this place, and he's got these thin spectral cheekbones and a great angular nose. There are hollows where his eyes should be. Carlos steps backwards in awe and for a moment the whole scene just hovers above itself.

Then the ally starts walking. He is walking towards Carlos, taking long slow steps straight at him, digging the heels of his patent leather boots into the sand. Suddenly, there are hawks in the sky. This is it, no doubt about it—the denouement, the culminating battle of a man of knowledge! It has taken twelve years to reach this point.

But it never goes any further. For some strange reason everything always stops right here, just as the ally is making his approach. Everything freezes, and overhead, out among the hawks, a single crow is wheeling across the Mexican sky. It is an omen, a metaphor, the last link with Carlos' personal life—which is to say his real life and not the character in his books—and in a single electric instant Carlos understands that this is his final weakness, the last link to be broken before he becomes a man of knowledge. And as he stands there, the details of his apprenticeship wash across his memory in a backward moving tide—

*An old Indian swimming in air and climbing waterfalls, alkaloid sleeps in dingy cabins, consciousness dreaming, chewing peyote, strawberry-faced allies, the hallucinations, the trance running, the ecstatic aluminum/oil visions, the early lectures on "seeing," his fabled meeting of Don Juan.*

—And suddenly he's back at the beginning again. All the teachings are fresh again and the rule is new: Break all bonds! There is no coincidence, there are no dreams! There are only the fleeting incomprehensible images crashing through the skull. Suddenly, Carlos is in the Slipstream and it is a million colors.

"Chocho," he screams at the crow, but the bird is too high. Carlos Castaneda leaps up from his bed. "Chocho!"

Nanny, a UCLA student who is with him here in Westwood, walks over to the mattress and sits down and puts her arms around him. "No," she says softly. "He's not here. C.J. is back with his mother. It's only a dream."

"But I was there," whispers Carlos Castaneda. "I was right there."

Nanny strokes his hair. "Not yet," she says. "Not yet."

It isn't exactly easy, you know. It's no cinch putting whole inexplicable worldviews down on paper so that every burgher from Schenectady to Long Beach can understand. Carlos Castaneda is having a great deal of difficulty doing it, waking up nights in cold sweats and then trying to reconstruct enough to make sense of it all. That's not to say his books are a product of his nightmares. On the contrary, he has spent years researching sorcery and Indian culture in the libraries around UCLA, traveled the desiccated Mexican plains, and invested a quarter of his life collecting information on medical plants and the rest from informants. One-quarter of his life probing their strange Paleolithic philosophies. He has paid his dues to mysticism and the great god Anthropology. Moreover, he has spent years hunched over that damned typewriter telling his whole story in meticulous detail. Now, here in the spring of 1974, with three books out and a fourth over there on the desk, he has become more than just a cult hero of the West, more than just a minor legend, he is more than that, he has become...Castaneda—a Man of Power.

And the way he did it was to transform rather basic Eastern philosophical ideas into pure shamanic aperçus—that sort of danger there in the drift. The message was always the same—there is a reality apart from ego-bound real world. He would sit there at his typewriter, roll his brown eyes shut in deep metaphysical concentration, and channel everything through the Magnificent Mystifier way back there in the cerebral peduncle or someplace. Finally, out would come something like, "Knowledge is a moth" or "Death stands always to the left." Something soaring and cryptic. It's like hitting a moving target trying to understand what Carlos Castaneda is talking about—and God knows, everybody is trying to understand.

The only thing you have to go on are his books, his magnificent story, all about how he was once an undergraduate at UCLA and ran across an old Indian whom he called Don Juan who revealed a unique personal worldview perceived by a network of Central and South American sorcerers that everybody thought was long extinct. But here

they were, and this student was living among them and writing about them. For twelve years, from 1960 through 1972, Carlos says he served as an apprentice medicine man to Don Juan and he watched the gradual revelation of his Indian's role as botanist, curer, sorcerer, warrior, *brujo*, and master of eclectic ritual. Don Juan used three drugs—peyote, mushrooms and Jimson weed—during the early stages of Carlos' apprenticeship. The drugs were aimed at breaking down cultural conditioning and, ultimately, one's safe perception of the world.

Carlos wrote about his experiences as an apprentice in a series of four books, published between 1968 and 1974. It was a flat-out Hesse ideal: student of life meets spiritual master, only Carlos was saying that it *actually happened*. Here was a guy from Los Angeles saying he had lived this strange metaphysical existence on the Mexican plain and had come back to tell about it. In the four books, which from the outset were more philosophy than anthropology, he had put down in black and white the conversation, the ritual, the hallucinations, the aperçus, the final sorcerer's explanation—the whole reticular system. It was all there, only it remained rather incomprehensible to the end. Even Carlos admitted that his work gave only a superficial view of how a grizzled old Yaqui *brujo* views the world. The key, Carlos wrote, was to understand that the world of common-sense reality is a product of social consensus, an idea basic to Carlos' favorite area of academic study at UCLA—phenomenology.

In his first book, *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, Carlos wrote about *mitotes*—peyote ceremonies—in which the participants “see” rather than just look. That is, they use a total bodily awareness to flesh out the world as it is, not just as it appears as a result of descriptions pounded in from birth. The *brujos* can halt the fleeting stream of interpretation that makes up our rather feeble perception of things. What you're left with after stopping the stream is pure wondering perception—where gut-sense prevails and the body overtakes reason.

It was there, in *The Teachings*, that Carlos described how he first met his Indian teacher, Don Juan, in an Arizona bus depot. He was collecting material for a college paper on psychotropic drug use among the locals and, told of Don Juan's purported knowledge in the field, he sought the old man out. It took nearly a year before Don Juan explained that he possessed a certain strange knowledge and agreed to let Carlos in on it. This was something of a revolutionary thing because there is a strict convention among *brujos* that the secrets are to be taught only to their own kin. But Don Juan made an exception and Carlos, who pictured himself as the most unlikely of apprentices, began his apprenticeship first in Arizona and later moved to Sonora, Mexico. At first, the Indian made him roll around on the porch under the ramada until he found his *spot*, which is to say the exact location where he felt *absolutely right*. It took Carlos six hours of rolling around there on the porch before he began perceiving delicate changes of hue and a narrowing of the vision, and finally he settled on a spot Don Juan called the *sitio*, the place that gave a sense of superior strength. The apprenticeship was off and running.

A few months later, Carlos and Don Juan traveled to the house of another Indian and it was there that Carlos had his first taste of peyote and the soaring hallucinations it brings. There was jargon to learn and steps to take before becoming a man of knowledge in the ancient tradition; there was that peculiar kind of satori called "seeing" in which the world takes on a new existential meaning. In the *brujo's* system, allies stand at the periphery ready to help an apprentice, advise him, give him strength and so forth. And there was another kind of power called Mescalito, a protector and teacher who produced states of consciousness beyond ordinary reality.

All this was pretty far out, of course, but Carlos succeeded in developing these primitive religious ideas in a neat and interesting way. He recounted long Socratic sessions with his Indian teacher, conversations that gave resonance and depth to all the ritual and shamanic technique

that had seemed almost silly from a distance. He returned from the crest of his hallucinations with the most detailed notes on the primitive netherworld since Fr. Bernardino de Sahagun first stumbled on the peyote feasts of the northern desert hunters of Mexico.

In a border town one day, Don Juan explained that the man of knowledge faces four enemies. Like so many of Don Juan's perorations, it was intricately constructed, beautifully conceived and devoid of real-world logic.

The first enemy of the man of knowledge is fear, mostly of the unknown. As he begins to learn, the apprentice faces a second enemy, clarity of mind, which Don Juan says can dispel fear but also blinds the initiate to the rather terrible psychic possibilities of letting go of one's personal sense of reality too soon. It's really a matter of balance, of moving slowly in the exchange of realities, the burgher's for the sorcerer's. It's there, in the exchange, that the sense of personal power comes, a secret kind of ancient power that can make an apprentice cruel and capricious, such is the case for a lot of those old farts out there in the desert. But for somebody who can handle it and use it to understand the non-logical cosmos, for that person there is only one thing that stands in the way, the enemy of old age.

And so here was this old man sitting in some border town with Carlos, describing how the fourth enemy was something that could never be defeated entirely, only kept at a distance for a while, and Carlos wrote it all down verbatim in a rather enigmatic exchange in his first book.

The sequel, *A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan*, included more of Don Juan, his adventures and his teachings, and introduced Don Genaro, a Mazatec superman with a predilection for pirouetting across the edge of waterfalls and floating a few inches off the floor. If Don Juan's method was the Socratic dialogue, Don Genaro's was creative gymnastics. The book covers the second phase of Carlos's apprenticeship from April 1968 to October 1970. By the book's end,



Don Genaro tries to break Carlos's clawhold on Western logic and reason by violating the rules of Aristotelian time and space. He travels ten miles in an instant. He actually moves from open plain to a distant scree-covered mountain ledge ten miles away in a single transcendent moment...here...there. *Impossible!*

It is left to the reader to conclude that the Indians are manipulating Carlos's conversations. There are no signposts. It's like when Carlos flew in the second book. At the direction of Don Juan and with the help of a little Jimson weed, Carlos felt himself one afternoon leave the ground and soar across the desert. When he returned, he asked Don Juan if, in fact, he actually had flown or merely had hallucinated the trip. The question was absurd to Don Juan's mind, and therein lay the crux of the matter of sorcery. It was, above all, a matter of mind. Carlos flew all right, a flight different from, but no less real, in the *brujo's* world than that of a crow. It was the flight of a man who had used Jimson weed and all those arbitrary distinctions of the Western world were as irrelevant to the shaman, as the difference between dreaming and waking.

In the early days of the apprenticeship, Carlos used drugs and so he could explain everything away as a function of the chemicals, but toward the end, through the third and fourth books of the Don Juan tetralogy, he began experiencing extraordinary phenomena—lights, colors, allies, forces, inexplicable sounds—with a clear and chemically unclouded head. Suddenly, it was obvious that the Indian, that gritty product of the open plains, was not only the progenitor of a complex primitive god system, but also of a totally unique view of things, a perspective and worldview as revolutionary in its own way as Einstein's must have seemed to the German intelligentsia in 1921. No! Even more than that—as Nietzsche's must have seemed, or Darwin's. Suddenly all those fineboned notions about Europeans being the only ones who could ever develop a system of rational thought would waver and fall.

In *Journey to Ixtlan*, the third book, Carlos returns to his field notes of the first two years of his apprenticeship. Most of the book, all except the last three chapters, is material he previously had excluded because it didn't deal directly with hallucinations. In the early days, the drugs were the most fascinating aspect of becoming a primitive man of knowledge and so the other stuff, the tranquil conversations learning the shaman's vocabulary and a whole series of esoteric lessons—all that was generally ignored. It was only later, after he understood the limits of drug use, that Carlos returned to the early conversations. There are no psychotropics in *Journey to Ixtlan*, only lessons of the sorcerer's conception of death and the various techniques for enlightenment. It came the closest of explaining that the ordinary experience of the world is only "a description."

The final three chapters are new material, not reconstructed field notes from the early years, and they carry the apprenticeship through May 1971. Carlos wrote as much about Don Genaro as Don Juan, especially about the old Mazatec's brilliant pantomimes and the baffling psiopsychic feats—such as making Carlos's car seem to disappear and then reappear out on the desert. Confronting a coyote a little while later, Carlos is able to suspend the limits of his cultural conditioning enough to actually *communicate* with it. This is weighty stuff, the glistening edge of schizophrenia. Don Genaro warns him of the dangers by explaining his journey to Ixtlan, a broad and frightening metaphor of what can happen to the psyche not ready for the deepest revelations of sorcery.

As a young man, Don Genaro chose to perform the rite of passage—which is to say, by wrestling the ally. As he tells it, he met the ally on the plain but was not strong enough and was hurled into a netherworld where people appear only as phantoms. Genaro moves constantly, heading always for his home in Ixtlan, a journey he says he can never complete. The point of this rather mystical story was that Carlos, too, would one day find himself face-to-face with the ally and would have to wrestle it. If he was prepared, if his personal life was in order and his

power was strong enough, he would find himself alive in the real—but separate—sorcerer's world.

And so Carlos sits at the typewriter, trying to make some sense of it. He looks down and makes slits of his eyes, red-rimmed from lack of sleep, and the only thing he can think of is that damned nightmare. He hasn't had a decent night's sleep in weeks. It always just sort of creeps in there at night, a horrible frightening vision of himself walking barefoot on the Mexican desert at dawn, searching for the ally which he must wrestle to the sand. If he wins, he earns the title of *brujo*, but if he loses...

But it never goes that far. Carlos and the ally finally meet on the plain. The adrenaline starts pumping. Carlos just stands there, staring straight into those hollow eyes, primed and ready to fight it out. Then suddenly, there is the crow again and for some reason the whole thing just sort of dissolves. It just washes away and Carlos is awake again, sitting up in bed at home in Westwood with the sweat rolling down his jawline, wondering if this damned nightmare *will ever go away*.

But then, that's the psychic baggage one has to bear if one is Carlos Castaneda. He is, after all, one of our few European rationalists who have stepped deeply into the practice of Indian sorcery. It has never seemed more primitive or more *attuned*, probably because Carlos has been aware of it for so long. As an undergraduate at UCLA, he knew the practices of the *brujos* in Mexico don't just spring up full-blown in 1960. They really *are* primitive. They have roots 2,000 and 3,000 years old that reach back into the peyote and mushroom cults of the Aztecs and the Toltecs—to the shamans of Siberia and the atavistic masters of South America. Carlos didn't just stumble into all this. He holds fast to the story that he is from Brazil; actually was born in Peru, and it was there—not in Arizona, Sonora or Oaxaca—there on the square at Cajamarca that Carlos Arana first learned about the *brujos*; and it was here, that Carlos Castaneda began his journey.

## 2

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In the Peruvian winter, from June to November, the rarefied fogs hang like gauze over the Andean cordilleras. There's a brown moonscape of desert on the western coast of the Andes and even there, its' bone chilling. On the street corners of Trujillo and Cajamarca and Lima, the Quechua Indians stand in straw shoes, wrapped in woolen sarapes against the midnight breeze of the Humboldt current. To the west, there are the tropics, dense jungles and the headwaters of Mother River—the Amazon.

Salas, a tiny Pacific coastal village, is reputed to be the capital of the northern *curanderos*, the folk healers. Not far from Salas are blue fresh-water pools of undetermined depth, sacred lagoons where the magic plants of the northern highlands grow. Twelve thousand feet straight up in the Peruvian stratosphere, near the southern border of Ecuador, lie the most revered of South American lagoons—Las Huaringas. Along the reed banks the nut brown *curanderos* and *brujos* of the south lands sing canoes into existence and sail across the water and the carboniferous streams into zero time. They always carry leather pouches or jelly jars to fill with vilca snuffs and narcotic legumes, enough to last a season back on the medicine circuit in the city. It's like a psychedelic supermarket there in the foothills—coca leaves, holy *Datura* plants, tree fungi of the specie *Psilocibe* and Ayahuasca, the “vine of the dead spirits.” And there, standing like emerald organ pipes

in the scree, is San Pedro—Mother Cactus!—the most mind-altering substance in the whole fantastic expanse of Las Huaringas.

For hundreds of years, the *curanderos* have been setting their spirits free 12,000 feet straight up on top of the world. First they sliced San Pedro into long loaves and then boiled them for hours in black pots. Under the late night sky they drank the magic infusion. Under the tutelage of Mother Cactus, the *curanderos* say, there are no more reference points, no more middle ground. No boundaries. No coincidence. Only that ineluctable half-consciousness in the backbrain they know as the Slipstream.

In the Chicama River Valley, about fifty miles west of Carlos Castaneda's birthplace, the *Temple of the Brujo* stands rotting in the shade of mimosas and Eucalyptus trees. Two pyramids, Coa and Prieta, rise from the plateau like brown weather-beaten guards against the coastal sky. The outer wall is broken, exposing the outline of old paintings. Terra cotta friezes stretch along the roof where geometric lizards and cats do their last dance in endless time. Hundreds of years before the temple was built, this spot was considered sacred. Young men from Cajamarca gathered here and, in the late day Peruvian sun, listened to a bony-faced legendary shaman talk about allies and spirits. He was an ancient with no name, who explained how the mountains were really dreaming *brujos* and how animals and plants were inextricably tied up in the same system. Plants, like men, grew and were subject to death. Each ate and needed to breed and each responded in its way to the environment. He explained that there was a certain affinity between the world of men and the world of plants, and while the two seemed radically different, they were the same world nevertheless. Some plants, however, were special. They were magic, housing spirits and forces that gave men a unique perception of things. In essence, these plants were willing to share their view of a separate reality with man. And in order to truly understand this relationship, to really perceive the nature of all parts of the world, one had

to empty one's brain of all cultural impediments that accumulates throughout the real-world process of tribal socialization and so forth—and then stand anew at the gates of the Slipstream and *see*.

The Legendary Shaman of the Chicama River Valley became well-known throughout much of South America because he outlined a system of thought that eventually affected all the Americas, to some extent.

Of course, it wasn't the first time a man-god had raised a raggedy head to the stars and taken a good look inside. There have always been men shamanizing in the hunter's small world. The Magdalenian artists painted their shamans in full bison-gear on the walls of Paleolithic caves in Trois Frères. Then there were the Egyptian mushroom zealots and the African shamans of the half-baked Ozymandian sheikdoms of the Sudan. There was the magician Moses and the flesh-and-bone Greek rainmaker Zeus. They were everywhere. The whole thing swept like an infected tide across western Eurasia, Siberia, over the Baltic Strait and across the Pacific—and wherever the magic plants grew, there were the spirits. On the North American plains, there was peyote. In Oaxaca, mushrooms. In India, the mysterious Soma. In Peru, Ayahuasca, *Datura* and Mother Cactus.

And like his counterparts—time frames and lifestyles apart—the Legendary Shaman explained to his apprentices that the plants were not an end in themselves, but a means of reaching an end. They called it *seeing* even then, which made absolutely no sense to the Incas, who were an upwardly mobile lot, with little tolerance for the narcotic tradition of the *curanderos* and less for their individualism. Things didn't change once the Christians arrived 300 years later. It was as if Pizarro had just captured Atahualpa in downtown Cajamarca, when suddenly, you had missionaries everywhere—building straw brick churches, baptizing the rabble and generally letting the philanthropic juices flow. There were converts to be sure, but there were also those would not let go of the past, *curanderos* who were the great grandsons of *curanderos* who had

survived the Incas, and distant relatives of those who once sat at the feet of the Legendary Shaman. They stand on the street corners now, in the squares, behind their magic plant stands. Their gods are the Virgin, the Holy Father and Mother Cactus, whom they named San Pedro, but whose spirit is that kinky hombre...*Mescalito*.

The weight of all this history didn't hit Carlos until well after his first few years of research. Gradually, he came to realize that the Indians he was interviewing were vestiges of the shamanic sweep. They had their magic talk and their ritual and their attempts at "seeing," and they always seemed to be operating within a system where the cardinal rule was to break all bonds.

In late December 1960, Carlos says Don Juan instructed him to get rid of his past, leave his friends, sacrifice everything for the new lifestyle. The Indians called it becoming a man of knowledge and it entailed the rather complex process of erasing one's personal history, which is exactly what Carlos Castaneda did. Though he never says so in his books, he actually separated from me in September 1960, left many of his friends, began keeping irregular hours, missed appointments at UCLA and elsewhere and began spending more time in Mexico.

By 1965, Carlos had a voluminous manuscript but he was out of money and disillusioned with his graduate work and some of the faculty members at UCLA. *The Teachings*, his first book, was published almost three years later. The second and third books followed. In the fall of 1974, his fourth book, *Tales of Power*, the conclusion of the tetralogy, was published by Simon and Schuster.

Based on Castaneda's experience in 1971 and 1972, *Tales of Power* carries the apprenticeship to its conclusion. Carlos is led toward the full initiation out on the plain, which is where Don Juan finally demystifies himself with the sorcerer's explanation—a detailed discussion of the strategies he had used throughout the apprenticeship. In a spectacular climax, Carlos watches a fellow apprentice explode in

a spray of points and then he, too, feels his awareness shatter into fragments of pure mind.

"I'm going to practice," Carlos told me one night in October 1973. "I had to go in order to see what they were talking about. I had to write about things, very particular things, all important. I have nothing now. I have my pants, my pantaloons, and that's all I have in the world."

Which was a strange thing for the hottest mystic of the Seventies to say, considering he had a ballooning cult following, a million dollars in the bank, three books published, and a rough draft of a fourth, most of it anyway, sitting there on the desk.

"It won't come out," he said in a sort of strange moan. "I have to work my head off, work my poor head off."

But that wasn't the only thing bothering him, all this business of hunching over a goddamn typewriter for months at a time, the nightmare and the ending that won't come. There is something more. The real thing bothering him, eating away at his reason like a rabid jackal, was that he, Carlos Castaneda, dispassionate chronicler and closet novelist, was really beginning to believe everything that he had written.



### 3

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Much of the Castaneda mystique is based on the fact that even his closest friends aren't sure who he is. During the early 1970s, as his books grew in popularity, Carlos became more obscure. Until *Time* magazine disclosed in a long cover story in March 1973 that Carlos was from Peru, everybody figured that he had come from where he said—Brazil or Argentina or Italy, depending to whom you talked. The *Time* piece had a curious effect on Castaneda's following. Those who had grown to doubt the enchanting Paleolithic stories of the desert took to the fact that he'd lied about his pre-Don Juan days as proof that he was untrustworthy, that his books were fabrications, mere extensions of a total sweeping lie which he'd begun long before deciding to write his cryptonovels. After all, they reasoned, if he lied about something as conventional as his place of birth, then why should anyone trust the far more incredible stuff in his books?

Believers saw it differently. If the stories about his past weren't exactly true, so much the better. After all, wasn't he practicing something that Don Juan had taught him, something called "erasing your personal history"—an elaborate sorcerer's technique for obfuscating the past? Didn't that prove that he was alive and living in the real world of the freeways and news magazines in accordance with the tenets of his metaphysical master? If anything, the contradictions served to deepen the mysteries of the man.

He was suddenly first-class material all right, the doyen of the occult fringe, the main man for thousands of hip social drug users searching for an alternative perspective. The Castaneda legend ballooned, feeding on myths that he, in part, perpetuated. He failed to keep appointments, he withdrew for weeks into the Mexican desert, he even kept some of his closest friends at a careful distance. He was clearly a man absorbed by his own legend when he erased a portion of a pencil sketch done by an artist for *Psychology Today*, leaving only part of his face to accompany a December 1972 interview. For the *Time* photographer he allowed his picture to be taken, but peered coyly through his fingers and from behind a copy of some esoteric sociological tract. The idea was to protect his identity and discourage the curious who had begun hounding him for information about Don Juan and his magic worldview. All it really did was further the myth.

It's unclear how long it took for him to develop his standard account of his past: born in Brazil, the son of a university professor, educated in a "very proper" Buenos Aires boarding school, Hollywood High school and UCLA, and so on. The truth is a bit more conventional.

Carlos César Salvador Arana Castaneda was born in Cajamarca, Peru, on Christmas Day, 1926, the son of a watchmaker and goldsmith named César Arana Burungary, who owned a little shop in the downtown section of the city. His mother, Susana Castaneda Navoa, was a slender, almond-eyed girl of 16 when Carlos was born. His father's family had come from Italy and had roots in Sao Paulo, Brazil, but most of Carlos' immediate family lived in Cajamarca. His sister, Lucia Arana, was a constant companion during childhood and is now married to a businessman and still lives in Peru.

Actually, there is some confusion about the spelling of his last name. Immigration records show that a Carlos César Arana Castaneda entered the country in 1951. But once in America, Carlos often signed his name Carlos C. Aranha—with an "h"—as in 1957, when he cosigned a telephone employee's credit union loan for me, then his girlfriend. This

inconsistency apparently stems from a story he was telling friends in mid-1959 about how he was related to Oswaldo Aranha, the Brazilian gaucho, revolutionary and skilled diplomat. It was something he couldn't say if his name was actually spelled Arana. After taking the name Carlos Castaneda, he dropped Aranha altogether, however, he continued to make vague references about an unnamed uncle in later interviews with reporters.

A few months before Carlos was born, Oswaldo saved the town of Itaqui during an eighty-day siege from the rebel forces of Luis Carlos Prestos. In the end, Oswaldo dragged a bullet-splintered leg through the boiling red dust of the little Brazilian town, grinning and waving his pistol in the air like some latter-day cowboy. He had expelled the communist hordes, saved Itaqui for the government and was well on his way to a prestigious career. Oswaldo spent the next year recuperating from his leg wound and then went on to become president, cabinet member, ambassador, and president of the United Nations General Assembly. Still, according to Carlos, he kept close tabs on his relatives in Peru.

"He said his uncle ruled the whole clan," said one old friend. "He told everybody what to do. Carlos said Oswaldo sent him money to the United States after he got here, but he sent it back to Brazil."

The real patriarch of the Castaneda side of the family was Carlos's grandfather, a short red-haired Italian immigrant. The craggy-faced old man was something of a wit and bears a strong resemblance to Carlos's later descriptions of Don Juan. He was always telling earthy little stories that had a twist at the end and all these different levels of meaning. He was also inventing things all the time. In the early 1930s, the old man completed one of his proudest projects and called the whole Castaneda-Arana clan together for the unveiling. It was a big day around the household. Grandfather Castaneda had been working for days on this new invention. When the old man finally yanked away the sheet, the aunts howled and César, who'd known all along what'd been

built, congratulated his father-in-law's inventive skills. Carlos and his cousins weren't so sure.

"It's an indoor toilet," the old man said, beaming. "And who'll be first?"

After arriving in the United States in 1951, Carlos was very selective about what he told his friends about himself. A few things slipped through, however, often in casual conversation with me, whom he married in Tijuana, Mexico, in January 1960.

He told me, for example, that when he was eight months old he looked up at his aunt and said "*Diablo*" which is Spanish for devil. It was his first word, he said. Later, Carlos gave me advice, answering questions and advising me on a variety of personal matters.

Carlos was an attractive little boy, dark with deep brown eyes, curly hair and delicate little hands and feet. He was stocky and short, something that later became an obsession with him. As a student in Los Angeles, he often talked about how he wished he were taller. As an adult he grew only to 5' 5" and as a child always seemed to be a few inches shorter than the others.

During his early days in Cajamarca, Carlos was an altar boy at the Catholic church. The churches were all pretty grim barns in Cajamarca in the 1930s, long since stripped of most of their religious paintings and silver. They bordered the square in majestic ugliness: San Antonia, El Belen, The Cathedral. The Aranas showed the same deference for religion as did their middle-class Catholic neighbors. There was some talk of Pope Pius XI and there were two-color duotones of Jesus and the Virgin on the walls. In college, Carlos would deny it all, saying he was a Hasidic Jew. In his books, he stayed away from conventional mass religion altogether.

He started elementary school about 1932, attending classes in a Cajamarca school. After classes and sometimes during the weekends, he found himself in César's little goldsmith shop. There was always something the old man was doing, re-springing clocks and spreading new coats of gold on cyclopean pocket watches and so forth, but the most

intriguing thing in the shop, absolutely the finest, most interesting craftsmanship was the way César would make rings. He would take out his jeweler's eye and wink at Carlos and watch the Cajamarca ladies bend over the glass, staring at the rows of rings, a sea of rings all gleaming there in the counter on black velvet. Business was off because of the world economic crisis, but still the ladies came to have their jewelry repaired and to look at the bracelets and rings.

Carlos took an interest in working with copper and gold and became something of a goldsmith himself. Only there was a big difference between himself and his father. Carlos watched César spending so much time creating and sweating over his worktable and then simply selling everything, with no thought other than the money it was bringing in. But when Carlos made a bracelet or ring, especially the fancy jobs with gold and silver threads intertwined, he wanted to keep it or at least give it as a gift to someone who appreciated the care he'd taken. César was working at craft; Carlos was working at art. This business of selling your creations as though they were blocks of tallow or bags of fertilizer or something was crazy.

Another thing bothered him. Watching the covetous Mestizo ladies day after day, Carlos developed an aversion to things he saw as hopelessly middle-class. For example, he felt the ladies and west-side dandies weren't just buying jewelry, but gathering impedimenta. The brassy gorditas of Cajamarca were in search of attachments, irrelevant objects, the products of truly pedestrian minds. Carlos never wore jewelry, but occasionally made something and gave it away to a relative or friend, thinking how this was somehow part of his rite of passage to the level of artist.

"I have an uncle, a bachelor who has left me with a 52-room house in Brazil," Carlos told me. "He did that because once when I was young, I made a little pinkie ring and gave it to him. He lived in the house by himself and because I showed him that much attention, he allowed me to live in the house. And the house will always be mine, except if I sell it

or do anything so that the money goes to the government.” Carlos claimed that he inherited the house in 1960 and that it was later turned into a girls’ school of some sort.

Jewelry, art, ceramics and architecture were all inextricably intertwined throughout the history of Peru, so it wasn’t so unusual for young Carlos to get some vague feeling of the connection. A few years later, while studying painting and sculpture at the National Fine Arts School of Peru at Lima, Carlos spent hours in public museums and private collections, studying early archeological finds. The centuries lay in dusty rows of stone plates and bowls, jet mirrors, shell and turquoise pendants and beads, bone spatulae, rings, golden false faces from mummy bundles. Standing in the dank halls of Lima’s Museum of Archaeology, Carlos Arana followed the whole artistic sweep. There was the two-dimensional cat god art of the religious cults of the Amazon sub-tributaries and the realistic ceramics of the Moches and the snuff-brown adobe arabesques in clay relief and the polished and elegant Chimu blackware. He saw models of the gut-bust road building and temple design of the Incas. Much of the stuff owed a debt to the early shamans, the original mystic-artists. The vases, for example, sometimes showed warriors with small square shields and flange-tipped maces gripping the vanquished by the hair in the moment of victory. Sometimes there were representations of medicine men performing curses—by exorcising spirits or sucking foreign particles out of bloody puncture wounds. But the most interesting of these were the stirrup-handled Chavinjugs, long rows of them, and especially those decorated with jaguars shank-and-jowl with a dozen emerald green stalks of San Pedro cactus.

Much of it Carlos had seen before. The whole atavistic thrust of 3000 years of Peruvian art history was under the counter at César’s, albeit reduced to its lowest common denominator, bastardized, modified through a jeweler’s eye in the name of convention and altered for acceptability. The real gritty stuff was in the museums and private collections.

And it was *art*—the ceramics and the arabesques and the lemon-drop rings, jug drawings, gold ornaments and all the hammered repousse decorations—they were all real Peruvian art. Carlos studied the lines and techniques of these early artists, and he noticed something. The subject of much of the work was myth and religion, not Catholicism, but that ineffable low-rent Quichua Indian variety. The thing that turned the old boys on, the thing that really got their artistic juices moving, was flat-out jungle country magic.

As a boy, he'd heard the *curanderos* talk about warriors and spirits and the like. Folk healing was a big business in Cajamarca, though it hardly carried the social cachet of mining, or manufacturing. The Aranas were a typical middle-class family and didn't pay much attention to the old-time healers. When Carlos or Lucia were ill, it meant a trip to the doctor, not the *curandero*. The Indians and the poor Mestizos and various mountain people from the north coast were the ones with faith in the mystics. Carlos found the *curanderos* mildly interesting, as did most of the young boys around Cajamarca, and he would see them at the herb stands in the market buying and selling magic plants. They would sit behind rickety wooden stands and make pitches for their plants, which were sealed in *seguros*, special glass jelly jars used to preserve the spirits. Sometimes Carlos saw them talking among themselves around the huge empty fountain that still keeps a silent vigil in the center of Plaza de Armas. The plaza is a spacious grey concrete square that serves more-or-less as the center of activity for the city. It was the site where, centuries before, Pizarro captured Atahualpa and turned the tide of Peruvian history. When Carlos was a boy, it had been largely stripped and given over to scrawny hedges clipped to simulate various birds and animals. On Sundays, the plaza was filled with Hispanic ladies and dark Mestizo gentlemen. Occasionally, some imperious cattle-breeder from the south would stride across the concrete with manure on his gaucho boots and bolo tie around his neck en route to closing a big deal. Sunday afternoons there were great undulating scenes with farmers,

urchins, west-side dandies, mothers, gentlemen and, of course, the mysterious walleyed shamans of northern Peru.

Actually, very few of the people Carlos thought were *curanderos* were really *curanderos* at all. Most were simply old geezers who liked to hang around the square. It wasn't like the *curanderos* were all wacked-out ecstatic visionaries or anything—they were, in fact, infinitely practical men. It was hard to distinguish them from the old geezers. Many had worked as bricklayers or artists or as netmen on tuna clippers along the Pacific Coast. It was just that they were different inside somehow; they looked at life in a radically different way, an ancient individualistic way that sometimes bothered the city types.

Somewhere along the line they'd been taken under wing by a knowledgeable teacher whose job it was to expand their perception and make them "see." San Pedro, the magic infusion, activated an inner eye that could penetrate the root of pain of illness and injury. It was the doctor, not the patient, who took the medicine, and from his altered point of view, he could better deal with the cosmic mysteries of suffering. Whether it was cancer or a cold or witchcraft (either black or white), the *curandero* could handle it. He carried with him a vast and meticulous tradition. On any given day, you could find a couple of them out on the square, talking about plants and spirits and all this gibberish, and then somebody would mention the Legendary Shaman of the Cicama River Valley, where the *Temple of the Brujo* stood, and they'd all nod their floppy hats in perfect silent understanding.

The *curanderos* of northern Peru have always been a rather knowledgeable group and remarkably educated about the finer aspects of their drugs. They know, for example, that the active alkaloid in San Pedro (*Trichocereus pachanoi*) is mescaline, to the tune of 1.2 grams per kilo. It is not as potent as peyote, its Central and North American cousin, which has thirty-eight alkaloids. In 1920, San Pedro cactus was first described and classified in the academic literature. N.L. Britton and J.N. Rose found it in Andean Ecuador, where the natives call it



agua-colla, gigantón and San Pedrillo. By the late 1950s, Western scholars began to realize that it grew also in Peru and Bolivia. The *curanderos*, of course, had known that for centuries.

One modern Peruvian *curandero* is Eduardo Calderón Palomino, whose picture hangs over Douglas Sharon's desk in his office at UCLA. Palomino was Sharon's teacher during his years in the highlands. Sharon, who went through his own apprenticeship long before meeting Carlos at UCLA, noticed a great number of similarities between the teachings of Eduardo and Don Juan. Which is interesting because it means either Don Juan is part of a vast oceanic tradition, or he is a character drawn less from the Yaquis (who don't use hallucinogens) than from the old guys Carlos used to see in the square at Cajamarca. One thing is for sure—Eduardo is a real live magic man of the Peruvian coast who knows very well what an evening with Mother Cactus is like. As it turns out, it is remarkably similar to what Carlos said.

"...first a slight dizziness that one hardly notices," says Eduardo. "And then a great vision, a clearing of all faculties of the individual. It produces a light numbness in the body and afterward a tranquillity. And then comes a detachment, a type of visual force in the individual inclusive of all senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, etc.—all the senses, including the sixth sense, the telepathic sense of transmitting oneself across time and matter. It develops the power of perception...in the sense that when one wants to see something far away, he can distinguish powers or problems or disturbances at a great distance, so as to deal with them..."

What the *curandero* really wants to do, of course, is move away from the ordinary way of perceiving the world toward a separate reality. "One must try to make the individual 'jump out' of his conscious mind. This is the principal task of the *curanderismo*. By means of the magical plants and the chants and the search for the root of problems, the subconscious of the individual is opened like a flower, and it releases these

blockages. All by itself, it tells things. A very practical manner...which was known to the ancients (of Peru).”

This kind of thing was not exactly common knowledge, but it was hardly new to somebody like Carlos who grew up just south of the Peruvian holy lands. Carlos was aware of the folk healers and their dealings with witchcraft and curing, and beyond that, of their attempts to gain a vision apart from the conventional real world. But like so many other things, Carlos admitted none of it.

Finding himself at the home of one of Don Juan’s friends in August 1961, Carlos steadfastly pretended to know very little about hallucinogens in general and absolutely nothing about “mescal,” which the men were passing around on this particular night. The man who owned the shack, a dark, hulking Indian about 50 years old, was interested in South America and the Quichas, and he asked Carlos if there was any mescal down there. Carlos shook his head. Novice to the end, he said he’d never even heard of it.

There’s no indication that young Carlos was ever let in on the inner workings of Peruvian magic. Everybody around Cajamarca knew that the old boys would get rocking horse crazy on Mother Cactus, apocalyptically *wasted* on the stuff. But what they didn’t understand was why. It was one thing to catch the obvious visual manifestations—the chants, the ecstatic dances, the wild gesticulations of a confident healer plying his art. But it was quite another thing to perceive every subliminal flicker, to arrange in a clear orderly way in the cerebral cortex every mystery, every abstruse working of the sorcerer’s divine system. This was the thing the apprentice had to do, and it didn’t make any difference whether the apprentice was Peruvian or Mexican.

“I would say there are structural parallels in the sense that he might have picked up a receptivity by growing up in a milieu where everybody was talking about *curanderos*,” Sharon says of his colleague. “They were part of the folklore. In Peru, you find them selling herbs on every street corner. It’s an everyday event. He would have been brought up

thoroughly imbued with that kind of thing. But as far as really being familiar with the philosophical and structural underpinnings of shamanism per se, being socialized in an environment where this kind of thing was going on, would not necessarily prepare you to go all the way, which is what I think he has now done.”

