

THE BEAST OF FEAR . . .

The tiger seemed angry, aroused. It crouched back on its hind legs, as if it were preparing to jump on us. I was terrified.

La Gorda turned to me, smiling. I understood that she was telling me not to succumb to my panic, because the tiger was only a ghostlike image. With a movement of her head, she coaxed me to go on. Yet at an unfathomable level I knew that the tiger was an entity, perhaps not in the factual sense of our daily world, but real nonetheless. And because la Gorda and I were *dreaming*, we had lost our own factuality-in-the-world. At that moment we were on a par with the tiger: our existence was also ghostlike.

We took one more step at the nagging insistence of la Gorda. The tiger jumped from the ledge. I saw its enormous body hurtling through the air, coming directly at me. I lost the sense that I was *dreaming*—to me, the tiger was real and I was going to be ripped apart. A barrage of lights, images, and the most intense primary colors I had ever seen flashed all around me.

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**CARLOS
CASTANEDA**

**THE EAGLE'S
GIFT**



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Contents

| | |
|----------|---|
| PROLOGUE | 1 |
|----------|---|

Part One *THE OTHER SELF*

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. <i>The Fixation of the Second Attention</i> | 9 |
| 2. <i><u>Seeing Together</u></i> | 29 |
| 3. <i>Quasi Memories of the Other Self</i> | 49 |
| 4. <i>Crossing the Boundaries of Affection</i> | 66 |
| 5. <i>A Horde of Angry Sorcerers</i> | 87 |

Part Two *THE ART OF DREAMING*

| | |
|--|-----|
| 6. <i>Losing the Human Form</i> | 111 |
| 7. <i><u>Dreaming Together</u></i> | 127 |
| 8. <i><u>The Right and the Left Side Awareness</u></i> | 150 |

Part Three
THE EAGLE'S GIFT

| | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| 9. | <i>The Rule of the Nagual</i> | 171 |
| 10. | <i>The Nagual's Party of Warriors</i> | 188 |
| 11. | <i>The Nagual Woman</i> | 212 |
| 12. | <i>The <u>Not-Doings</u> of Silvio Manuel</i> | 230 |
| 13. | <i>The <u>Intricacies</u> of <u>Dreaming</u></i> | 247 |
| 14. | <i>Florinda</i> | 266 |
| 15. | <i>The Plumed Serpent</i> | 297 |

Prologue

Although I am an anthropologist, this is not strictly an anthropological work; yet it has its roots in cultural anthropology, for it began years ago as field research in that discipline. I was interested at that time in studying the uses of medicinal plants among the Indians of the Southwest and northern Mexico.

My research evolved into something else over the years as a consequence of its own momentum and of my own growth. The study of medicinal plants was superseded by the study of a belief system which seemed to cut across the boundaries of at least two different cultures.

The person responsible for this shift of emphasis in my work was a Yaqui Indian from northern Mexico, don Juan Matus, who later introduced me to don Genaro Flores, a Mazatec Indian from central Mexico. Both of them were practitioners of an ancient knowledge, which in our time is commonly known as sorcery, and which is thought to be a primitive form of medical or psychological science, but which in fact is a tradition of extremely self-disciplined practitioners and extremely sophisticated praxes.

The two men became my teachers rather than my informants, but I still persisted, in a haphazard way, in regarding my task as a work in anthropology; I spent

years trying to figure out the cultural matrix of that system, perfecting a taxonomy, a classificatory scheme, a hypothesis of its origin and dissemination. All were futile efforts in view of the fact that in the end, the compelling inner forces of that system derailed my intellectual pursuit and turned me into a participant.

Under the influence of these two powerful men my work has been transformed into an autobiography, in the sense that I have been forced from the moment I became a participant to report what happens to me. It is a peculiar autobiography because I am not reporting about what happens to me in my everyday life as an average man, nor am I reporting about my subjective states generated by daily living. I am reporting, rather, on the events that unfold in my life as a direct result of having adopted an alien set of interrelated ideas and procedures. In other words, the belief system I wanted to study swallowed me, and in order for me to proceed with my scrutiny I have to make an extraordinary daily payment, my life as a man in this world.

Due to these circumstances I am now faced with the special problem of having to explain what it is that I am doing. I am very far away from my point of origin as an average Western man or as an anthropologist, and I must first of all reiterate that this is not a work of fiction. What I am describing is alien to us; therefore, it seems unreal.