## 4

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One of Carlos's favorite activities as a boy was flying kites. It was all very popular around his neighborhood. He spent hours running along the windy hillsides of the Cajamarca Basin, trailing a kite he'd just made. He considered himself something of an expert at kite flying and later at the more mature sport of falcon hunting. Sometimes he went out alone to hunt game. The Arana family appreciated his efforts and congratulated him for providing incidental wild meat for meals. His aunts and uncles would make a serious show of gratitude when little Carlitos would bring in some birds, calling them "pheasants."

There was an albino falcon that Carlos says he chased an entire summer. It had become something of a menace to the farmers. Carlos says he'd look up and suddenly here would come this bird making a mad sweep out of the sky, grabbing a stray leghorn around the belly and then making for the horizon like a vertiginous lightning bolt; there was nothing anybody could do about it.

Carlos's grandfather, a wiry, red-haired old chicken farmer, had declared war on the ghost bird and predicted that before the summer was over, those jaundice-yellow claws would be dangling from a Barbasco vine on the porch, twisting in the breeze next to the bamboo wind chime. But the bird wasn't about to let this happen. Even during long midnight watches, neither the old man nor little Carlos would see it until too late and the ghost bird was soaring off with another chicken.

This went on for weeks until one day Carlos ran across the falcon perched on the top branch of an Australian Eucalyptus. Slowly he raised the sights of his .22 rifle with the red square. One shot and there'd be a blizzard of white feathers in the branches. One shot and it was all over. Just one shot...only he couldn't do it. There was no way Carlos could bring himself to pull the trigger.

He says it took him twenty years to find out why. Twenty years before meeting Don Juan, he finally understood that wasn't just some bird there in the Eucalyptus, not just some albino falcon, but an omen, a signal. It was absolutely correct to say that something seemed to grip him, as he stood there squinting down the sight of his rifle in that steamy yellow Peruvian morning. His Death advised him, his wisest advisor, the spectral figure that stands always to the left—Death told him not to kill the omen, whether Carlos knew it or not. It all made perfect sense in the primitive shamanic scheme of things, but the explanation was years away and so young Carlos understood only that he had failed somehow. And that notion of self-defeat, Carlos says, was the dominant theme of his childhood. Carlos maintains that he was fearful and lonely as a boy. The reasons are not clear. Shortly after arriving in America, he told a few people of cruel and sometimes bizarre treatment he suffered at the hands of various cousins. Apparently, this mistreatment caused him to begin losing his self-confidence and, to some extent, his self-respect. He never really pushed the idea, but some people got the impression that Carlos' field work in Mexico and his years writing were more or less a test of his own worth than anything else.

In one of many long rambling conversations with me, Carlos recounted the incident of the button-nose boy that later appeared in *A Separate Reality*. In the fall of 1934, Carlos was a third grade student at a Cajamarca elementary school. He had begun to stand up to his cousins and furthermore, had begun to tease and bully the younger, weaker children. One of them was a button-nose boy named Joaquín, a first grader who had a habit of hanging around Carlos. One day, without

really thinking, Carlos shoved a blackboard over on Joaquín, snapping the boy's collarbone. When he looked down at Joaquín, seeing the pain and his mangled little arm, it was more than he could bear.

At least that's the way he wrote about it. In his earlier conversation with me, he left out the moral, as he always did. It is as if he were trying out his stories in advance. Friends recall hearing dozens of scenarios well before they appeared in one of Carlos' books, albeit in skeletal form and devoid of the little sorcerer's aperçu that characterize so many of his adventures with Don Juan.

In his conversation with me about the button-nose boy, Carlos neglected to include a moral. It was only after he wrote about it in *A Separate Reality* that I learned that he had been defeated in strength and had, in a moment of compassion, given the little boy an important gift—all his victories. Carlos concluded from his experience with the boy that his place in the scheme of things was that of a victim. And he says it took Don Juan to change his loser's attitude.

It's just the kind of moralizing that has prompted some critics to question whether Carlos is more con than mystic. But just because much in the books is didactic doesn't mean certain things didn't happen at all. The fact is that all of the material in Carlos's books is absolutely true.

Carlos Castaneda actually met an Indian during the summer of 1960, when he said he did. In fact, he met several informants, some of whom taught him about drug use and shamanism. He did spend years in Mexico talking to Indians and studying their way of life. He was, in fact, born in South America, although it was Peru and not Brazil, a distinction that Carlos himself doesn't think is very important.

"To ask me to verify my life by giving you my statistics is like using science to validate sorcery. It robs the world of its magic and make milestones of us all," he says.

The story about his father being a university professor may have been a lie, but is also indicative of the way Carlos uses words such as "father"

and “mother” as symbols. When talking about his father and mother, he didn’t necessarily mean that the same real-world couple who came together and bore him. It was more a matter of symbol, of spirit, and once one understands that kink in the Castaneda psyche, the books become much more understandable. Again, it is a question of how much is con and how much is mystic, but one thing is for sure: certain roles in his books, and in Carlos’s real life, are often interchangeable and not determined by biology or some other real-world definition. His characters and stories are often a product of perception and circumstance. When Carlos writes about his weak-willed father, he is really talking about himself.

“I am my father,” he says. “Before I met Don Juan I would spend years sharpening my pencils, and then getting a headache every time I sat down to write. Don Juan taught me that’s stupid. If you want to do something, do it impeccably, and that’s all that matters.”

In August 1967, he wrote to me: “I went back to your old apt. in the Valley a couple of days and got an attack of profound sentimentalism. You are my family dearest, dearest Margarita. I felt that as I drove away. What emptiness you have left in my soul! It is the emptiness of losing something irreplaceable; the emptiness of those who long even though they are busy and in the company of people.”

It wasn’t just in his books but in private conversations back in the 1950s that he was disparaging his father, calling him an intellectual, a teacher, a literary man who had never written a thing. He talked with me from time to time about the man, saying what he really disliked was that his father was average, that everything ran on schedule. “I never want to be like that,” he told me.

On the other hand, Carlos wanted the security and prestige of being an educated man, of getting a Ph.D., of becoming a man of knowledge, in the conventional sense. And yet, he feared he might become a flatulent hack, hopping buses to classes, making the rounds of faculty parties and the rest of it. Carlos Arana didn’t want to be

average, but more than that, he didn't know. So what he did was to construct a straw man. He threw it up before him, like a map of the image "father," and publicly railed against it, trying in his own life to avoid those areas he feared, those characteristics about himself that he hated. The father he discusses in his books (and had begun discussing long before his literary career ever began), was himself. Or more accurately, it was the image of a man, taken partly from César, whom he wanted desperately not to become.

His descriptions of "mother" are made up equally of real-life detail and fertile imagination. The woman he mentions in his books and discussed with friends was a composite of myself, various friends from college days and a somewhat romantic vision of Susana Navoa Castaneda, whom he described to acquaintances as "very beautiful and just like a child."

In the classroom at the University of California at Irvine, where Carlos taught in the spring of 1972, John Wallace recalls this description of his mother:

She would say to Carlos, "Nobody has given me anything. I have no diamond ring." Carlos said that she would cry and that he cried with the woman because she did not have a diamond ring. When Carlos told Don Juan about the matter, Don Juan said, "If nobody gave her anything, the world was hers to take. If a man can liberate himself from the terror of being alive, that would truly be enough."

But that wasn't his mother he was talking about, it was me. There's little indication he ever told that story before 1960; that's because it was me who provided him with the substance for it. I, not Susana, bothered him for a ring. And it was me, not his real mother, whom he had in mind that afternoon talking to his graduate class at Irvine. His mother could have had a ring at any time, since his father was a jeweler.

In *A Separate Reality*, Carlos recalls a peyote vision in which his mother appears and tells him something. He recalls her laughter and the way she would shuffle around the old house in floppy house slippers.



Again, he appears to have appropriated a characteristic of mine and plugged it into his literary character of “mother.” In the spring of 1958, I bought a pair of floppy gold and silver house slippers, a purchase I remember well because Carlos hated them. He disliked particularly the way I shuffled around the apartment in them. “They are so awful,” he said finally, “that I’m going to have them and someday I’m going to take them to my house.” He took the slippers, presumably to be stored among a collection of things he supposedly was keeping in his 52-room Brazilian mansion. The image of me in my slippers stayed with him and he had no problem using it in his expanding description of “mother.”

## 5

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After spending three years in high school at Cajamarca, Carlos moved with his family to Lima. It was a great bustling city in 1948, much bigger than his hometown. Jiron Union, a narrow winding street stretching six blocks through the city's shopping center, connected two large and elaborate squares. It was in Lima that Carlos graduated from Colegio Nacional de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe and decided to turn his strength toward painting and sculpture. Even as a boy he'd felt drawn toward art. A creative youngster, his greatest desire was to become a respected artist.

The years in César's shop in Cajamarca had provided Carlos with the underpinnings of a strange sort of artistic education. He had a good fortune of working with precious metals. For a Peruvian artist, Lima was the place to be. The artists were everywhere, sketching and painting on lawns and in alley rooms, creating art in a city that was the cradle of art on South America's Pacific Coast.

There was fine sixteenth century architecture—the elaborate façade of San Augustine and San Francisco's labyrinthine interior, and there was marble and stone and the incredibly noble construction of the Presidential Palace adjacent to the Cathedral. There were parapets and crenellations and bartizans and a noble skyline of black spires and domes. Peru's artistic and anthropological history was well preserved and gathered in a dozen museums. Among them was the Historical

Museum, presided over by novelist José María Arguedas, a place where portraits of all the country's viceroys and liberators hung on the cream stucco in perfect timeless attention. And there were the bizarre nineteenth century surrealistic tableaux that covered entire walls. It was, for all practical purposes, a great city for art and history. To Carlos's mind, a most impressive place.

Susana Castaneda Navoa died in 1949. Carlos' sister remembers that when it happened, Carlos was grief-stricken. He refused to attend the funeral and locked himself in his room for three days without eating. During those days alone, he began reconsidering the rather deep and sentimental feelings he had toward his mother, and by extension, the feelings he had developed for a great number of people and places and things. Carlos was by his nature emotionally dependent on Susana, even in his early 20s. His mother's death was a crushing blow. He remembered the old families in Cajamarca during the world depression and the fat gorditas of his father's jewelry shop, those fat ladies who came in steady streams and who put so much value on rings and bracelets, the ones who were locked in—I was exactly like those ladies. He called it, "my attachment to trinkets"—hopelessly entangled in webs of impedimenta.

He'd always thought of himself as a weak person and attributed that, at least in part, to his dependency on others, particularly his mother. When she died, Carlos was suddenly adrift on a desperate grey sea. The rest of the family was upset by the death, of course, but not totally crushed. During those three days in his room, Carlos concluded that his attachment to his mother had been too strong and the only way to avoid that kind of thing in the future was to fight his more comfortable notions of attachment and dependency. It would be a matter of breaking all bonds or at least limiting them until he could reach that point.

In his books, he attributes this idea to Don Juan and writes how the old Indian instructed him to avoid lapses of self-pity and introspection, directing him always toward the truth that real-world attachments

make one vulnerable. It sounds all very mystical in the books, but the fact of the matter is that his mother's death hurt him and he wanted to avoid that kind of thing in the future. When Carlos finally stepped out into the hallway outside his room, his sister remembers, he announced that he was leaving home.

Carlos began studying painting and sculpture at the National Fine Arts School of Peru, feeling as he did that he had a natural artistic ability and the drive to become a fine artist. It was not so much fame he was searching for, but approval from those he knew. The plan was to go to America as soon as he saved enough money. He would soak up the Hispanic culture of Lima and then travel to New York or Los Angeles or someplace where people were not so aware of South American influences in art. He'd have the tools to turn out the stuff expertly, make a big splash somewhere and be set for life.

It was about this time that Oswaldo Aranha returned to his home in Rio after an impressive term in New York as president of the United Nations General Assembly. Before that, he served for twelve years as a cabinet minister and four years in Washington as an ambassador to the U.S. He was one of the most famous men in South America, a continental hero, and when he returned to his own native black Brazilian soil, there was much talk of the old man and his years in the United States. No doubt about it, Carlos intended to go there just as soon as he learned enough.

As a student, Carlos spent time in museums and art galleries, picking up hints, studying technique, looking for the parameters within which he'd develop his own unique style. Some of his fellow students at the National Fine Arts School were pretty good and sometimes there were these fears in the back of Carlos's mind that maybe he just didn't have it, that maybe he wasn't good enough to make a living as an artist. It was going to be especially tough in post-WWII America, where foreign painters and sculptors were engaged in a fearsome highbrow competition in a dozen cities. Ultimately, it was a battle for style and

recognition, and Carlos figured he'd be successful once he refined some of his sculpting techniques. Painting was important, of course, but sculpture caught his interest like no other medium. Wood, soapstone and especially *terra cotta*—all of it intrigued him. Carlos suddenly found himself further than ever from the dull and inconsequential life. Older and more mature and away from his family, Carlos Arana began seeing himself not as a weak and acquiescent boy, but as a confident and aggressive student. He moved easily among people and developed a free and unstructured lifestyle, almost bohemian. His manner was always charming—giving his full attention to the person he was with. José Bracamonte, one of his fellow students at the National Fine Arts School, remembers him as free and easygoing. Bracamonte says his old friend lived mainly off gambling, or seemed to. His tools were cards, horses and dice.

"We all liked Carlos," Bracamonte says. "He was witty, imaginative, cheerful—a big liar and a real friend." And he remembers that Carlos "harbored like an obsession" a desire to move to the United States.

His work was more than just a matter of mastering contemporary oil and acrylics and *terra cotta*. There was the need to understand the continent's artistic sweep, those rolling centuries of South American high art. Carlos studied Chavin art, Mochica culture, the ubiquitous imprint of Tinquanaco architecture—every highlight and vicissitude in two millennia of Peruvian artistry. The museums and galleries of Lima were well stocked with exceptionally good pieces of highlands art. All Carlos had to do was read the texts, go to class, check the galleries and develop his own style.

The Larco Herrera Museum had a fine collection of pre-Columbian artifacts, including long walls of Mochica pottery and Chimú blackware, and there were the displays at the Historical Museum and the university. But the really intriguing collections were those in Lima's Museum of Archaeology, the rotund stirrup-handled jugs that the ancient *curanderos* once used to carry their holy infusions. The Chavin

vessels were the end product of an evolution from hollow gourds and clay pots used by the Stone Age magicians of the Peruvian mountainsides. And now here they were—in dusty chaotic displays—showing jaguars, *curanderos*, warriors and green columnar stalks of San Pedro, back from the lavender peaks and the jungles and the early *mitotes* of the holy men who ate when they felt like it and worked when it suited them and slept wherever they chose. They had broken the bonds of convention and truly lived the free life.

As an art student, Carlos was more interested in the style and technique of historical artifacts, not their place along the shamanic sweep. The subjects of magic and sorcery came up occasionally among the students at the National Fine Arts School, but for Carlos it was all pretty distant from his main aim, which was to become a sensitive and respected artist. He knew about the Twentieth Century healers of his native Cajamarca, but that wasn't something he thought about very much. There was his art and the loose and easy life around him, the college life, and there were the card games and the horse races and the wine-drinking with friends. He was attracted to intelligent, unconventional and creative people; he began hanging around with artists and dandies. There were writers and poets everywhere, and there were always art shows and poetry readings and long distended dialogues on Jimenez and Lorca.

Carlos told friends in America that he became so unmanageable that Oswaldo shipped him off to the States. According to that story, one of the reasons for Oswaldo's dissatisfaction was that Carlos had become quite friendly with a Chinese girl who smoked opium. It was, he said, his first contact with drugs. Carlos contends he arrived in New York, but his immigration records show that he arrived in 1951 in San Francisco. Later, he traveled to Los Angeles.

Lydette Maduro, who lived with her mother and father in Hollywood, was one of Carlos's good friends during his early days in Los Angeles. He called her Nanecca and saw her frequently prior to the

end of 1955. It was Lydette, as I recalled, who brought Carlos to my apartment in December of that year. Mrs. Angela Maduro, Lydette's mother, had made two cocktail dresses for me and wanted her daughter to deliver them. Carlos accompanied her on the errand. I was living at 5301 W. 8th Street in an apartment building owned by my aunt. When the two of them arrived at the apartment, I asked that they wait a moment while I tried on the dresses. Carlos walked silently to the corner of the room and sat down. Lydette helped me change and we measured and tugged at the dresses to make sure they were right. It wasn't until on her way out that Lydette introduced her companion.

"Oh Margarita, this is my friend Carlos from South America," Lydette said.

He was a short dark man, with black curly hair that gathered in a dangling cluster of tiny curls at the forehead. His eyes were large and brown, and the left iris floated out a bit, giving the impression that one eye was always looking beyond you. It was a flaw that he sought to hide by squinting quizzically or looking away, which made him seem painfully shy. He had the look of a high countryman, short but slim with an ample chest, thin eyebrows, a broad, ingratiating smile and the aquiline nose of one with more than a random share of Indian genes. Though he said nothing, I found him intriguing.

A few days later, I made a trip to the Maduros' to pick up the finished dresses. Anticipating that Carlos would be there, I carried with me a copy of *The Search*, a spiritual book written by my mystic and guru, Neville Goddard. He was there and seemed genuinely pleased by my gift and we talked for a while about Sao Paulo and art. Carlos explained that he was an artist and would like to do a bust of me, preferably in *terra cotta*, which was his specialty. It was the kind of promise he'd often use to flatter women. In the front of *The Search* I had written my name, address and telephone number. We talked for a moment about Neville, but there wasn't really much time. Carlos promised to read the book and return it to me.

A native of Barbados, Goddard had moved to the United States and had become relatively well-known along the West Coast as a teacher. Earlier in his life, he had taken an Indian teacher named Abdullah, learned what he figured was the meaning of everything and now spent his days traveling between Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York, lecturing and writing. His spiel was vintage mystic—William Blake, the Bible, an occasional Platonic reference—giving the whole thing a scholarly respectability. Neville had a commanding physical presence and a slow, powerful delivery. He spoke the way he wrote, which is to say in a kind of uncluttered Kahlil Gibran prose. I attended all his lectures and bought all his pamphlets and books. “God is I-AMness consciousness,” said Neville. “Christ is your wonderful human imagination.” “Nothing,” he preached from the podium at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre, “absolutely nothing is without significance.” But Neville felt that man couldn’t understand the ultimate internal meaning of the Cosmic Nexus, as it were, and instead sees the world as a moving panorama of meaningless events. The mystic often alluded to Plato’s allegory of the cave and quoted from the Hebrews about how “things which are seen and were not made of things which do appear” and so forth. The real gasper, though, was from William Blake. He’d sometimes conclude with it, standing there at the podium and saying with that great booming British accent, “All that you behold, tho’ it appears without, it is within, in your imagination, of which this world of mortality is but a shadow...and one day, like Nebuchadnezzar, you’ll awake and find that you’ve never lived and never died except in the dream.”

During Lydette and Carlos’s first visit to my apartment in December, I mentioned that I planned to attend a Neville lecture that evening. And later, finding Carlos at Lydette’s, I ran over a couple of Neville’s precepts when I handed Carlos the book. My purpose in loaning the book was two-fold. I did believe quite deeply in Neville and often did a bit of proselytizing on the side when I had the opportunity. But I also wanted to see Carlos again and figured that one good way was by writing my



name and telephone number on the inside front cover of *The Search*. Thinking he would certainly notice it, I waited for the call.

For six months, there was nothing. But I didn't give up. Instead, I employed one of Neville's curious mystical teachings, something he called "controlled imagination" (controlled dreaming), which boiled down to concentrating intensely on a goal until it became a reality. Neville encouraged his students to raise their wishes through dreams to an unconscious urge. He told them to consider what they wanted to accomplish and to concentrate on the end desire at night in bed before falling asleep. Sleep sealed the instructions given the subconscious mind. So, for six months I focused all of my mental energy and on a Saturday night at 9 PM in June 1956, Carlos called and asked if he could stop by and bring along some paintings he had done.

I asked about Lydette, whom I assumed would accompany him. But Carlos answered as if he hadn't the slightest idea who Lydette was. At first, I thought it was a gag, that Carlos was merely pointing out that he'd be alone. But later I found this is the way Carlos often did it. He had a habit of going full-bore into relationships and then breaking them off suddenly, sometimes pretending he had never heard of the person.

"I used to fall madly in love," says Carlos, "cling to the poor girl and then—pow!—it was all over and she'd been used up and I was looking for a new girl to fall for. It's a social pattern we learn to repeat and repeat until we get old and say, 'There's no love, no excitement left. I'm ready to die.' It's a pattern we take for granted—we think there's no other possibility.

"Well, Don Juan told me to stop all that. He said making romance the sole purpose of your life—or making *anything* the sole purpose—was ridiculous. Of course, if someone crosses your path you have that sense of the marvelous, that here is yet another wonder, you must give your awareness to that. But you must tap others only lightly—not use them up."

## 6

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In the summer of 1955 he enrolled under the name Carlos Castaneda at Los Angeles Community College, a collection of aging brick buildings on Vermont Street, just south of Hollywood. The old buildings have since been replaced by cinder block bungalows and tacky yellow brick classrooms which encircle a yard festooned with palmettos and desert shrubs. Construction on the new buildings began just as Carlos Castaneda graduated and moved on to UCLA.

His records, still on file at LACC, say he was born on December 25, 1931, and confirm that he was from Peru. It was one of the last times he would designate Peru as his homeland. It's unclear why he first began lying about where he was from, but it might have had to do with his sense of achieved status. It was better in his mind that his cultural and artistic roots were in the rich, intellectual gauche-country of Brazil, not Peru, where everybody was perceived as poverty stricken and the backward peasants and superstitious Indians were better known than the middle-class strivers who populated the larger cities.

The whole idea of coming to the United States was to get a good education and, hopefully, become an established artist, which he wasn't having much success with during the early going. The competition was stiff and Carlos began to doubt himself, thinking he just might not have it. During leisure hours he began writing poetry and short fiction, usually romantic stories, but he wondered if there was any talent there

either. He was an extremely private person, gracious and charming with small groups of friends, but more withdrawn around strangers. He did not go to parties, opting instead for cultural exhibits, his art and his studies. His liberal arts studies at LACC included, in his first two years, a course in journalism as well as the usual undergraduate fare of science and literature. In addition, he enrolled in two creative writing courses, just to tap the juices. Vernon King, his creative writing instructor, was one of the first persons to really analyze Carlos's fiction and poetry, making suggestions and giving him encouragement.

During the first couple of years at LACC, Carlos lived in a sparse little apartment with a kitchen on Madison Street near the campus. I brought some curtains and put them up and generally helped arrange his room. He made few friends, preferring to return to his room to study, or paint and write. During this time, we dated occasionally. He was older now, quieter, somehow more reserved, his attitude more serious than in his Lima days. He was more mature than most of the students at LACC. After all, Carlos had enrolled at 29 years old, even though his school records said he was 24, and he had a few years on most of the young hometown crowd, who'd decided to take their freshman and sophomore years at the small college. His goal was an Associate of Arts degree and then off to UCLA or USC or Stanford or someplace. Carlos wasn't sure. If he couldn't make it as an artist, he'd make it as a teacher at the college level, perhaps in psychology, since his major was pre-psychology, or maybe in archaeology or anthropology or literature. Sometimes, he'd think teaching wouldn't be so bad, but at other times that damned specter of the flatulent professor rose up, that ignominious curse!

Carlos enjoyed being with Lydette. She didn't question him about his past and when he seemed discouraged she offered gentle support. Nonetheless, by mid-1956, he was seeing more of me and we went to art exhibits together. There were also ballets, concerts, lectures and the usual fare of cultural events around college and university campuses.

And Carlos developed a passion for the movies, especially Russian films and Ingmar Bergman film classics.

All of this developed after his first visit, when Carlos brought his oil paintings over to me. He proudly showed off his paintings. They were highly stylized and colorful. One was of an old black man or shadowy Amazon Tribesman hunched over his drum and beating out a furious rhythm with waves of motion rolling off his back. Carlos sat on the divan next to me, holding each painting up and explaining his various influences—Dali, Gusev, Doré, El Greco, Goya and so on. They were bold, almost primitive designs, and to my mind, they were pretty good. But Carlos seemed to have these ambivalent feelings. His work was good, but there were too many rough edges that needed work. It was something that time and experience might solve; but I noticed sometimes in the moody flicker of his smile, an uncertainty in his own ability.

I went to the kitchen and took out a bottle of Mateus wine, which became Carlos' favorite, and which he jokingly referred to as his most valuable teacher. It was not his art that impressed me this particular evening, but the mere fact that he had come to visit. His mere presence verified Neville's mystical technique. For six months, I had tried "controlled imagination"—I imagined being with him, talking with him and being most happy with him—and now *here he was*. Something beyond logic had compelled Carlos to come and there was no way you would convince me otherwise.

Before the evening was over, I was talking about Neville and "controlled imagination" and the New Mysticism, which brings all of your senses into play—you see, hear, feel, and smell all that you imagine you already have and then let it go. Three days before, I had listened to Neville discuss "controlled imagination" and quote from the Song of Solomon about how someone searches at night on the bed for the soul of the person he loves.

He taught that dreams have a peculiar power and dreamers can, under the right circumstances, manipulate the dream and select from a variety of thoughts those few that are powerful. Neville's idea was to pick a relaxed situation, such as on the bed at night before sleep, and create a scenario in the mind which implies that you already have whatever it is you want. That's all there is to it. By acting as if the wish were already a reality, the wish, more often than not, becomes reality. To set up dreaming, Neville suggested that his students coast gently to the edge of sleep and concentrate on one object, one goal. Slowly, the division between dream and real life becomes arbitrary—they become the same, there is no difference. All I knew for sure was that I practiced "controlled imagination" religiously and suddenly here was Carlos in the flesh, in my apartment, showing off his acrylic paintings.

Carlos was not convinced. But he was interested in this idea that dreams and real life are equally valid in the scheme of things. And he was intrigued by Neville's faith in dreams and his attempts to manipulate them.

The theoretical unity of the dream and real life was an old idea, *La Vida es Sueño* (Life is a Dream) was standard reading for Cajamarca school children. Pedro Calderón de la Barca, that devil-bearded Jesuit and baroque dramatist, had seen life as a shadow, a snaky penumbra trailing the dream. But it was more than the message that attracted Carlos, it was Neville himself. He was so mysterious. Nobody was really sure who he was or where he had come from. There were vague references to Barbados in the West Indies and his being the son of an ultra-rich plantation family, but nobody knew for sure. They couldn't even be sure about this Addullah business, his Indian teacher, who was always *way back there* in the jungle, or someplace. The only thing you really knew was that Neville was here and that he might be back next week, but then again...

There was a certain power in that position, an appealing kind of freedom in the lack of past and Carlos knew it. Neville wasn't the only

mystic in town during the mid-1950s. The whole California coastline was beginning to stir under the influence of an emerging band of psychics and practitioners of extrasensory perception.

The reigning dean of the paranormal was J.B. Rhine, an American botanist who had been engaged in psychic research since the late 1920s. It was Rhine who coined the words extrasensory perception and psi (for psychic phenomenon). Working out of his laboratory at Duke University, Rhine studied his test animals and various "sensitives" who read cards they could not see. Much of the data suggesting fantastic successes for ESP served as ammunition for the faithful out among the doubters. An enthusiastic group of psychic aficionados emerged in Los Angeles and San Francisco. There were science fiction collectives and spiritual cults and mystery-philosophers like Neville, all together in a great bursting popular scene. High school students were writing term papers in the 1950s about the "new" psi phenomenon. The college lecture circuits were suddenly glutted with psychic experts who joined hip young poets and folkies on the bill, Hollywood made it unanimous—by cranking out a series of instant sci-fi and flying saucer movies.

Carlos found himself in the middle of this. He generally avoided this kind of ersatz occultism. The *curandero* as magic man had been a product of the unenlightened masses. But now you had intelligent college kids from upper middle-class families caught up in this bizarre talk of psychic research, and here I was, a slender and rational girl, suddenly babbling on at him about a Barbados-born mystic as if he were the Buddha. It wasn't just happening in California, of course. There were housewives and mechanics looking out their windows at the red Georgia landscape, and Texas dentists, Iowa farmers and a thousand others, all searching for something, *something*, that had a suspicious look as if maybe it were green and glowing and doing impossible maneuvers in the black spectral night sky. Everyone was into this occult business in one form or another, and we were no exception.

## 7

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Carlos began seeing me frequently after that first visit. Unlike Lydette, I asked about his background, and so he told me a story about how he actually had been born in Italy on Christmas Day 1931, the son of a 16-year-old girl who had been attending finishing school in Switzerland. His father, a professor, had been on tour around the world when he met Susana Navoa. A maternal aunt came to Italy and took custody of Carlos shortly after he was born, returning him to the family farm near Sao Paulo, Brazil. He grew up on the farm, attending local schools until he was old enough to go to Italy, where he enrolled in art school. After studying there, he came to the United States, arriving in New York as an immigrant at the edge of the great unfolding American continent. He talked about attending art schools in Montreal and New York, but he was never very specific.

At this point, there didn't seem to be any systematic purpose for lying to me or for lying earlier to Lydette. However, it did make him appear more worldly and gave his paintings and sculpture a certain heightened importance; but it wasn't as if his lies were part of a broad plan or anything. There was no dogma attached, no metaphysical significance for scrambling details of his past. That happened later, when he says Don Juan urged him to erase personal history. At this point, it was simply that he enjoyed telling these stories. He seemed to thrive on it. As he

told them he began adding neat little morals and friends began to notice that Carlos's stories increasingly took on a didactic edge.

One night when he was particularly depressed, as he was often was, I asked why he didn't smile more. It was not enough for Carlos to discuss—he had to moralize. He was a serious person and he wanted me to know there was nothing wrong with that. If anybody had a problem, it was me, “for being so damned frivolous,” he said. Sometimes, I would talk about the silliest things, totally insignificant things, like clothes or the color of the new curtains over his sink or something else equally pedestrian.

Carlos told me about the time he was in the Army and was wounded and got the scar on his lower abdomen and groin. It was a serious wound and as he tottered there on the edge of death, every existential question crashed through his skull. That's when he became so serious.

“It was dark when the enemy came,” he said, in pitch-black night, and he was in bed. He was serving in the Intelligence division in Spain or Korea or someplace; it was never really clear. Suddenly, he was roused from sleep by the cries of buddies. By the time he realized what had happened, everyone in his squad either had escaped or was dead, and only he was left in camp. Somehow, they had missed him. Carlos sat up perfectly still, squinting into the darkness and listening for any sound. For a long time there wasn't anything. And then, suddenly they were there, looming in front of him, looming spectral figures which he knew absolutely had brought his death. They grabbed him, maybe a half-dozen of them, and they jerked him up off the ground and wrapped his ankles with rope and then strung him to a tree. Dangling there upside down, his mind flashed pure panic. He barely saw the bayonet that somebody slammed into his abdomen, slicing into the groin. Blood gushed out and down, covering his stomach and chest and shoulders and hair, and the pain exploded in his head.



When he woke up he was spread-eagled on a stainless steel bed with doctors talking solemnly over him. The doctors weren't aware that Carlos was conscious enough to hear the conversation. They concluded among themselves that he would not live.

Carlos told me that at that moment he decided that, if allowed to live, he would be a different person. Given the opportunity, he'd make every minute count. Everything, he knew in that electric transcendent moment, everything is very important.

He leaned over to me with a great solemn face and said that experience changed his whole attitude toward life. He pledged that there wasn't much time left and, therefore, he would make everything count. One could go at any moment and so it was important to live under that assumption. The only other time he ever mentioned being in the Army was when we were considering buying a house and Carlos said he could qualify for the GI Bill loan. We never applied for the loan, but I believed him anyway, basically because of the little things he did for himself, like cut his hair with a pair of scissors and a mirror. Except for the time when he took a hunk of hair out from the back of his head by accident and hid the spot with a band-aid, Carlos exhibited great skill in cutting his own hair. He also could patch and hem his own clothes. I had seen him add months of wear to shirts by turning frayed collars inside out and then sewing them back on. Whether these were skills he'd learned in the Army or with a pack of gypsies in Italy, the story changed. The Defense Department has no record of Carlos Arana Castaneda's service.

Actually, he spent much of his time after arriving in the country kicking around California, working odd jobs, perfecting his English and trying to save enough money to get into college. During this period, he wrote home sporadically. Lucia still has his letters, which indicate he served in the Army, but left after suffering a slight wound or "nervous shock"—she's not sure which.

As always, his stories seemed to give him a more impressive background. It was like an insecure young man searching for a respectable identity, who in the process suffered a gradual elimination of his past.

Everything wasn't untrue, of course. Carlos described to me his love for his mother, his desire to become a sculptor, his ambivalent nature—all true and accurate. And yet, there were also stories, such as his Army days. As Carlos talked about these, he gradually found himself in a remarkable state of ease. He had essentially erased himself; he had created a fog around the details of his past where nobody could ever be sure. He was like an author, conceiving of the elements of a fictional character, who was himself in disguise.

## 8

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Sitting over cups of Chinese tea one evening in September 1957, I began to proselytize on behalf of Neville. Earlier that week, during his regular Thursday night lecture at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre, Neville had discussed the *I AM*. It was one of his pet ideas, drawn from the Biblical reference for man's essential nature, although its origin probably was in the Babylonian water cults or even before in the primitive dreams of Neanderthals. To Neville it was a fundamental idea, pure and correct, a product of the basic brainstem! The *I AM!* (God in Man).

"It's like the Christian soul," I was saying to Carlos. "Like the Hindu Atman. It's sort of like the nameless presence within everybody." Then I turned straight to Neville, memorized from one of his many books, which the mystic was turning out at his own printing house on South La Brea Avenue. "When you understand Carlos, you're neither rich nor poor, strong nor weak, neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, male nor female. All these conceptions limit man. They hold him in captivity."

Carlos was polite, saying he understood, thinking it was all very interesting. And it was sort of interesting. To Carlos this *I AM* business was really something he'd felt all along. It was tantamount to saying that the past was more than just a series of years and places and arbitrary designations, more than a collection of social constructs, limits, bonds, boundaries—cerebral impedimenta. Some of the things Neville was saying

Carlos had believed for years. He still had the copy of *The Search* I had given him the second time we'd met. Skimming through it, he'd found little beyond the incomprehensible jargon of the philosopher. But I could make sense of it. I had the ability to draw from all the books those few passages that really meant something to him, those special phrases that triggered the flags. Gradually, Carlos began to develop a mild interest in mysticism and rogue philosophy and psychic phenomena.

Still, he had this uncomfortable feeling about people such as Neville, who appeared to be just another of those eccentric philosopher-mystics from Laguna Beach or some such place. He wondered about the homemade books and the expensive lectures and Neville's own weekly TV show. But the bookstores around the beat districts and the universities were stocking his books right along with the J.B. Rhine studies in parapsychology. By 1957, Rhine was on the skids. He had been the darling of the occult back in the 1930s, but two decades of criticism from conventional laboratory types and journalists like H.L. Mencken had decimated his Society for Psychical Research and had reduced his work at Duke University to little more than a parody of itself. But even if Rhine wasn't doing well in the mid-1950s, there were others who were doing just fine. There was a renewed interest in the occult across the country, a sort of paranormal revival which by 1957 was rolling full-bore with ESP, flying saucers, and American International sci-fi John Agar movies. After I talked about the *I AM*, and the magazines about clusters of UFOs over Kansas, and all the rest of it, Carlos decided to test the psychic waters himself.

He made a deck of ESP cards with five symbols: a circle, a square, an addition sign, a star and a flowing wave. For months, we tested the hidden side of each other's perception. The living room coffee table at my apartment was the logical place to do all this, basically because it was private. Carlos was a bit embarrassed by the ESP card testing and he rarely included anyone else in his experiments. There were variations to the testing, but generally Carlos would place the cards face down in

front of him and then direct me to visualize each symbol in turn. I would guess and he would write down my answers on a yellow legal pad and then check my score. We would switch roles sometimes, with me being the tester and Carlos the subject.

From the beginning, Carlos attempted to give it an academic imprimatur by compiling thick notebooks of statistics and notes, much as Rhine had done. It was all very scientific, very respectable in an off-beat sort-of-way. He wanted to keep it that way, even though he had mixed feelings about the limits of conventional scientific techniques and record keeping in such experiments. On the one hand, he felt it necessary to remain somehow respectable, even if the general subject of ESP was still considered by academicians to be nutball stuff. Yet on the other hand, new ideas too often had been opposed in the beginning by the philistines. After all, hadn't they looked down their long fine-boned noses at Galileo, all those stout burghers of conventional thought? It wasn't as if Carlos were some kind of unhinged flying saucer cultist or anything, he just wanted to test the outer perimeters a bit. So he spent months with me and the ESP cards, attempting to find out if it really was *true*, that there was another perspective. But the only thing he found out from all the testing and statistical data and the Chi-square analysis, all of it, was that if someone had the gift of ESP, it certainly wasn't Carlos or me.

The two of us began spending a great deal of time together, although I suspected he was dating other girls as well. Although not handsome in any classical sense, Carlos was exceptionally charming, especially with women. He would listen intently as they talked, seemingly interested in anything they had to say. He had developed a charming patter and a disarmingly personable style. If he was reserved in large groups, he was the opposite in private. Back at his apartment, he would sometimes talk at length in his strong Hispanic accent about his sculpture, or about the occult or whatever I wanted to talk about. We went to the movies, to art exhibits and we visited friends; sometimes Carlos and I went down to

the Albatross at the beach or The Point or a couple of places in Hollywood where the poets read.