As I enter deeper into the intricacies of sorcery, what at first appeared to be a system of primitive beliefs and practices has now turned out to be an enormous and intricate world. In order to become familiar with that world and to report about it, I have to use myself in increasingly complex and more refined ways. Whatever happens to me is no longer something I can predict, nor anything congruous with what other anthropologists know about the belief systems of the Indians of Mexico. I find myself, consequently, in a difficult position; all I can do under the circumstances is present what happened to me *as it happened*. I cannot give any other

assurance of my good faith, except to reassert that I do not live a dual life, and that I have committed myself to following the principles of don Juan's system in my everyday existence.

After don Juan Matus and don Genaro Flores, the two Mexican Indian sorcerers who tutored me, had explained their knowledge to me to their own satisfaction, they said goodbye and left. I understood that from then on my task was to assemble by myself what I had learned from them.

In the course of fulfilling this task I went back to Mexico and found out that don Juan and don Genaro had nine other apprentices of sorcery; five women and four men. The oldest woman was named Soledad; the next was Maria Elena, nicknamed "la Gorda," the other three women, Lydia, Rosa, and Josefina, were younger, and were called "the little sisters." The four men, in order of age, were Eligio, Benigno, Nestor, and Pablito; the latter three men were called "the Genaros" because they were very close to don Genaro.

I had already known that Nestor, Pablito, and Eligio, who was no longer around, were apprentices, but I had been led to believe that the four girls were Pablito's sisters, and that Soledad was their mother. I knew Soledad slightly over the years and had always called her *doña* Soledad, as a sign of respect, since she was closer to don Juan in age. Lydia and Rosa had also been introduced to me, but our relationship had been too brief and casual to afford me an understanding of who they really were. I knew la Gorda and Josefina only by name. I had met Benigno but had no idea that he was connected to don Juan and don Genaro.

For reasons that were incomprehensible to me, all of them seemed to have been waiting, in one way or another, for my return to Mexico. They informed me that I was supposed to take the place of don Juan as their leader, their Nagual. They told me that don Juan

and don Genaro had disappeared from the face of the earth, and so had Eligio. The women and the men believed that the three of them had not died—they had entered another world, different from the world of our everyday life, yet equally real.

The women—especially doña Soledad—clashed violently with me from our first meeting. They were, nevertheless, instrumental in producing a catharsis in me. My contact with them resulted in a mysterious effervescence in my life. From the moment I met them drastic changes took place in my thinking and my understanding. All this did not happen, however, on a conscious level—if anything, after my first visit to them I found myself more confused than ever, yet in the midst of the chaos I encountered a surprisingly solid base. In the impact of our clash I found in myself resources I had not imagined I possessed.

La Gorda and the three little sisters were consummate *dreamers*; they voluntarily gave me pointers and showed me their own accomplishments. Don Juan had described the art of *dreaming* as the capacity to utilize one's ordinary dreams and transform them into *controlled awareness* by virtue of a specialized form of attention, which he and don Genaro called the *second attention*.

I expected that the three Genaros were going to teach me their accomplishments in another aspect of don Juan's and don Genaro's teachings, "the art of *stalking*." The art of *stalking* was introduced to me as a set of procedures and attitudes that enabled one to get the best out of any conceivable situation. But whatever the three Genaros told me about *stalking* did not have the cohesion or the force I had anticipated. I concluded that either the men were not really practitioners of that art, or they simply did not want to show it to me.

I stopped my inquiries in order to give everyone a chance to feel relaxed with me, but all of the men and women sat back and trusted that since I was no

longer asking questions I was finally behaving like a Nagual. Each of them demanded my guidance and counsel.

In order to comply I was obliged to undertake a total review of everything don Juan and don Genaro had taught me, to go deeper still into the art of sorcery.

PART ONE
THE OTHER SELF

1

The Fixation of the Second Attention

It was midafternoon when I got to where la Gorda and the little sisters lived. La Gorda was alone, sitting outside by the door, gazing into the distant mountains. She was shocked to see me. She explained that she had been completely absorbed in a memory and for a moment she had been on the verge of remembering something very vague that had to do with me.

Later that night, after dinner, la Gorda, the three little sisters, the three Genaros, and I sat on the floor of la Gorda's room. The women sat together.

For some reason, although I had been with each one of them an equal length of time, I had isolated la Gorda as the recipient of all my concern. It was as if the others did not exist for me. I speculated that perhaps it was because la Gorda reminded me of don Juan, while the others did not. There was something very easy about her, yet that easiness was not so much in her actions as it was in my feelings for her.

They wanted to know what I had been doing. I told them that I had just been in the city of Tula, Hidalgo, where I had visited some archaeological ruins. I had been most impressed with a row of four colossal, columnlike figures of stone, called "the Atlanteans," which stand on the flat top of a pyramid.

Each one of the almost cylindrical figures, measuring

fifteen feet in height and three feet across, is made of four separate pieces of basalt carved to represent what archaeologists think are Toltec warriors carrying their war paraphernalia. Twenty feet behind each of the front figures on the top of the pyramid, there is another row of four rectangular columns of the same height and width as the first, also made of four separate pieces of stone.

The awe-inspiring setting of the Atlanteans was enhanced by what a friend, who had guided me through the site, had told me about them. He said that a custodian of the ruins had revealed to him that he had heard the Atlanteans walking at night, making the ground underneath them shake.

I asked the Genaros for comments on what my friend had said. They acted shy and giggled. I turned to la Gorda, who was sitting beside me, and asked her directly for her opinions.

"I've never seen those figures," she said. "I've never been in Tula. Just the idea of going to that town scares me."

"Why does it scare you, Gorda?" I asked.

"Something happened to me in the ruins of Monte Alban in Oaxaca," she said. "I used to go to roam around those ruins even after the Nagual Juan Matus told me not to set foot in them. I don't know why but I loved that place. Every time I was in Oaxaca I would go there. Because women alone are always harassed, I would usually go with Pablito, who is very daring. But once I went there with Nestor. He *saw* a glitter on the ground. We dug a little and found a strange rock that fit in the palm of my hand; a hole had been neatly drilled into the rock. I wanted to put my finger through it, but Nestor stopped me. The rock was smooth and made my hand very hot. We didn't know what to do with it. Nestor put it inside his hat and we carried it as if it were a live animal."

All of them started to laugh. There seemed to be a concealed joke in what la Gorda was telling me.

“Where did you take it?” I asked her.

“We brought it here to this house,” she replied, and that statement elicited uncontrollable laughter from the others. They coughed and choked laughing.

“The joke is on la Gorda,” Nestor said. “You’ve got to understand that she’s muleheaded like no one else. The Nagual had already told her not to fool around with rocks, or bones, or any other thing she might find buried in the ground. But she used to sneak behind his back and get all kinds of crap.

“That day in Oaxaca she insisted on carrying that god-awful thing. We got on the bus with it and brought it all the way to this town and then right into this room.”

“The Nagual and Genaro had gone on a trip,” la Gorda said. “I got daring and put my finger through the hole and realized that the rock had been cut to be held in the hand. Right away I could feel the feeling of whoever had held that rock. It was a power rock. My mood changed. I became frightened. Something awesome began to lurk in the dark, something that had no shape or color. I couldn’t be alone. I would wake up screaming and after a couple of days I couldn’t sleep any more. Everybody took turns keeping me company, day and night.”

“When the Nagual and Genaro came back,” Nestor said, “the Nagual sent me with Genaro to put the rock back in the exact place where it had been buried. Genaro worked for three days to pinpoint the spot. And he did it.”

“What happened to you, Gorda, after that?” I asked her.

“The Nagual buried me,” she said. “For nine days I was naked inside a dirt coffin.”

There was another explosion of laughter among them.

“The Nagual told her that she couldn’t get out of it,” Nestor explained. “Poor Gorda had to piss and shit inside her coffin. The Nagual pushed her inside a box

that he made with branches and mud. There was a little door on the side for her food and water. The rest of it was sealed.”

“Why did he bury her?” I asked.

“That’s the only way to protect anyone,” Nestor said. “She had to be placed under the ground so the earth would heal her. There is no better healer than the earth; besides, the Nagual had to fend off the feeling of that rock, which was focused on la Gorda. The dirt is a screen, it doesn’t allow anything to go through, either way. The Nagual knew that she couldn’t get worse by being buried for nine days; she could only get better. Which she did.”

“How did it feel to be buried like that, Gorda?” I asked.

“I nearly went crazy,” she said. “But that was just my indulging. If the Nagual hadn’t put me in there, I would have died. The power of that rock was too great for me; its owner had been a very large man. I could tell that his hand was twice the size of mine. He held on to that rock for dear life, and in the end someone killed him. His fear terrified me. I could feel something coming at me to eat my flesh. That was what the man felt. He was a man of power, but someone even more powerful got him.