Following a movie one night Carlos and I decided to stop at Piece O' Pizza near the LACC campus for something to eat. He mentioned that a girl in one of his classes had begun to follow him around. She was tall and blonde, a writer of sorts, whom he hardly knew. For some reason, she wanted to give him a Christmas present. I urged him not to take anything from her and he agreed. I was still jealous, which is exactly why he had made up the story, and for a while I thought seriously about walking to one of his classes just to get a look at this mysterious blonde, whom Carlos had described in some detail as having copper-colored eyes and shoulder-length hair and a cap on her front tooth. Somebody like that wouldn't be hard to find and Carlos knew it. He later told me the girl had dropped out of class and had gone off to the mountains or someplace. She had been created and dissolved, an ephemeral lady, and I was left wondering at a safe distance.

Carlos assured me that his school friend had been a real person, a real flesh-and-blood person. And a few weeks later, driving along Hollywood Boulevard in his blue and white 1954 Chevy, Carlos suddenly turned and pointed vaguely toward the sidewalk.

"There," he stabbed his finger in the air. "That's the girl I told you about! That's the girl who tried to give me the gift."

"Where? Where is she?" I whirled around in the seat. There were dozens of people downtown, dozens of young blonde bubs. "I don't see her, which one? I don't see her at all." I wanted to circle around and take another look, but Carlos would have none of it. There was a long silence, which I finally broke by asking the girl's name.

Carlos thought for a moment. "Sue," he said. "Sue Childress."

I commented that Childress was my mother's maiden name, which Carlos already knew, and I said maybe we were related somehow. Carlos smiled and nodded and kept driving along the boulevard under the drowsy California palms and neither of us said anything for a long time.

It was March 1957 before I thought any more about it. I was at work at Pacific Bell in the audio-visual department and for some reason the whole Sue Childress episode came flowing back to me. I looked at all the telephone directories in the city and began searching for this elusive Sue Childress. Finally, in the last book I checked there she was...a Sue Childress. I called a number every hour for the remainder of the day. Finally, at 9:30 P.M. that night, somebody named Sue Childress answered the phone.

"I was at this party recently," I said, "and I met a young man from South America, a writer. He told me about a girl he'd met named Sue Childress..." I went on for a while about the party and how my mother's maiden name was Childress and so forth.

Sue was clearly bewildered. She said she didn't know anyone from South America and certainly hadn't attended classes in December at LACC and she didn't know anything about a Brazilian writer at a party of whatever it was that I was saying. But she was blonde and she was a writer and that was confirmation enough for me, who later that night confronted Carlos with my discovery.

Carlos was amused by all this and poured a glass of Mateus as he listened to my story. This whole thing had jerked me into a mean frame of mind and so Carlos finally was moved to assuage my jealousy.

"Oh, you know, there's no Sue Childress," he said. "You know I just made the name up." He stared at me with those black gleeful Carlos eyes and explained that Sue was his mother's name and Childress was my mother's name, and it was from those that he chose a fake name for an imaginary lady. "I had made it all up," he said. "It was a hoax; surely you can understand that."

But I resolutely held on to my discovery, saying that the two of us had agreed to meet for lunch the following day.

He blinked a moment, and gave me one of his quizzical looks and then he grinned and the laugh lines broke around his eyes. "You really are something. You've created Sue Childress out of your mind. Now

someday you're going to realize what you've done and you'll find it was really magnificent."

I wasn't so sure it was all that magnificent. All I had done was to open a telephone book and find her name. It didn't seem all that Olympian and for the first time, I began to think maybe it had been an accident, a coincidence. Maybe he was telling the truth after all.

I mumbled something about that, but Carlos wasn't listening. He was standing in the center of the room with his arms and legs very stiff, the way he'd get when he was very excited. He rolled his eyes closed and for one instant, he *understood*. I had created Sue Childress, or more accurately, I had arranged events so radically as to allow her to be brought into our life. And I had done the whole thing with that damned persistence of mine, that steel-spined determination to will things into being. Carlos knew he had made up the whole Sue Childress matter, but I couldn't be sure, and that doubt had permitted me take a vague pastiche of description and detail and virtually create this woman. To Carlos, it made perfect sense. He dreamt up a character, told me, and I in turn handed back to him a real human being. Of course, this was Carlos's own strange logic operating here and I didn't understand it.

Carlos wanted to believe—totally, and completely believe, that he had a real find here, an honest-to-ghost J.R. Rhine phenomenon. This was neither staged nor a matter of chance. This was no coincidence. This was a great occult stew and I seemed to have a handle on it. It was not Sue Childress that so impressed Carlos, but me and my iron will, my persistence.

He sat down on the couch and picked up a pad and began sketching a portrait of Sue Childress.

"She's not too short, about 5'7". She's blonde, but has these dark eyes and this lovely face, see?" He turned his sketch toward me, showing his black and white conception of what she'd look like.

Looking at Sue Childress seated in the half-light of a restaurant near Pacific Bell's downtown L.A. office, I was dumbfounded. She looked very



much like Carlos's description and his sketch. But Sue denied knowing anybody from South America and, saying she once had taken a poetry course at LACC, now worked for Jansen modeling bathing suits.

I told her everything. The story, my search through the telephone books, Carlos' denial, the sketch, everything. Sue shook her head and grinned tolerantly...*and there it was!* Capped incisor! Her front left tooth was capped, just like Carlos had said!

When Carlos met her a couple of days later, he swore to me that it was the first time. He seemed genuinely baffled about the whole affair, especially about how closely this woman resembled his creation. I had the definite feeling that they knew each other, but I was never able to prove it.

"Someday," Carlos wrote me, "you will understand what you've done here. It's beyond your comprehension now, but someday you'll understand."

The important thing was not that something inexplicable actually had occurred, but only that Carlos believed it had. Or maybe, it was just that Carlos wanted everybody to get that impression. I wasn't sure. The only thing for certain was that Carlos insisted on imposing a rather mysterious definition to a situation that may, or may not have been, all that mysterious.

In retrospect, fifteen years after Sue and Carlos and I sat in that apartment and discussed the episode, Sue Childress, now Sue Parrott, says she's still not sure how I did it. Carlos's idea was that I was a strong woman, able to rearrange the order of things if I so desired; and in this case, I was determined to find a Sue Childress who fit the bill. But Sue wasn't so sure. It was Carlos, after all, who came up with the name in the beginning and Carlos who alone described her. It is possible that he had seen her on that tiny LACC campus in 1956, when she was attending that poetry class. It's even possible that she attended his class, although she doesn't remember him and doesn't think so. There are several

explanations, only one of which is totally wacked-out, which is the one Carlos embraced.

But Carlos had a knack for making normal, logical situations seem somehow deep and mysterious, like the night a year later, when he called my apartment and Sue was there and answered the phone.

"Susie, your mother, she is having throat trouble," he said. "She is going to have serious trouble."

Obviously, he wanted her to think he was prescient, which he wasn't. But it was enough to scare her anyway.

"He led me to think that my mother was going to die and at a subliminal level it scared me," Sue recalls. "My mother has a kind of rattly throat. She's a sneak smoker, and it took a moment before I saw that he was pulling this thing on me, this mysterious thing about my mother's throat. My mother's still very much alive, still sneaking smokes in the back room, and everybody knew my mother's phone number."

After the initial shock, it all became very clear. I had Mrs. Childress's telephone number and used it occasionally. Carlos had it too, and must have accidentally called the number, talked briefly with Sue's mother and, hearing the woman's normally rattly throat, decided to call Sue with his ominous prediction. And he knew right where to call and get her—my apartment.

It was almost as if he was trying to impress the girls with his psychic potential or something. Shortly after the telephone incident, Sue invited Carlos and I to her mother's for dinner. But before Mrs. Childress could serve the meal, Carlos disappeared. He just walked out into the back yard and was gone. An hour later, he turned up, acting as if nothing had happened. When they asked where he'd been, Carlos refused to answer directly and instead, tried to give the impression that there was something strange in his disappearance. It was as if he wanted everybody to know that beneath that conservative demeanor a bit of magic was bubbling in the corpus callosum.

The single thing that contributed most to his interest in respectable occultism was the book, *The Doors of Perception*—Aldous Huxley’s controversial mescaline experiment that became a classic shortly after its appearance in 1954. Until he read Huxley, Carlos had felt there was something vaguely low-rent about mysticism and altered states of consciousness. But *The Doors of Perception* was important in shaping his new view of things, especially the way he interpreted the Sue Childress episode. There are levels of coincidence, other explanations to seemingly logical occurrences, and Huxley helped Carlos understand that.

It was 1956 before Carlos got around to reading *The Doors of Perception*. The book is an eclectic mix of scholarship and respect for the *mysterium tremendum*, and on first reading Carlos was hooked. Here was one of the world’s most distinguished writers putting down on paper in fine scholarly fashion his thoughts while under the influence of some little-known drug. Huxley wasn’t some lunatic visionary or pseudoguru, but an intelligent gentleman who had come upon a unique world-view as a product of his intoxications. Here was a man who was everything Carlos wanted to be—urbane, literate, intelligent, respected, a creative man and excellent writer, an artist of rare quality. Huxley had the security and prestige of being an educated man, a man of knowledge, in the traditional sense. There was no low-rent feel about his work with drugs and altered perception. Huxley remained aloof, untrammelled, untainted by the rabble.

In Carlos’s mind, Huxley had escaped the trap of academia, that ghastly nightmare where professors hop buses to class, make the rounds of faculty parties in pipe and hopsack tweed with satisfied Shelly visage, and where the conversation is academic and boring. Huxley had escaped it. In the mid-1950s, he had leaped feet first into drug use, religion, superstition and pure primitive magic, and he emerged victorious. He had his detractors, to be sure, but the fact was that his

experiment and eloquent discussion of it was light years beyond the campus hacks.

It was almost as if he were two different persons. On one level, here was Huxley in his grey suit entertaining scholarly workshops and teaching in conventional classrooms and speaking at commencement exercises; on the other level you had Huxley, the enigmatic master of the raised consciousness.

It wasn't unusual to find him at commencement, those awful mediocre gymnasium rites. Rows and rows of business majors, biology students and parents fanned themselves with graduation programs, and there, down front, standing at the podium in splendid pontification, gazing out over the queues of jocks and secondary education majors was...Huxley, who was not one of them at all. Huxley, whom Carlos saw as a man living in two worlds, which is exactly what he wanted.

Carlos perceived that Huxley *understood*. Huxley would have understood the old *curanderos* and the creation of Sue Childress. Bone-deep he knew there were no boundaries, no biological imperatives; there was no coincidence, no chance, only the unbridled subjective, the *mysterium tremendum*.

## 10

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Huxley began *The Doors of Perception* with a brief overview of the sporadic history of mescaline research. Lewis Lewin, the German pharmacologist, published in 1886 the first systematic study of a strange cactus which eventually would be named *Lophophora williamsii*. It was just one of the mescaline cacti which for thousands of years had brought on the spirits for the Indians of Mexico, the American Southwest and South America. Later, Havelock Ellis and Weir Mitchell began their experiments with mescaline itself. It was all very prim and scientific until Huxley came along. Huxley ignored the old laboratory and control group-placebo-bar graph approach. He just took a spoonful and sank back into his hip joints and suddenly the flowers were glowing like rubies and green jade. And the folded cloth—yes!—long folded trouser bottoms and velvet drapes, lying in still silent waves of great new importance. Ordinary objects he had taken for granted during the day-to-day suddenly loomed up and showed themselves from new perspectives. Suddenly, he was seeing much the way great artists must have seen—Van Gogh, the great Blake. This, he thought, is the way one *ought* to see.

The old gentleman was actually saying that mescaline was good for you, or at least beneficial in its role of stretching the parameters of consciousness. Huxley's thesis was that this great phenomenological firestorm is constantly raging around us, but that it goes largely

ignored because the brain, nervous system and sense organs are largely eliminative, not productive, in function. They screen out all those stimuli not immediately usable. Only the utilitarian stuff gets through, those perceptions directly related to cooking dinner, driving a car, dealing in the classroom or whatever. The brain and nervous system are primarily occupied with protecting us from being overwhelmed and confused by the firestorm, most of which is useless and irrelevant knowledge. But mescaline jerked away the screen and Huxley was saying he got a look at it *all*. But of course! Carlos couldn't have agreed more. It was the old Mind at Large he was talking about, the Clear Light, the *mysterium tremendum*.

Henri Bergson had talked long before about the theoretical spot in time and space where everybody is capable of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. Henri knew how the senses limit perception and shield the brain from all irrelevant material. There was the matter, however, of trying to prove all this appealing theory, always a sticky area. Maybe everything was funneled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system, but there was no way of knowing for *sure*, at least no way short of satori hunting in clay cubicles way out on Naoshima Island or someplace.

It was a problem, all right, but then Huxley happened along saying to hell with the Chi-square, to hell with the control groups. Here came Huxley, who cranked open the reducing valve and let the firestorm in. He just sat there in a sudden flickering mescaline explosion of stimuli and perception that crashed through his skull, somehow *seeing* things that nobody else could see—not totally nutsy stuff, like somebody's long lost mother floating over the Ouija board or iridescent spaceships or that kind of thing, but a sort of attuned understanding of the world as it is. He was seeing the perfect geometry in the tubular legs of his den chairs and of picture frames. Not things *out there*, but real world objects and relationships seen with new eyes. It was the same reality, only there was just a little more to it than people first thought.

Carlos was enthralled by the man. He decided to do a term paper on Huxley for his second year English class at LACC. In December 1957, he asked a friend, Jennie Lavere, to type the paper for him.

“It was the first time I’d ever read anything by Aldous Huxley and after that, I really got into all his writings,” Jennie recalls. She is now a housewife in North Carolina. “The paper dealt with the effects of taking the peyote plant, the hallucinations. Because back then, nothing was ever known about LSD, or any of the hallucinogens, so this was really something. Carlos was impressed that it was done with a scientific background, done while being observed in a scientific framework and not just to go out of your mind, you know?” In fact, Huxley recorded himself throughout the experiment and constantly was being observed and even questioned by colleagues.

“Carlos put many of his own ideas in the paper. It was marvelous. I typed it from his rough notes and he stood over my shoulder and injected new ideas and things he wanted to put in it. I later wrote a term paper of my own on Huxley, only it wasn’t anywhere nearly as good. *His* was quite new and exciting.”

Besides the Huxley-Bergson-Mind at Large idea, which took up much of the paper, Carlos explored Huxley’s ideas on symbol systems and language. It was Huxley’s feeling that the linguistic tradition is at once good and bad. It facilitates communication and gives future generations a record of the past, but it also reduces awareness. The words spoken are soon taken to be the actual objects and not just the symbols of objects. Our perception of things is defined to a great extent by the way we talk and write about them, so pretty soon we figure that if it can’t be described, then it just can’t be. The world of shared symbols is restrictive and in order to escape the rut of conventional perception it takes something radical—religion, hypnosis, drugs, something like that.

Carlos’s paper covered it all: the drugs, Mind at Large, the reducing valve, shared symbols, the *mysterium tremendum*, the whole Huxley

message. Some of it became Carlos's own message and the message of Don Juan, which was much the same. By 1973, Carlos was saying things like:

"Gazing off at the cosmos like the mystics do is like beating a dead horse. There's so much to this marvelous world right in front of us, but we don't perceive it, because our reason screens out so much. Of course, I came from 'out there,' and I'll return. Meanwhile, I'm on a stupendous loop, a journey of power—life. My body is all I have. It is an exquisite instrument of awareness. I must make excellent use of it."

This wasn't the straight Huxley line, of course. Years and experience had tempered him. Carlos had many of his own ideas and, by the 1970s, was borrowing from scholars like Talcott Parsons. It was Parsons who first used the term "glosses" to mean units of perception. As a graduate student, Carlos read his share of Parsons.

"All parts of 'building' have to be present before we say it is a building," Carlos told a reporter. "It may be impossible to determine the parts of a building, and yet we all know and agree about what a building is, because we've learned to gloss 'building.' We learn to gloss very soon after we're born. It's not bound up with language at all. The only beings who do not have glosses are autistic children; glosses are based on agreement, and autistic children don't make agreements with the world. Due to some physiological difference, they're not members—membership occurs when everyone agrees on a certain description of the world. Of that building. But there's more to that building than you think."

During his early years at LACC, Carlos didn't make very many friends. It was not that he was misanthropic, but there was a small clique he liked to stay with. By the fall of 1956, he and I had become quite close and were spending much of our free time together. During the day I was working at Pacific Bell and he was going to school. At night, I would go to his apartment or he would visit me by sneaking up the back stairs of my apartment on West 8th Street, the large apartment



building owned by my aunt Velma. Velma didn't particularly like Carlos, which was why he had to sneak in to see me at night. Velma saw Carlos as a dark foreigner from South America and admonished me to stay away from him.

"Occasionally he had unhappy feelings about himself," Jenny recalls. "He felt rather negated from the outlook of the family which, well, let's just say there were certain aunts who couldn't understand that which wasn't Protestant, Republican or American. They didn't see Carlos as a person; they saw him as something they couldn't understand. Carlos felt very badly about it but I don't think he still feels their attitudes are important."

It was the first full-blown example of racism he'd run up against in America. It came at a time when he was unsure about his ability as an artist, self-conscious about his height and accent, and unsure about his future. The racism of Velma and to a lesser extent of another aunt who lived there, Alta, disturbed him deeply. Thoughts of those two lean-jawed harpies plagued him, especially at night when he tried to study. Sometimes he'd fall into dramatic states of melancholia and self-pity. Friends remember he didn't laugh or smile very much and periods in which he examined himself intensely.

Carlos knew at a gut level that his artwork probably wouldn't make him well known, but that was something he didn't want to believe. He continued to paint and sculpt. And he encouraged me to make the most of myself. Carlos often reminded me not to spend my time foolishly, that time was short. He'd recall the time he almost died, when he lay on that aluminum military bed and vowed that he would be a different person...*that existential moment*. He'd been given the opportunity to live in this world and, by God, he was going to make every minute count. In his mind I was a "sensitive" of sorts and should make the most of it. Even his casual conversation among friends had turned didactic in the late 1950s. He was always spreading the lesson, which was to live

nobly for today. "Life is short; make every minute count." It was a lesson that he carried with him.

"Don't lose your marbles over trifles," he admonished me in a letter in April 1967. "Life is but a second long."

In January 1958, he persuaded me to better myself by enrolling part-time at LACC. I protested, saying the addition of classes to my work schedule would be a real infringement on my time, but Carlos insisted. He wanted me to be a well-educated woman and so he literally dragged me by the arm across Vermont Street to the registrar's office and stood there, as I signed up for a class, elementary Russian. The following semester, he accompanied me again when I expanded my curriculum to nine hours of class credit with English, Russian History and World Religions.

Carlos liked the idea of my taking Russian. He had developed a fantasy that some day I would meet Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who had just taken power in Moscow. Khrushchev was a powerful and influential figure in his eyes, a great determined bear of a leader who had come up from the bottom to grab the reins of one of the most powerful countries in the world. More than that, Khrushchev had a distinctive style. It was his sense of power and determination that intrigued Carlos above all else. At the first of the week, Carlos would go to the newsstands and buy the new *Time* or *Newsweek*, or he'd walk to the library if he was short of cash, to read about the Soviet leader there. Carlos assured me that I had the potential to meet and talk with the great bald Nikita. For some reason, this fantasy was important to him, and he mentioned it often. It was as if he wanted to live vicariously through the experience and gain some insight into the strong-willed spirit of a bold and determined person like Khrushchev.

Carlos's closest friend during this period was probably Alan Morrison, a fellow student and sometime poet who worked part-time at the post office. There were only a few people Carlos felt comfortable with, specifically Alan and a Costa Rican named Byron Deford, a fellow

pre-psychology student at LACC. They would come over to Carlos's apartment on North New Hampshire Street along with me and maybe a couple of my friends like Sue, and they'd all eat and drink wine and talk into the early morning. There was always plenty of wine, often Mateus, but rarely hard liquor and never any drugs. Everybody bounced ideas off everybody else. Carlos was into Huxley and his idea of living nobly for the moment. I talked about Neville. Byron liked psychic phenomena, mysticism and the notion of dreams as power.

Thanksgiving 1959 Carlos cooked turkey Brazilian-style, with sweet homemade sauce made of apples, apricots, pineapple, wine and tomatoes. He served it with side plates of pasta. Everybody ate and complimented Carlos on his prowess in the kitchen. As the night wore on, the conversation moved from movies and books to music and ESP and philosophy. Byron mentioned a couple of great religio-philosophical documents he'd been reading. He mentioned that Buddha never wrote anything, that someone else recorded all that he said and did. The same for Jesus Christ. The discourse of the perfect master from Galilee, Byron told everybody, was written down well after he'd said it by disciples who were probably affected by time, ancient scripture and rapidly ballooning myths.

Everybody agreed, Carlos included. There actually was no proof that these philosophical man-gods really said anything remotely resembling the historical scriptures. It might have been the words of the chroniclers and not of Buddha or Jesus.

"If I came to you," I interjected, "and I told you that I'd found the ultimate way of life and that I could tell you exactly how to do it, it would be very hard for you to accept." Byron nodded. Carlos nodded. "But if I said to you that I've got a mysterious teacher who has let me in on some great mysteries, then it's more interesting. I'd say I've gone through all these mysterious things with him and now have come to these conclusions. It's much easier to accept."

"Like *The Razor's Edge*," said Alan.

“Like *Siddhartha*,” Byron said.

Carlos nodded again, as if thinking carefully. As usual, he said very little, choosing to listen and maybe ask a couple of questions. He rarely contributed ideas of his own. Carlos rarely agreed or disagreed with the drift of the conversation, choosing instead to just sit back with a glass of Mateus.

Byron, who always joined readily into the conversations, swung his wine glass and launched into some long discussion on a tangential issue, coming around eventually in full agreement with me. He suggested that the great thinkers, truly great intellectuals whether they were famous or not, probably were too wrapped up in their revolutionary work or ideas to write it all down. That was left to the disciples and students and other lessers, he said.

Or maybe they just didn’t think it was important, suggested Allen. Maybe they were too far above it all.

“Maybe,” said Carlos and then he grinned, which was sort of a signal that he was not committing himself. He rarely committed himself in those gatherings, but he always appeared to listen with great interest. And this business of a true mystic’s words coming not from the thinker himself, but from the student—well, this was quite interesting. It seemed to make a big impression on him.

“I am sure that you and I will be again together in order to partake of our grand sessions of intellectual and spiritual findings,” Carlos wrote me almost ten years later. But he may not have meant it. A few years after writing this letter, he told an interviewer that those evenings with friends at his apartment were little more than ways of escaping the boredom of the moment. His work in the desert was often strict and demanding. “I would have preferred just to sit around with my friends and talk about ideas. We all have so many devices for fighting off boredom—being intellectual, overindulging in alcohol, sex, drugs, anxiety.”



Carlos and I at Ma Schuster's apartment—  
I lived here with Carlos, after we married in 1960. Notice the "luminous head of  
light" in the mirror—looks like the picture of Carlos on the book cover of *A  
Separate Reality*



**Carlos's terra cotta bust of his father,  
César Arana Castaneda**

In his final two years at LACC, however, “being intellectual” was a way of coming face-to-face with ideas he never found in his psychology, English or art classes. Even my theatrical mystic was saying things he found interesting. Neville’s ideas about dreaming, for example. Carlos had long thought of dreaming as, well, as just dreaming—a hazy subliminal state of nightmares and overblown fantasies. But here

was a man who was saying that one state was as real as the other. Dreaming and waking were both valid conditions, only the vantage points were different. What's more, Neville taught that dreams have power and that by arranging them according to one's personal wishes one can alter the future. The heart of Neville's prophetic spiel was developing a confidence in getting what you want through intense dreaming and "controlled imagination." Carlos read only a little of Neville's work; he never took him seriously enough to work his way through all his books. It was mainly through me that he learned about Neville's ideas on dreaming and all the rest of it, and that was back in 1958 over wine in his own apartment.

The idea of "setting up dreaming," Carlos says in *Journey to Ixtlan*, came to him in August 1961. Two weeks earlier, he had eaten peyote buttons and, at the height of a soaring hallucination, he had played with a neighborhood dog. It was an enchanting experience the way Carlos told it. The dog became suddenly iridescent and, as both he and the animal drank water from a dish in a silly, giddy episode, fluid suddenly came flowing out their pores, giving both long, gleaming, iridescent manes. It was Carlos's first hallucinogenic adventure. The following morning, Don Juan explained that the dog was actually the incarnation of *Mescalito*, the power or deity contained in peyote. It was a good sign and the Indian figured that his apprentice might be ready for heavier stuff. Don Juan explained that dreaming was real and that a person should think of it in those concrete terms. A strong individual can choose and select what he wants to be part of his dream. To "set up dreaming" is to manipulate those elements of a dream in a way that will affect day-to-day life. According to Don Juan, it was all a matter of power—unity, a sense of the nature of things, control over one's life. This was all rather abstract, but clearly resembled Neville's technique of altering the future as a route to money or success or whatever. Dreaming Don Juan-style brought everything into focus—there were no differences between sleep and waking.

Neville said much the same thing. Even the preliminaries were similar. As preparation for setting up dreaming, Carlos stared at his folded hands in his lap. Neville, in his lectures, instructed his students to lie on the bed or sit in a chair and just concentrate on what they felt was their ideal self, their ideal situation. Claim to be ideal, Neville promised, and “your present world of limitations will disintegrate as your new claim rises like the Phoenix from its ashes.”

The techniques were the same, but so was the goal: to shake the apprentice out of the rut of ordinary real-world perception. *To go beyond.*

With the *I AM*, Neville proposed that the real individual should be devoid of past or future. It was the man without the cultural and social impediments. But the idea of erasing the personal history and recognizing the individual without the limitations and attachments of past was all part of Don Juan’s early teachings. More importantly, it was something that Carlos actually had begun doing years before meeting Don Juan or hearing about Neville.

Then there was the beacon of light. One Tuesday night, I went to Carlos’s apartment after one of Neville’s lectures at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre. The subject on this particular evening had been something called the awakened imagination. Neville said someone who possesses an awakened imagination is special and he sometimes appears as a beacon of light, a great white glowing face. It was supposedly a real quality, even for a few non-Nevilleites who were extremely attuned, such as artists, scientists, inventors, people with vivid imagination.

In 1958, Carlos was working on a terra cotta bust when I burst into the apartment and starting going on about the latest Neville spiel. He listened for a while. The thing that convinced me was that right in the session, in the middle of the convoluted dissertation, Neville’s face actually began glowing. It was almost like a beacon in the front of the theatre. All he had to do was talk about something and *it happened*. Carlos looked up from the sculpture and laughed.



It was in April 1968, by Carlos's own account, that Don Juan explained that smoking the mixture of hallucinogenic mushrooms and other ingredients lifted an apprentice to the point where he could see men as they really are—as fibers of light. Threads circle a man from head to navel, creating an effect like that of a great glowing luminous egg.

Carlos writes that after slipping into some vertiginous funk with Don Juan's "little smoke," he looked up and saw his benefactor's face as a strange luminous object. Carlos figured it was the product of the drug, but Don Juan said no, that in fact everybody actually looks like a luminous egg. All it took was a perceptive person to see it.

In retrospect, some of Don Juan's ideas certainly have roots in Neville's Tuesday night speeches at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre. But my mystic was hardly the prototype. Carlos' favorite in the late 1950s was not Neville or Rhine or any of the others Byron and I would talk about during those old "grand sessions of spiritual and intellectual findings." It was Huxley he admired most, the gentleman scholar who, for a fleeting instant had seen as an artist sees, as Van Gogh had seen. Sometimes, Carlos would play with the idea of taking mescaline and then do his painting and sculpting. In one of his deep depressions, he'd lie back on the bed and stare up at the ceiling and think about how his work was too mediocre to get him anywhere. He just didn't have it, the skill, the vision, whatever it was that successful artists have. He'd lie there with all the lights off and fight the reality.

His fantasy was that somehow he'd gotten hold of a few grams of mescaline and had taken it and was sitting at the sink over a lump of clay, when suddenly, everything slipped out of focus for a moment. It was one of those rolling surrealistic rushes he always imagined. When the focus sharpened, he'd look down at the clay and there superimposed on the lump was a vision of a great piece of art. It was his greatest achievement, a single statuette that represented both a pre-Columbian ruggedness and individuality, and a modern sense of motion and space. It was a perfect mating of period and lifestyle, a bold new genre, and

suddenly here was the *New York Times* interviewing Carlos Castaneda about his contribution to the development of art, and he appeared on the cover of the journals and the trade publications and even *Time* magazine, which devoted six full-color pages to his vision of the new Hispanicism or whatever it was. He was suddenly the darling of the galleries and the dealers, and his timeless Chimu knockoffs were on display everywhere in Los Angeles and New York and Paris. The father of Primitive Modernism...

Then some crazy greaseball would squeal down North New Hampshire in his 1948 Ford and the dogs out back would start yelping for no apparent reason. Carlos would squint up at the ceiling and sometimes the dapple patterns on the plaster would change, depending on the light from the window. Sometimes they'd roll for hours up there, floating around like oil on water, shadows doing a mad hypnotic gavotte, just floating, just rolling up there, the slow rhizopodous tide. He'd watch that for awhile and then he'd get up to go outside and walk around.

## 11

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Carlos stared through the yellow dusk. His hands flashed on the sunlight slanting in through the Venetian blinds. The curtains were drawn against the bright December L.A. sun, but the light still streamed in and Carlos' hands flashed away as he shaped a tan lump of clay into a bust of Sue Childress. He worked quickly and with a sort of inner serenity and confidence, pulling the clay into a nose, shaping a pony tail, poking his thumbs into the eyesockets of the bust, using his sculptor's tools for refinements.

Sue wasn't actually wearing a pony tail on this particular afternoon. But Carlos thought it was appropriate, because he had seen her wear it often enough. In fact, it seemed *de rigueur* for the Sue Childress he wanted to capture, the Sue Childress who was always heading for Venice or Muscle Beach or some of the decadent dives farther south. She had begun to write poetry with a friend who sometimes read from a lighted stage down in Venice. Sue would dress up in her pony tail and wooden shoes and jeans and sit there in the gloom beating a bongo or something. Carlos didn't care very much for the beatniks, who he felt were largely untalented and self-indulgent. But he went with me to some of the coffee houses on Hollywood Boulevard and he enjoyed listening to some of the poets. Just a year before, Allen Ginsberg had delivered the legendary reading down at Venice that Lawrence Lipton later described in his book, *The Holy Barbarians*. Ginsberg dropped by the spots along

with Jack Kerouac and some of the others who were all part of the unfolding bohemian history.

But Carlos didn't care very much about that. He didn't care for their devotion to *laissez-faire*, their pornographic verse, their cliques, and he wasn't impressed with their sloppy appearance. He abhorred rolled jeans and stained cableknits, especially those navy blue jobs all the painters were wearing. Carlos wore to the coffee houses exactly what he wore to the library and the laundromat—a pastel Don Loper shirt with dark slacks and black very plain shoes, all neatly pressed and polished and coordinated and respectable. He was an outsider, a curious interloper in beatland, and he wanted it that way.

He wrote poetry himself, though not the kind he was hearing in Hollywood and along the beach. It was more an imitation of the past masters he'd studied. César Vallejo, for example. Sometimes he included poems in his letters home. Perhaps his favorite was *Dichos de Luz y Amor* by San Juan de la Cruz, a haunting metaphorical verse, which he included at the beginning of *Tales of Power*:

The conditions of a solitary bird are five:  
The first, that it flies to the highest point;  
the second, that it does not suffer for company,  
not even of its own kind;  
the third, that it aims its beak to the skies;  
the fourth, that it does not have a definite color;  
the fifth, that it sings very softly.

Classes and part-time jobs infringed on Carlos's time, but he still managed to turn out a number of sculptures in the late 1950s. I got a few of his pieces, only one of which I still have. It is a roughly hewn bust of a man with a slender nose, empty stare and ruggedly carbuncular look. Besides the bust of Sue, there's one of Lydette he turned out, with her long hair falling down on each side and forming at the base. Usually

he worked in terra cotta, obviously of the Chicama school which he studied at the Fine Arts Institute. Generally, it was a style devoid of varnish, which gave the sculpture a natural tone and human look. Around the Chicama Valley that's the style you'd see everywhere, with fired clay statuettes and vases, or as relief ornamentation on buildings. Carlos also worked with soapstone, and on one occasion, he worked for hours on a full-figured nude of a pregnant woman kneeling, hands on her chin and long hair flowing back. It was a delicate six inches high, almost iridescently pink and grey with slender streaks of black running through it.

Joan McFadden, who is now Joan Daugherty and a housewife living in Arlita, California, remembers that when she met Carlos in 1963, some of the old Castaneda art was still circulating among friends. Slowly, as he lost confidence in his ability as an artist, he stopped painting and then sculpting. But there was still that earnestness about him, that drive to be accepted and recognized as an accomplished, creative person. And so his conversations often were geared in the abstract.

"When you were with Carlos," says Jenny Vucinich, "you always had to talk about things that were deeply meaningful. It was always something that he felt very deeply about. You just couldn't help from being excited when you were talking with him, because he wasn't the type of person who talked about the weather or things that would make you feel depressed or down. Not people or things. We talked about ideas and how to be more alive and what life was. He did speak of his father and mother and how they put him on this earth and left him by himself."

If his fabled aloneness was an obstacle, he could turn it into an instructive little story; his problem with Aunt Velma was not so easily transformed. She did not like him. It was simply a matter of racism and there wasn't much Carlos could do about it. The bottom line was not that Carlos was strong and resourceful, which was the message in his story about being put on the earth and left alone, but that he was somehow inferior, at least by Alta's standards. It was something he couldn't

overcome, short of bleaching his face and adopting a midwestern accent. "He had this little problem about feeling important," says Jennie. "I think because of his mother dying at such an early age and having been raised by people who weren't perhaps sympathetic to him, it must have been very traumatic for him to find another lady who gave him a hard time."

If her version of his past was a product of Carlos's careful fitting of fact with myth even as early as 1957, her conclusion was very close to the mark. His antagonists were often women; his predicaments, real or imagined, were often the result of something a woman had done. Interestingly, he writes in his books about *la Catalina*, a sorceress, a woman of enormous power who becomes the only physical opponent he faces throughout his years as an apprentice. There are powers, to be sure, and plenty of abstract confrontations with abstract forces, but only when *la Catalina* appears does Carlos come face-to-face with a human opponent of such frightening proportion.

Though Carlos was preaching independence and freedom, he was nevertheless becoming increasingly possessive of me. One evening when Carlos was getting ready to take me to class, the telephone rang. It was Dr. Teja Gerth, a physician I had met a few months earlier. I had warned him about Carlos and so when a man answered, Gerth pretended he had called the wrong number.

"Is Mrs. Goldabourge there?" he asked.

Carlos didn't buy it. "Listen you SOB, I know who you are. You're Gerth and I'm taking Margaret to school and I don't want you ever to call here again!" Carlos slammed down the receiver and grumbled all the way to campus.

Once we got to UCLA, where I was enrolled in a night class, I ducked down a hall and called Gerth from a pay phone. I explained what had happened and was standing there laughing about it when I turned around and there, scowling through the glass, was Carlos Castaneda.

In 1958, I was attending a class at Pacific Telephone in Management Conversational Skills. I rode the bus from the Wilshire area to downtown Olive Street in Los Angeles. One evening when I waited for the bus, I saw an East Indian dressed in a black suit, very British-looking and carrying an umbrella. He sat alone on the bus and so did I.

The next morning as I was going to work, I thought how interesting it would be for me to have a discussion with him and write it up for my class.

That evening I came out, of course looking for him; he was nowhere around. I felt rather disappointed and started to hurry to get the bus. Suddenly, right behind me, I heard this voice with an Indian-English accent and he said to me, "You really have to hurry to get this bus." Well, to say the least, I was delighted to see him. I entered the bus first; then he came aboard and sat beside me. I couldn't believe my good luck. He never sat by anyone before. I wondered why he chose to sit beside me this particular day.

After the bus started and we were well on the way, I started the conversation and found that he was from Bombay, India. His name was Suran Bhat. He was with Boeing Aircraft. He had a Ph.D. from Bombay, India and a Ph.D. from Purdue University. Very impressive, I thought. In our conversation I found that he was an astrologist and could actually cast a horoscope. He asked my birthday and time of day I was born and said he would work my chart and let me know what he found. He said he had used his astrological chart and played the stock market in India and had done very well financially.

He was married, had no children and had been in the United States about six months.

I wrote my discussion on an "I said," "He said" basis and it turned out very well. In fact, I had a wonderful response from the class and my instructor was very impressed with my originality and unique approach.

A few days later, Bhat got on the bus. As we were riding along, he reached inside his suit coat and took out the horoscope, which he had promised.

He said during the discussion that I would marry someone who would become famous...definitely for something I would write about. It would be philosophical in nature, but written clearly for everyone to understand.

I was so impressed with his astrological ability. Not only to cast a horoscope, but to interpret what the stars in different positions meant. I asked if he would teach me to cast a horoscope. He agreed to do so.

I lived in one of my aunt's apartments on West 8th Street in Los Angeles and he had made about two visits to help me set up a horoscope. I was learning very quickly because I was very interested in astrology and its effect on our lives from day to day.

I heard a knock at the door. When I opened the door, there stood Carlos, all dressed up. He had a suit, white shirt and dark tie on. He said he'd like to meet my friend.

I asked him to come in. He sat down in a chair in the corner of the living room. The Indian was sitting on the couch.