“The Nagual said that once you have an object of that kind, it brings disaster because its power enters into challenges with other objects of its kind, and the owner becomes either a pursuer or a victim. The Nagual said that it is the nature of such objects to be at war, because the part of our attention which focuses on them to give them power is a very dangerous, belligerent part.”

“La Gorda is very greedy,” Pablito said. “She figured that if she could find something which already had a great deal of power in it, she’d be a winner because nowadays no one is interested in challenging power.”

La Gorda assented with a movement of her head.

“I didn’t know that one could pick up other things besides the power that the objects have,” she said.

“When I first put my finger through the hole and held the rock my hand got hot and my arm began to vibrate. I felt truly strong and big. I’m sneaky so no one knew that I was holding the rock in my hand. After a few days of holding it the real horror began. I could feel that somebody had gone after the owner of the rock. I could feel his fright. He was doubtlessly a very powerful sorcerer and whoever was after him wanted not only to kill him but to eat his flesh. That really scared me. I should’ve dropped the rock then, but the feeling I was having was so new that I kept the rock clutched in my hand like a damn fool. When I finally dropped it, it was too late. Something in me was hooked. I had visions of men coming at me, men dressed in strange clothes. I felt they were biting me, tearing the flesh of my legs with sharp little knives and with their teeth. I went berserk!”

“How did don Juan explain those visions?” I asked her.

“He said that she no longer had defenses,” Nestor said. “And because of that she could pick up that man’s fixation, his second attention, which had been poured into that rock. When he was being killed he held on to the rock in order to gather all his concentration. The Nagual said that the man’s power went out of his body into his rock; he knew what he was doing, he didn’t want his enemies to benefit by devouring his flesh. The Nagual also said that the ones who killed him knew this, that’s why they were eating him alive, to get whatever power was left. They must have buried the rock to avoid trouble. And la Gorda and I, like two idiots, found it and dug it up.”

La Gorda shook her head affirmatively three or four times. She had a very serious expression.

“The Nagual told me that the second attention is the most fierce thing there is,” she said. “If it is focused on objects, there is nothing more horrendous.”

“What’s horrible is that we cling,” Nestor said. “The man who owned the rock was clinging to his life and to his power; that’s why he was horrified at feeling his

flesh eaten away. The Nagual said that if the man would've let go of his possessiveness and abandoned himself to his death, whatever it may have been, there wouldn't have been any fear in him."

The conversation faded. I asked the others if they had anything to say. The little sisters glared at me. Benigno giggled and hid his face with his hat.

"Pablito and I have been in the pyramids of Tula," he finally said. "We've been in all the pyramids there are in Mexico. We like them."

"Why did you go to all the pyramids?" I asked him.

"I really don't know why we went to them," he said. "Perhaps it was because the Nagual Juan Matus told us not to."

"How about you, Pablito?" I asked.

"I went there to learn," he replied huffily, and laughed. "I used to live in the city of Tula. I know those pyramids like the back of my hand. The Nagual told me that he also used to live there. He knew everything about the pyramids. He was a Toltec himself."

I realized then that it had been more than curiosity that made me go to the archaeological site in Tula. The main reason I had accepted my friend's invitation was because at the time of my first visit to la Gorda and the others, they had told me something which don Juan had never even mentioned to me, that he considered himself a cultural descendant of the Toltecs. Tula had been the ancient epicenter of the Toltec empire.

"What do you think about the Atlanteans walking around at night?" I asked Pablito.

"Sure, they walk at night," he said. "Those things have been there for ages. No one knows who built the pyramids, the Nagual Juan Matus himself told me that the Spaniards were not the first to discover them. The Nagual said there were others before them. God knows how many."

"What do you think those four figures of stone represent?" I asked.

"They are not men, but women," he said. "That pyramid is the center of order and stability. Those

figures are its four corners; they are the four winds, the four directions. They are the foundation, the basis of the pyramid. They have to be women, mannish women, if you want to call them that. As you yourself know, we men are not that hot. We are a good binding, a glue to hold things together, but that's all. The Nagual Juan Matus said that the mystery of the pyramid is its structure. The four corners have been elevated to the top. The pyramid itself is the man, supported by his female warriors; a male who has elevated his supporters to the highest place. See what I mean?"

I must have had a look of perplexity on my face. Pablito laughed. It was a polite laughter.

"No. I don't see what you mean, Pablito," I said. "But that's because don Juan never told me anything about it. The topic is completely new to me. Please tell me everything you know."

"The Atlantians are the *nagual*; they are *dreamers*. They represent the order of the second attention brought forward, that's why they're so fearsome and mysterious. They are creatures of war but not of destruction.