I left the room to pour some wine for us. When I returned, Suran, the Indian, was asking Carlos if he was interested in astrology. Carlos said very solemnly, "No, I am not interested in astrology, I am only interested in Missa Runyan. I feel your ideas are most intelligent and I think she is most intelligent. To me, that is a very dangerous combination, so I suggest you leave immediately." Of course I heard all of this, and really didn't know what to do. The Indian just sat there and said nothing, but finally did go.

I said to Carlos that he shouldn't have come and put me on the spot with that very dignified Indian man. He was, after all, there at my invitation and we were working on drawing up a chart for a horoscope.

Carlos said, "Ah, Missa Runyan, you are dangerous when you get with an intelligent man. I don't know what might have happened if I hadn't shown up."



Well, that was the last I saw of the Indian. I didn't even get a copy of my horoscope he had done.

## 12

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Carlos remained at his place on North New Hampshire through most of 1958. He got a job at the Mattel Toy Company plant on Rosencrans Avenue at Hawthorne a few miles away. He drove the distance in an old Chevrolet which he'd bought. The place on North New Hampshire was a pink stucco apartment building with a tile roof and miniature balconies—sort of early Alamo. Carlos lived in apartment No. 4, on the first level with a large window in front that opened out onto a street of modest houses and apartments. He had straw mats on the floor, long bookcases against the walls and a wooden desk by the window. His sculpting gear was set up in the corner. He had a Murphy bed and a couple of old stuffed chairs and the long bookcase against the far wall was filled with paperbacks, mostly Latin poetry or biographies. There was no radio or television or telephone—just a typewriter on top of the desk and one half-finished piece of sculpture or another in the corner. On Sunday afternoons when I came over, he'd set up his board across the kitchen sink and work with the light streaming in.

With classes and his job at Mattel, there was less time for his art. But he could write anywhere—between classes, on the job, at the apartment—and he began carrying around a ringed notebook that he filled with poems and romantic prose. He took a class in Latin poetry to get acquainted with classical style and classical themes. He paid special attention to Lucretius. Like Huxley, Lucretius had a serious regard for

the scientific method, such as it was in the First Century, B.C. And there was all this noble talk of death and the pusillanimous fear of death and how the brave warriors of the mountainsides live always with the notion of death without cowing to it. Among the verses that Carlos circled in his textbook was:

And some will die to gain a statued name  
Sometimes the fear of death will bring a man  
To hate the sunlight fostering his life  
Till, grieving, he will toss his life away.

If he told some people he was from the land of Lucretius, he also said he was from Brazil, and made it clear to me that he was aware of the classics of that South American country. In the fall, he gave me one of his albums, *Bachianas Brasilerras No. 5*, a Villa-Lobos suite and a collection of Brazilian folk songs with five Puccini arias on the other side. The suite and folk songs were in Portuguese and Carlos seemed to understand the language, as would have been the case had he come from Brazil. Until 1960, he received regular letters from home and I never paid any attention whether or not they were Portuguese. He'd always read them to me in English, so I never knew.

By his fourth year at LACC, Carlos had moved into a boarding house on Adams Avenue, owned and operated by a small, wiry woman named Jonnie, who lived on the ground floor. She fixed up steaming home-cooked meals and served them for her boys at a long table in the dining area. She was a friendly, maternal woman with strict rules about girls in the rooms. Most of the boarders were rather dull and abided by her dictum of "no girls allowed." But Carlos didn't pay attention to that. He'd have me leave my apartment and sneak up the stairs after dark and spend the night in his room. At dawn I'd put on a pair of Carlos's socks so as to not make any noise while creeping down the stairs, and then out

across the lawn along Adams Avenue with Carlos watching out the window upstairs.

He'd write about little romantic encounters, short stories about personal relationships, but he never wanted me to read them. He tried to keep his notebook to himself. At LACC, one teacher who encouraged him to continue writing was Vernon King, Carlos's creative writing instructor. Under King's tutelage, Carlos was writing more than ever, especially poetry. One of his poems won first place in writing contest sponsored by *The Collegian*, the school newspaper. The winning entry appeared in an issue of the paper complete with the adopted name of its author, Carlos Castaneda.

In December 1958, Carlos decided to rent a small house on Cherokee Avenue in Hollywood. I was living in an apartment on 8th Street that my Aunt Velma owned. She watched my activities very closely and questioned me if I wasn't there when I was supposed to be. She disapproved of my dating Carlos, because he was foreign and she knew nothing about him. I spent most of the month with Carlos. He was always busy working on a sculpture, writing, etc. He made Christmas cards with Father Time holding an hourglass (I lost the one he gave me). We went to coffee houses on Hollywood Boulevard, attended cultural activities and a lot of movies...mostly foreign movies.

I never missed any of Neville Goddard's lectures at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre. Carlos never attended any of the lectures with me. I would usually discuss them freely with Carlos. He would comment sometimes, other times not.

Neville claimed that the Bible is not history, but each human being's biography. He states that the Bible always speaks in the present tense and is telling us about ourselves.

He stated that in John 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." It is telling us the Word is our thoughts, which are words, and that each of us is a God. When we stop worshipping God as someone outside ourselves and know that He

dwells within us and by accepting Christ as our wonderful human imagination, we can make anything we can imagine a reality. Thinking from what we want, knowing that it is already so, then resting on the assumption that it is so, automatically brings about the events that bring it into being. That is the *Sabbath Day*, resting from your mental labor. Not Sunday, resting from physical labor.

With me, Carlos wasn't as reluctant to talk about psychic phenomena and sometimes he'd have me interpret in that strange, creative, mystical way of mine some stories he'd tell, often stories he'd read in *The Brothers Karamazov*. I read it too, and I went into great detail about the abstract and metaphorical aspects of the book. The brothers, I said, were actually aspects of one individual and the father was the physical, material male—while the mother was symbolic of the subconscious. I went on like that, all about the symbols I saw, and Carlos wrote it all down to use later in a paper for the class.

We stayed on Cherokee Avenue for about a month. I returned to Aunt Velma's and Carlos took a room on the second floor of the Marietta Apartments on Vermont Street just across from the LACC campus. The Marietta was a four-story, dirty yellow brick apartment building with white double doors, a baroque iron light hanging out front beside a white pillar with gold shields over the two street-level windows. Oriental carpets stretched the length of the hallways inside.

Carlos was in his last semester and the grind was beginning to wear on him. He took a job at a silk screening operation and began studying for naturalization. Carlos and I talked occasionally about which name he'd use, Arana or Castaneda. Arana was his legal name, but we both agreed that Carlos Castaneda had a certain ring to it. He'd used it on school records and job applications for years anyway, so we decided that he'd stay with Castaneda.

When Aunt Velma died in April 1959, I joined Alta and other family members at the funeral. But Carlos stayed away. He didn't like her pretensions—her comfortable California life-style, or her stories about

traveling West and getting married three times and collecting real estate. She had spelled her name Runyon out West and she claimed that Damon Runyon was not only a relative, but a friend she had advised about writing some years before. Carlos didn't care about any of it and he was happy that she was dead. He felt less intimidated around me with Aunt Velma gone.

Carlos finished his classes at LACC by spring, graduating on June 19, 1959, with an Associate of Arts degree in pre-psychology. He went through the standard ceremony in robe and tassel, standing for the graduation photo, standing stiffly, unsmiling, his hair clipped neatly and arms dangling and hands cupped self-consciously. He sent the photo to his relatives back in Peru along with a letter saying he planned to enroll at UCLA. It was one of his last letters home. When his books were published, Carlos didn't even let them know and it wasn't until the early 1970s that they even knew where he was. His last link with home was a photograph of his mother that he dramatically tore up during an argument with me at the apartment.

## 13

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With classes at LACC completed, Carlos applied at UCLA. Recognizing what had been painfully obvious all along—that he'd never make it as an artist—Carlos turned his attention to a teaching career. The idea of becoming a writer was intriguing, but still a bit improbable at this stage. Carlos's switch from psychology to anthropology wasn't something he'd done after careful consideration. He barely thought about it. It was just a different area of the social sciences, a discipline he felt only a little more inclined to teach.

After Velma's death, I moved to a duplex on South Detroit Street, which I furnished with pieces collected over the previous three years. Sue Childress, who had spent the summer working in Florida, returned to California and moved in with me. When he wasn't in class or working at some odd job, Carlos was at my apartment. For about six weeks he taught Sue Spanish and worked with dialect. In return, she paid him in fresh fruit sherbets. In early winter, Carlos got a job in the billing department of Haggarty's, a fine women's shop on Wilshire Boulevard in Hollywood. It was evening work, checking accounts, bringing balances into line and seeing that bills were mailed.

There was a vague sense of *déjà vu* about the whole thing. Here he was, standing in the delicate pink womb of Haggarty's of Hollywood, like being back in Peru, watching the *gorditas* again. Only here he was, standing near the baby pink wall-to-wall under a great unfolding

crystal chandelier, right at the rolling edge of America. Sometimes the light would slant through the windows in the late day and would crash off the counters and the rings and bracelets and the gold and silver would glitter, like the old days at César's shop. Sometimes Carlos wondered if he'd made a mistake coming to America, thinking maybe he'd have done better back in South America, where he didn't feel so much like an outsider. But generally he felt he'd made the right decision, especially during those freewheeling Saturday nights around my apartment where somebody would bring the Mateus wine and everybody would talk about philosophy, painting, extrasensory perception and poetry. The smaller the group, the less inhibited Carlos was and the more he would commit himself to really wacked-out occult stuff like astral projection and trance running. "He'd twinkle up his eyes and it was almost as if he wanted me to think he had some of the answers I didn't have," Sue recalls. "But then, on the other hand, I wouldn't doubt it." He could turn mystic when the spirit willed.

When everybody started talking about predicting the future, Carlos did some predicting of his own. He told me one night about somebody he hadn't seen in years, somebody he described strangely as "the missing link to this fate, determined tri-unity among the three of us," the three being himself, myself and Sue. He predicted that Sue would marry the man. I got excited and called Sue.

"Is he a doctor?" Sue asked, apparently with visions of her own.

"What does this fellow do?" I asked Carlos. He said the man was an intern, who intended to specialize in brain surgery. And, he added, the four of us would some day travel to Brazil. It never happened.

But if his predictions didn't come true, some of his ideas had a way of turning up later, often in his books and occasionally as lessons from Don Juan. The routines, for example, were enemies even before 1960. The idea of being bored with life and with people frightened him, and he often worried aloud about the routines of his life, of getting up every morning and going to class in specifically numbered classrooms and



being at work by 3 P.M. He was dying inside a structure, he felt, wasting away without enough time to paint and write. He told me that if he intended to take an eight-to-five job he would never carry his lunch. Years later, he wrote that Don Juan had admonished him to disrupt his routines as a way of keeping the world fresh and new and his perceptions keen.

When *The Sacred Mushroom* by Andrija Puharich was published, everybody read it, Carlos included; it became the center of conversation around the apartment for months. Puharich's thesis was that a Dutch sculptor who he had met could, from a deep trance, recall details of Egyptian life during the IVth Dynasty and did so from the reference point of a man named Ra Ho Tep. Moreover, Puharich set out to prove that the sacred mushroom, *Amanita Muscaria*, could heighten psychic ability and awareness. There was a connection, Puharich figured, between the Siberian shamanistic phenomenon of leaving the body and the lulling intoxication of the sacred mushroom. That was his theory.

The Greeks apparently had a tradition of magical detachment of psyche from the body. In the first chapter, Puharich quotes from Dodd's *The Greeks and the Irrational*, a scholarly anthropological piece published a few years earlier by the University of California Press. Among other things, it says the *shaman* is a psychically unstable person who has fallen into the religious life, albeit an unconventional one. A period of rigorous training gives one all the credentials of a shaman, including the ability of falling at will into states of mental dissociation.

"A shaman may in fact be seen simultaneously in different places; he has the power of bilocation," Dodd wrote. "From these experiences, narrated by him in extempore song, he derives the skill in divination, religious poetry and magical medicine which makes him socially important. He becomes the repository of supernormal wisdom."

Through the Dutch sculptor Harry Stone, Puharich came up with esoteric Egyptian phrases that seemed to document the existence and

use of sacred mushrooms in ancient religious ceremonies. It was a most irrational proposition and Puharich went about proving it in a most rational manner. He collected pages of data and did hours of scientific testing. He transcribed 200 pages of Stone's babbling in Egyptian, a volume so immense that Puharich concluded he could not have memorized it.

The idea of drug use among the ancients interested Carlos to be sure, but the thing that really pricked his psychic sensibilities and kept him reading was this eerie similarity between Harry Stone and himself. It was crazy how much alike they were. Stone was a foreigner in America, shy and unsure of himself, a high school graduate who had gone to an art academy for several years. He had been trying unsuccessfully for the last six or seven years to establish himself as a sculptor. Stone told Puharich that when he was about six years old, his aunt died, which is exactly what had happened to Carlos. Even if the book seemed absurd, Carlos found himself identifying with Harry Stone, the magical Ra Ho Tep personality.

As part of the study, Puharich talked with Gordon Wasson, an expert in drug use among the primitive mystics, who told him about traveling in 1953 to Mexico to check stories about a ritualistic mushroom cult that had once flourished there. Wasson found not only that the cult had once existed, but also that some members were still working their peculiar magic in remote regions of the desert. As Wasson explained it, the ceremony was conducted by a *curandero* who ate mushrooms as part of the healing and divination process. The mushrooms were *Psilocybe mexicana* and the active ingredient was psilocybin.

Puharich rounded up some of his own sacred mushrooms, ran experiments and discovered that human beings don't exhibit any remarkable psychic effects after eating *Amanita muscaria*. Toward the end of the book, Puharich wheeled on somebody who suddenly snapped Carlos back to attention, somebody who gave the whole occult affair a certain respectability—Aldous Huxley. In August 1955, Huxley

had watched as Harry Stone slipped into one of his trances. During this segment of the experiment, Stone receded into his Ra Ho Tep personality and insisted on having the golden mushroom brought to him. Puharich did. Then Stone began going through the secret ceremonial details of applying the mushroom to his tongue, placing it on the top of his head—the whole Egyptian ritual, lost forever except that Puharich seemed to be resurrecting it in his New England laboratory. As Stone came out of the trance, Puharich blindfolded him and tried a MAT test for clairvoyance. Huxley watched as the Ra Ho Tep counterpart completed an entire series of matching ten sets of pictures in a few seconds, a feat with odds of a million to one. With Huxley involved, at least passively, the whole book was worth at least some serious consideration. With Puharich, Carlos was introduced to Mexican shamanism and the use of *Psilocybe mexicana*. Huxley had introduced him to mescaline and, more specifically, to Professor J.S. Slotkin's descriptions of peyote use by the American Indians. Slotkin's research dealt with the Native American Church, a group who believed peyote was God's special gift to the Indians. Slotkin was one of the very few white men to participate in the rites of peyotists, one of only a handful to be shaken out of the rut of ordinary perception by a plant that Carlos knew was so attainable—a plant that was essentially the same as his native San Pedro...the holy Mother Cactus.

There was another drug that was batted around, sometimes facetiously in the parlance of college students—"loco weed." It was perhaps the most widely known wild hallucinogen in the Southwest. There was nothing unusual about reading that a half-dozen Longhorns accidentally got into the *Datura* and ran amok for hours on a west Texas ranch, ripping up fence posts, attacking each other, bellowing well into the night from the gut of hallucination. Mushrooms, peyote cactus and Jimson weed, the three drugs Carlos contends Don Juan introduced to him after 1960, were actually well known to him well before that. Despite the charming naïveté of his books, Carlos Castaneda was

acquainted with the three drugs of his apprenticeship well before he met Don Juan.

Puharich and *The Sacred Mushroom* replaced *The Doors of Perception* and Rhine as the big topics of conversation around my apartment.

"We talked about mushrooms and cactus which, ingested, expand consciousness," says Sue. "*The Sacred Mushroom* had just come out. But I had the feeling that Carlos knew a lot about mind expansion—natural or unnatural—before he read that book."

As always, Carlos more often took ideas away from conversations, rather than adding some of his own. Sometimes, he'd write them down for his short stories and poems or his work in psychology and anthropology classes. By late 1959, I had enrolled in psychology at LACC and wrote a paper in which I explained my ideas about the "ambivalent self," only I did it by constructing a conversation first outlining the situation and then adding another conversation, a more learned one, to explore the nature of ambivalence. It was just a technique for examining one's other self. Carlos read the paper and thought it was a fascinating technique, two conversations from the same writer, and he told me so.

"Margaret had a fantastic sense for intrigue," said Joan Daugherty about me. "She could quote Neville, discuss Zen Buddhism for hours, all kinds of mystical things. He listened, but was not the believer. In his books, I see so much of the Carlos I knew. There is a reserve there. I saw the skepticism in Carlos's attitude toward each new experience. I don't think he ever doubted that any of these things was a possibility. In terms of mysticism, he had an open mind, but he wasn't convinced."

One day in early spring of 1958, I left the office at 666 South Labrea to go up the street to the dry cleaners before the noon hour rush. I picked up my clothes, walked out on the street and saw no one around. I was alone walking toward the office—suddenly, I saw Neville coming toward me. As he approached me, I looked at him and smiled—he returned the smile—we never spoke. As he passed me, I turned around to be sure it was Neville I had seen—as I did so, he looked back, smiled

again and kept on walking. The strange thing was I had been on a street alone with him, but as I turned back to walk ahead, I was on a normal street at noontime.

For a moment, I thought I had flipped. I could not understand this, because Neville was in San Francisco giving lectures for two weeks. He wasn't in Los Angeles at all.

Well, you can bet I didn't go back to the office and talk about my strange encounter with Neville.

That evening when I saw Carlos, I related the whole happening to him and wondered how this could happen. I said the next time Neville is lecturing here in town, I'm going to ask if he ever appears to anyone in one city while he's in another city. Carlos didn't react much to this tale of being in two places at the same time, but said he'd be interested to know what Neville would say when I asked about it.

The next time Neville lectured I was right there. I knew I wanted to ask about his appearance to me that day on Labrea Avenue.

When the lecture was over and he made himself available to answer questions for fifteen minutes, I was ready! However, a strange thing happened. Before I had a chance to ask my question, some one else rose and asked him if it is possible, when he's in another city, for him to appear as though he is real in Los Angeles to anyone. He looked at this person, then he looked at me and said, yes, he could appear to people he wanted to appear to. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. He had appeared to me for some reason. I still don't know why he truly had the ability to be in two places at the same time, or, at least, I know I saw him in what seemed to be an unreal circumstance.

While both Carlos and I dated other people, it was an arrangement neither of us particularly liked. Both of us were quite jealous of the other. Carlos had a habit of coming to my place when I had a date and saying he wanted to meet my friend. I would try to dissuade him, but Carlos would come anyway, usually finding a place on the couch where he could observe everything and make everybody feel uncomfortable.

Sometimes, he actually told my date to leave and not come back. The last time he did that was in January 1960, when Farid Aweimrine, a young businessman from the Middle East, was at my apartment. We had been to a restaurant somewhere in L.A. where everybody sat on exotic pillows and drank Turkish coffee, and afterwards we returned to my apartment. As usual, Carlos dropped by. Farid tried to make the best of it. During the course of the evening, he began talking about these visions he'd been having recently. One of them involved me.

"There is someone holding a gun to you, Margaret," he said. "Someone wants to kill you."

Carlos rolled his eyes around. Farid said some particularly flattering things about me that angered Carlos, who implied that he was somehow on sensitive ground.

"I would have married Margaret when I first started dating her, but my divorce is not final yet," Farid said.

"Over my dead body," said Carlos. "No one is going to marry her but me."

"So why haven't you married her?" Farid asked.

"The thought hadn't occurred to me. But I'm going to marry her tonight." Carlos turned to me, "Let's go, Maggie. We're going to Mexico."

All this took me by surprise and I was speechless. But Carlos was insistent about his proposal. He said he was really serious about getting married. Farid left, leaving us to talk about the implications of getting married, something both of us had thought about, but actually hadn't discussed at any length. Finally, we got into Carlos' black Volkswagen and headed for Tijuana. A skinny, grey-faced little Mexican official married us once we got there and had us fill out the proper forms. He was one of those sad little men who seemed to take such joy in such moments and he played a peppy mariachi tune on the record player before and after the brief service. Estado Libre Y Soberando de Morelos, the record of the marriage, is still there. It reads:

“Oficina del Registro Civil de Tiaquilténango. En el Libro num 5/960 a fojas Catorce, bajo la Partida num. 14 de esta Oficina, se encuentra asentada el acta de Matrimonio de. Carlos Aranha Castaneda con Margaret Evelyn Runyan. Cuyo contrato se celebró ante mi con los requisitos de Ley. Tiaquilténango Morelos 27 de Enero de 1960.”

## 14

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Carlos abandoned his room on Vermont and moved in with me at 823 South Detroit Street. Sue moved out. Carlos continued his job in the billing department of Haggarty's, bringing in enough money to stay in school and make ends meet. My job at the telephone company paid the rent and kept us eating. He was coming home late at night after work at the shop and had to go to classes the next day at UCLA. There wasn't much time for foreign movies or concerts or exhibits. By summer, even the weekends were a bust. Carlos began leaving for hours at a time, and then days; I wasn't sure where he was going. At first, I thought he had found another woman, but he denied that. Carlos said that he was making trips into the desert to study the use of medicinal plants by the Indians. "I have found a man," he told me one day; but other than saying he was an Indian and a teacher, Carlos said very little more about his excursions.

These early trips to the desert were a direct outgrowth of an undergraduate class he was taking—California Ethnography. It was a popular course taught by a bony, garrulous archeologist with sharp blue eyes named Clement Meighan. It was Meighan Carlos would mention first in the acknowledgments section of the first book, calling him the person "who started and set the course of my anthropological fieldwork."



This class was one that Meighan taught every year. Each time at the outset, he made a deal with the students up there on the third floor of Haines Hall. Haines was one of those redbrick buildings on the UCLA campus with a freshly sandblasted look and ribbon gums and holly trees bending solicitously out of the peat moss out front. Concrete friezes with winged dragons and birds twisted their way around the edge of the red-tiled roof and there were grey arches over the windows. The first floor was occupied by French classes. Sociology had the second floor, and its grimy brother, Anthropology, had the third.

A term paper was required in Meighan's class and anybody who actually interviewed an Indian automatically got an "A" for the project. It meant actually getting out and dealing with a live informant and anybody who took that trouble, no matter how the paper turned out, was rewarded with an "A."

"It's a lot of work to do this," Meighan warned, "and it's very difficult psychologically. You may put in an awful lot of work and get very little in terms of results, because you can't find the right informant or he won't talk to you or he's mad at you."

This was an annual admonition, which Meighan delivered by rote to discourage the faint of spirit from tackling something he knew could be an agonizing few weeks of research. Meighan's specialty was archaeology, but he'd paid his dues under the sagging ramadas listening to the ramblings of old informants of the California scrublands, and he had read the literature and all the rest of it, and so Meighan had more than just a vague idea how difficult something like this could be.

"But if you show me in the paper that you made the effort to actually find and talk to a California Indian, then I will guarantee you an "A" on the term paper, no matter how it comes out," he told the class. Carlos was sitting there among the group of students and it all seemed fair enough to him. A good interview with an Indian would get him a good grade, but more importantly, if he could get a really good interview and then get the paper published, there would be no problems of getting

into graduate school. Finding a subject for the paper was not a serious problem. There were dozens of conventional undergraduate ideas—basket weaving and pottery, agriculture, religious systems, relations between the redman and white usurpers, all of which were things Meighan had seen a dozen times. Carlos wanted something sufficiently deep and scholarly to assure publication and yet he wanted to focus on something kinky enough to sustain his interest. After some rumination, Carlos decided on ethnobotany, the classification of psychotropic plants used by sorcerers. It would be like being Gordon Wasson out there in the Mazatec hills finding magic mushroom cults, or like Huxley at home or Weston LaBarre on the Plains. He read up on the subject, especially LaBarre's *The Peyote Cult*, and concluded that he was ready to go out and find himself an Indian.

Out of a class of almost sixty students, Meighan got three papers in which students attempted to interview an informant. One student found an Indian on campus through an ethnic grant program and put together a polemic representing the Indian's views on how his people had been treated. Another lived on a ranch in Fresno Country and asked a friend some more-or-less routine questions about Indian lifestyles. Only Carlos went out and found an informant. Actually, he dealt with a number of Indians and went to Meighan's office two or three times during his early research to get direction and to learn a little about technique. In the beginning, he worked with a Cahuilla on a reservation near Palm Springs, and then went out on the Colorado River and worked with a few Indians there. Usually, one Indian leads to another and so Carlos started on the reservations and began moving from informant to informant, deeper into the strange ritual and use of medicinal plants. Ultimately, he found one man who related a great deal of information about Jimson weed (*Datura innoxia*) and it was that information that served as the basis of Carlos's undergraduate paper, a piece that turned into a minor masterpiece.

“His informant knew a great deal about *Datura*, which was a drug used in initiating ceremonies by some California groups, but had been presumed by me and I think most other anthropologists to have passed out of the picture forty or fifty years ago,” Meighan recalls. “So he found an informant who still actively knew something about this and still had used it. He turned in a term paper which had a lot of information in it that just wouldn’t have been possible to get, unless you had an informant who was knowledgeable about this plant and material. It was a very good paper and I encouraged him to continue with his research. He reported on the fact that there was still an Indian who knew about the use and practice of *Datura* as a power plant. A lot of this came out in his first book. He talked about the fact that it’s very important what part of the root it comes from. There’s a lot of symbolism and fantasy about the male plants and the female plants and whether it is deep in the root. I doubt whether any of that had any pharmacological value whatsoever, although he investigated that. He went around and talked to various people about their beliefs. But that business about *Datura*, so far as I knew, wasn’t published in the literature anywhere. I’ve read most of the California stuff very carefully and that’s where the resistance comes in, when you start asking people about a whole set of beliefs and use of a drug, when you start dealing with ceremonial knowledge and stuff that’s hard to get and not supposed to be revealed. I was very impressed with this paper. Obviously, he was getting information that anthropologists had not gotten before.”

There was plenty of symbolism and fantasy, all right, and Carlos wrote it all down, all about the devil’s weed having four heads—the root, the stem, and leaves, the flowers and the seeds. And every part has a special role in the mystical order of things. The root, for example, has the power, or more exactly, the power is conquered through the root. The stem is for healing, the flowers alter personality and the seeds “fortify the head.” Carlos’s informant for this paper said the idea was to tame the devil’s weed as part of one’s search for knowledge. The male

and female plants are different: the female is taller and tree-like, while the male is thick and bushy. The root of the female is long and straight, going down a long way before it forks. But the root of the male forks almost immediately underground. To dig the plant, an Indian *brujo* is supposed to use a dry branch from a paloverde tree, clean it, slice it and treat it in accordance with the ritual and technique of the infinite past. Carlos had it all down, quotes from the informant, paternalistic sides, strains of ritual and superstition, medicinal folklore, pharmacological data. But more importantly, he had on the record someone who had agreed to break the rules and let an outsider in.

“This could be the man he calls Don Juan,” Meighan says. “I think it very well may have been the same man, although he is not identified in the paper as the same man. He identified his informant by tribe and area, and so it’s either the same informant or somebody very closely related, because the background of the informant as he gave it—part Yuma and part Yaqui.”

The literature said Yaquis didn’t dabble with ceremonial drugs, but Carlos wasn’t paying attention. He had found a real-life medicine man, which wasn’t all that hard to find, but the old guy was giving him esoteric knowledge thought to have passed from the scene years before. When Meighan raised those great grey eyebrows, Carlos knew he was on to something. He had struck a new vein and he got excited just thinking about the possibilities: a graduate paper, a thesis, maybe a book. The day that Meighan praised his paper and suggested the material had added a great deal to the academic literature, Carlos knew he had arrived. If he had doubts before, the matter was settled—he would study anthropology.

PART TWO

*Spun by Allegory*

By Carlos's account, he met Don Juan in a bus depot in an Arizona border during the summer of 1960. It came during one of those trips to the Southwest in search of information. A friend, identified only as Bill in Carlos's books, nodded toward Don Juan when the old man entered the depot, saying the Indian knew a great deal about peyote. Bill, who bears a strong resemblance in Carlos's description to Alan Morrison, was guide and helper in the drug survey. Like Morrison, Bill spoke only a few words of Spanish and on this particular afternoon, standing there in the muted glare of the late day sun, he made up some absurd phrase in Spanish. Don Juan didn't understand and so Carlos stepped in and explained how he was an expert on the use of hallucinogenic cactus as a result of his extensive studies and research at UCLA. The Indian didn't seem too impressed, especially when Carlos got to the part where he said it might be mutually profitable for them to get together and talk about peyote. Carlos says Don Juan just lifted his head and stared straight on with those hard black shaman's eyes, a look that stopped him cold. It was the inviolable stare of an extremely tough man.

The Don Juan described in *The Teachings* was born in the Southwest in 1891. At about the age of eight, he traveled with thousands of other Sonoran families to central Mexico. Mexican soldiers beat and killed his mother for no clear reason and then loaded him on a train heading south. His father, who had been shot and wounded by the soldiers and

jammed into the train, died en route to Central Mexico, where Don Juan grew up and lived until about 1940 when he moved north.

“One of the problems with Don Juan,” says Meighan, “and one of the reasons there is criticism of him as an informant is that he himself is a unique individual. He is not really a member of any tribal society. His parents were not members of any tribal group, so he’s lived part of the time among California Indians and part of the time among Mexican Indians. He’s not a pure Yaqui. And, moreover, he is the type of individual who raised himself to be an intellectual. I’ve met other Indians like this, but they are rare. You don’t find the average person who is a philosopher or thinker and concerns himself with matters except on a very superficial level.”

In mid-December 1960, after some reading and preparation, Carlos traveled to Don Juan’s house, but it wasn’t until the following June that his apprenticeship really started. During that first six months, Carlos saw Don Juan on various occasions, but always as an anthropological observer and not as an apprentice. First, it was to get information for the paper in Meighan’s class and then, with the professor’s encouragement, he continued the association with more than a vague notion that the material was publishable.

The Indian informant was not identified in his paper for the California Ethnography class. The name given to his benefactor in the later books was the pseudonym Juan Matus, hence Don Juan, a name as common in Mexico as John Smith in the United States. Meighan didn’t hear the name until about 1966 and many of Carlos’s friends got their first real information about the mysterious Indian only after the University of California edition of *The Teachings* arrived in the bookstores at UCLA in 1968. But Carlos had decided on the name Don Juan Matus before 1963. He and Adrian Gerritsen were having lunch at a Third Avenue café in Los Angeles in early 1963, when the conversation turned to Central American Indians. Through the Mormon Church,

Gerritsen had become involved with programs to help Indians on reservations in Utah, California, New Mexico and Arizona.

"I was wearing a turquoise tie-piece and he became interested in my knowledge of the Indians," Gerritsen recalls. "He told me of a Don Juan who had been a medicine man. Carlos took a number of trips to his meeting place and they became friends. Don Juan then confided in Carlos and Carlos was making arrangements to go see this man and others of his group the coming summer. Carlos told me he was going to write about this man and his fantastic history, but he wouldn't say any more."

Carlos says he began taking notes on June 23, 1961. The rules were simple enough and remained essentially unchanged throughout the apprenticeship. There would be no photographs and no tape recordings. In the early going, Carlos took notes covertly, and later, relying on memory, reconstructed entire conversations and incidents. After the note-taking became generally accepted by Don Juan, Carlos was able to put down detailed and voluminous accounts of their conversations, complete with date, so that readers could follow chronologically the slow and agonizing development from Western student and rationalist to apprentice, believer and flat-out magic man himself.

There are, however, a few nagging problems that always rear up when one attempts to reconcile what Carlos says happened and what actually appears to have happened. For example, did Don Juan really deliver a dissertation on Jimson weed, the power plant that plays an important role in preparing the initiate for the state of nonordinary reality? If so, when did Carlos hear it?

Don Juan's instructions appear to have come well before Wednesday, August 23, 1961, the date listed in *The Teachings*. At least, Carlos knew the material before then, because he had written it down in his paper for Meighan. His undergraduate paper included all the talk about the weed's four heads, Don Juan's admonition that the plant gives men a taste of power, the significance of the roots, the cooking



process, the ritual of preparation—it was all there, things nobody else was getting, information Carlos says he got in 1961, but already had from somewhere the year before.

“I think now, in retrospect, the reason he got that scoop on *Datura* is because *Datura* is not really very important in the frame of reference of his informant,” says Meighan. “It’s one of the less powerful things in the guy’s stock of powerful knowledge, and therefore when Carlos showed up on the scene and was extremely interested, he dribbled out a little information, without feeling he was getting into anything.”

The problem, then, is whether Carlos’s dates really mean anything at all, or whether they are another smokescreen. It’s possible that his informant in the undergraduate paper was not Don Juan, but somebody else who outlined details of something that Don Juan repeated later. But Carlos acts as though it is all new in the first book, as though he’d never heard the *Datura* knowledge before.

To make things even more confusing, Carlos says *Datura* wasn’t even the first drug he learned about from his Indian informant. His first drug experience was with peyote, he wrote in *The Teachings*, and it came weeks before the *Datura* conversations. But if that was true, if Carlos actually learned about peyote before he learned about *Datura*, then why wasn’t that in his undergraduate paper to Meighan? Why did he wait until his book was published, to jumble the chronology and present what appears to be a gradual initiation into the ways of shamans? It is possible that Carlos’s first book, and presumably those that followed, was a pastiche of fact and imagination, a collection of information gleaned from the deserts of Arizona, California and Mexico as well as the libraries of UCLA, and then assembled in a readable story form. It is also possible that the books he has written are careful and reasonably accurate records of his years as an apprentice.

The only thing for sure was that the Carlos Castaneda of the real world was making trips away from the apartment through the rest of 1960 to talk with the Indians. He was spending less time at home on

South Detroit and only occasionally had friends over, and even then he didn't seem too interested in the current occult news. There was still some talk of Puharich, but Carlos's interest in astral projection, telepathy, ESP cards and the rest of it was on the wane. For a while, he'd try to explain the importance of his trips to me, but I wasn't particularly interested. The only thing I knew was that he wasn't around the apartment very much any more and I didn't like it.

One afternoon he came in from the desert, with a bundle of what appeared to be dried *Datura*, though I couldn't be sure. He wanted to try an experiment and so he had me lie on the couch, while he lit the bundle with the gas burner on the stove and then he began waving the whole smoking flambeau back-and-forth near my head, telling me to inhale the smoke and just let myself go. Carlos wanted me just to float and free-associate; he wanted me to say whatever came into my head. So I began talking about the curtains or something as the room started folding in on itself, and the figure of Carlos started fading milky-blue against the wall, just nodding and writing in that yellow note pad, writing every streaming sentence I said.

When I woke up a few hours later, I asked Carlos what had happened. But he didn't seem very anxious to talk about it. He acted, in fact, as though the whole episode had been quite unimportant. He wouldn't show me the notes he had taken or explain what his grand experiment was all about. It was the only time he ever brought drugs into the apartment.

Carlos and I began fighting more often, sometimes about inconsequential things, but usually about his frequent absences during trips to Indian reservations. Finally, he decided to move out and get a room somewhere else for a while, at least until his research was completed. So in July, he gathered his typewriter, his boxes of Latin poetry and biographies, his writing and sculpting gear and he returned to the Marietta Apartments on Madison Avenue. Under the circumstances, it was a better situation, because he told me he really

was into something significant and he warned of more irregular hours. I wasn't very happy with him bringing weeds into my apartment either; so as the new school year began, I left the apartment on South Detroit and got a place on Willowbrook, not too far from Carlos.

I was certain the marriage would never work. We had been together just six months and already he was lost for the weekends on his field trips, unable or unwilling to talk about exactly what he was doing. Having met a slender blond businessman named Adrian Gerritsen, I pressed Carlos for a divorce. He refused. But in the weeks that followed our separation, I hammered away and finally, after much harping, was successful in getting Carlos to agree. Assuring me it was a simple procedure, Carlos drove me back to Tijuana, back to the same official who had married us less than a year before, and he explained we wanted a divorce this time. Pulling the old man aside, Carlos explained the whole situation and had him prepare some papers of divorce which everybody signed. Carlos paid the man, explained that the divorce would be final as soon as the papers were legally processed, and we drove back to Los Angeles.

Carlos began spending more time with his field work that fall and winter. It was during this period he says he was introduced to *Mescalito*, the power and teacher and protector in peyote. Carlos and Don Juan discussed the encounter with Mescalito, who had assumed the shape of a dog that barked, wrestled and played with Carlos—a good sign. By August 1961, he wrote that his relationship with Don Juan was quite good, but his initial forays into the magical world of his Indian often left him in melancholy. There was a certain enormity to the system and a complexity in the ritual which Carlos found increasingly oppressive. With the exception of classes, much of his time was being taken up with field work. He almost never saw me, hearing from friends that I had married Gerritsen shortly after we separated and was now pregnant.

He thought a lot about me that summer, wondering if his work with the Indians was important enough to lose me. During the early going, Carlos tried not to skip a weekend in the desert, but he decided against leaving Los Angeles the weekend after his initial peyote experience, because it looked as though I might have my baby anytime. I did—on Saturday, August 12, at the Hollywood Presbyterian Olmsted Memorial Hospital. I vaguely remember Carlos visiting the hospital downtown after C.J. was born.

A couple of years later, Carlos hit me with the news: we weren't really divorced after all. The Mexican divorce had been a charade, something to appease me while he did his field work. He intended to tell me sooner or later. How could he know that I would go off with Adrian Gerritsen almost immediately? How could he have known?