"The other row of columns, the rectangular ones, represent the order of the first attention, the *tonal*. They are *stalkers*, that's why they are covered with inscriptions. They are very peaceful and wise, the opposite of the front row."

Pablito stopped talking and looked at me almost defiantly, then he broke into a smile.

I thought he was going to go on to explain what he had said, but he remained silent as if waiting for my comments.

I told him how mystified I was and urged him to continue talking. He seemed undecided, stared at me for a moment, and took a deep breath. He had hardly begun to speak when the voices of the rest of them were raised in a clamor of protest.

"The Nagual already explained that to all of us," la Gorda said impatiently. "What's the point of making him repeat it?"

I tried to make them understand that I really had no conception of what Pablito was talking about. I prevailed on him to go on with his explanation. There was another wave of voices speaking at the same time. Judging by the way the little sisters glared at me, they were getting very angry, especially Lydia.

"We don't like to talk about those women," la Gorda said to me in a conciliatory tone. "Just the thought of the women of the pyramid makes us very nervous."

"What's the matter with you people?" I asked. "Why are you acting like this?"

"We don't know," la Gorda replied. "It's just a feeling that all of us have, a very disturbing feeling. We were fine until a moment ago when you started to ask questions about those women."

La Gorda's statements were like an alarm signal. All of them stood up and advanced menacingly toward me, talking in loud voices.

It took me a long time to calm them and make them sit down. The little sisters were very upset and their mood seemed to influence la Gorda's. The three men showed more restraint. I faced Nestor and asked him bluntly to explain to me why the women were so agitated. Obviously I was unwittingly doing something to aggravate them.

"I really don't know what it is," he said. "I'm sure none of us here knows what is the matter with us, except that we all feel very sad and nervous."

"Is it because we're talking about the pyramids?" I asked him.

"It must be," he replied somberly. "I myself didn't know that those figures were women."

"Of course you did, you idiot," Lydia snapped.

Nestor seemed to be intimidated by her outburst. He recoiled and smiled sheepishly at me.

"Maybe I did," he conceded. "We're going through a very strange period in our lives. None of us knows anything for sure any more. Since you came into our lives we are unknown to ourselves."

A very oppressive mood set in. I insisted that the

only way to dispel it was to talk about those mysterious columns on the pyramids.

The women protested heatedly. The men remained silent. I had the feeling that they were affiliated in principle with the women but secretly wanted to discuss the topic, just as I did.

“Did don Juan tell you anything else about the pyramids, Pablito?” I asked.

My intention was to steer the conversation away from the specific topic of the Atlanteans, and yet stay near it.

“He said one specific pyramid there in Tula was a guide,” Pablito replied eagerly.

From the tone of his voice I deduced that he really wanted to talk. And the attentiveness of the other apprentices convinced me that covertly all of them wanted to exchange opinions.

“The Nagual said that it was a guide to the second attention,” Pablito went on, “but that it was ransacked and everything destroyed. He told me that some of the pyramids were gigantic *not-doings*. They were not lodgings but places for warriors to do their *dreaming* and exercise their second attention. Whatever they did was recorded in drawings and figures that were put on the walls.

“Then another kind of warrior must’ve come along, a kind who didn’t approve of what the sorcerers of the pyramid had done with their second attention, and destroyed the pyramid and all that was in it.

“The Nagual believed that the new warriors must’ve been warriors of the third attention, just as he himself was; warriors who were appalled by the evilness of the fixation of the second attention. The sorcerers of the pyramids were too busy with their fixation to realize what was going on. When they did, it was too late.”

Pablito had an audience. Everyone in the room, myself included, was fascinated with what he was saying. I understood the ideas he was presenting because don Juan had explained them to me.

Don Juan had said that our total being consists of two

perceivable segments. The first is the familiar physical body, which all of us can perceive; the second is the luminous body, which is a cocoon that only seers can perceive, a cocoon that gives us the appearance of giant luminous eggs. He had also said that one of the most important goals of sorcery is to reach the luminous cocoon; a goal which is fulfilled through the sophisticated use of *dreaming* and through a rigorous, systematic exertion he called *not-doing*. He defined *not-doing* as an unfamiliar act which engages our total being by forcing it to become conscious of its luminous segment.