Sitting there with me, Carlos explained that we were still legally married and, furthermore, claimed the boy as his own. I was stunned. My head started spinning. It was weeks before I grasped it and months before the three of us—Carlos and Adrian Gerritsen and I—reached any kind of understanding of the situation. It was more than a sticky wicket, it was a damn disaster to my way of thinking, and it took nearly a year of visits by Carlos at my new apartment on Doheny Drive before I began to feel differently about it. From the beginning, Carlos developed a strong attachment to C.J., whom he described as his spiritual son. He delighted in watching little C.J. grow. At ten months, C.J. was walking with a confident gait, then talking. Carlos began taking the boy to campus and introducing him to students and other friends of his own. When somebody inevitably would point out that C.J. was blond with blue eyes while Carlos was dark and had curly hair, he would shrug and say the boy was a product of his recessive genes. Carlos never mentioned me. The mother, he said, was a Scandinavian woman who lived somewhere off campus, a woman whose description fit that of Gib Edwards, whom he had known in L.A. before meeting me.

Meighan remembers the story, as does Mrs. Lipton, wife of the author, who was working as a receptionist at the University of California Press in the basement of the Powell Library at UCLA. She recalls Carlos bringing C.J. to the office several times while negotiations were underway for publication of his first book. But discussions of his personal life usually ended after a mention of the Scandinavian mother and the boy, whom he called Carlton Jeremy Castaneda.

At his insistence, I signed documents with the California Department of Public Health that Carlos was the legal father. A new birth certificate was issued stating the child's name was Carlton Jeremy Castaneda. Carlos had to sign papers, too, swearing that he was the father. Interestingly, he identified himself as a student who had been born in Peru.

"The reason why I love that 'chocho' (Carlos' affectionate name for Carlton Jeremy Castaneda) is that he is a projection of you and will carry on," he told me one evening. "I hope to teach him and work with him and bring about all the things that I'd hoped you would be." Carlos could be effusive and dramatic when he wanted to be, but he really meant it when he pledged to dedicate his field work to C.J. It was a side of Carlos that I had never seen, the loving parent who genuinely cared about C.J. I knew the flatterer, the ingratiating liar, but this business of doting on C.J. by spending hours playing at the apartment or taking him to campus was new. He never seemed so content as when he was with C.J. In real life, C.J. had brought a certain focus and meaning. In his books, he was vaguely defined as "my little boy," the one who would become the final link in Carlos's convoluted allegory, the last connection with the real world to be severed in order to become a sorcerer.

While all this was happening, Carlos says Don Juan delivered his gentle prohibition against attachments, his shaman's warning. He explained that Carlos's apprenticeship would include a process of "erasing personal history," which meant breaking all ties with the conventional real world. In December, the Indian instructed Carlos that he

must slice off pieces of his past, little by little, until he finally had no history, no ties, no boundaries—until he became an absolutely free, sentient being, moving in a constant state of presence. Once one creates a fog around the past, Don Juan said, the future is wide open, mysterious, wildly exciting.

Of course, this was something Carlos had been doing for years anyway, albeit for other reasons, and on a rudimentary level. Carlos had come to find that people have definite ideas about you and how you act, and he knew when that happened, you became inextricably tied to their preconceptions and desires. What the Indian was saying was create a fog and become lost in it and no one could take you for granted.

Begin with simple things, Don Juan advised, the details of personal everyday activities like appointments, for example, and then move into removing the background, the personal relationships. José Bracamonte had called Carlos a liar but Don Juan was saying that only those with personal history can lie. And he was saying something more, something beyond Carlos's notion that there are no biological imperatives and that the stories about family and home country were "emotionally" true, even if the facts were false—the old Indian was saying there *are* no imperatives. It was the most serious sorcery of all, and what it meant was giving up relatives and close friends and C.J. It meant giving up C.J., because once Carlos got into the father-son relationship he would be promising things he could not deliver: failing to keep appointments, offering affection that was not really his to give.

In the field, Carlos learned about three drugs used to jerk one out of the rut of ordinary perception: peyote and its power Mescalito; *Datura* and its ally power; mushrooms, *Psilocybe mexicana*, much like the flesh of the gods that had produced Wasson's "ineffable visions" in southern Mexico, about six years before. The ally that Don Juan spoke of was not a drug at all, but a power that could be used as an aide or advisor, or as a fountain of strength. The ally was shapeless and could take most any form depending on the initiate's frame of mind.

There were spirits, omens and powers everywhere. But Carlos wrote about them in the classical sense—as part of a *curandero's* ancient belief system and so the whole adventure took on a certain respectability that the flat-out ESP magic mushroom experiments of Puharich and the rest of the occult crowd could not approach.

When Carlos told Don Juan about the white falcon back home in Cajamarca and about how he couldn't bring himself to shoot it, Don Juan nodded and assured him that was the right thing. The bird had been an omen and Carlos's Death had warned him not to shoot. Death and transformation were important shamanic ideas. Death was a being, a counselor who taps one when the time is up, an overseer who reduces everything to the egalitarian plain of mortality. It was an old rule that Death's tap was imminent and Carlos wrote that it was Don Juan who instructed him to live always under that impression.

There was also a lot of mystery surrounding the idea of transformation. In November 1961, Carlos left the campus and drove to Don Juan's house, as had become the weekend routine. He found the old man's daughter-in-law, a Mexican woman from Yucatan, tending Don Juan's dislocated ankle. He had fallen or said he had been pushed by a woman, *la Catalina*, the sorceress of power. According to Don Juan, she had transformed herself into a blackbird. Carlos was incredulous at first, but listened anyway. *La Catalina's* ability to transmogrify wasn't anything new to *brujos* who have long understood human-animal transformation and believed that the soul can separate from the physical body and make a journey. Just a few hundred miles from Carlos Castaneda's hometown, in the Ucayali region of eastern Peru, the Conibo-Shipibo Indians say it's common after taking ayahuasca for the shaman's soul to leave the body in the form of a bird. The Amahuasca to the east in the Peruvian Montana say the same thing, as do dozens of other tribes like the Zaparo of eastern Ecuador and the Siona of Columbia and the Campa Indians of Peru. So Don Juan was just one in a long line of

shamans passing on knowledge of the gift of flight. At one point, even Carlos took wing.

On July 6, 1963, Carlos wrote that he rubbed a *Datura* paste over his entire body and, taking long springy steps across the desert, suddenly shot off the ground in a great booming elastic thrust, out into the ozone, the great purple emptiness of the Mexican sky, and he says he careened wildly through the air with his arms folded against his sides and his prognathic jaw jutting out front. Carlos writes as though it was Don Juan who first made the link between *Datura* and the Yaqui notion of flying. But, in fact, it was a friend, anthropologist Michael Harner, not Don Juan, who first mentioned to Carlos he'd read something about Yaquis smearing the stuff over their stomachs "to see visions." The idea intrigued Harner, who in 1961 had taken ayahuasca with the Conibo Indians of eastern Peru, and so he asked that Carlos investigate the possibility that *Datura* paste was the ayahuasca of the Yaquis. It was all new to Carlos when Harner mentioned it one day on campus, but six years later Carlos not only had investigated reports of such a ritual, but also had participated in it. He wrote in his first book a long, detailed account of flying under the influence of a *Datura* paste that was introduced, prescribed and made entirely by his own Don Juan.

It was clear to Carlos this kind of thing was going to make great reading. He felt he was closer to...it...than any other anthropologist or pharmacologist had ever been, closer than old Louis Lewin and his *Datura* studies or Weston LaBarre and his peyote cult or even his friend Mike Harner and the ayahuasca test. But the only problem was that he was running out of money. He needed time to research and write, to bring all his imagination and flair to field notes and pages of library research, but classes and jobs were stealing his time. He wanted to provide for C.J., finish graduate school and continue his work in the desert, but lack of money was making it hard. "He was starving to death," Meighan remembers. He took a job as a taxi driver and then as a clerk in a liquor store. Carlos knew implicitly that he could put together a



monograph of such insight and originality, a subtle blend of art and anthropology, that the entire department would be awed. The question was, would he ever be able to do it?

Carlos took C.J. for a weekend in the fall of 1963. I often let him take C.J. for a few days and the two of them would go over to Carlos's apartment or to UCLA, where they would eat at the student union and make the rounds of various faculty members and fellow students. But this weekend was different. When he returned with C.J. three days later, Carlos told me he had taken C.J. to see his Indian friend out in the desert. He had told Don Juan about his "chocho," whom he loved very much, and he talked at length about all he hoped the boy would accomplish in the future. But he was worried about money. Carlos had hoped to send C.J. to a private school where there would be lots of individual attention, so he'd get the best education possible. And then there was the matter of erasing personal history and how that would affect his relationship with C.J.

Don Juan listened to all this, Carlos told me; he listened to all of Carlos's hopes and apprehensions, and then he just sort of nodded there and smiled. Don Juan looked down at C.J., who was playing in the dust. "Don't worry about the little crow," said the Indian. "It doesn't matter where he is or what he's doing. He'll be what he's supposed to be."

And what a scene this was! Here was Don Juan, Carlos Castaneda and little two-year-old Carlton Jeremy Castaneda, all squatting on the desert with this strange panoramic neo-galactic corona rising above everything. Carlos was in the depths of some intellectual battle between the indulgent comforts of the conventional world and the values of the Separate Reality, and his *brujo* answered everything like he always did, with a perfect little shamanic aperçu—He'll be what he's supposed to be. But of course!

One day when C.J. was two years old, he and Carlos were at UCLA standing on the steps of Haines Hall and the boy looked up at the sky

and said, "Look at the sun. It's old and weak. Tomorrow morning, it will be young and beautiful."

This was the kind of innocent, almost primitive perception and phrasing that delighted Carlos and he told me about it that night. He was amazed about a year later when I told him how one afternoon C.J. and I were riding along the San Diego Freeway when suddenly, C.J. clamped his hands over his ears and told me to stop the music on the radio. C.J. said it was the same music "that was playing when they killed the Germanics." Whatever the explanation, Carlos started talking about C.J. as if he were a fledging California *brujo* or something.

Interestingly, C.J.'s reference to the young sun and the old, dying sun seemed to make its way into one of Carlos's books, *Journey to Ixtlan*. Only it didn't exactly get written the way it happened. In the book, it is Don Juan, not Carlton Jeremy, who talks about it.

According to *Journey to Ixtlan*, the two of them, Don Juan and Carlos, sit and watch a blazing sunset one evening that seems to inflame the earth like a bonfire. Then they climb to the peak of some igneous rock and talk about the sunset, which Don Juan calls an omen, a personal omen for Carlos, the creature of the night. In Don Juan's own experience, the omen has always been the young sun, but for Carlos it is the dying sun that crashed through the low-lying clouds to rage in its final moments.

Clearly, part of the conversation was fake, but "Don Juan" is real. He was a real Indian, somebody Carlos actually was making trips to see. It's just that once Castaneda got to the point of putting it all down in a readable form, the Don Juan of his books became a different creature, a broad and omniscient construction made up of equal parts real Indian, pure Castaneda imagination, library research and dozens of conversations and experiences with people like C.J., myself, Mike Harner, colleagues at UCLA, his grandfather and others.

## 16

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In the field, Don Juan was teaching technique and philosophy, opening his great psychic shaman's bag of mysteries. There was "crossing your eyes," for example, which Carlos described as gradually forcing the eyes to see two separate and distinct images. It was tantamount to see two different arrangements of the world, two perceptions of the world, or maybe it was two worlds all the time. The technique was supposed to allow one to detect subtle changes in the surroundings, slight alterations invisible to normal eyes locked on a single worldview. So, when Don Juan started talking about the twilight being the crack between the worlds, he was referring to the way everything important falls between two distinct perceptions of the world.

Along with "crossing your eyes," Carlos says he learned about *not-doing*, a process of forgetting standard distinctions that everybody recognizes like, say, "pebble" as opposed to "boulder" or tree against the sky. The idea was to just let the great flowing Slipstream come through. It was a process of repealing socialization, of becoming primitively perceptive and of understanding that time, motion, color and the distinctions of space and shadow are the same. What really mattered was *stopping the world* and thereby achieving what the *brujos* and the South American magic men had achieved through the guidance of *Datura* and ayahuasca, which was to *see*.

But sometimes all this runic jargon had an anesthetic effect after awhile. What it all boiled down to was a verification of the old bro-mide that things seldom are what they seem. *The Teachings* say the world of common sense reality is a product of social consensus and the only way to get close to the real thing, is to strip away the explanations and assumptions that limit our vision. In essence, Don Juan was talking phenomenology, which was interesting, because that was the field Carlos had begun gravitating toward at UCLA, largely because of Harold Garfinkel, one of the nations' leading phenomenologists and a professor of his. In the simplest of terms, Garfinkel taught that socialization was a process of convincing each individual that generally agreed upon descriptions actually define limits of the real world. What he was saying was that people generally agree on something being real and true and, therefore, it *becomes* real and true, the view of a few random schizophrenics, catatonics and autistic children notwithstanding.

As a graduate student, Carlos found himself on the receiving end of some rather sophisticated phenomenology in the classroom. He went so far as to read and discuss passages from *Ideas* by German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl with Don Juan. A student of Husserl who knew of Carlos's interest gave him a piece of ebony that had once sat on Husserl's writing desk. Carlos says he passed it on to Don Juan and remembers the Indian fondling it, much the way Husserl had done a generation before. And then Don Juan placed it among his treasury of power objects used in divination. It seemed so perfect that somehow a paper-weight of one of the century's leading phenomenologists should be passed back in time, back through the shamanic sweep, to be used in flat-out bugaboo desert magic.

As he worked with the Indians in the field, Carlos also studied the conventional academicians, people such as Talcott Parsons and the linguistic philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. He began attaching classical terms to the phenomena of Don Juan's world.

"I have begun to understand sorcery in terms of Talcott Parsons's idea of glosses," Carlos says. "A gloss is a total system of perception and language. For instance, this room is a gloss. We have lumped together a series of isolated perceptions—floor, ceiling, window, lights, rugs, etc.—to make a single totality. But we had to be taught to put the world together in this way. A child reconnoiters the world with few preconceptions until he is taught to see things the way that corresponds to the descriptions everybody agrees on. The world is an agreement. The system of glossing seems to be somewhat like walking. We have to learn to walk, but once we learn, there is only one way to walk. We have to learn to see and to talk, but once we learn, we are subject to the syntax of language and the mode of perception it contains."

The classroom work was giving him a new language and an understanding to deal with the results of his fieldwork, but in language there were limits. Carlos says he read a bit of Wittgenstein to Don Juan one day. The old man just laughed.

"Your friend Wittgenstein tied the noose too tight around the neck so he can't go anywhere."

At the end of each year, Don Juan and Carlos collected the ingredients for the "little smoke," completing a strange sort of cycle in which they would collect, prepare and store the mushroom mixture. The procedure was something Carlos says he learned the first year of his apprenticeship, and then in December 1962, he went through the whole ritual himself. By the following December, it was time to start the cycle again.

The secret smoking mixture, prepared with exacting ritual, included as its most important ingredient the little mushrooms, *Psilocybe mexicana*. He first smoked it on December 26, 1963, using the slender wooden pipe Don Juan had given him. Sitting in the dim yellow half-light of a kerosene lamp in Don Juan's house in Sonora, Carlos lit the mixture in the pipe with a small charcoal from the adobe stove and almost without realizing it, began slipping back through the narcotic drifts. The smoke altered his sense of perspective, of hot and cold. He stared out through closed eyelids at flashes of light on a blood red field and then a great blast of faces and scenery, flashing intermittently, slamming by in one mad vertiginous rush. Suddenly, he was lifted into the air and out through the ozone with tremendous speed; then slower, like a feather in the wind, floating back and forth in a slow rocking-horse pattern back to earth.

He slept for two days afterwards and when he finally woke up, the Indian didn't seem disposed to talk about it. Don Juan would say only

that the mushroom had transformed him gently. It had given him power to lose the body and soar, which was exactly what happened to Carlos, or at least it felt that way. Don Juan explained that's all there is in reality anyway—what one feels.

And at the root it was all the same. It didn't matter whether it was a vision of the Peruvian Slipstream or Don Juan's Separate Reality, because they were identical, the same total-body perception of everything and the same apprehension of the world without interpretation—just pure flowing interconnected world. Wittgenstein knew it. Huxley knew it.

When Joan Daugherty met Carlos Castaneda for the first time in the spring of 1962, she was impressed more with his quiet, serious nature than with any burning ambition to complete his work on the Indians. He rarely talked about the project. It was C.J. he was usually talking about, or about Joan herself. I was still quite interested in astrology and psychic phenomena, but Carlos was clearly on to other things.

Joan didn't ask a lot of questions or push Carlos on subjects he didn't seem ready to talk about. That's the reason Carlos felt so comfortable around her, and also because Joan was interested in painting and sculpture. She painted a pair of matching clowns in oil for C.J.'s bedroom, and Carlos, looking at them one afternoon at my apartment in Beverly Hills, admitted he wished he had more time for his art.

"He had very deep feelings," Joan says. "There was so much more to him than you could actually see. He seemed to know things, he seemed to have a sixth sense. When you were talking with him, it was as though everything was being programmed through a computer. He absorbed everything, every topic. He analyzed not what you said, but what you meant to say. There were times when you wondered if he was putting on a front. He seemed to read into all occasions, no matter how trivial, some kind of significance."

When Joan told Carlos and me in 1964 that she was getting married, Carlos seemed surprised for some reason. For a few days he didn't say anything about it. Then one evening after all the congratulations were in, he said he was elated by the news. It was if he had to take things seriously, as if he was compelled to study all the ramifications before he could offer an opinion.

"You'll be a good mother," Carlos told her solemnly.

There it was. The ultimate virtue. Carlos appreciated it that Joan never questioned his honesty. She never rolled her eyes around when he'd talk about some little incident and attach this great important meaning to it, this...significance...as if he were seeing things apart from everybody else. She believed him, and he appreciated it. Carlos was trying to figure out exactly what truth was anyway. There was emotional truth, factual truth, phenomenological truth, the truth of *brujos* like Don Juan and the greasy truth of short-order cooks. Everybody seemed to know what was true, and it was all different, and so who was José Bracamonte to come out and call him a "great liar"?

For all his respect for the sober truth and objectivity of academia, Carlos was still fascinated by the mystics. In retrospect, Puharich and Rhine were not the visionaries he'd once thought, but Huxley had held up well. There was somebody else who had caught his attention. As he sat there on my couch, listening patiently and smiling sympathetically at my talk of Neville, at that exact moment another philosopher-magician had come on the scene. In the beginning, he seemed to have all the credentials, a position in academia and a kinky streak of abandon, and Carlos began reading all he could find about Dr. Timothy Leary.

Even before Leary was thrown out of Harvard in 1963, Carlos had taken special note of the strange doctor's psilocybin experiments, which were an outgrowth of Leary's first drug experience eating *Psilocybe mexicana* during 1960 in Cuemavaca, Mexico. Leary and his Harvard colleague Richard Alpert had founded the IF-IF, International Federation for Inner Freedom, with the whole effort



aimed at “multi-family transcendental living” at Newton Center near Boston. The idea came from Huxley’s Utopian novel *Island*, in which the futurist Pala Islanders ate visionary mushrooms, practiced Tantric Buddhism, hypnotism, eugenics, painless childbirth and multi-parental upbringing of children. By the fall of 1960, there was an informal network of scientists and scholars who had taken psychedelics. Leary saw them in three basic groups: the detached philosophers such as Huxley and Wasson who understood the weighty theological significance of chemical revelation; the doctors with visions of a psychedelic renaissance; and the less prudent god seekers who, like Leary himself, were out to turn on the world.

From the beginning, Leary and Alpert were under pressure to keep it clean. Harvard officials wanted the psychedelic research within the strictures of convention and laboratory respectability. But for Leary it was not enough. The freewheeling LSD experiments and subsequent publicity prompted Harvard president Nathan Pusey to invoke for the first time since the mid-19th Century the power to fire a faculty member for “grave misconduct and neglect of duty.” By the time Leary and Alpert were thrown out, they had given out 3,500 doses of psilocybin to 400 subjects, mostly graduate students in psychiatry and theology and doctors and artists. Hobbled by government restrictions and ostracized by academia, the enlightened left for a small hotel in the balmy Mexican fishing village of Zihuantanejo, where IF-IF set up a training center. But this strange drug-using enclave was viewed with a suspicious eye by the Mexican authorities, and on June 13, 1963, the government gave the twenty Americans in Leary’s party five days to get out.

The beleaguered Leary and Alpert, Leary’s two sons and other couples returned to the estates and moved into a secluded and spacious 3,000-acre estate in Millbrook, New York, just northeast of Poughkeepsie. The group called itself Castalia now, after the intellectuals’ colony in Hesse’s *Magister Ludi*. There they hunkered down on sweet Mother Earth for some extremely serious mind expansion. They

were editing a quarterly by the summer of 1964, *Psychedelic Review*, and were performing lots of public relations schemes—like sprucing up the lawns and planting three acres of corn and other vegetables. It was all quite wholesome, all very reasonable and scholarly, and this great blanket of earnest convention was spread out over the whole endeavor.

Leary understood all too well what the messiahs had always known—that it's not enough to see the light; you've got to *market the message*. And so he did. He entertained the new LSD noblesse, he proselytized fanatically and traveled to the West Coast and into New York to see friends. It was there, down in the East Village, smack in the center of the hippest community on earth, that Carlos Castaneda ran into the great Tim Leary. Carlos, in town to visit some friends, had become quite interested in Leary by this time. Word of his Harvard experiments, Leary's forced departure and dash to Mexico, and the subsequent return to Millbrook had been a big topic of conversation among the students at UCLA. You couldn't go a day at Haines Hall without hearing about him.

Carlos would come home and when he got over to my apartment to play with C.J., he'd talk about Leary and his psychedelics and his liberation of experiments from the lab. This business of moving the whole thing out of the lab and into private apartments or out into the desert or someplace, anyplace, everyplace, seemed quite important to Carlos. Liberation from the gloomy eggshell walls. The old farts just snorted at the idea.

But the thing was, Leary's experiments had the vague look of legitimate scientific inquiry. At least in Carlos' mind they did, and so he paid particular attention to Leary. Leary was rising on the East Coast as the hottest thing in psychedelia—a visionary whose time had come; Carlos kept close watch on the ascension from the West Coast. He read about him in *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Life* magazines, in specialized publications and journals and he talked about Leary in conversations with friends. Carlos had begun thinking a lot about Leary, even when he did his own

psychedelic research with the Indians; and so it was a real surprise to run into the real thing one night at a party in the East Village.

Carlos had the preconceived notion that he and Leary were somehow on the same wavelength, that both were scientists probing social unknowns. Carlos was wrong.

For one thing, Leary and Alpert were stars here at the party and Carlos was a nobody. Ego was the game here, not science, and everybody was huddling around Leary who was slouched down in a peach wingback chair with that brilliant toothy grin of his. They were talking about mushrooms and acid, so when Carlos interjected something about his experiences with the Indians, nobody paid much attention. It was as if his words disrupted the flow of things. This was no gathering to talk about cognitive dissonance; Leary was preaching acid revolution. He was babbling on about the "elixir of life" and the "draught of immortal revelation." All the hip young scholars in bleached Levis were nodding, while Leary just sort of jangled at the joints there in the chair, going on in an eloquent stream of consciousness conversation about his mystical tantric crusading vision. He talked about the tantrics, the demons, the Sufis, the Gnostics, the hermetics, the sadhus...

Leary was stoned. Carlos shook his head and looked disgusted. Leary must have seen it, because he sat up in the chair and glowered out from behind half-closed eyes, looking carefully at the way the light bounced off the Orlon in Carlos's suit and the way it was buttoned in the middle and at the Don Loper pastel shirt and that stringy little black tie with a knot the size of a grape at the collar.

"What's your astrological sign?" asked Tim Leary. Carlos mumbled something about being a Capricorn. Leary nodded and sneered. "A structure freak," he said. Then he turned to Alpert and giggled and teased him about being a Jewish queer. And Alpert, in turn, wasn't saying anything, but just sitting in the corner, meditating in a long cloak making a great serious godhead-like face. Alpert reached into a broad

kangaroo pocket in his robe and pulled out apples and bananas which he handed to everybody. And he wasn't even smiling.

The scene was a crude parody of itself. The luminaries and hangers-on were actually bumping into each other in the center of the room and they all had these horrible red rims around the eyes that always come in the final stages of a bleak amphetamine daze. The great Leary was indulging in incoherent revelations and Alpert was in the corner giving away bananas. People were caroming around. It was all just too hip. Carlos Castaneda, the one in the Orlon suit, decided it was time to go.

Carlton Jeremy started school in September 1964, but not in public school. I enrolled him in Saint Sophia's Montessori School in Santa Monica, an elitist academy which Carlos thought would afford his "chocho" the best education. Carlos had saved some money from odd jobs and used it to help pay the tuition, a stiff \$120 a month. He told me that his money was part of a grant he had received at UCLA for work with the *brujos*. Actually, he was in grave financial shape, and having considerable problems making enough money to stay in school and keep C.J. at Saint Sophia's. For a while, he sold academic books office-to-office at the university. He visited various departments and talked to professors and department heads about the merits of the Oxford Union products. The job kept him on campus and, at the same time, provided enough money to eat and pay the rent.

In early September, Carlos had his last encounter with Mescalito before ending his apprenticeship. It came during a series of four peyote sessions called *mitotes* in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, just across the Texas border. *Mitotes*, of course, were nothing new to scholars. Three hundred years before, Bernardino Sahagun, the Spanish priest, investigated the peyote ceremonies and his classic work on the Teochichimeca desert hunters had become standard reading for serious anthropological students. Sahagun had watched the northern desert hunters gather in the boiling yellow dust 300 miles northeast of the

Sierra Madre mountains where they would sing all night and all day, weeping and extolling the sacred hallucinogenic *peyotl* of the Aztecs. The Huichols had used peyote to find Tatewari; Don Juan sought Mescalito. But it was all the same: the diviners, the mystics, the Indians of the sixteenth century, the Guatemalan mushroom cults, the Aryan Soma hunters, the Legendary Shaman, they were all searching for the same understanding that everybody is plugged into the divine scheme of things.

Much of this had been documented by scholars from Sahagun to LaBarre. It was down on paper, scattered in a dozen different scholarly journals and a hundred textbooks and always the scholars explained the magic of the shaman in the solemn grey tones of respectability.

And so the idea of finding Mescalito during a four-day *mitote* in Chihuahua, Mexico wasn't exactly a new idea. He knew the thing that would make his paper important anthropology would be a full discussion of exactly how the *peyoteros* and the apprentices communicate at a *mitote*. Carlos assumed it was achieved through a complex series of signals. He had heard stories about how the participants saw and heard essentially the same thing during those all night sessions, while all the time remaining perfectly silent. There had to be a series of cues and Carlos went into the *mitote* determined to decipher them. For three days, he watched them sing and chant together but saw no cues. On Sunday, the fourth day of the *mitote*, about the time he chewed his fourteenth peyote button, Carlos heard a dull bombardier's rumble. It was the sound that the Indians said marked the presence of Mescalito, and as Carlos looked over the old grey-faced Indians sitting around him, he knew they had heard it too. The thing was, it wasn't a real sound but only a rumbling way back in his head, so it was impossible that they heard it. There was no cue, no signal he could make out, but everybody's face shone with the same understanding that the spirit of Mescalito was somewhere present.

Maybe his brain was just scrambled with peyote, but for some reason, he seemed to understand what the shamans meant when they said the entity inside *Lophophora williamsii* was out there, regardless of oneself. It existed out there, out in the Slipstream. And suddenly Carlos had the sober thought that there was something terribly real, something terribly serious about the superstitions of the Indians.

As Carlos wrote about it later, he left the group and walked into the fields to find Mescalito. He sang the same song that he had learned in the circle and as he sang, Mescalito stepped out of a plant and stretched his long trumpet-like mouth to Carlos's ear and said something. It was his spiritual name. And as Carlos stood there in the backwaters of his peyote dream, a clear light illuminated the entire field in all directions and the silver-rimmed desert skyline burned in the East.

Carlos's years in the field had generated several hundred pages of field notes, some photographs, a brief 16-mm film and some tape-recorded interviews, most of which he later denied having. He had reworked his field notes all along, trying to put them into a more readable form.

Sometimes he had peaks of great confidence in the work, feeling the project would be published, probably as part of the UCLA monograph series on anthropology. But there were other times when he was depressed with his field work and with himself. That was a real question even in its broadest terms. After all, he had never discovered the cues and, worse, had become something of a believer himself in some of the more inexplicable elements of sorcery. It was hardly an attitude that would wash over in academia. He wrote in the first person with plenty of dialogue to make it interesting, but he added long expository paragraphs explaining in coldly rational terms exactly where he figured Don Juan was manipulating his consciousness or where some of the phenomena he saw were merely products of hallucination. The tentative plan was to finish graduate classes and then take exams in the fall of 1965 for a Master's degree, using his work with the Indians as his thesis.

But he ran out of money and, after an agonizing period of considering the options, he dropped out of UCLA.

One of my friends, Alberta Greenfield, was working on a book with me about the telephone company. Carlos agreed to help write and edit it. He hoped his share would be enough to return to graduate school and get his degree.

Alberta was a slender young woman with close-cropped brown hair, deep eyes, fine cheekbones and a serious look. She worked with me at Pacific Bell and between us we had more than a casual knowledge of how the sprawling utility operated, at least on the level of operator and caller. Our idea had been to write a book that included every conceivable scheme that people had come up with to rip off the telephone company in matters of installation, billing, long-distance phone calls, everything. The working title was *Dial Operator*. Alberta and I registered it with Writers Guild of America West in Hollywood. We took a humorous approach in the book, sometimes anecdotal, always light, as we covered the spectrum of devious rip-offs. We detailed dozens of ways to cheat on credit card calls. We outlined the possibilities and limitations of WATS lines. There were wild, convoluted schemes of unworkable dimension that we just dreamed up.

It was all there, the most unscrupulous assemblage of inside knowledge ever about the workings of the telephone company, at least the rudimentary workings. But the copy was shapeless and unwieldy. It needed a deft touch and Carlos agreed to help work on transition and continuity. It wasn't top-drawer anthropology, but it was something. Carlos quit, occasionally returning to campus but never telling anyone exactly what happened.

"It was assumed he was more or less a college drop-out type," says Dr. Meighan. "That pattern is very common around here. On the few occasions that I saw him, he told me he was working with an informant and was writing down his work. He asked if I'd look at it when he got finished and I said yes, I'd be happy to. I had the idea in the back of my



mind that he was like everybody else around here who was planning great things, but they never got written. This is a standard game among students, academicians and novelists.”

Carlos worked almost exclusively with Alberta on editing the book about the telephone company. My contribution had been mostly in the form of ideas and the work was far beyond that stage by the summer of 1965. All that was left was rearranging passages and chapters, tightening the prose, expanding on unclear sections and otherwise editing *Dial Operator* into a salable commodity. From the beginning, Carlos and Alberta didn't get along. For one thing, she was abrupt and disputatious, and she had this rawboned look and was always wearing chino pants and oxford cloth shirts, which Carlos hated. Their personalities clashed at once and they constantly argued. It was clear after a short time working on the book with Alberta that Carlos would never be able to finish it.

As Carlos tells it, his work with Don Juan and the Indians had reached its most serious and frightening level, frightening because all these doubts had begun to creep in about what was real and what was not. He had been experiencing brief flashes of disassociation, which he interpreted as shallow states of nonordinary reality. This was all happening at the same time he was becoming disenchanted with Alberta and the telephone book and also concerned about C.J.'s schooling and his own future. Carlos kept taking notes in the field and in the library and he kept writing at home, but the grand design of his anthropological novel was still scrambled in his brain. He had data, he had dramatic presence, he had brilliant characters—what he didn't have was a suitable denouement.

He was going crazy. Carlos would walk around Levering Avenue where he was living and then he'd go inside and sit down at the desk and stare at that pile of notes stacked up there at the edge of the desk and he'd just shake his head. Then right in the middle of everything, right in the middle of going absolutely bonkers from the pressure of

impending failure, just as everything was looking exceedingly grim, it came to him. He would simply go nuts. Just so! He would write down all his doubts and his flagging objectivity; he'd admit it all!

In January, he became a crow in a mindswimming hallucination. Crow's legs sprouted from his chin, wobbly at first, pushing out from the soft meat under the mandible. Then a long black tail grew from the back of the neck and a great crow's wings broke through the cheeks. A month later it happened again, only this time he actually flew. He and Don Juan talked about the experience for days, and they talked about Carlos's recurring agitation and anxiety. The only thing that had kept him sane was the understanding that his experiences with Don Juan were the product of two things: drugs and the shaman's subtle use of suggestion. But when Carlos tried to pin him down, he couldn't.

Gradually, he began to understand that there was more here than just...*hallucination*. There was more than being absolute man or absolute bird. *There was something else*. Maybe it was just that he was beginning to believe all this magic talk, or maybe some inexplicable middle ground really existed, a state of mind that was nonlinear and nonrational and otherwise nonsensical to the Western order of things. Either way, Carlos was the loser.

If he kept a sufficient distance between himself and the Indians, as Sahagun had, the result would be interesting and scholarly, but a woe-fully incomplete account. If, on the other hand, he fell feet first into this Separate Reality business, if suddenly he found himself seeing people as silver threads of light and so forth—if he went that route, then there would be a tremendous problem trying to sell the piece to the conservative faculty at UCLA. Tim Leary had flipped and lost his place in academia; Carlos wasn't so sure he was ready.

If there were any hopes of making a few dollars from the book with Alberta and me, they were effectively destroyed by the fall of 1965. Carlos stormed out of a session with Alberta, after she insulted him about something and he told me that if she wanted her book published,

she could get another editor. And suddenly, there was nothing: no book, no school, an unfinished stack of notes on the *brujos*. Carlos returned to the desert.

In the final months of what he'd later call the first cycle of his apprenticeship, Carlos wrote about sitting cross-legged on his power spot near Don Juan's house, singing his Mescalito songs and otherwise drifting along in the nebulous shamanic flow. After a few hours, Don Juan yelled to Carlos from inside the house, only it wasn't the real Don Juan at all—the voice was different and the figure that lumbered around the porch was heavy and lethargic. The Indian had a cold dull look and he made strange sounds at the door, gargling, whining and pretending to choke. He called for Carlos, who stayed out and the Don Juan figure finally left.

Later, in the early morning dawn, Don Juan stepped out onto the porch and stretched broadly. Except this wasn't Don Juan either, but someone else who had somehow assumed his form, or something like that. Carlos grabbed a rock in his right hand, assumed the fighting position and then suddenly screamed and hurled the stone straight at the Don Juan figure, which wobbled and shrieked and staggered into the bushes. A few hours later, Don Juan, the real one, stepped out of the house.

It was a strange and frightening illusion. According to Carlos, the explanation was simply a *diablero* or witch who had assumed Don Juan's form and was trying to fool Carlos. This was all very logical in a sorcerer's world—one person taking another person's form and so forth. But to the rationalist, there seemed only three possible explanations. One was simply that Don Juan, fully aware that he was staging an elaborate charade, went through the motions of being somebody else in order to teach Carlos some lesson. Or, perhaps Don Juan wasn't really aware of his own movements on the porch. Maybe he had fallen back into some deep religious funk, some schizophrenic other self unknown to the "real" Don Juan. If that were the case, the explanation about *diableros*

taking over his body wasn't exactly a lie—the old man actually believed it. There was a third possibility. Maybe, just maybe, *there was something else*. Perhaps there existed something so primitive and beyond comprehension that it could be understood only in terms of magic talk and sorcery.

The business about the *diableras* made quite an impression on Carlos. He quoted Don Juan at one point, saying the female witch made her victim suffer unbelievably. The female exploits her prey, according to Don Juan, and Carlos figured he knew exactly what that meant. Women had always been the root of his most emotional and painful episodes: his mother, his aunts, me, Aunts Alta and Velma, Alberta Greenfield. Carlos had long begun to look on some of the women around Los Angeles as shrewd witches and that attitude sometimes lead him to overdramatize his situation, much the way he did when his mother died. He was, therefore, practically overwhelmed when I announced in early 1966 that I intended to take C.J. out of Saint Sophia's and leave Los Angeles forever. I was tired of his broken promises, especially the ones he'd make with C.J., pleading to come and visit but then staying away for weeks at a time before showing up suddenly, unannounced, expecting the boy to understand. All I wanted was to get away from Carlos and hire into another job someplace else. Ours was the strangest of relationships. Separated for years, the two of us often saw each other and Carlos continued to take C.J. for daylong outings, hiking or walking around campus. On one hand, Carlos was serious and unreliable, yet on the other hand he could be charming and thoughtful—as when he assured me that he was working on the *brujo* book for all of us. It would be a kind of tribute to my patience, he said, a paean to his “chocho.” But when he finished the manuscript, there wasn't that jolt of elation he expected. There was nothing, just the vague hollow feeling that he was broke, out of school and the owner of a convoluted, unedited autobiographical manuscript about *brujos* that he wasn't certain he could sell. And to make matters worse, C.J. and I were

gone. I got a job at WTOP, a TV and radio station in Washington, D.C., as a Chief Operator and settled downtown.

"When you took your little boy away, you really took the light out of my life," he wrote to me in September. "I have told you repeatedly that we will not leave this earth without getting back the equivalent of our deeds. I must have caused some of my fellow men the same anguish I am experiencing today. That is all I am ever going to tell you. Whatever I am, and whatever I feel about that little boy should be my concern alone.

"My work has not been accepted yet; perhaps my spirit is not there any longer. I have tried to the best of my ability to be in the position to help my little chocho; and yet everything I do seems to be so useless. Sometimes I have the illusion I am rubbing his baby head. What can I tell you? What can *you* tell me that would bring relief to my soul?"

One week later, he sat down at his desk with a glass of Mateus and typed a bitter response to a request by me for some money.

"Has it ever occurred to you that I also need some one to help me? Do you think that I am a machine that feels nothing? Or perhaps I am only that silly looking Mexican that is good enough to be exploited, but not good enough to be respected. In my blind stupidity, I have allowed you to drive me against the wall; it is my fault alone. When I walked out of that school last year to help (Alberta Greenfield) write that book, I also walked out on all my possible opportunities to do anything in my field. Now I have to prove that I am reliable, and that would be something similar to asking you to hold a job. We all have our own limitations; we should know and accept that fact, and at the same time we should have the kindness not to judge our fellow men."

Carlos used notes and his own imagination to work over the manuscript, rendering it in a more readable form. He first wrote long sections in longhand on his yellow pads and then moved to the desk to type. Much of the actual writing of *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* was done at his apartment. After his first peyote experiences back in 1961, Carlos had presented a long analysis of his visions to Professor Garfinkel. But Garfinkel didn't want to read some student's intellectual assessment of what was happening—he wanted the primary stuff, the straight detail. So Carlos rewrote and expanded it and showed the work to him again a few years later. But the old man still was put off by all the academic jargon and psychological explanations of Don Juan's behavior. So he worked through the manuscript in its entirety, and when he finished, he went up to the third floor of Haines Hall with his thick bound sheaf of papers under his arm. During the period Carlos had quit school; he and Meighan had talked occasionally, but never specifically about the fieldwork with the *brujos*.

"He wandered in here one day with a completed manuscript, which he laid on the table," Meighan recalls. "He asked me to read it and give some comments and advice, at which point I began to take him a great deal more seriously. His inquiry to me was to see if I could get this manuscript printed in one of the monograph series of the university publications in anthropology or some such series."

“I read it and thought about the kind of thing that it dealt with, which was an extremely popular subject and even more popular then, than now, because of the drugs and mind expansion which was a real cult of the moment at that particular time, and about the fact that a lot of the writing was personal and anecdotal and had to do with himself in response to a situation, rather than being a detached observer, which most scholarly writing is. The manuscript was about him as much as about anything else. So for both reasons, I felt that he had a book and not something that should appear in a scientific series. He tried to cope with that by segregating the more personal aspects of the manuscript from what might be called the detached scholarship.”

Meighan suggested that he go over and talk with somebody at the University of California Press, which was just across the lawn from Haines Hall, in the basement of Powell Library. He also suggested that Carlos not present his manuscript as something for the anthropology series, or any other series for that matter, but as a trade book with general readership.

Meighan and Garfinkel weren't the only faculty members at UCLA to get an early look at the book. Both William Bright and Pedro Carrasco were visited by Carlos and were enthusiastic about the project, and there was Robert Edgerton, who had studied the work and criticized it at various stages from the beginning.

One of Meighan's friends at University Publications was Jim Quebec, a slender, balding man with a grey goatee and an ingratiating manner, who had begun hearing reports about this incredibly detailed manuscript put together by some Brazilian graduate student who had spent years with a real, archaic, off-the-wall Sonorian *brujo*. Quebec was sold from the first reading, but he was an old anthropologist himself and knew the real test would be the sales department. The manuscript lay around for weeks. It was copy-edited as usual and the editorial board met to discuss it, but sales wasn't exactly convinced that Castaneda's tedious discussion of life among the *brujos* was prime copy. Some people

started talking about bringing the book out as a monograph because, among other things, a definite concern existed as to whether a trade book by an unknown like Castaneda and published by an academic publishing house would sell.

That's not to say that sales had the last word; it did not. This was the respectable University of California Press, not one of those profit-happy bookmills to the east. There were scholars judging this stuff, resident masters such as sociologist and ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel and Walter Goldschmidt, one of that club of conceptual anthropological-sociologists who was always showing up in the textbooks and scholarly journals, one of the boys from the stuffy gut of academia. Goldschmidt was an intellectual, and a well-known one, but he wasn't a scintillatingly creative genius like, say, Talcott Parsons of Harvard or Buckminster Fuller or Marshall McLuhan, the social visionaries, or somebody like that. He was simply one of the resident gods who had published and flourished and had brought credit to UCLA. When Professor William Bright, who was sold on Carlos's manuscript from the start, wrote a letter to Quebec extolling the work, Goldschmidt read the letter, too. That was significant because he was not only a resident god—he was on the editorial board of the University of California Press.

Bright had seen some of the manuscript even before Carlos did some of his final editing and hired F.A. Guilford, a freelance editor, to go over it and correct the mistakes. "I've seen this manuscript and by all means you should publish it," Bright wrote, and he went on about this remarkably creative piece of work he stumbled across. Quebec was suddenly bombarded with good reports from the anthropology department. Even one of his own employees, Atlee Arnold, a young editor who had met Carlos years before at LACC while both of them were students there, started talking about this guy Carlos Castaneda. According to Atlee, the manuscript was a masterpiece, but still it lay around for another year, while the academics considered precisely what form their



*brujo* novel should take. For Carlos, who wasn't in school, all this waiting around was very disheartening.

"It seems that my 'chocho' is what keeps me going, but once he is away, everything runs out on me," he wrote to me in January 1967. The thought of C.J. so far away made his stomach sink. "I mean, if I cannot help my 'chocho' I must be absolutely at the end of my rope. But that is a condition on which I will not prevail. I am confident that God will allow again that I scratch his head and make him sleep. Sometimes in those very simple acts we could condense the very meaning of our lives. Whisper in his ear that Kiki will do all there is in his power to help him. The battle is not over yet."

Carlos sat at his desk, behind his typewriter, writing one long disjointed paragraph after another and thinking how he ought to be doing more, sending more, sending anything. He picked up his billfold and took out a few dollars and slipped them into the envelope. Maybe when the manuscript was sold he'd have more money to send. Then he started typing again.

"I will send my 'chocho,' I hope very soon, another type of first money. Perhaps, if I arrange the world in such a magical order, I will be able to see him again."

The editorial board delayed on the book. In the early spring, Carlos went to the desert to see Don Juan and the others. Upon returning in April, Carlos had a definite feeling that things were looking up. He had a feeling that he was going to make it. It was a pervasive sense of mood that came, at least partially, because he *knew* his thesis would be accepted by the anthropology department and probably published by the school. His letters, which had see-sawed between vague optimism and desperation, exuded a hopeful tone and a sense of self-respect. Carlos was careful, however, to send letters to a post office box in Charleston, West Virginia, when I was at home visiting the family. My family, like my aunts, weren't particularly fond of Carlos, although they never asked me not to see Carlos. That wasn't the reason why he used

the name Charlie Spider when he left messages at my answering service in Washington. That was just sort of an inside joke, since the word *Arana* is Spanish for spider.

Carlos talked with Meighan and Garfinkel in the spring and got permission to take the exams he had missed the previous October while working with Alberta on *Dial Operator*. Dozens of people around Haines Hall were reading the manuscript, the few *attuned* souls, those who were aware of a minor celebrity in their midst, an underground aficionado of the shamans' netherworld...and then again, there were those who started doubting the whole business.

It was that summer that the controversy really started, during late June and July. The field broke up roughly into believers and skeptics—those who felt Carlos's apprenticeship was on the level and that his strange years of Indian mind expansion were really true, and then, well, there were those who didn't. Carlos was fully aware of how much of himself he'd put into his thesis, but he was fascinated nevertheless by the reaction on campus.

"...Ours has been a long journey, full of intrigue and mysteries, just like I conceive an ideal journey ought to be like. Thank you Mayaya for your magnificent displays of excitement and nerve, now that I see our life in perspective. I miss your spirit. You are a strong invincible warrior. It could not be otherwise...My thesis was accepted and they had to let me come back to school," he wrote in July. "It has caused a big splash. Some people think the work will be a classic for a very long time to come, others think it is pure shit. However, they all read it. The point of argument is the nature of the material (*brujos*) remember? and the way I have treated it. So now I need is to pass those exams. If I have a Ph.D. after my name I could say anything in my book and it would sound somewhat more credible. At any rate, the book, I have been told, cannot be put away after someone starts reading it, so even those who did not like it, read it through; I suppose they did that just to hate it.

"It is intriguing to see all that turmoil. The book is the one I wrote for my *chocho*. He will make it into a blast, because he is the biggest *brujo* of them all."

The editorial board was impressed with the book and by September, after all the delay, it was obvious that the University of California Press would publish it. Bill Bright told the other board members that they had on their hands a masterpiece. Meighan agreed. Even crusty old Goldschmidt was fascinated by Castaneda's apparent ability to go so deeply into the psyche of his informant and come back with so much information.

At the same time, *The Great Fear* had reared up at Haines Hall, that haunting, almost unspeakable worry that maybe the whole thing was some kind of elaborate hoax. Nobody really knew how shrewd Carlos was. He had few credentials to fall back on. Maybe he had let his peyote visions roll and was now pulling the pinstriped shank of bluenose academia.

"I can believe what he's telling me," Meighan told the editorial board. "It was the same thing he'd been telling everybody for months. The sorts of things he is coming in with are too damned good. Even to fake it, you'd have to study anthropology for ten years in order to provide the kind of convincers or data he comes up with."

Meighan went on like this, assuring, proselytizing, assuaging *The Great Fear*. He found himself inextricably tied with Carlos's predicament, watching Carlos as he had from the early days when he first began taking anthropology classes. And he had been stunned by the achievement. Carlos had just gone to a corner and begun cranking out this soaring, phantasmagorical thesis without so much as a word from the campus cognates. Meighan looked around at everybody.

"I know in a lot of Carlos's writing there is a lot of Carlos; that's no mystery." *The Great Fear* was in the room. "He makes no effort to conceal that. There's no difficulty for me to sort out where it's Carlos's interpretation of what his informant is saying. Because of the fact that

his approach is not objective distance scholarship, because it is not the way scholarship is generated by union card scholars, many people think this is some sort of fraudulent approach in which they apparently can't sort out where it's Carlos talking and where the informant is talking, and they feel as though they've been fooled by being given anthropological information which is not Indian information."

Quebec, who was in charge of the monographs as well as other areas, suggested Carlos's work was the kind of strict scholarship that might fit as a monograph. Yet there was the matter of money, perhaps a lot of money, if the book were packaged with just the right sense of marketing and then pushed like crazy. Quebec saw the specter of hoax all right, but the dollar signs were blocking the view.

"It's got the mark of a trade book," he said. "I think the drug culture, the whole thing that is going on will, in effect, get the book going, and make it an important book financially."

The flags went up in Meighan's brain. That attitude stirred up in Meighan a concern even deeper than the possibility of hoax, and that was the feeling that maybe the only readers of Carlos' book would be acidheads and cosmic dilettantes, the great pseudocultural campus hip—*attuned*, but vastly underlearned. Meighan feared that his student Carlos would become some kind of underground guru, and he knew there wasn't much he could do about it.

Meighan cleared his throat and looked around at the board. "I've known him since he was an undergraduate student here and I'm absolutely convinced that he is an extremely creative thinker, that he's doing anthropology. He's working in an area of cognitive learning and the whole cross-cultural thing. He's put his finger on things that no other anthropologist has even been able to get at, partly by luck and partly because of his particular personality. He's able to get information that other anthropologists can't get, because he looks like an Indian and speaks Spanish fluently and because he's a smart listener."

Bright may have given the manuscript its greatest strength before the committee. He spoke in great glowing terms about how UCLA had this unique genius with a piece of the heaviest shamanic lore since Weston LaBarre's *The Peyote Cult* a quarter-century before.

Carlos wasn't even on campus when the committee finally decided that the book would be published. He had left for Oaxaca in southern Mexico on September 11, to see someone he called Don Genaro, a Mazatec shaman who was Don Juan's best friend.

The delays in publishing the book discouraged Carlos to the extent that he tried to get a couple of other firms interested in his manuscript. He told me he'd sent it to Random House and another publisher in New York. The rumor around the anthropology department was that Carlos had become so dissatisfied that he had submitted the manuscript to Grove Press.

Actually, Carlos viewed the possibility of becoming a published writer with mixed emotions. He had been given some bad information along the way that his work could be used as a M.A. thesis or as a trade book, but not as both. UCLA's graduate program, especially at the Master's degree level, was in a constant state of flux and so it was difficult to say exactly what was required for a degree from one year to the next, but this business about a commercial book being precluded from use as a thesis was clearly hogwash. But Carlos was under the impression it was true and the day before leaving for Oaxaca he told me, "my 'chocho' and his crows will guide me to choose the best course of action. I am sure of it. After all, it is his book."

I didn't think much about his strange use of metaphor. He'd long been talking that way, ever since the early days of his fieldwork. In casual conversation he would use words he'd never used before 1960, words like "impeccable" and "warrior" and "invincible," absolute neo-primitivisms of the hokiest sort. I never really doubted that Carlos was spending his time among the Indians and I assumed these strange additions to his vocabulary were a natural effect of it.

While in southern Mexico, Carlos thought almost constantly about the book. The project had become an obsession. Publication would give him the leverage and credibility he wanted, and once he got a Ph.D., he'd have the credentials to blast the critics out of their staid nineteenth-century notions of scientific method. The feedback from campus was that Castaneda was on the surreal edge of a significant anthropological controversy. The manuscript was still before the board, but he was confident and returned to the field to take notes again, back among the Indians, collecting more data with crazy ideas sort of swimming around, that he would turn out another of these "classics." Only this time, it would read more like a novel. It would be a sequel, but more than that, it would showcase his talent as a writer.

When he returned from three weeks of field work around Oaxaca, Carlos checked in with Quebec, who told him the book would be published by the school and distributed in 1968. He had expected it, but still the news was exciting. Things were finally going his way. Carlos signed a contract with the University of California Press on September 23 and then went back to his apartment and wrote me.

"It will be published as an *important contribution* to anthropology. How do you like that? Now all I have to do is finish the exams I did not take in 1965. The people at the school here did not let me take them and they maintained their stubborn attitude until the thesis was obviously approved by everybody else. Some school in New York, Columbia University, offered me a scholarship to get my Ph.D. there, so the cronies here decided to let by-gones be by-gones. The only thing is that I may eventually go to New York. I am very tired of here."

Carlos had friends in New York, some of them old colleagues who were now at the New School of Social Research and at Columbia. It wasn't a prospect Meighan and Garfinkel weren't too happy about. They knew they had a flat-out protégé in Carlos, a self-contained scholar who would bring added respect to the department. They were convinced that he was a legitimate researcher who had this knack for writing readable

prose about something that was radically different from the mainstream. Furthermore, the idea of losing Castaneda and later having him criticize the red tape and delays at UCLA did not sit well.

Once word got out that a contract had been signed, *The Great Fear* was on everybody's mind. Everybody at Haines Hall knew how damned silly the department would look if this whole Don Juan story turned out to be a shuck job.

The contract was the standard arrangement, whereby the Regents of California got the copyright and the author got royalties from publication. The University of California didn't buy the book outright. Instead, it was a percentage arrangement, which Quebec explained would mean hundreds or thousands of dollars for Carlos, all depending on the success of the book. Immediately after signing the contract in Quebec's office, Carlos went downtown and bought something he had wanted for years—a grey three-piece suit. When he looked at himself in his new three-piece, standing there in the three-sided prism of a full-length mirror, exuding an absolute sense of worth and formality, as he just stood there under the neon lights and looking straight at himself, Carlos thought of Aldous Huxley.

There was still a lot to do before publication. The final editing would take weeks, and then there was the matter of design, particularly the dust jacket. Carlos came up with some photographs and notes, but few suggestions. Most of the photos were black and white, standard shots he'd taken of expansive desert and Mexican hovels with sagging ramadas and bony dogs out front. One was a color portrait of an ancient nut-brown man with grey crinkly hair and leathered skin and a noble look, and Quebec figured it was a natural for the cover. The thrust of the book was a Paleolithic magic man who befriended young Carlos and taught him the lifestyle of the Mexican shaman, and so the photograph would be great for the cover. Carlos jerked the photo away. "No way," he said, and continued to reject ideas that people came up with. Ideas like decorating the cover with a nest of electric lizards exploding

in a rainbow of colors. Carlos rolled his eyes at that one. He wanted something less provocative, something more respectable, and that's exactly what he got. As published by the university. *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* had a simple cream and green cover with the title stretching across the dust jacket in meek and soulless Franklin Gothic type, as if it were *The Central Nervous System of the Elasmobranch*, or one of those other pieces of esoterica the university press was turning out.

In late November, Carlos went to New York to tie up some loose ends and then traveled down to Washington for a week to visit with C.J. and me, who had been there about a year.

*The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* was released in early spring and the University of California Press, fully cognizant that a nation of drug-infatuated students was out there, moved it into California bookstores with a vengeance, particularly around Los Angeles and in the Bay Area up north. Autograph sessions were organized where Castaneda dutifully appeared wearing his three-piece. He was hardly a celebrity, but Carlos did enjoy the attention.

The university press pushed the book in college towns to the east and it began catching on. People began reading it, especially in New York and Boston. It began selling hundreds of copies a week, better than any other original work published by the University of California, and it was selling to everybody: anthropologists, lay anthropologists, social scientists, English students, amateur phenomenologists and wacked-out visionary guru types from the deep New England woods. Within a matter of months, Carlos Castaneda was a valuable commodity. He had easy access to Quebec's office and he went there often, checking on how well the book was doing and laughing about the sudden upturn in his life. He was still eating hamburgers at Denny's in Hollywood, he told Quebec, but by God, it was a matter of choice.

Once *The Teachings* was off and running, Carlos confided in Quebec that he was writing a second book, a kind of sequel.



Quebec knew it was time Carlos had an agent. He sent Carlos downtown to a friend, Ned Brown, a competent scrambler with several clients who had met with quick success. Carlos heard about people suddenly made rich, and so he was more than happy to meet with Brown.

"Carlos, I'm going to make you famous," Brown said, figuring that's what he wanted to hear.

Carlos looked away. "Damn," he said. "I want the money."

Brown was startled for a moment and then he smiled. It was clear that he and the mystic were on the same wavelength after all.

It was clear within six months that *The Teachings* had the potential for mass distribution and the University of California Press's New York manager started making contracts with larger publishing houses that might want it. Ballantine came up with the best offer: \$25,000 for four years of limited trade, at which point everything reverted back to the University of California Press. A few years later, after Carlos had made a national name for himself, the press made even more money from their original contract, reselling it to Simon and Schuster for its own hardcover edition, but retaining the original hardcover rights for itself and the rights for another paperback.

Ballantine came out with its version in April 1969, a 276-page paperback wrapped in an eerie Wilson MacLean painting of peyote blooms and muted rainbow arch and symmetrical profiles of Don Juan and the translucent, marvelously *attuned* apprentice, both staring black-eyed out at the crack between the worlds or something. It was a hit and into its second printing by October.

Carlos never got his M.A. Instead, he continued taking upper-level classes and began the second book, the plan being to go directly for his Ph.D. That wasn't going to be easy, because while he was the creative darling of the *attuned*, he was clearly anathema to those faculty members gripped by *The Great Fear*. Some of the professors knew bone-deep that Carlos had foisted a magnificent fraud upon the university, upon

their revered department. Others were more trusting, but criticized the book as an indulgent antischolastic work of a frustrated novelist, which was pretty much true. What really irritated this group was the rejection of the standard procedure of being a detached observer without ego, and they didn't like it that Castaneda was carrying it off so well. Suddenly, Carlos Castaneda was the *most famous anthropologist in America*, but the boys back in the department had let go with a swelling academic chorus that rose up out of the faculty lounge at Haines Hall like the fulsome cry of a pack of jackals—where was the objectivity, where was the detachment, where was the chi-square analysis?

An obscure piece of literary history began making the rounds at UCLA. People began talking about the Ossian poems, a collection of poetry published in 1760 by a young Scotsman named James MacPherson. The real name of the collection was *Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland and Translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language*, which is not exactly what they were. The poems were neither ancient nor collected in the highlands of Scotland, nor translated; they were total fabrications. But it took the self-assertive Dr. Johnson to declare in print what some others had only suspected.

People were taking pot shots at Carlos, but there was no Samuel Johnson in the crowd, no dominant personality with an overweening self-confidence who would stand up and announce that *The Great Fear* was operating for good reason—because Castaneda was a fake. Nobody did that, but there was a lot of what Meighan calls “scuttlebutt and chitchat.” And throughout it, Meighan remained one of Carlos's greatest defenders.

During the summer of 1968, Meighan asked Carlos to come over to his house in Topanga and help as an unpaid extra in a film the professor was shooting about Indian rock paintings. What he needed was a pair of Indian hands, and Carlos's were brown and stubby enough. Carlos drove to Meighan's house for a couple of days and they shot and reshot scenes of Carlos's hands crushing berries and stirring earth mixtures in

crude pottery and painting primitive animals of the hunt on the Topanga outcroppings in Meighan's back yard. The actual filming took less than an hour. The rest of the time they prepared for scenes or ate or just talked about Carlos's future plans.

"I was embarrassed to ask him to do this," Meighan says. "He was beyond this, but it was such a picnic. We had lunch, sat around and chewed the fat. He liked it. He's really an amiable, very agreeable character."

The film was distributed by the university as a classroom teaching aid.

That was the same summer that Carlos says he resumed his apprenticeship with Don Juan. Carlos's work with Don Juan ended in the fall of 1965 and began again in April 1968, according to his first two books. But his association with the Indians continued unabated throughout that period. He made several trips to Mexico to visit the locals and to take notes, but none of that appeared in his books.

There is simply a neat resumption of the apprenticeship in April and by the next month, he and Don Juan travel to Huichol country in northeastern Mexico for a peyote session, a four-day *mitote* during which Carlos decides to stay away from the peyote. He wants to watch with a clear head for the signals and subtle moves that he *knows* are there, the ones the guides use to manipulate everyone's perception. The visions, which Carlos knows should be highly personal, are the same for everybody, which seems impossible. So Carlos watches for four days trying to pick up on how they do it, but there are no signals and no cues. There is...nothing. And on the final night of the *mitote* everybody sees Mescalito, the spirit and force of peyote, the being, hovering over Carlos's own head, a green glowing spirit just floating there in dry air. Nobody said anything; there were no signals. Everybody just sits there in a circle with their mouths dropped open, staring at exactly the same spot, at exactly the same moment, staring at...*something*...and damned if Carlos ever saw the cue.

It was hardly the kind of thing he needed for his Ph.D. dissertation, just more of Don Juan's primitive magic talk about an extant spirit,

and so Carlos was pretty much back at the beginning. At UCLA, Garfinkel kept channeling Carlos's confusion through the filter of phenomenology, which made him feel as though he understood shamanism to some degree.

Phenomenologists say people interpret and evaluate phenomena according to all those cultural and societal data that are thrust upon the impressionable mind from the instant of birth. It is because of it, that a chair, for example, is recognized as a chair with four legs and a back and not as a couch. It's why a tree standing out over the horizon is quite naturally separated in the mind from the horizon. It's all learned behavior, and it varies, at least to some degree, from society to society, depending on culture, history and language. So the way Garfinkel saw it, Don Juan's task was to force Carlos to unlearn and rearrange phenomena along new patterns.

Having returned to classes by September, Carlos was something of a sensation. Ballantine had agreed to publish the book for the mass market; he had some money, a little security, a sense of direction, and already he was into his second book and on his way to a Ph.D. People started coming up to him on campus, pressing him for the whereabouts of Don Juan and asking questions about the apprenticeship. For the first time, Carlos began taking precautions to be sure he wasn't being followed when leaving for field trips in Mexico.

In October, Carlos says he met Don Genaro, a younger friend of Don Juan's, an agile man in his early sixties. From the beginning, Don Genaro demonstrated a marvelous control over his body. For example, Carlos says he saw Don Genaro flip over onto his hands and stand on his head with legs crossed and arms against his chest and his nostrils flared out at twice their normal size. And then there was the ballet at the waterfall, which Carlos describes in *A Separate Reality*.

It was in Oaxaca that Don Genaro ascended the precipitous boulders at the edge of the waterfall. Don Juan, Carlos and two young apprentices arranged small flat rocks in a line at the river's edge and sat to

watch. Several times Don Genaro appeared to lose his footing and slip, sliding or dangling for a while, but always regaining his composure and continuing the ascent. Finally, he made it to the top, where he stood on a peaking boulder for a long time, in perfect stillness, with the water raging on both sides. Then suddenly, he bounded across the falls to the tip of another rock. Finally, after an afternoon of elliptical leaps at the water's edge, Genaro threw his arms up and flipped in a strange stop-time lateral somersault, disappearing behind some rocks. Everybody got up and headed for the car. Carlos wanted to find out where Don Genaro had gone, whether he was hurt, but Don Juan said no. They had seen the exhibition, the rest didn't matter. Don Juan admonished Carlos it was time to leave.

Although the water-ballet occurred in October 1968, according to Carlos, it didn't appear in print until 1971, a full year after a lecture series at UCLA where anthropologist Peter Furst told much the same story. Carlos appeared during the series, too, as did Douglas Sharon, a friend who had done extensive research into Peruvian shamanism. Furst, who was at the Latin American Center on the tenth floor of Bunch Hall, also qualified, having as he did, the requisite insight into psychedelic phenomena and its cultural and historical dimensions.

Carlos told about Don Genaro's ballet at the waterfall during the lecture series. It bore a remarkable resemblance to Furst's account earlier among the Huichols.

During a field trip in the summer of 1966, Furst's friend and fellow *hikuri* (peyote) seeker, Ramón Medina Silva, performed at the edge of a spectacular waterfall. It was a demonstration for a small group of Huichols on the meaning of "balance." Ramón took off his sandals, made the appropriate gestures of ritual, and then leaped from rock to rock, sometimes gripping the slippery edge of boulders, sometimes standing motionless and then suddenly, making a great leap across the water. He would hide for awhile behind a massive rock and then leap out over another one. Nobody, except Furst and his wife, seemed the

least bit apprehensive about all this, and that included Ramón's wife, who sat calmly with the others in a semicircle at the river's edge.

The next day, Ramón explained that his exhibition was not just a foolhardy display, but a legitimate shaman's method of illustrating what it means "to have balance." There was something imperative in that for the shaman, something incredibly important about crossing the bridge that links the ordinary world with the world beyond, and standing there on the bridge to look down on the snakes below, the great stamping horde, the carnivores, the wild animals jabbering and stamping in the boiling yellow dust—there was something absolutely necessary about crossing that stretch of cosmos and reaching the separate world beyond. The idea of moving from one world to another was so incomprehensible to Furst, except on a vague abstract level, that it was necessary for Ramón to give a kind of physical interpretation in which he demonstrated balance with a hope the Anglo would extrapolate a bit. It was a crazy wild experience and all part of the literature. Furthermore, it was well known around the Latin American Center, after Furst returned from the field in 1966.

So it was strange that Carlos Castaneda should appear on the same program with Furst and tell much the same story four years later. That's not to say Carlos merely elaborated on Furst's intriguing story—even Furst didn't think that. Ramón had told him the ballet of the waterfall was "a specialty of shamans," and so it was highly probable that magic men everywhere were doing much the same thing.

And yet there was a nagging doubt. Here was another case in which Castaneda heard something and later wrote about much the same thing in incredible detail and with a magnificent sense of drama. First there was Michael Harner, telling Carlos about how the Yaquis may rub *Datura* ointment over their bellies and then Furst, and his experiences at the waterfall.

Sometimes Carlos would try out stories on friends, stories that later appeared in print in a more complete form. Sitting in Quebec's office

one afternoon, Carlos began talking about some of his field work in Oaxaca. He told about how he was at a restaurant and saw three Mexican urchins outside the hotel on the curb, trying to round up customers for their street-side shoeshine business. They weren't having much luck, but Carlos noticed that after each customer left a table along a shaded sidewalk café, the boys would rush to the table and eat all the scraps of food that remained, the ice cubes, the lemon peels, everything. Apparently, the hotel had an agreement with the boys—they could hang around and have the leftovers if they promised not to break anything or harass the customers.

All well and good. That was the extent of Carlos's little story in Quebec's office. But later, when it appeared in the first chapter of *A Separate Reality*, published in 1971, Don Juan imparts his lesson on the whole affair. The ancient Indian chides Carlos for feeling sorry for the urchins and disputes the idea that Carlos's life is any better. If Carlos's life was more varied, it was nevertheless the product of the hopelessly vacuous Anglo world of L.A. where the chances of becoming a man of knowledge were very slim. That was the important thing, not his access to UCLA and concerts and exhibits and eating hamburgers at Denny's—the single most important thing in life was becoming a true shaman, and that was something the urchins had a chance at. All the men of knowledge Don Juan knew had been kids like those at the table, eating the scraps of somebody else's meal. It was a great moral, another sterling aperçu, but for Quebec, the attendant Don Juan philosophy had to wait until the book was on the market.

There were other stories too, other experiences in the desert that Carlos told in casual conversation or over lunch, which later turned up in a more complete, detailed and didactic form in one of his books. When he'd see Douglas Sharon, he'd string his experiences together in an enthusiastic monologue.

"The thing is that when you talk to Carlos, he carries the ball," said Sharon. "He does most of the talking. You don't have a chance to get a



word in edgewise. He's always into the current thing, and he's very good in a group, very clear about the philosophy and he really likes to spell it out. I get the impression that Carlos is a master storyteller and that's typical for a lot of Peruvians. Eduardo (Sharon's shaman teacher from Peru) is one of the best and that's another thing about shamanism. Usually they are masters of the dramatic art. That's one of the secrets of shamanism, really being a good actor, really being able to put on a good show, because that's all part of this whole shamanizing process, the psychodrama of it."

Carlos talked with me on the telephone in June 1969 about my pending trip to Los Angeles. I wanted to visit some old friends on the coast and see how things had changed in the years I'd been away, and when Carlos read I was coming in a letter, he insisted on getting me a suite at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel. He was excited about it, anxious to see me and C.J. and talk about our lives in Washington and fill us in on the success of his book. The prospect of seeing C.J. again was exhilarating. It was the best news he'd heard in months and Carlos started planning activities just for the two of them, like hiking and trips to the campus and movies, especially movies which had become Carlos's passion. He had the money now and rarely a week went by that he didn't take in a couple of movies downtown or someplace on campus.

C.J. and I were to arrive in early July, so Carlos made the arrangements at the Hollywood Roosevelt and then headed for Mexico for a few days. It was during this visit, he says, during this session smoking the *Psilocybe* mixture at Don Juan's house that the Indian bent over him and explained softly that Carlos's life had become too complicated. Don Juan urged him to rid himself of whatever cultural impediments were weighing him down. It seemed like hours there, floating in a grey limbo state of thoughtful calm, just sort of drifting around, and Carlos thought about school, the new book and C.J. and me. He understood the reason for Don Juan's admonition; it was C.J. Carlos knew he'd have

to let go. The boy lived 3,000 miles away, but even if he didn't, Carlos understood very well that he could not coerce him into a certain lifestyle for which he had not chosen and was not prepared. The relationship between the two of them had suffered over the last couple of years, primarily because Carlos was always promising to call and send presents and visit, but rarely did. The problem facing him was whether to make amends or just to let the boy go to live his own life without the intrusion of an unreliable father figure from 3,000 miles away who was too wrapped up in his field work. Even after C.J. and I arrived in Los Angeles, Carlos wasn't sure how well he and C.J. would get along. He was older now, seven years old, and taller, with blond hair falling down in bangs across his forehead. After a week, I flew back to Washington, but at Carlos' insistence, C.J. stayed behind for a second week.

C.J. stayed that week at Carlos' house, a tan stucco home not far from the university. It had a flat roof with two arches out front and a fence on the right, the usual Spanish motif. Inside, there was a large living room with an adjoining dining room and kitchen, and two mattresses on the floor in the bedroom with blankets draped over the top. All the way down the hall and to the right was Carlos's den, a sparse room with a wooden desk and a typewriter against one wall and a door outside to the backyard directly across the room. There was no telephone. When he or Nanny, a UCLA co-ed who stayed with him, wanted to make a call, they had to go to the public phone booth on the corner.

Carlos had an aversion to telephones. Even back at LACC he didn't want one in his apartment. Phones were expensive for one thing, and they were noisy. There was something in the ring, something that gave him a headache every time somebody called. Once, after a great deal of coercion, I talked him into getting a phone installed at his apartment on North New Hampshire. I even paid for it, but that didn't work. A few weeks later, I found the phone in a closet wrapped with pillows and tied with rope. Carlos complained about the sound and said he didn't particularly like talking on it anyway. It was like some kind of cultural icon

hidden there in the closet, disrupting things with an occasional muffled ring that Carlos just ignored. I shrugged; I reminded him this was the 20th Century. I tried to call a few days later, but couldn't get through. The phone had been disconnected.

During the week C.J. spent at Carlos's, the two of them spent a couple of days at UCLA and a few days hiking in the hills north of L.A. At night, they'd pick up Nanny at a dojo where she was taking karate and return to the house to talk and play Old Maid. Nanny read poetry to C.J. in bed each night, always *Casey at the Bat*, which was his favorite. Afterward, he'd lie there in the dark of the bedroom listening to Carlos in the den typing into the early morning hours, typing with a painful slowness on his new book.

The visit was amicable enough. Carlos was on a health kick and so they ate steak and grapes and fresh vegetables. No candy or soft drinks were allowed in the house. Even after two weeks, C.J. was hesitant to talk with Carlos very much and he seemed a bit doubtful of all those stories about the *brujos*. A few years before, C.J. had been so influenced by Carlos that when he'd see a flock of crows at school, he would run home and tell me about them and about how that meant Kiki (Carlos) would be calling soon. But that influence was on the wane. Too many times Carlos hadn't called, even on those evenings when he told me he would. Too often he had failed to show up or write when he promised. Too many things had muddled the waters and there was no way Carlos was going to get his "chocho" back. On the way to the airport, Carlos promised to take C.J. to Europe, especially to Italy, and C.J. looked up and nodded, but there was this glimmer of doubt in his eyes. He was only seven, but he'd heard it all before.

Carlos's first book was selling quite well, especially on college campuses in the West, and Carlos started making the literary tours, collecting modest honorariums, talking in grey tones about cognitive dissonance and his own quirky view of phenomenology. He was interviewed by historian Theodore Roszak for the BBC. Roszak was a fan and let Castaneda off easy on the question of Don Juan's existence, saying at one point that the teachings demonstrated, " a searing conviction and a commanding eloquence that cannot but jar the most determined skeptic." Castaneda, sitting there at the microphone beside him, was much obliged.

The second book, *A Separate Reality*, was in manuscript form by now and read more like a novel than *The Teachings*. There was not, for example, a division of labor in which Carlos tried to explain away the mysteries in a ponderous structural analysis. The critics generally had panned it away. When a Berkeley campus newspaper asked for an article, Carlos submitted part of a chapter from his new book and entitled it, "*Death on a Gallop*." There was nothing in Carlos's contract that called for an option on a second book. Quebec read the manuscript and knew at once that Castaneda was moving away from the traditional academic line that the University of California Press was designed to turn out. That's not to say the press wouldn't accept it. On the contrary, the prospect of a respectable bestseller that would carry the name of the University of California Press directly to the pages of *The New York*

*Times Book Review* and the *New York Review of Books* was something that had Quebec's pulse running. But he considered Carlos a friend, which is why he had sent him to Ned Brown. It was a move that simultaneously lost the press rights to the second Castaneda book, but won for Carlos more than a modicum of success, out away from the university. "I'm the one who set Carlos on the road to becoming a millionaire," he'd tell friends.



Photograph taken by Carlos Castaneda



Carlos Castaneda and Carlton Jeremy—  
en route to Saint Sophia's Montessori School, Santa Monica, California.

The royalty checks from his first book, however, weren't exactly making him wealthy. He was still hard-pressed to help C.J. and me, but in December he started sending regular monthly checks, usually between \$75 and \$200. The big money was yet to come. By keeping the copyright for himself on the second book, he struck a better deal and suddenly his financial situation began looking up. He was considered a commodity, not just a quirk who had somehow turned out a single book. Once Ned Brown got a look at the second manuscript, it was clear Carlos Castaneda was destined for better things. Alexander Tucker of Hollywood, one of the shrewdest moneymen around, a prince among philistines, was hired to take care of Castaneda's financial matters.

As expected, *A Separate Reality* was a great success. In the introduction, Carlos expanded on his 1960 meeting with Don Juan. The book itself, however, covers a period from April 2, 1968, through December 18, 1970, the so-called second cycle of Carlos's apprenticeship. There are more mysteries of the shaman, more inside dope that only Carlos was coming up with. Some of the material was new, but much seemed to be an extension of old ideas; like how men of knowledge see other men as fibers of light, while seeing allies as dripping pieces of cloth, and how life is controlled folly and the individual will is an important link between humans and the world they choose to perceive. And there was more on death, which as every *brujo* knows, stands forever to the left, a few inches off the scapula, a forceful certainty that makes each act meaningful, because every act might be the last. There were in *A Separate Reality* repeated attempts by Carlos to *see*, episodes such as when he perceived Don Juan's face as a glowing object and later when he saw a Mexican peasant whose face was a glowing coruscation of yellow light.

In the final mindswimming afternoon of the book, Don Juan succeeded in cracking Carlos's desire to understand everything, rather than just let it flow over him waves of pure perception, straight to the memory bank.