In order to explain these concepts, don Juan made a three-part, uneven division of our consciousness. He called the smallest the first attention, and said that it is the consciousness that every normal person has developed in order to deal with the daily world; it encompasses the awareness of the physical body. Another larger portion he called the second attention, and described it as the awareness we need in order to perceive our luminous cocoon and to act as luminous beings. He said that the second attention remains in the background for the duration of our lives, unless it is brought forth through deliberate training or by an accidental trauma, and that it encompasses the awareness of the luminous body. He called the last portion, which was the largest, the third attention—an immeasurable consciousness which engages undefinable aspects of the awareness of the physical and the luminous bodies.

I asked him if he himself had experienced the third attention. He said that he was on the periphery of it, and that if he ever entered it completely I would know it instantly, because all of him would become what he really was, an outburst of energy. He added that the battlefield of warriors was the second attention, which was something like a training ground for reaching the third attention. It was a state rather difficult to arrive at, but very fruitful once it was attained.

“The pyramids are harmful,” Pablito went on. “Es-

pecially to unprotected sorcerers like ourselves. They are worse yet to formless warriors like la Gorda. The Nagual said that there is nothing more dangerous than the evil fixation of the second attention. When warriors learn to focus on the weak side of the second attention nothing can stand in their way. They become hunters of men, ghouls. Even if they are no longer alive, they can reach for their prey through time as if they were present here and now; because prey is what we become if we walk into one of those pyramids. The Nagual called them traps of the second attention.”

“What exactly did he say would happen?” la Gorda asked.

“The Nagual said that we could stand perhaps one visit to the pyramids,” Pablito explained. “On the second visit we would feel a strange sadness. It would be like a cold breeze that would make us listless and fatigued; a fatigue that soon turns into bad luck. In no time at all we’ll be jinxed; everything will happen to us. In fact, the Nagual said that our own streaks of bad luck were due to our willfulness in visiting those ruins against his recommendations.

“Eligio, for instance, never disobeyed the Nagual. You wouldn’t catch him dead in there; neither did this Nagual here, and they were always lucky, while the rest of us were jinxed, especially la Gorda and myself. Weren’t we even bitten by the same dog? And didn’t the same beams of the kitchen roof get rotten twice and fall on us?”

“The Nagual never explained this to me,” la Gorda said.

“Of course he did,” Pablito insisted.

“If I had known how bad it was, I wouldn’t have set foot in those damned places,” la Gorda protested.

“The Nagual told every one of us the same things,” Nestor said. “The problem is that every one of us was not listening attentively, or rather every one of us listened to him in his own way, and heard what he wanted to hear.

“The Nagual said that the fixation of the second

attention has two faces. The first and easiest face is the evil one. It happens when *dreamers* use their *dreaming* to focus their second attention on the items of the world, like money and power over people. The other face is the most difficult to reach and it happens when *dreamers* focus their second attention on items that are not in or from this world, such as the journey into the unknown. Warriors need endless impeccability in order to reach this face.”

I said to them that I was sure that don Juan had selectively revealed certain things to some of us and other things to others. I could not, for instance, recall don Juan ever discussing the evil face of the second attention with me. I told them then what don Juan said to me in reference to the fixation of attention in general.

He stressed to me that all archaeological ruins in Mexico, especially the pyramids, were harmful to modern man. He depicted the pyramids as foreign expressions of thought and action. He said that every item, every design in them, was a calculated effort to record aspects of attention which were thoroughly alien to us. For don Juan it was not only ruins of past cultures that held a dangerous element in them; anything which was the object of an obsessive concern had a harmful potential.

We had discussed this in detail once. It was a reaction he had to some comments I had made about my being at a loss as to where to store my field notes safely. I regarded them in a most possessive manner and was obsessed with their security.

“What should I do?” I asked him.

“Genaro once gave you the solution,” he replied. “You thought, as you always do, that he was joking. He never jokes. He told you that you should write with the tip of your finger instead of a pencil. You didn’t take him up on that, because you can’t imagine that this is the *not-doing* of taking notes.”

I argued that what he was proposing had to be a joke.

My self-image was that of a social scientist who needed to record everything that was said and done in order to draw verifiable conclusions. For don Juan one thing had nothing to do with the other. To be a serious student had nothing to do with taking notes. I personally could not see a solution; don Genaro's suggestion seemed to me humorous, not a real possibility.

Don Juan argued his point further. He said that taking notes was a way of engaging the first attention in the task of remembering, that I took notes in order to remember what was said and done. Don Genaro's recommendation was not a joke because writing with the tip of my finger on a piece of paper, as the *not-doing* of taking notes, would force my second attention to focus on remembering, and I would not accumulate sheets of paper. Don Juan thought that the end result would be more accurate and more powerful than taking notes. It had never been done as far as he knew, but the principle was sound.