Don Juan recalled that Carlos had told him about an incident in which a friend, seeing a leaf falling from the top of a sycamore tree, declared that the same leaf could never fall from that same sycamore. He pointed to the tree on the other side of a gully with yellow leaves. After a few minutes, a single leaf cracked loose and tumbled to the ground, striking three branches before it hit. Don Juan repeated that Carlos's rational scheme of thinking would never allow the leaf to fall again—then suddenly, there it was, happening again! The same yellow desiccated leaf was tumbling exactly as before, three bounces and to the ground. It was like an instant television replay or something, and there was Carlos, not believing his eyes or his reason or his sense of cosmic order, not daring to think exactly what all this meant, just standing there watching another leaf fall, and then another, all falling the same way. They were all the same leaf from the same tree falling at different isolated points in time...there was no way this was possible!

Then Don Genaro stepped in and did something truly extraordinary. He moved in a single second from Carlos's side to the top of the mountain miles away. He was here and then suddenly, over there, all in an electric instant. It was the most wrenching kind of hallucination in which the whole system of Aristotelian logic folds in of its own weight and the thin skin of logic is ripped away, exposing pure flowing perception. It was the crack between the worlds and the sorcerer's plain, the bridge between the pit of demons; it was the Separate Reality, which was the other world of the Slipstream, or *naked...flowing...perception*.

After ten years of field work, Carlos knew only that nothing was certain. He knew that everything he understood about the real world was a product of his own intellectual manipulations. It was all a construction, learned from the moment of birth, and the only thing he was into was seeing it with new eyes.

Douglas Sharon had come to UCLA after a few years of more-or-less freelance archaeology in Peru. He was a slender, boyish man with sandy brown hair, a straight nose and the ingeniously enthusiastic look of a prep school freshman. Bored with his teachers and their scatter-gun approach to liberal education in high school, Sharon dropped out in 1960 and headed to South America. In 1965, while working on the ruins of Chan Chan near the northern Peruvian community of Trujillo, Sharon met Eduardo Calderón, a local *curandero* with an extraordinary knowledge of the ancient curing rituals. Eduardo invited him to participate in some of the sessions, but Sharon was too busy and didn't get around to it before departing in 1967. Returning in the summer of 1970 on a fellowship, Sharon participated in curing ceremonies and discussed the essential nature of learning to "see" as the *curanderos* do. He spent hours taping Eduardo, and while the details sometimes differed, much of it was the same thing Carlos was getting from his informants. While Don Juan was teaching Carlos to "see" by using peyote, Eduardo was doing the same thing with San Pedro cactus.

During the first year of Castaneda's apprenticeship, he drank a clay mugful of *Datura* infusion and almost immediately his head rolled back and a blurry red spot swam before his eyes. For Sharon, it was the *remolino* he saw, a whirlpool of red and yellow spinning in front of his eyes. Christopher Donnan, who taught a Peruvian archaeology class at

UCLA, grasped the similarity right away and asked both Sharon and Carlos to speak to his class.

"We were both doing shamanism, so Donnan thought it would be a good idea. It's no surprise, because shamanism wherever you find it has structural components that are very similar. The surface may vary according to cultures, just as languages vary, but when you start getting down to the psychological core, there is a tremendous amount of similarity. It's no accident that there was all this similarity between what he was doing and what I was doing.

"I believe in a straightforward, open, spell-it-out no secrets kind of approach and so does Eduardo. It's appropriate that he be my teacher. Personal history is a thing that he lived through. He was 14 once, but he's not anymore and he'll talk about it anytime you want. Yet it doesn't pin him down, because he lives his life as he sees fit and enjoys the company of his fellow human beings. That's his personality; that's his way."

Carlos and Sharon appeared again before on one of Chris Donnan's classes, each again outlining the basics of his shaman's teachings. In December 1971, well after publication of Carlos' second book and after Sharon's return from the Peruvian highlands, the two graduate students got together at the Co-op to discuss in detail the similarity of each other's work. Sharon had spent the previous months in the lagoons of northern Peru with Eduardo and a photographer for *National Geographic*. They were right up there at the top of everything, smack in the center of the primitive magical worldview, only a few hundred miles from Carlos's hometown and the place of the Legendary Shaman. Sharon talked for a while and Carlos seemed genuinely interested, but after a while, it was Carlos's turn and he was off, as usual, with his anecdotes, his stories and shaman's aperçus, his opinions on how to live an impeccable life. The spiel had new details, but Sharon had heard the tone before plenty of times.

*A Separate Reality* was riding high on bestseller lists and *The Teachings* had become something of a bible among the intellectuals and the *attuned*. Edward H. Spicer, a distinguished anthropologist from the University of Arizona, had written a glowing review of *The Teachings* for *The American Anthropologist*, although he concluded that Don Juan bore absolutely no resemblance to Yaqui Indians he had studied for over two decades. Other magazines and newspapers began publishing articles about Carlos, some favorable, but others, like Edmund Leach's devastating piece in *New York Review of Books*, in which he ridiculed the book as great literary fiction but terrible anthropology.

Whatever the case, Carlos was becoming quite famous, at least in certain circles. Hundreds of thousands of people on college campus all across the nation had read one or both of his books. He was getting letters and phone calls at the information desk of the department in Haines Hall. Simon and Schuster was hyping his second book like crazy and so when the black and red silk-screen posters with the crow's wings and the silhouette of Don Juan went up on bulletin boards in social science buildings and the word got around—Castaneda is coming!—well, there was a run on peyote and mescaline that had dealers scrambling south in vans trying for every border connection they could find. People were going out and actually eating Jimson weed. Unbelievable! The campuses weren't just prepared for Castaneda's visit, they were *primed*.

At the University of Washington, you couldn't even buy a copy of *The Teachings* the week before he made a lecture stop. There were students eating raw peyote and snorting mescaline through rolled \$20 bills, trying to share in this thing that was happening. It was as if they thought maybe something phenomenal was going to happen when Castaneda walked into the auditorium, like maybe when he was standing there in front of them, not more than twenty feet away talking about relieving oneself of the despised pedestrian baggage of the real world and the rest of Don Juan's philosophy, which was little more than a grand blur to

most of them—when all of this was happening, maybe somehow in the middle of everything, the stage would suddenly break in two and the floor would buckle and the ceiling rumble, and they would be miraculously privy even in their outrageously stoned condition to the Crack Between the Worlds! *Who knows what might happen!*

So everybody was there, not just the sociology and anthropology undergraduates and a scattering of professors, but the cognoscenti, the *attuned* on campus, the cool and ragged hip, the philosophy majors and biology students, all squatting on the floor near the front in filthy jeans or lounging back in the chairs or standing along the walls in the rear. Everybody was haunch-to-paunch waiting for Castaneda, everybody stroking the heads of Labrador retrievers and Huskies they had brought along, as was the custom.

Finally, after all this waiting and anticipation, in came Carlos Castaneda with a couple of lackeys from the department. Only he didn't look like Castaneda, or rather like everybody's ideal of Castaneda. He was short and slightly paunchy with glistening black hair trimmed short and a brown suit with white shirt and a narrow tan and cream tie. He had this dour sedentary look. Everybody looked at everybody else in stunned silence. This was the purveyor of the new mysticism—a guy who looked like a Cuban bellhop.

"Hey, he doesn't look like a head to me," one guy was saying and everybody nodded.

"Man, there is something wrong here," somebody else was saying. "This just can't be the same guy."

It wasn't that Carlos didn't look capable of the wacked-out visionary experiences of his books, but that he didn't seem right for the real-life legends about him, such as that he had mystical feet and that he always walked barefooted and never got calluses. And there was the story about how Castaneda was stoned all the time and had committed suicide in several places. It was quite a shock, therefore, when the real thing walked in looking like an ordinary businessman from downtown L.A.

He just stood at the microphone for a long time, surveying all the bobbing heads and looking out from those incredibly heavy-lidded eyes like maybe he was...seeing or something. Yes! He was *seeing!* And everybody was thinking, so go ahead and lay it on us. Carlos!

"Uhhh," he mumbled into the microphone, squinting at the back of the room. "Can't we get some of these dogs out of here?"

As can be expected, everybody was taken aback. Carlos seemed suspiciously unattuned. And to make matters worse, his address was dry and unprofessional, all about membership and perception and socialization. He had given more interesting monologues in Doug Sharon's office. It was much the same wherever he appeared, San Diego State and the University of California at Long Beach, everywhere. Always the shock of recognition, tentative acceptance, the professional lecture and the chilling conclusion that maybe Carlos Castaneda was not all that he was cracked up to be.

But his books kept selling, even on campuses where he appeared in person. The phenomenon was too big for him to blow. For one thing, in the early 1970s Castaneda was just about the only God around. Even the disenchanted came to believe in his books, at least in some of the less abstruse points. And there was this curious minority out there who came to believe that the man they were seeing on college campuses wasn't Carlos at all, but someone else. The real one was in hiding, an intense recluse. And then, of course, some people were saying how the suit and tie was an elaborate joke or some esoteric lesson, and so you had gatherings in student union cafeterias for days, trying to divine the message Castaneda was sending through his conventional appearance.

Whatever the reasons, Carlos Castaneda's popularity was soaring. The students at the University of California at Irvine wanted him as a guest instructor. A certain number of faculty slots were set aside for visiting professorships, those whom the students wanted to come and teach. The money came from student fees, so students had a lot to say about who was hired. In the spring quarter of 1972, it was Carlos Castaneda.

He taught two classes on the Irvine campus, an undergraduate course and a graduate level seminar called, "Phenomenology of Shamanism." Both were loosely based on his past work and his Ph.D. dissertation, something he'd been writing ever since finishing *A Separate Reality*. He called his dissertation *Sorcery: A Description of the World* and it became his third book, *Journey to Ixtlan*.

Twelve people were actually enrolled for the seminar, but perhaps thirty were there on the first day, all crowded around the polyethylene tables and standing against the wall, all waiting for Castaneda.

A fellow named Russ Reuger got there early and took a seat at the table next to the podium. Russ was thinking that some of the real biggies on the faculty were here and kept running his hand through that frazzled mop of black Marty Allen hair as he looked all around the room. A doctoral candidate in sociology at UCI, Russ was looking forward to the Castaneda seminar. He had been pretty heavily into the drug scene himself, both in California and back home on Staten Island, where he grew up in a Jewish neighborhood.

When Carlos walked in, there was the customary shock and hush as everybody just ogled him and let all those deliciously primitive thoughts of Don Juan rush through. It was difficult to relate all those famous anecdotes from the books with this little man. But there he was, a short nut-brown man with beige slacks, tan hiking shoes, a white short sleeve dress shirt open at the neck, looking every inch a Westwood burgher.

Rosemary Lee, his teaching assistant at UCI, introduced Carlos to the class. After a brief course outline and a few words on the nature of phenomenology and membership, Castaneda got right down to it.

"My apprenticeship is ended," he said. "There is nothing more that Don Juan can teach me anymore. I have all the units of perception that the sorcerer needs to proceed by myself. The perceptual glosses can be stopped, can be changed. Don Juan, you see, was concerned with giving me another description of the world, another way of seeing, another

reality. There is nothing else that he can tell me. But I must do it by myself now.”

During the next few class periods, Carlos explained that his last visit with Don Juan had been the previous May. While at Don Juan’s house, he had watched Don Genaro perform more physical tricks. This time he lay on his belly on the floor and began moving his arms over the boards as if swimming, and slowly Genaro actually began gliding across the floor and around the room, smoothly, effortlessly, as if he were on a skateboard or something, a scant inch off *terra firma*.

But the real gasper came later that afternoon, when Don Genaro made Carlos’s car disappear. The three of them, Carlos, Genaro and Don Juan, had been together all the time, but when Carlos stepped out onto the porch and looked out on the desert at the spot where he had parked his car, it was gone. He ran out trying to find it, but Don Juan and Genaro just joked between themselves on the porch. Finally, Genaro took off his floppy hat and tied a string to the brim and ran down a long hill, trailing his improvised kite around him. The kite made a slow loping sweep over the mountains and then suddenly took a turn for the ground and began falling. At the point when the kite struck the real world, Carlos’s car appeared. Or maybe, it had been there all the time. When Carlos ran down the hill to examine it, Genaro began screaming. He screamed for Carlos to forget the car, to forget the desert, forget everything and turn his attention to the crux of the matter, the real goods—stopping the world.

Castaneda grinned at the class. “Two sorcerers who agree on the world can make a non-member share their view of reality, similar to the way that children are taught to view reality,” he said. “Sorcerers separate their bodily feelings, sort of kinetic communication, from reasoning.”

His undergraduate class was highly structured with tests and papers and formal lectures, but he decided to make the graduate seminar a loose flowing free-for-all. There wasn’t even a textbook until halfway through the quarter and only then, when a few students, par-



ticularly Russ and Rosie Lee, got his dissertation and went upstairs to make copies on the thermofax. Some days Castaneda would just walk into the room and say, "Okay, put up your hands and ask questions." And everybody would begin asking about Don Juan, stopping the world and the Separate Reality. The first thing they asked about was the drugs and they were among the first to find out that Carlos didn't use them anymore.

"I used to think that psychotropic drugs were the important part," he would say, "I no longer believe that. They were only an aid. Don Juan told me that everything he taught me was a means for stopping the world."

He explained how peyote, mushrooms and Jimson weed were Don Juan's drugs, or more accurately, the drugs of his sorcery, and how the old man hadn't used them himself in years. The drugs were like a road map, he said, which leads you someplace, but isn't the location itself. It was just part of the trip. Everyone carries around a description of the world like so much mental baggage stored deeply in the backbrain and this description is the product of a constant flow of interpretation. The real thing, the other world, is the same world—only it is altogether too oppressive and phantasmagorical and infinite, like William Blake's doors of perception washed clean. Castaneda would start waving his arms all around, as if suddenly interrupting the flow of interpretation and he'd explain that only under such a condition can the Separate Reality slip through as pure mindswimming undifferentiated electric dendritic perception.

But then, this was all *so...intangible*. So when Carlos noticed he was getting those dull bovine stares, as if everybody was wondering what the hell he was talking about—and God knows what they were trying to understand—when this would happen, he'd fall back on some of his neat little didactic stories, such as when Genaro floated around the room on the invisible skateboard.

He'd tell them about the time he met stoned Tim Leary at a New York party and about the time he stumbled onto the remnants of a colony sup-

posedly started by Leary in the 1960s. When the Mexican government started hassling Leary's people and running them out of the country, a few stayed behind, hiding in the hills. So when Carlos found the house out there one afternoon, he naturally walked inside and, thinking he'd find a group of friendly Americans, said hell, and introduced himself.

"They were zonked out. There were twenty-five of them in a big room. Stoned." He'd stretch out his arms, as if to underscore the enormity of the waste. "One little girl who almost smiled at me almost encouraged me. But she wouldn't talk to me either. She lifted up her leg to scratch it. It was very hairy. I was shocked at what I saw there. Truly shocked.

"I got up and left. Don Juan came and we went into the mountains. I told him about the Americans. Don Juan told me that he had seen them, too. He thought them truly preposterous. He told me that he saw them in the fields eating the mushrooms directly."

That, of course, was a bastardization of the Shamanic Way. One doesn't just pluck up *Psilocybe mexicana* and pop a couple into the mouth as if they were like so many toasted almonds. Meticulous preparation was required, lots of ritual and foresight, and just to eat them raw was tantamount to psychic death. Russ Rueger winced. He had done his share of mystical mushroom gobbling around Los Angeles.

"Don Juan saw a naked American standing in the field, eating the mushrooms right there on the spot. He was horrified. The mushrooms must be picked with utmost care. They must be stored in a gourd for a year and then mixed properly with other things. The ritual even includes the way you must handle them. You must take the mushroom in the left hand and transfer it to the right to place it in the gourd for storage. And there must be enormous concentration to find the right one. It is better to practice the Yaqui exercises than to use the psychotropics."

He tried repeatedly throughout the course to relate the essence of his experience with that of his college students. Pointing to somebody's watch, Carlos would say, "I'm nobody without my watch. It's my power object." The student would look down at his wristwatch and think for a

moment at this little profundity, this little classroom Castanedaism soaked through the corpus callosum, and he'd wonder what the hell Carlos was talking about—and God knows, he was trying.

"It's a matter of socialization." Everybody was staring blankly at Carlos. "It's not only a matter of suspending judgment, but also of intentionality, of not allowing the world to be made whole."

But of course! The old reducing valve. If one chose to crank open that mother and not limit the watch to merely a timepiece, it could be *so much more*. It was a matter of intentionality. Don Juan said everything could be used for power and, by God, nothing was going to escape the nouveau shamanic gaze—not the desert, not the classroom, not the wristwatch, not the freeway.

"Coming down here on the freeway, I got this feeling on the top of my head. It had to do with straightening and collapsing the world."

Carlos said he got these feelings often. When he was on the San Diego Freeway, going underneath an overpass, it was as though the top of his VW bus made contact and he felt himself not only driving underneath but brushing underneath, making a connection, and in an instant he felt all the lines interconnecting in a kind of spider web Slipstream net. For one vertiginous instant, he was *there*, plugged in, his head making contact with the roof and the roof making contact with the underpass and the underpass, that great concrete span, was seen suddenly for what it really was—one of the lines of the world stretching toward a million perspective points, infinitely.

And just now, just as Carlos drives his tan VW minibus down the San Diego Freeway, somewhere around Westminster or Huntington Beach or someplace, just as he discerns that the overpass is one of the lines of the world, the whole thing collapses—highway, sky, rooftops, storefronts—all folding in on itself, like a house of cards. *Flapflapflapflapflapflapflapflapflap.*

And for an instant, he is in the Separate Reality of Don Juan. The shackles of his cultural conditioning fall away from his eyes and he...sees.

So it didn't matter whether you were in the Sonoran desert or on the San Diego Freeway. It was all the same.

Carlos warned his graduate student that L.A. was hardly the ideal spot for a *mitote*. "The hunter makes use of the world as he sees fit. The sorcerer as hunter and warrior ventures into our reality only as far as he has to."

There was that afternoon, he reminded them, that he and Don Juan were fifty miles from Los Angeles and heading into the city when, suddenly the old man shouted for him to stop the car and turn around. There were too many evil spirits or disconsolate vibrations or something. Anyway, Don Juan wasn't about to travel another mile north and so Carlos turned around and headed for Mexico.

The basis of the classroom work was his newly completed Ph.D. dissertation, which he read from and made references to and otherwise used to stimulate classroom discussion. A few weeks into the class, some students started asking when they were going to get a copy. Carlos said at the beginning he'd have a dozen or so made, but he never did. Finally, after several weeks, Russ and Rosie and another student went up to him after class and asked if they could have his copy of the dissertation to run off a few more, a couple of chapters at a time, on the thermofax upstairs. Carlos agreed and five weeks into the course, a nucleus of students began gathering on the sixth floor around a table adjacent to the office of Mary Rezig, who was the head of the department secretaries. They laid out the pages and made piles of each number and stapled them into about twenty full copies of *Sorcery: A Description of the World*. The last 100 pages had to be duplicated on a Xerox photocopier because of a screw-up involving the thermofax, but finally, with just five weeks to go, everyone got a finished copy. It was all done two and three chapters at a time, because Castaneda wouldn't give out any more than that. Rosie would take a couple of chapters and reproduce them and then return the originals before Carlos would agree to letting the students see the next few.

Russ made two copies for himself, binding one in a green folder and the other in a brown folder, because he said these were Carlos's aura

colors. Some of the other students thought he was nuts for saying that, but Russ saw the aura colors very clearly, just after Castaneda arrived on campus and moved into his temporary office in Room 724 of the social science tower. It all came to Russ suddenly, in the middle of a roaring psilocybin high while he and a friend were up on the seventh floor one day waiting for Carlos. The walls were undulating in a slow rhythmic bellydance pattern all the way up and down, like so much Kentucky Bluegrass in the wind. Russ and his friend slid down to the linoleum floor with their backs against the wall and just sat there waiting for him.

And as they waited, the hallway became a glistening tube with lime Jello walls stretching a million miles, a great Jello tube where, just now, Carlos Castaneda was walking in that gingerly way he always walks—only there was a green coruscation from where the phosphorescent lights were crashing off his body. It was green and Russ noticed the aura alternately faded and swelled as he walked under the neon lights in the ceiling. Finally he was in front of them, fumbling with his office keys and looking out of the corner of his eye at these two guys on the floor. “Hello,” Carlos said, quickly opening the door. “Hey man, it’s a pleasure to see you,” said Russ. Carlos gave a brief nod and just stood there in the middle of a crackling green mass of electric light. Then he scooted into his office and closed the door. In the classroom Carlos had seemed brown, but here in the hallway his green aura was the thing, and Russ *understood* that.

Russ figured the brown aura had something to do with the power he had to tell the most fantastic story and get away with it. Carlos would say he had talked with a bilingual coyote or he would explain how he had seen Don Genaro travel miles in a fraction of a second, and no matter how far he went, no matter how ridiculous it sounded, nobody ever challenged him. What usually happened was that students struggled to understand what he was saying in terms that were more rational, which is exactly what Carlos didn’t want to hear. They kept interpreting his

experiences as hallucinations or as the result of hypnosis or suggestion. Carlos didn't want them to interpret them at all. The most skeptical student in the class was a guy who kept trying to drag Castaneda into classical discussions of positivism and materialism.

"Isn't Don Juan's way destined to be replaced as are all imperfect and provisional systems resting on the primitive basis of theology?" And the guy would look across at Carlos with a fake earnestness. "Even the synthesis established by the old theocracies of Egypt and India was insufficient. It was based on subjective principles and could never embrace practical life. There are, after all, objective realities of the external world..."

And Carlos would nod and say, "Uh huh, yes. Perhaps." "...because theocracy at the outset was limited to thought and feeling, right? The priests threw out polytheism and ultimately transformed it to monotheism, while the *brujos* stayed..."

"...Perhaps. Uh huh. Well, maybe..."

It would go on like that, sometimes for ten minutes before somebody would ask about one vision or another from the books or about Don Roberto's peyote ceremony back in 1964. There were usually questions about the allies, the shapeless forces that Carlos was always writing about and having to deal with on the desert, the powers inside the drugs. When Russ wasn't talking about the auras or about one of his friends who was a witch or otherwise on some occult tangent, he was talking about Eastern religions and the parallels with Don Juan's system of beliefs.

"The idea of seeing, for example," Russ said, "appears to be similar to the Zen idea of 'satori'. Both involve a profound illumination, a sort of penetration of the essence of things beyond all worldly description. And the lifestyle of the warrior has a number of similarities to that of the Zen-man. Both require disciplined detachment from worldly concerns and the realization that man's affairs are ultimately of little significance. Both Zen and the philosophy of Don

Juan stress man's need to be in full harmony with nature. I mean, I can see a lot of similarities here."

And Carlos would nod again and say, "That's interesting. Teach me about that. Tell me what you know."

"There are certain books on Eastern mysticism that contain striking analogies to some of the phenomena of the sorcerer's world. Like *Fourteen Lessons in Yogi Philosophy* by Yogi Ramacharaka. It talks about egg-shaped auras that surround people, bristles of light that extend from the body, astral bodies. They can be detached from their owner and powers that can be used to produce remarkable effects. You can find a lot of this in your books."

Carlos was always ready to consider feedback from the class. Some of Russ's ideas were ridiculous, but the business about the East-West parallels appealed to Carlos. It was as if it were totally new to him. Castaneda knew that American Indian sorcery could very well have started in Asia. He knew and generally accepted the theory that Indians came from Asia across the Bering Strait, but he seemed surprisingly unaware of Eastern thought.

One day, Castaneda explained to the class how he had tried to bring an ally into Professor Harold Garfinkel's living room up at Pacific Palisades. Garfinkel, a Jewish scholar in his fifties with credentials from Harvard and Berkeley, was primarily known for his great ponderous discourses on phenomenology. He was a no-nonsense kind of teacher, a blue nose in academia. He found himself intrigued by Castaneda's research and guided him during the early days. The two of them went over to his house to talk. In the middle of an otherwise logical conversation, Carlos suddenly announced the ally was out on the porch. He asked if it would be all right to invite it inside. It was one of those classic scenes.

"I want to show it to you," Carlos said.

"Oh, that's all right, Carlos," Garfinkel said, pulling back in the chair. "That's fine. I believe that the ally's here, so it's all right."



Garfinkel's eyes were doing a fandango around the room, wondering what was going to happen next, wondering if maybe Carlos had lost it. That sometimes happens to anthropologists who become too deeply involved with alien cultures. They either become anaesthetized by the repeated cultural shocks of their work and begin seeing everything from a curious and uncommitted distance, or else, they seize on their research with a divine diligence—they go completely bonkers.

And so Garfinkel was a little worried that evening that maybe Carlos had gone over the edge. He had no intention of suspending his bourgeois sense of reason and allowing Castaneda to drag his ally into the living room. What would people down at *Phenomenology Sociological Review* say? Garfinkel looked at his old student with the most suspicious kind of clinical scrutiny.

Castaneda shifted back and forth at the podium in an exuberant sway. If the incident at Garfinkel's had been an elaborately staged joke, he didn't bother to explain. He was on new ground already—to kernel sorcery—which he discussed in far greater detail than in any of his books.

The ancient ritual calls for the sorcerer to steal forty-eight kernels of corn from another sorcerer. They are placed in the path of someone who is to be killed, inside yellow flowers preferably, hidden so that, when the victim steps on the flowers, a kernel of corn goes inside the foot and, so the *brujos* tell it, instantly kills him.

"Don Juan will find a kernel for me," Carlos said. "A powerful sorcerer will plant a kernel and grow it from one ear of corn. Don Juan will select the kernels for me."

After class, he drove back to Los Angeles and called Ned Brown to talk about arrangements with Simon and Schuster for the publication of *Journey to Ixtlan*. Then he called me to promise that a check was in the mail and to ask about how C.J. was doing. C.J. was doing quite well in school, but his teachers kept saying he had problems with the other students. C.J. had few friends. He was quiet and moody and serious about everything. I said he was just too mature for most of his classmates.

Later, back at home, Carlos lay back across the mattress and stared out the window. The conversation with me had depressed him, because it was himself he blamed for any problems C.J. had. The boy had no father; he had no name.

To make it worse, he was telling his class about how he had no unfinished business. There was an irony in that. He stood there in class and actually told them, "I don't have any unfinished business right now. I can go from here to eternity. There's nothing working for me, no unfinished business, nothing to hold me back. That is being tight, which is the only way to be." God, what a line. Here he was, Carlos Castaneda, the man who proselytized against attachments, only he was as ensnared as all the rest of those middle-aged burghers he'd see all the time sitting there at Ships coffee shop on Wilshire Boulevard. They were always there, the burghers, always jammed into the booths with wives and kids, dealing with mortgages, marriage and children. It was the grimmest sort of responsibility. And here was Carlos Castaneda sitting there, a Master Charge card in his wallet and an apartment in Westwood and a teaching job.

And yet, there were times he felt there was something more, something transcendent—his name for one thing. His name was magic. When he said something at Irvine about starting an institute for the study of hermeneutics, everybody listened. In restaurants, people asked for his autograph. Sally Kempton came to town saying she was going to do a piece on him for *Esquire*. His agent was dickering with *Time* magazine about a cover story. There was this tantalizing electricity. He wasn't just some musky professor or half-baked novelist, he was something more, something special, he was...*Castaneda*.

In the early spring of 1972, a producer of the *Dick Cavett Show* asked if Carlos would make an appearance.

It was the quintessential credential, but he turned it down. Carlos was worried he'd be treated like a clown. He knew what a superficial fifteen-minute discussion of his experiences with Don Juan would sound

like to the folks at home. And there was another reason he didn't want to appear on the *Dick Cavett Show*. There was a certain power and freedom in remaining inaccessible. Ned Brown had pressed him into interviews before his second book and was doing the same thing for the upcoming work, *Journey to Ixtlan*, but those were with magazines and newspapers, not network television. He was no gadfly and didn't want to risk appearing like one. The sorcerer's explanation, the dramatic conclusion of the Don Juan saga, was still over a year away and would appear in his fourth book. There were still some things to shake into place, so it seemed wise to avoid a potentially dangerous and embarrassing situation on nationwide television with a brash young elitist like Dick Cavett, who might try to pick holes in his *Separate Reality*.

Toward the end of the seminar, Castaneda moved farther away from the material in his books and into whole new areas of sorcery that nobody in class had ever heard of: the *Four Winds*, for example. He said they were women whom the sorcerer must not deliberately seek, but who would come and help in the final battle on the plain with the ally. They were to accompany the apprentice during the ceremony when he is finally recognized as a *brujo*. To the north, there is his *shield*, his protector. In the back of him, to the south, is the warm wind, the *joker*. The *joker* represents the warmth and lightness of spring. Her presence moderates the devastating north wind. To the west, introspection is represented by the *spirit catcher*. Completing the array is the *weapon*, to the east. The weapon is the "foremost authority" and sometimes is called the wind of *illumination*.

Castaneda told his class these four women are used to blunt the attack of the ally when they all finally meet on the plain, somewhere in Sonora. It's sort of like a strange macabre ballet. The ally attacks the women one by one until finally, he comes eyeball-to-eyeball with the apprentice himself. If the apprentice can grab the ally and slam him to the ground, he gains the ally's power. But if he loses, the apprentice is spun, literally twirled into the air at great speed. For Don Genaro, it

meant losing a part of his humanity. He could never go back home. His journey, his metaphorical return to Ixtlan, will last forever.

Most people in the class were vaguely aware that Carlos was speaking metaphorically here, that this whole thing with the *Winds* and the ally was a broad allegory to explain an apprentice's finally becoming a shaman—but it was still awfully murky.

"Since I don't have *Four Winds*," Carlos said, "I'll have to take the plunge by myself. I'll do it when my body feels like it."

There was a rumor on the Irvine campus for a while that Rosie had found a *Wind* for him, some freewheeling co-ed willing to become part of his psychodrama, but nothing ever came of it. And the class ended, he had yet to make the plunge. He was not yet a shaman and, furthermore, was a bit unsure exactly how it would all end.

There was no term paper at the end of the graduate seminar, although he asked everybody to return copies of his dissertation with notes written in the margins, suggestions, ideas, criticisms, whatever.

The final class period was held high in the hills north of Los Angeles, a spot Carlos called a *place of power*, where Yaqui sorcerers once had come to practice meditation and other shamanic rituals. He said it was a location that Don Juan had seen in one of his dreams, a huge ring of boulders arranged in a circle around a dense forest of chaparral, high above the Malibu Canyon. Everybody met at Ships coffee shop. Russ was there with Rosie, and John Wallace and his wife Ruth were there. Wallace, although not enrolled, had attended Carlos's graduate class several times. A philosophy major was there babbling on about Spinoza or something and there were a couple of trippy Sufi characters and most of the others from the class.

There were two caravans, one led by Carlos in his tan VW minibus and another led by somebody else in a van who seemed to know the way. Everybody headed up the Ventura Freeway and then turned onto Las Virgenes Road toward Malibu and the circle of boulders. When they got there, Carlos hopped up in front of everyone and began demonstrating

some exercises, some of the techniques of Yaqui sorcery, such as coming in contact with the lines of the world. Everybody gathered around him. Carlos stood with his feet at a right angle, his left arm extended and his right arm parallel to the ground and bent inward toward his chest. He turned his left palm toward the back and his right palm toward the front. Then the fingers on each hand began moving wildly as if they were plucking a giant banjo. Carlos made fists and turned himself around gracefully into a prizefighter's stance.

He stood there tense and locked, his arms out and legs bent in his determined crouch, stony eyed. And suddenly, there they were...*the lines of the world!* The net, the web, the cosmic interstitial flow!

"Pop," Carlos yelled, falling back into a relaxed position. "There they are. The lines of the world."

Everyone tried it, plucking the giant banjo there under the May California sun. Everybody was crouched at the foot of a boulder that looked like a huge skull and they were just letting it flow, looking for...and God knows what they were looking for.

Carlos went to the center of the chaparral forest and explained how the old sorcerers used to bury themselves by taking bits and pieces of manzanita and mesquite and building small tombs. It was a technique for stopping the world. The *brujos* would just stretch out for days under the vegetation, until everything just came to a halt—the internal dialogue, the ordinary perception of things, the active lifestyle. They'd just lie there silently, until the whole hulking universe came creeping to a halt and they would *see*. Nobody got a chance to try out the mesquite death; Carlos was already discussing how to survive in the desert by eating rattlesnake meat.

"Stupendous," he shouted. "Truly stupendous. Better than whale, turkey, chicken. What you need to trap rattlesnakes is string, lots of string. The trapping is done like this," he said, dangling a length of string made into a loop which he said was slipped over a snake's head when it came out of its hole.

"Actually, dental floss is the best thing to use. Anthropologists don't need all that junk they take into the field with them. All they need is dental floss, lots of dental floss. You could survive anywhere with dental floss."

Everybody followed Carlos down into the thick vegetation below, stopping occasionally to listen to one of his dissertations. He told the students to back into their cars and follow him down through Malibu Canyon in search of a water canyon where he said *angelica* grew. It was supposedly a favorite plant of the Yaqui sorcerers, which was burned to produce a smoke that was inhaled for clarity. The group trundled down into a creek bed, ignoring the sign that warned: "No Trespassing. Los Angeles Water District \$500.00 fine and/or imprisonment for violators." There were a few strands of green *angelica* growing out of the creek bed, but they hadn't been dried, naturally.

"It is no good," Carlos said. "It must be dry before you pick it."

John Wallace reached down and snapped off a strand and sniffed it. The plant had a familiar fragrance. Wallace took a bite. "Carlos," he said. "This is wild celery."

Carlos grinned. "Of course, wild celery. It's good, isn't it? *Angelica* is amazing. I took it to a famous botanist at UCLA for analysis. He told me there is nothing to it. Nothing. Perfectly innocuous stuff. You could eat ten pounds of it and nothing would happen. But it is important to the sorcerer. He insists that its smoke will produce great clarity."

Wallace and his wife were supposed to meet some friends at the Los Angeles International Airport and so they left everybody at the water canyon. The trip was a nightmare. While driving through Venice, Ruth got violently ill. Wallace took a wrong turn and ended up getting a traffic citation for driving on the Venice Boardwalk. They finally got to the airport and met their friends. As they pulled out, a rain storm broke over Los Angeles, the windshield wiper motor burned out and Wallace was forced to get home to Laguna Beach very slowly, creeping along U.S. Highway No. 1 at midnight, sticking his left arm out the window to

clear a tiny patch in the windshield. They were nearly home before Ruth noticed the twig that somehow had gotten inside her jacket. Carlos had warned everyone not to take anything away from the place of power.

"But I didn't take it," Ruth protested. "It must have jumped into my pocket."

"I don't care how it got there, throw the goddamned thing out the window," complained John. "Right now!"

That's not to say that Ruth and John Wallace were total freaked-out loonies or anything. They were not. But they were impressionable, extremely susceptible to suggestion. So when Carlos passed on one of his slightly mystifying admonitions like, "Don't take anything away from the place of power," they took him seriously.

Russ Rueger took him seriously too—when he saw the jackrabbit in the parking lot, it seemed like so much more than just coincidence. Russ was peddling his bicycle back to his apartment from the social science tower, a mile away. He was peddling along through the parking lots and the blacktop roadways on campus when, without any warning, a gargantuan jack rabbit lurched into the road right in front of Russ's bike. Suddenly, out of the shadows that the moon made with the palmettos, a great hulking black-eyed rabbit was staring straight at Russ with an imperious midnight gaze. Russ was so startled, he fell off his bike. He just lay there on the road with his eyes closed, not daring to think about the monster rabbit that was just a few feet away. He tried not to think of anything, but his mind kept returning to how Carlos had played with the dog with the glistening mane and had talked with the coyote. An ally could appear at any time, in any form. Russ rolled his head slowly toward the rabbit, which looked at him curiously. It was just the two of them, Russ and the monster jackrabbit, locked in *something strange* under the blue-rimmed California sky. Locked...*plugged in*...a single sentient mind under God's own ozone.

Suddenly, the rabbit turned and bounded off. Russ lost it in the bush so he just lay there, staring off aimlessly into the night. He had never

fallen off his bicycle before, at least not since his boyhood days back on Staten Island where he learned to ride. But the rabbit had so jangled his senses that he fell off his bicycle. That was the kind of thing he'd find in Carlos's world, not his own—crazy Carlos's world, where there were allies and omens and the biggest damn jackrabbits in the cosmic nexus. Russ knew somehow he had entered the world of Carlos Castaneda right here in the middle of the night on the UCI campus.

But then, naturally, this was the kind of thing that always happened. You couldn't talk with Carlos's students or friends or acquaintances or even those who'd only read his books without hearing all these stories. There were people everywhere who had experienced something extraordinary, something totally outside the parameters of pure Aristotelian logic.

Linda Cornett, an old friend of mine who had read Carlos's books religiously, had an autographed copy of *Journey to Ixtlan*, which she kept on the table, next to her bed. And one day her daughter, Paula, also a Castaneda devotee, walked into the bedroom and there on the book was a huge crow perched calmly in the sun. The crow apparently had flown in through an open window and had come to light on the book. There was no way to keep from thinking of the strange irony in all this—a crow on a book by Carlos Castaneda.

Paula just let her jaw drop in a kind of curious amazement. Then she noticed something wrapped around its right leg. She took a step closer and saw it was a copper band embossed with what appeared to be little Aztec symbols. What an omen! What a scene in the real world! The dull burghers might think they could explain it all away, but Paula and Linda were both *attuned* and they saw the magic operating.

But that was parlor stuff compared with John Wallace's dream. Just after Wallace met Carlos on campus at UCI in the spring of 1972, he noticed there was a feeling of expectation all around. It was in the air. People expected things to happen, Wallace included, so one night he was up late writing music in his living room, which overlooks the



Pacific high up in the Laguna Hills. He was sitting at the baby grand piano in the corner making up these lazy melodies until he got tired and decided to go over and lie down on the couch for awhile in front of the fireplace. The night sky through the window had that surreal chocolate marble swirl look to it and as Wallace lay there watching it, he suddenly became very frightened. He experienced a sudden plunging ethereal chill. It was frightening and he got up and went into the bedroom and lay down beside his wife.

The instant he lay down, things began happening. Twigs began breaking outside, the wind blew more strongly and the basement door suddenly began slamming against the frame. At first, it seemed like a sudden squall, but it kept building and climbing in a furious howling intensity, until whole branches were crashing down on top of the house. The wind was shrieking wildly and the basement door was exploding in a violent spray of splinters. It was as if half of Laguna Hills was about to be hurled out over the ocean.

A full sweat stood on Wallace's forehead. This crazy business was suddenly getting quite serious. He dared not move, but looked frantically around the room for the first signs of windows breaking and the howling of this nightstorm through his bedroom. The more Wallace tried to get control of things, the worse it got. Finally, he resigned himself to being sucked out over the Pacific in a vile apocalyptic rush, and just as he thought it, everything stopped. There was suddenly a vast perfect calm!

He lay there breathing hoarsely with a corona of sweat on the pillow, wondering what the hell had happened. Just about the time he concluded it was some kind of strange hallucination, he heard Ruth's voice. "It's all quiet now," she whispered. Then she rolled over and fell back asleep.

She'd heard! Or had she? Was that just part of his dream, his own peculiar Separate Reality? What kind of hall of mirrors was he in?

Visions, dreams, hallucinations, soaring goof-ball nightmares, just them and Carlos and the vastness, plugged in...floating in the crack between the worlds. Nobody was immune if they wanted to believe in Castaneda.

Adam Smith, the writer, ran into Carlos's double one day in New York. Wanting to meet Castaneda, Smith hustled over to Simon and Schuster's New York office and began climbing the stairs because he understood that Carlos avoided elevators. A couple of flights up, Smith ran into somebody who looked like he might be Castaneda, a short dark man, and he attempted to strike up a conversation about Carlos's terrific contribution to anthropology and how his books were not just like reading about an experience, but actually living it; all the time Carlos was nodding and descending the stairs at a quick pace. Smith tried Wittgenstein, but that didn't work either. Near the bottom of the stairwell, down almost at the lobby, Smith had a sudden flash of insight. He had just read about how Don Juan taught his apprentice the most difficult feat of all—to make a double of yourself. It was a strange and ancient relativist concept, this business of creating a duplicate, so Smith asked the man half-jokingly if he actually was Carlos Castaneda's double.

The man stopped. He nodded and said yes. Then a broad grin broke across his face and he walked out into the lobby and disappeared into the crowd.

This business of having a sanctioned double was something Carlos had been thinking about for years. Even before writing about it in his fourth book, *Tales of Power*, Castaneda was playing these little psychological tricks on people.

During February of 1973, Carlos traveled to New York to talk with his publisher about *Tales of Power* and invited me to join him there for a few days. I hadn't seen Carlos in years and it surprised me to see he had put on a little weight under that dark suit and topcoat. Otherwise, he was much the same—the same broad grin, the same black rain hat, the same charming patter.

We took a cab to the Drake Hotel and ate dinner downstairs, steak for both of us, but while I had wine, Carlos had hot tea—no cocktail, nor wine or alcohol of any kind. I wanted to talk about *Journey to Ixtlan*, which I had just finished, but Carlos refused. He just kept moving from one idea to another in a nervous, fidgety way. After we got back upstairs to the room, Carlos kept roaming around, peering out the window, then walking over to the door, then rummaging in one of his suitcases. I sat bewildered in the corner in a splashy flower print arch-back chair. I watched his agitation with a quiet exasperation.

Carlos took a silver pen and pencil set and a few foreign coins out of the suitcase and gave them to me. He wanted C.J. to have them. Then he reached down and grabbed a raggedy suitcase and thrust it toward me, apologizing that a friend's dog had chewed the edge. He wanted his "chocho" to have that, too.

I decided to take a shower. When I finished, he was still there, hopping around between the beds and talking on the telephone. And he kept talking into the night, dialing different people in the United States and Mexico, talking to a professor somewhere in California and then to his editor, Michael Harner, across town. Sometimes he talked in English, sometimes in Spanish, just roaming there at the end of the cord in a kind of amniotic drift. As I slipped off to sleep, he was dialing Oaxaca or someplace.

The next day it was worse. Carlos became quite dictatorial, ordering me all around, and so finally I announced that I was getting a room at the Commodore. I packed and marched out of the room and climbed aboard the elevator. Carlos followed me and as we descended, he directed me to be sure C.J. was getting a good education and was seeing a dentist regularly. He admonished me for allowing C.J. to ride a motorcycle in competition on dirt tracks around West Virginia. He went on like that all the way down to the lobby until I couldn't take it any longer. "Okay, Napoleon! Okay!" I retorted. He gave me a \$5,000 cashier's check for C.J., unsigned.

Carlos raised his palms submissively. "Look, I'd like to see my 'cho-cho' very soon. Maybe he can come to California or maybe I can take him for a few weeks to South America." I nodded absent-mindedly. "And tell him Napoleon says hello."

When I got back home to Charleston, West Virginia, I filed for divorce, something that I had meant to do for years. There had been a feeling we could work things out and get back together, but the weekend in New York proved it was hopeless. I didn't like this matter of not knowing if I was legally married and so I decided to cut it off for good. It wasn't until October that I heard from Carlos, who said he was confused by the notice of divorce. I complained about his strange attitude and behavior in New York.

There was a long silence as if Carlos had left the phone or something. Finally, he asked me to repeat all that about his attitude in New York, which I did. Carlos listened and then solemnly confessed that he was quite confused.

"I wasn't in New York at the Drake Hotel in February," he said. "I didn't see you there then."

I was in no mood for this. "Well, I know I was in New York and I spent the night with somebody who looked like you, but as I say, you certainly didn't act like the Carlos I used to know."

"No, I'm serious, Maggie. I was not in New York in February." He sounded deadly serious.

I thought for a moment and wondered why he would lie about something like this. Somebody was there, that's for sure. What kind of bizarre schizophrenia was I dealing with here anyway? And then suddenly, it dawned on me—what a magnificent new level he had slipped on everybody. What a marvelous new twist.

It wasn't just a matter of meeting the mysterious Mr. Castaneda anymore, of catching him in a restaurant or on the telephone or something. No, from now on, there was a new quirk in the apparatus. Even if one caught Carlos somewhere and managed to talk to him at length, which

was difficult enough, there was no absolute certainty that it was really Carlos at all. There were a couple of them running around now, duplicates, doubles, making the real thing more inaccessible than ever. Mr. Metaphysical! He had pulled out the rug again!

There is always the flapping of the crow's wings, his C.J., that brings Carlos back to the insipid burgher's world. Carlos has been struggling to let the boy go. But he was also writing about the Indians who were really out there in their boots and bolo ties, squinting out from those marvelously wrinkled eyesockets like a full-color spread in *National Geographic*. They really had those curiously syncretic beliefs which Carlos had to come to know and understand, at least to some degree. It was all there, and in the beginning Carlos Castaneda was rather careful to get it down accurately. Of course, he'd always interjected a lot of himself into his books, and the truth is, they were never pure anthropology and were never supposed to be. After all, hadn't Walter Goldschmidt, the resident god at UCLA, described *The Teachings* as both ethnography and allegory in his glowing foreword to the book? Hadn't the old man come right out and said...*allegory*...as if to say Carlos was blending certain levels here.



Carlton Jeremy Castaneda (C.J., "Chocho") with Carlos  
in New York, 1968



**Carlos and Carlton Jeremy at my apartment—  
5315 W. 8th Street, Los Angeles, California, 1964**

So it wasn't a secret that some of the material in Carlos's books was absolutely real world fact, while some was, admittedly, a bit more subjective. What Carlos had been doing from the beginning was weaving these little stories, these aperçus, the real desert experiences and dreams the honest dialogue of a dozen informants—weaving all this together with the details of his rather mundane Los Angeles lifestyle. He had written about C.J. from the beginning—had dedicated the book to him, in fact—and so when it finally dawned on him that he'd have to quit dotting on the boy, he began thinking of the separation in metaphorical terms. It became an obsession with him; it plagued his dreams. When



he finally sat down to complete *Tales of Power*, it dominated the message. The break with C.J. became essential in what he was calling his transformation from apprentice to man of knowledge.

Nobody ever mentioned that in the magazine articles that were appearing everywhere. The big issue was whether Castaneda's books were legitimate, a controversy that raged for months in the media. When Paul Riesman, an anthropologist from Carleton College, wrote a favorable review of all three books for the *New York Times Book Review*, novelist Joyce Carol Oates wrote a letter impugning Castaneda's work as too slick and too perfectly constructed to be real. He had brought an order and novelistic momentum and flawless dialogue to the real world and Ms. Oates was suspicious.

One of the first really long magazine pieces was John Wallace's article in *Penthouse*, a long account of Carlos's teaching at UCI based on classroom notes and the thermofax of the dissertation that Rosie, Russ and the others had assembled. When *Psychology Today* wanted to publish a conversation with Castaneda, he broke a long-standing rule by allowing Sam Keen to tape a discussion about Don Juan, shamanism and phenomenology. On the recommendation of Ned Brown, Carlos granted a few interviews immediately prior to publication of *Journey to Ixtlan*. Suddenly he was everywhere—*Harper's*, the *New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, the *Village Voice*; suddenly there were dozens of articles, reviews, conversations and opinions on the dean of the new mysticism. But they all had the same failing; they all took Castaneda at his word and so the apocrypha just became part of the mythology.

When a *Time* magazine reporter started asking questions about César and Susana, Peru and other elements of his background, Carlos knew the game was up. A search by a *Time* reporter in Peru had turned up the Aranas living in Lima. They hadn't heard from Carlos in years and were somewhat surprised to learn of his success in the states. César had given the reporter a photo of Carlos, the graduation picture at LACC which the family had received in a letter sent home thirteen years

before. So the magazine had some proof that conflicted with the Castaneda scenario of life in Brazil among the aunts and the intellectuals. They had the real goods and Carlos knew it. It was the grimmest of omens for one who has erased his personal history and so, sitting there with a woman reporter from *Time* high above Malibu in the place of the sorcerers, Carlos Castaneda grinned and looked out at the Pacific and waxed ethereal.

"To ask me to verify my life by giving you my statistics, is like using science to validate sorcery," he said. "It robs the world of its magic and makes milestones of us all."

The Castaneda cover story appeared in the March 5, 1973 issue of *Time* magazine. Following these pages of background, the article quoted critics and supporters who each had their own ideas about the existence of Don Juan and the validity of Carlos's work. It recounted his own vague story of living in Brazil and Argentina and then Hollywood. Using immigration records, school documents and information with the Aranas, the magazine revealed that the real Carlos Castaneda was born on Christmas Day, 1925 not in Brazil, but in Peru, under slightly humbler circumstances and that his education had been in Cajamarca and Lima, not Brazil and Italy. The article caused quite a stir around UCLA.

"I know this is easy to say after the fact, but the first time I met Carlos and after he told me he was originally from Brazil and then to Italy and then went to Argentina and then to the states, there was some kind of buzz I was getting all along in terms of his mannerisms that kept saying to me 'Peru' and I didn't know why," Doug Sharon says. "And I used to say that's because he's a Latin American and Latin Americans have a lot of things in common. But when the *Time* magazine article came out it surprised me, but then I sat down and began to think about it. I began to say this buzz was right after all."

Shortly after the article appeared, Jim Quebec bumped into Carlos and his girlfriend Nanny, on campus. Carlos seemed to be quite

embarrassed at the turn the controversy had taken. Nanny was as outgoing as always and jabbered on about how she intended to switch majors from sociology to journalism, something she had talked about before but which, under the circumstances, was particularly curious. Here was Carlos Castaneda, standing quietly, grinning sheepishly and looking down at his shoes—while Nanny went on and on about a discipline that threatened to destroy Carlos's already limited credibility. It was amusing to watch him squirming there. Clearly, he didn't want to talk about the magazine piece, but Quebec didn't mind. Quebec had long developed a tolerant indifference to the absolute truth of Carlos's stories. The revelation that Carlos was not from Brazil, but Peru, was no big shock. Quebec had suspected something ever since returning from Peru one summer and, knowing Carlos was from South America, asked for a little help with his Portuguese. Carlos vehemently refused. He put his hands to his ear and said it was a language he didn't like to hear.

That was strange. True Brazilians speak Portuguese. The language they don't like to hear is Spanish, which what Carlos spoke all the time. The *Time* article helped clear up the inconsistencies.

"He didn't want to talk about Brazil, because he didn't know anything about it," says Quebec, "and he didn't want to talk about Peru, because he knew too much."

Parodies of Castaneda began appearing in New York magazines and newspapers. *The Great Fear* was back at Haines Hall and a raging debate was underway among academicians and critics and friends who all had their own special understanding of what Castaneda was about.

The people writing letters to the *New York Times Book Review* seemed to want to crucify him out on the Sonoran plain, Joyce Carol Oates was openly calling his books a hoax. Old colleagues around UCLA were looking at him suspiciously.

Hoax. Con artist. My God, what was he into? Carlos granted no more interviews for awhile and limited his visits on campus to appearances

aimed at getting his Ph.D. He selected Meighan, Garfinkel, Dr. Philip Newman and two others to be his doctoral committee. There was a whole set of requirements he had to meet, written exams and oral exams and so forth. Much of the tedious preliminary material, the language proficiency requirement, was taken care of well before the *Time* cover story hit the stands. When Meighan had asked him what language he spoke as a child—he had lived in Brazil and had spoken Italian, picking up Portuguese and Spanish along the way. It was a bureaucratic question—not a personal one—so when Carlos passed the language examination, Meighan was satisfied. He didn't really care how Carlos came to learn the languages, only that he knew them.

The written examination was standard anthropology, straight-line scholarship of the conventional Goldschmidt variety, and he passed that with no problems. His dissertation was his third book, edited slightly, but not significantly, from the volume that took its place as the third installment of the Don Juan saga. Through it all, as *The Great Fear* rose up that spring 1973, Meighan remained his staunchest ally on the committee.

Meighan, who was something of an odd man out because his discipline was archaeology and not the more exquisite realm of ethnomethodological anthropology—only crusty old Clement Meighan remained loyally at Carlos's side. He frequently was called in to defend the whole Don Juan business from the broadsides of more skeptical colleagues.

That spring, as it became widely known that Carlos was about to get his Ph.D., a disgruntled clique mounted something of an attack on a body of work some felt was as close to true anthropology as Asimov's sci-fi articles were to conventional science. The general consensus up there in the lounge in Haines Hall was that Castaneda ought to be thrown to the boorish mob, the young elite with their fashionably half-baked ideas about cultural anthropology. You'd have these old guys with fifteen years in the late pre-Cambrian substrata sitting around the table

and debating whether Carlos Castaneda had made any real academic progress. They'd suck in their chin and say how Carlos's work was filled with all these problems concerning methodology and the impossibility of accurate duplication. They'd sit around the yellow polyvinyl tables and question the subjective aspect of Carlos's work in which he had gone back to the 1930s idea of asserting a humanistic trend in anthropology. In the late 1950s, the social sciences in general, and anthropology in particular, had moved toward a quantitative form of analysis, which was generally considered progressive and respectable. Social sciences would never achieve the precision of chemistry or physics, but with the increasing use of testing and statistical analysis, they were approaching what some scholars felt to be reality. The idea was to get into the little black box of the brain and the tool had become numbers and chi-square analysis.

And just as everybody was adapting to that, here was Carlos Castaneda with a tremendous following and influence wrecking everything, sending the pendulum sailing back into the soft-headed humanism of the 1930s. Moreover, he was doing it with such style, such élan. He had become so...*popular*...and so naturally some of the old farts were complaining about what a madhouse Haines Hall had become, what a goddamn sideshow with all those people squatting against the walls up on the third floor, always asking where Carlos was, always caroming around hoping to get a look at him, just a couple of words with him. These weren't just anthropology majors with red-baked California foreheads from days in the Santa Rosa Mountains; they were philosophy students and mechanical engineering students and pre-med students, a really strange kind of cerebral crowd—like the guy from Pittsburgh who had hitchhiked all the way in, seven days on the road, just to get a look at him.

It wasn't that the detractors in the department were jealous of Carlos or anything, but more than one of them had considered their own scholarly lives, of hopsack and musty libraries and respectable grey

anonymity. They knew the paperwork and the bureaucracy and all the bullshit you had to go through, the endless political jockeying for position. And they'd heard all about Carlos's teaching experience at Irvine and how the classroom was jammed all the time with people squatting everywhere, against the walls and up around the podium, the hippies and the young bubs and the honest students all pressing in with the heuristic flame in everybody's eyes opened full-tube and blazing. Given the alternative, who *wouldn't* want that? Who among them hadn't dreamt of crossing the line into that forbidden territory, where they talk about you at the New York cocktail parties and they silk-screen your words on posters that hang in rustic little Pacific Coast cottages in British Columbia. Who had not thought about all the sweet young bubs coming in their bleached jeans and their gingham halters to attend your class, to *lock in* with those perfect brown eyes, to offer you...*everything*. Who would refuse?

But who would admit that? So there grew among some of the faculty that spring a sort of surreptitious yammering, aimed at keeping Carlos Castaneda from getting his Ph.D. from UCLA. And the arguments kept running over the same ground of methodology and credibility.

Not everybody was denigrating Carlos. He had a number of supporters among the faculty. Meighan was the most ardent one, defending as he did Carlos's work before the editorial board, in private conversations and among the doctoral committee. As it turned out, the committee—Meighan, Phil Newman, all of them—fully supported Carlos, and that was important, because it is the committee that deals with the student, takes responsibility for him and speaks on his behalf before faculty members. If the committee backs a student completely, the rest of the department usually won't debate the issue, despite the reservations of some people. When some boy in the lounge would question the legitimacy of Carlos's findings, Meighan would leap to the defense.

"Carlos is himself between cultures. But his informant is too." It was one of Meighan's strongest conclusions about Carlos and he spared

none the spiel. "That's one of the keys to this whole situation, which is not very clearly brought out. It's my view looking at what I've heard about the informant that he's part Yaqui, part Yuma and had parents in two different cultural traditions and lived in two different cultural traditions on both sides of the border. He had to contend with the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant upper class here and the Spanish Catholic upper-class in Mexico, which are totally different cultural units themselves. They have totally different ways of dealing with the world. Plus the fact that he had made contacts around the country. I think personally that Carlos and the informant hit it off because of the fact they could perceive each other. They were intercultural people and they were trying to put together how to cope, how to understand the world. Carlos certainly is and his informant is too. His informant did it by building himself a store of power, knowledge of various kinds, derived from various places but all within a good shamanic tradition. I think it was one of the reasons why their relationship hit. Two people confronted by the same kinds of intellectual problems, namely, how to put it all together, while surrounded by alien cultures of all kinds. And it just meshed."

That was Meighan's spiel, the idea of Carlos and Don Juan as kindred spirits in an alien world. There were those who weren't convinced by Meighan's idea and figured that Don Juan and Carlos were so much alike, simply because they were the same person. He had lied to his committee, after all, saying he had lived in Brazil and had spoken Italian as a child. Meighan would just sort of smile.

"Carlos is a guy who falls between a set of cultures. Whatever his total mysterious background might be, there is no question that he is an individual who falls between a whole set of cultures. He's not a typical white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. He was raised in a world where he had to deal with lots of different cultures operating at different levels. He said he had lived in Brazil when he was a little child and had spoken Italian. Since he could handle all the languages, it was a bureaucratic question.

All the stuff in *Time* was new to me. My evaluation of him was based on whether what he was telling me about anthropology was true or not and there, I could believe what he was telling me.”

The committee believed it and that spring, the members signed all the proper papers awarding Carlos his doctorate. With the publication of his dissertation as *Journey to Ixtlan*, Carlos became a millionaire.

The big news in *Journey to Ixtlan* was that Castaneda was not using psychotropic plants anymore. The drugs, which had been so important in his first book and had assured his popularity, were completely absent in his third book. He had explained it all to his class at Irvine—all about how the plants had not been a means to an end—but a method of shaking the grip of Western rationalism. But it was new to readers expecting deeper drug experiences in the sequel to *A Separate Reality*. Actually, only the last three chapters could accurately be called a sequel. The first twenty pages included material Carlos said was left out of the earlier books because it seemed irrelevant. Primarily, it was material that dealt with technique and philosophy, rather than psychotropics.

Renewing his acquaintanceship with Don Genaro, the master acrobat, Carlos felt himself moving closer to absorbing the lesson. It was still broad and nebulous, but essentially the lesson was one of personal power and independence, of knowing one's self completely, and the means of breaking all bonds.



"I'm working on this book and I haven't finished it yet," Carlos phoned me to say. "I'm going back to Mexico in the morning. It's called *Tales of Power*. But I don't know, it's going to be very difficult to write. It doesn't come out. I have to go back again."

I switched the phone receiver to the other ear. "Where do you go?" I asked. "Oaxaca?"

"Yeah, so I won't be in touch with you until I come back." I mentioned the divorce papers and Carlos said, "Maybe it'll be over quickly and I'll be able to balance the money and pay the lawyer. I want to get rid of all those people. They just ride me."

Carlos had hired Guy Ward of the firm Ward & Heyler in Los Angeles to handle his legal affairs. Then he intended to lop Ward and Alexander Tucker off the payroll. And maybe his agent, Ned Brown too. Carlos lamented that the more money he made, the more dependent he seemed to become. Everything was inextricably tied to everything else and he felt as if he were struggling there in the middle, unable to get free.

Back in the 1960s, it was me who had wanted the divorce, but he had held me off with that double shuffle in Mexico. I had complained often about the legal box our Mexican marriage had put me in; but Carlos would always assuage me by saying our relationship was perfectly acceptable the way it was. It was always Carlos who wanted to

preserve the status quo, so it seemed strange when suddenly, in the autumn of 1973, he was willing to have the divorce papers drawn up. It was about time to break *all* bonds in that extended Castaneda metaphor he was writing.

"I must help that little boy," he told me on the telephone. "There is something about me and my name and all that crap that stands in the way. He has no name. His name is Adrian Gerritsen Jr. That's a very powerful name. I thought of helping him, but it didn't work. It just didn't work."

The hearing that awarded me permanent custody and control of Carlton Jeremy was held in December 1973 at Domestic Relations Court of Kanawha County, West Virginia. Carlos was not present. He called a few days later and seemed relieved to hear it was over. Carlos wondered if there had been any problems.

"Well," I said, "your birthday is the 25th, next Tuesday..."

"No. I don't have any birthday, not anymore."

"Yeah, well, my mother went with me to the hearing and they asked me a few questions. They asked me your age and I said there were quite a few inconsistencies. I said I didn't really know." Carlos leaned back and giggled. "So I just told them some number. I don't know!"

It was perfect. Carlos was suddenly relieved, even buoyant at the news that even in the glaring legalistic light of a domestic relations court, even there, he had escaped with his shroud of mystery. Still an unknown quantity, Carlos Castaneda—Mr. Metaphysical!

"Very good," he said, "because this way Ward can finish this thing and then tell me how much I owe him."

"Are we still friends?" I asked.

"I have always fought to be your friend. We will do whatever our fate is. Our fate is our fate. We must accept that in humbleness. We can't force things and we can't ever do things that are contrary to our own ways of thinking and being."

It was like the old Carlos, the one back at LACC who was always talking about fate and the virtue of living for the moment, the one who could be both loving and distant. I remembered how insecure he was in those days, how scared of failing and I knew for all his pretensions, he had changed very little in the last decade and a half.

"Carlos, you were already all the things that Don Juan is trying to bring out to make you understand," I said. "I don't understand why you persist in so many questions, because you're already that. All you needed was somebody to confirm that; you're already the way you thought."

Carlos paused a moment on the other end of the telephone line. "You're the only person who understands that about me," he said.

And so he was ready, finally, to wrap the whole thing up. The critics had all called him a liar and sometimes even he thought himself incapable of telling the truth two sentences in a row. But he'd show them; he'd actually end his attachments and reach that aesthetic plain before ever sending his manuscript to the publisher. By being honest and truly free, he'd close out the tetralogy redeemed. A few days after his conversation with me, Carlos checked with Guy Ward and got a copy of the divorce papers. Then he returned to his house in Westwood and completed *Tales of Power*.

In this, the fourth book, he introduced the notion of the *tonal* and the *nagual*, attempted to demystify Don Juan and finally wrote about himself and fellow initiate Pablito at the edge of the plain, in that rite of passage he had dreamed of for years. There were no specific dates, no anthropological touchstones, nothing but a broad unfolding drama in pure novelistic form. He allowed the reader to slip without warning from "real world" to this curious state he called the Separate Reality, testimony to both the excellence of Don Juan's deft manipulation and Carlos's subjective style.

Anthropologists had used the terms *tonal* and *nagual* for years. Doug Sharon ran across them while doing research among the Peruvian *curanderos*, but Carlos expanded on the definitions.

Essentially, the *tonal* is everything for which we have words, while the *nagual* is everything we can't define, identify or name. Only Carlos went beyond that. Through conversations with Don Juan, he supplied the nuance, the substance—so much that Doug Sharon even used an advance copy in writing his own Ph.D. thesis at UCLA.

After meeting Don Juan at a restaurant in Mexico City, Carlos was prepared for the sorcerer's explanation and the initiation. It was a strange meeting, with the old man dressed in a brown pinstripe suit, white shirt and tie and dismissing much of the technique and jargon of the past twelve years. The real goods lay in stopping the internal dialogue that reconstitutes the real world.

So finally Carlos Castaneda sat there at his desk in Westwood, pounding away at the typewriter with a painful intensity and the sweat rolling down his jawline and the adrenaline thrumming up through the external carotid. In the end, he wrote about C.J. not as "my little boy" anymore, as in the earlier books, but as "a little boy I once knew." He was keeping nothing secret here; he had made the break. Back in the fall of 1976, Carlos had written to me about how he and C.J. had gone hiking in the mountains north of Los Angeles.

"There is not one single day that goes by in which I don't think of you and my chocho," he had written. "And I don't say this just to say something, although it may sound like an empty ready-made statement, like those everybody makes to fit the occasion. There is not one single day of peace for me without you two. I would like to hike again with my chocho. Once, I was carrying him on my shoulders up the side of a hill and when we got to the top, he shouted to the sun and to the mountains, "Sun, mountains, I love Kiki."

"His little voice will resound in my ears to the end of my life. How I wish I could see you two again! But my fate was to lose both of you, and there is nothing one can do against one's fate, except to hope."

So he wrote about that too—and to hell with those critics who always said he wrote fiction. In the end, he went beyond the lanky guy

rising out of the shadows and beyond the portentous sorcerer's explanation, which remained nebulous even after four books. Towards the end of his journey, he wrote about himself, standing there in the desert watching Don Genaro suddenly flash like a strobe and then push off into a floating weightless dive.

When Don Juan whispered into one ear and Don Genaro began whispering into the other, Carlos felt his consciousness split in two. It was here that the anthropologists had always stopped, right here, with their tawdry ideas about schizophrenia. It was all the same. Carlos looked up and watched Pablito leap off the cliff and explode in a spray of points, a billion fragments of primitive awareness. Then he got up and walked to the edge and jumped too, right into the mouth of it, becoming in one electric instant a cluster of light and mental energy, with the recognition that he was free...and alone.

"The last time I talked to him, he was absolutely normal and rational," Clement Meighan was saying that summer in 1974, as the advance copies of *Tales of Power* were making the rounds at UCLA. "I had no feelings about his losing reality at all. He has a good sense of humor, and he can appreciate what's going on. He can take a certain detached attitude about it, which I think is a saving grace. If he really were totally humorless in his approach to this whole business, I think he'd been in an institution right now. He has enough detachment and humor so that he can come out of it.

"On the other hand, the kinds of things he's working with require you to engage your intellect. You have to have the brain cells turned on and firing in order to weave through the labyrinth to make sense of it. Or at least, in his case, to make sense out of it to the extent of putting it down on paper. He often complains to me that he's having a terrible difficulty trying to get the ideas out and down and written. He's working on it. It comes and goes. There are times that he's obviously hassling it through and his mind is totally committed and then, when he's over

that hump, he's solved that problem and is relaxed and in a good frame of mind, he seems perfectly normal."

Carlos Castaneda arrived late, slipping in unobtrusively during the speeches. But C.J. spotted him right away. The boy sat out there in the middle of the football field with the other students and he watched Carlos up in the stands, weaving his way through the aisles, until he found my sister Betty Virzi and her husband, Victor.

Carlos was late, but still in time. When the principal on stage began reading the names of all the May 1975 graduates of Connolly Junior High School here in Tempe, Arizona, Carlos was there to see it. And when the principal announced, "Carlton Jeremy Castaneda," and C.J. walked across the stage in his white jacket and powder blue slacks to get his diploma, Carlos grinned broadly and nodded.

Later, at my townhouse in Tempe, Carlos was ebullient.

He was always like this in a small group of friends, a gracious master of small talk, light years from his quasi-public image of mysterious academic and reluctant guru. Carlos was a bit stockier than the last time I had seen him, but he still had that bouncy athletic presence. He was dressed in a conservative grey suit with a white shirt that made his brown face seem somehow darker. The black curls were clipped a bit, but still there. It was the look of a distinguished professor. Only when Betty tried to snap his picture did he reveal a bit of the Castaneda personality by jerking out of the way. Betty's picture-taking bothered him, but he didn't say anything about it.

Carlos decided it was time to leave and so he rounded up everybody—Betty and Victor, C.J. and me, old friend Kay Quinn and her two daughters Kathy and Patricia, and my nephew Michael Magana—and he suggested they all go to Gregory’s Penthouse in Phoenix for dinner. On the way, sitting in my car, Carlos talked to C.J. about returning to Los Angeles with him for the summer. He hinted that they would go to Europe, but C.J. seemed reluctant. Carlos urged, but C.J. refused, largely because Carlos was so unreliable. Carlos had promised before to take C.J. to Europe, but hadn’t; he had promised to call and visit and send letters, but rarely did. C.J. had bitter memories of waiting for telephone calls that never came, for letters that never arrived. Once, in a fit of pique, C.J. declared to me that he would never hurt a human being the way Carlos had hurt him. In time, he intended to go away into the wilderness and live like a hermit. Carlos seemed to get the message. Before going inside, Carlos said he would call C.J. at the end of the summer to see if anything had changed, but he didn’t really mean it.

The rest of the night, Carlos was attentive and effusive. He dominated the conversation. He asked Kay about living in Utah and asked one of her daughters about a recent trip she’d taken to England. He talked with Betty about the old days in Los Angeles and he gave C.J. a \$100 bill as a graduation present. It was all food and small talk. Only once did he touch on his apprenticeship and only then, when I asked about Don Juan.

“He disappeared,” said Carlos. “He’s not there anymore.”

“Did he die?” I asked.

Carlos looked at me. “He just disappeared.” It was clear he didn’t want to talk about it.

After everybody had eaten and had sat around talking over dessert and coffee, Carlos left the table and went over to the cashier to pay the bill. He handed the cashier his Master Charge card and she started to ring the whole thing up when suddenly she froze and her eyes opened in recognition.



Was he *the* Carlos Castaneda? The writer? The one who had written all those mystical Indian books? Carlos nodded.

Had she known! She apologized profusely for the table, which was way back by the kitchen, where you could hear the clashing of the silverware. She lamented that the restaurant had been so busy and that someone of his stature had been shuttled to the back like some common burgher. Had she only known!

Carlos assured her that everything was fine and just wanted to pay the bill. We were hardly to the elevator, when suddenly a half-dozen sun-blond waitresses were around him, sweet young things all gathered around, pressing in—giggling and staring in a kind of mystical awe. Here was the man who had written so eloquently about reaching that rarefied peak, about taking the final step into the folk world of the *brujo*. Here he was at arm's length, a flat-out subterranean legend, just standing by the elevator at Gregory's Penthouse in a natty charcoal grey Botany Club suit. And he was so gracious about it, so self-effacing as they scrambled around for notebooks and napkins and scraps of paper—anything big enough for an autograph. He didn't seem to be rattled by it. He just stood there with his eyes darting around, scribbling his name.

Then something happened. He stopped suddenly and his face froze and he kept staring down at the paper in his hand, as if at something incredible, and there it was...*Carlos Castaneda! Descendent of the Legendary Shaman! Creature of the Myth!* He reeled under the weight of it all—while all around him these giggly young girls waited for their autographs...

When will this dream ever go away? It's always the same; he's always walking on the desert scared out of his gourd and is wondering when it will happen—when he will spot the mysterious polymorphic ally. And suddenly, out there at the corner of his eye, a lanky old guy rises out of the shadows, the same long face and spectral cheekbones, the same ominous presence that has always haunted his dreams, only now the ally is bald and has a scaly eczema or something all over the left side of his head. The guy stares straight out of his hollow eyesockets and Carlos stares back. The surrealistic scene hovers in the red Mexican dawn.

It's taken him years to reach this point and Carlos can feel the constant thrum of adrenalin along the external carotid, which always comes when he thinks maybe, just maybe, he will consummate the battle on the plain and become a sorcerer and have the stuff to finish the last book of the Don Juan saga.

But he always wakes up before the conclusion...

## *Epilogue*

I finally resigned myself to the fact that I would never be able to see Carlos or talk with him again. He never responded to my calls or notes that I had written over the years to his business office.

I was surprised when David Christie called around the 1<sup>st</sup> of October in 1993 to inform me that Carlos was going to lecture at the Phoenix Bookstore in Santa Monica, California.

His latest book, *The Art of Dreaming*, had been only out a month or two. I was so excited I could hardly contain myself. I said, "I would love to attend—what should I do?" Then David said, "It's only by invitation." David said he would check with the bookstore owner and see if he could bring a guest. He called me back and said I could attend the lecture with him. Immediately I called Adrian (C.J.). He was excited too and, of course, wanted to go with me. I said there might be a problem for him to get in and he said, "Don't worry Mom, I'll get in."

Arriving early gave me time to get my composure to speak with Carlos, if the occasion arose. However, the occasion didn't arise.

Finally we were allowed to go inside the bookstore before Carlos made an appearance. Adrian (C.J.) spoke with a lady waiting outside who seemed to be alone and asked if he could be her guest. She graciously said, "Yes." Carlos finally entered, dressed in a silk shirt opened at the neck, jeans, a brown leather vest and heavy-looking cowboy boots.

I became very upset when I saw that his hair was completely grey. I had also expected to see him wearing a suit, shirt, and tie. The years that separated us for so long were completely dissolved—as though time had collapsed.

He looked slim and in very good shape. I closed my eyes for a moment and listened to him speak with his delightful accent. Then I opened my eyes to observe his stage presence. Carlos is still wonderfully charming and has the ability to hold his audience spellbound. He spoke for about three hours, allowing questions to be asked during the lecture. He responded with lengthy answers to questions put to him.

He left the stage and exited the rear door at the back of the bookstore. I hurriedly exited to make an attempt to talk with him, if only for a moment. He was already in his van starting to drive away when Adrian (C.J.) knocked on the window. Carlos stopped and said, "Oh, there's my Chocho!" and got out. He went over to see C.J., hugged him and began talking. C.J. said that Carlos told him that he was a powerful warrior and repeated over and over again that he would be back with him soon.

While he spoke to C.J., I walked over to one of the tall young women who seemed to guard him and said, "I would like to speak with Carlos when he's finished talking with C.J." Her answer was, "No." I said, "Do you know who I am?" She replied, "Yes." I just stood there and continued to wait.

Carlos walked over to me. He put his arms around me, kissed my cheek and expressed his seeming delight to see me. Then he stood back and just looked at me. When he did that, I asked if he would sign the book I had in my hand, his latest book, *The Art of Dreaming*. His answer, which I never expected, was, "Oh, I'm sorry, my hands are too tired." And then he held his hands out in a gesture indicating they were really tired. I said to Carlos, "Oh, don't worry, it's all right, I've ordered the leather-bound edition from Easton Press, and I know you signed those." As he walked to the van he threw kisses to me and then drove away.

Carlos left me with the same impression he gives everyone else—he is still as mysterious and magical as he's always been.

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—  
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;  
How oft hereafter rising look for us  
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain  
—*The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*

## *About the Author*

Margaret Runyan Castaneda was born in Charleston, West Virginia, Kanawha County, on November 14, 1921. She is the eldest of six children. Her father, Dennie Runyan, owned a dairy in Charleston.

She graduated from South Charleston High School in 1940 and attended the Charleston School of Commerce, majoring in Business. She worked for C and P Telephone Company (Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Co.) as an operator and on the assignment desk, assigning telephones to customers, from November 1940 to July 1943. She then went to work for Union Carbide as a chemical analyst.

She worked for Union Carbide until 1947; then she went to California. "I started working for Pacific Telephone Company in 1947 and held the position of Assistant Chief Operator until 1965," she says. "I attended Los Angeles City College, while working full-time, accumulating two years' worth of credits; my major was psychology and my minor was Russian."

She did further study at UCLA in Audio-Visual Education.

She married Carlos Castaneda in January 1960; they separated in July 1960 and were divorced on December 17, 1973. She moved to West Virginia in 1966. In 1967, she went to Washington, D.C., working for the CBS Affiliate WTOP-TV and Radio as Chief Operator. In 1971, she moved to the Phoenix area of Arizona.

She currently resides in Charleston, West Virginia.