He pressed me to do it for a while. I became disturbed. Taking notes acted not only as a mnemonic device, but soothed me as well. It was my most serviceable crutch. To accumulate sheets of paper gave me a sense of purpose and balance.

"When you worry about what to do with your sheets," don Juan explained, "you are focusing a very dangerous part of yourself on them. All of us have that dangerous side, that fixation. The stronger we become, the more deadly that side is. The recommendation for warriors is not to have any material things on which to focus their power, but to focus it on the spirit, on the true flight into the unknown, not on trivial shields. In your case, your notes are your shield. They won't let you live in peace."

I seriously felt that I had no way on earth to disassociate myself from my notes. Don Juan then conceived of a task for me in lieu of a *not-doing* proper. He said that for someone who was as possessive as I was, the most appropriate way of freeing myself from

my notebooks would be to disclose them, to throw them in the open, to write a book. I thought at the time that that was a bigger joke than taking notes with the tip of my finger.

“Your compulsion to possess and hold on to things is not unique,” he said. “Everyone who wants to follow the warrior’s path, the sorcerer’s way, has to rid himself of this fixation.

“My benefactor told me that there was a time when warriors did have material objects on which they placed their obsession. And that gave rise to the question of whose object would be more powerful, or the most powerful of them all. Remnants of those objects still remain in the world, the leftovers of that race for power. No one can tell what kind of fixation those objects must have received. Men infinitely more powerful than you poured all the facets of their attention on them. You have merely begun to pour your puny worry on your notes. You haven’t gotten yet to other levels of attention. Think how horrible it would be if you would find yourself at the end of your trail as a warrior, still carrying your bundles of notes on your back. By that time the notes will be alive, especially if you learn to write with your fingertip and still have to pile up sheets. Under those conditions it wouldn’t surprise me in the least if someone found your bundles walking around.”

“It is easy for me to understand why the Nagual Juan Matus didn’t want us to have possessions,” Nestor said after I had finished talking. “We are all *dreamers*. He didn’t want us to focus our *dreaming body* on the weak face of the second attention.

“I didn’t understand his maneuvers at the time. I resented the fact that he made me get rid of everything I had. I thought he was being unfair. My belief was that he was trying to keep Pablito and Benigno from envying me, because they had nothing themselves. I was well-off in comparison. At the time, I had no idea that he was protecting my *dreaming body*.”

Don Juan had described *dreaming* to me in various

ways. The most obscure of them all now appears to me as being the one that defines it best. He said that *dreaming* is intrinsically the *not-doing* of sleep. And as such, *dreaming* affords practitioners the use of that portion of their lives spent in slumber. It is as if the *dreamers* no longer sleep. Yet no illness results from it. The *dreamers* do not lack sleep, but the effect of *dreaming* seems to be an increase of waking time, owing to the use of an alleged extra body, the *dreaming body*.

Don Juan had explained to me that the *dreaming body* is sometimes called the “double” or the “other,” because it is a perfect replica of the *dreamer’s* body. It is inherently the energy of a luminous being, a whitish, phantomlike emanation, which is projected by the fixation of the second attention into a three-dimensional image of the body. Don Juan explained that the *dreaming body* is not a ghost, but as real as anything we deal with in the world. He said that the second attention is unavoidably drawn to focus on our total being as a field of energy, and transforms that energy into anything suitable. The easiest thing is of course the image of the physical body, with which we are already thoroughly familiar from our daily lives and the use of our first attention. What channels the energy of our total being to produce anything that might be within the boundaries of possibility is known as *will*. Don Juan could not say what those boundaries were, except that at the level of luminous beings the range is so broad that it is futile to try to establish limits—thus, the energy of a luminous being can be transformed through *will* into anything.

“The Nagual said that the *dreaming body* gets involved and attaches itself to anything,” Benigno said. “It doesn’t have sense. He told me that men are weaker than women because a man’s *dreaming body* is more possessive.”

The little sisters agreed in unison with a movement of their heads. La Gorda looked at me and smiled.

“The Nagual told me that you’re the king of possessiveness,” she said to me. “Genaro said that you even say goodbye to your turds before you flush them down.”

The little sisters rolled down on their sides laughing. The Genaros made obvious efforts to contain themselves. Nestor, who was sitting by my side, patted my knee.

“The Nagual and Genaro used to tell great stories about you,” he said. “They entertained us for years with tales about a weird guy they knew. We know now that it was you.”

I felt a wave of embarrassment. It was as if don Juan and don Genaro had betrayed me, laughing at me in front of the apprentices. Self-pity took over. I began to complain. I said out loud that they had been predisposed to be against me, to think that I was a fool.

“That’s not true,” Benigno said. “We are delighted that you are with us.”

“Are we?” Lydia snapped.

All of them became involved in a heated argument. The men and the women were divided. La Gorda did not join either group. She stayed sitting by my side, while the others had stood up and were shouting.

“We’re going through a difficult time,” la Gorda said to me in a low voice. “We’ve done a lot of *dreaming* and yet it isn’t enough for what we need.”

“What do you need, Gorda?” I asked.

“We don’t know,” she said. “We were hoping that you would tell us that.”

The little sisters and the Genaros sat down again in order to listen to what la Gorda was saying to me.

“We need a leader,” she went on. “You are the Nagual, but you’re not a leader.”

“It takes time to make a perfect Nagual,” Pablito said. “The Nagual Juan Matus told me that he himself was crappy in his youth, until something shook him out of his complacency.”

“I don’t believe it,” Lydia shouted. “He never told me that.”

“He said that he was very crummy,” la Gorda added in a low voice.

“The Nagual told me that in his youth he was a jinx, just like me,” Pablito said. “He was also told by his benefactor not to set foot in those pyramids and because of that he practically lived there, until he was driven away by a horde of phantoms.”

Apparently no one else knew the story. They perked up.

“I had completely forgotten about that,” Pablito explained. “I’ve only just remembered it now. It was just like what happened to la Gorda. One day after the Nagual had finally become a formless warrior, the evil fixations of those warriors who had done their *dreaming* and other *not-doings* in the pyramids came after him. They found him while he was working in the field. He told me that he saw a hand coming out of the loose dirt in a fresh furrow to grab the leg of his pants. He thought that it was a fellow worker who had been accidentally buried. He tried to dig him out. Then he realized that he was digging into a dirt coffin: a man was buried there. The Nagual said that the man was very thin and dark and had no hair. The Nagual tried frantically to patch up the dirt coffin. He didn’t want his fellow workers to see it and he didn’t want to injure the man by digging him out against his will. He was working so hard that he didn’t even notice that the other workers had gathered around him. By then the Nagual said that the dirt coffin had collapsed and the dark man was sprawled on the ground, naked. The Nagual tried to help him up and asked the men to give him a hand. They laughed at him. They thought he was drunk, having the d.t.’s, because there was no man, or dirt coffin or anything like that in the field.

“The Nagual said that he was shaken, but he didn’t dare tell his benefactor about it. It didn’t matter because at night a whole flock of phantoms came after him. He went to open the front door after someone knocked and a horde of naked men with glaring yellow eyes burst in. They threw him to the floor and piled on

top of him. They would have crushed every bone in his body had it not been for the swift actions of his benefactor. He *saw* the phantoms and pulled the Nagual to safety, to a hole in the ground, which he always kept conveniently at the back of his house. He buried the Nagual there while the ghosts squatted around waiting for their chance.

“The Nagual told me that he had become so frightened that he would voluntarily go back into his dirt coffin every night to sleep, long after the phantoms had vanished.”

Pablito stopped talking. Everyone seemed to be getting ready to leave. They fretted and changed position as if to show that they were tired of sitting.

I then told them that I had had a very disturbing reaction upon hearing my friend's statements about the Atlanteans walking at night in the pyramids of Tula. I had not recognized the depth at which I had accepted what don Juan and don Genaro had taught me until that day. I realized that I had completely suspended judgment, even though it was clear in my mind that the possibility these colossal figures of stone could walk did not enter into the realm of serious speculation. My reaction was a total surprise to me.

I explained to them at great length that the idea of the Atlanteans walking at night was a clear example of the fixation of the second attention. I had arrived at that conclusion using the following set of premises: First, that we are not merely whatever our common sense requires us to believe we are. We are in actuality luminous beings, capable of becoming aware of our luminosity. Second, that as luminous beings aware of our luminosity, we are capable of unraveling different facets of our awareness, or our attention, as don Juan called it. Third, that the unraveling could be brought about by a deliberate effort, as we were trying to do ourselves, or accidentally, through a bodily trauma. Fourth, that there had been a time when sorcerers deliberately placed different facets of their attention on material objects. Fifth, that the Atlanteans, judging by