

The Dream Group

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Book One – Gateways: *Twelve people meeting each week at Miami International University to interpret their dreams encounter the ancient Aztec goddess Coatlicue and are thrust into a secret struggle between Good and Evil*

Chapter Ten

She'd met Josh nearly ten years earlier, before he completed his doctorate. Veronica was in charge of public information and community education for the County's Environmental Resources Department. Josh was working as a free lance diving instructor. She'd been putting in long hours on the reef restoration project and had even learned to skin dive and do underwater photography. Josh was in a group of Sierra Club volunteers she led on a dive to the project's man-made reef in Biscayne Bay.

Weeks afterwards, as they walked along the bay at Matheson Hammock, the sun's center just touching the water (why can't we hear the fizzle and see the steam, she wondered?) a sleek young lady strolled by.

"You know," Josh said as he admired the smooth rotation of hips and buttocks. "That's nice," he gestured with his head. "But your enthusiasm and the pride you felt about the reef project attracted me almost as much as the incredible way you fill out a wet suit."

Four years earlier, Josh completed his Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology at Harvard. Nearly burned out, needing to indulge his soul and rest from the academic circus, but with loans to repay that would take forever unless he got his Ph.D and into a tenure track, he compromised. He began his doctoral research into ancient Mexican religious rituals to indulge his soul, and have a shot at a tenure track. At first the academic hypocrisy wasn't too hard to handle. He managed two trips to Mexico City and one to Spain. The vaults in Malaga confirmed what he'd found in Mexico: a frightening new form of energy, a force, a natural frequency that enabled people to communicate in their dreams.

He returned to Boston torn nearly assunder. The classically trained professors on his doctoral committee would not be likely to accept the idea of a "new" force in Nature. Yet not only was that what the data showed but what he knew, in his soul. The dream frequency was not an

artifact of human psycho-social dynamics, though it clearly impacted these, it existed independently of them.

If he could get them to see this. . . . But they were myopic. True products of the system, they thought the dream frequency was a "supernatural" phenomena, inappropriate for scientific investigation. Months passed. He could not keep his doctoral committee focused.

Scraping up the money for two more trips, he went first to Malaga. They gave him the original diaries and journals of the conquistadors to read. Anything to stop that pitiful begging in his strangely accented Spanish. Then to Mexico City. He interviewed three generations of a family that claimed its descent from an Aztec priestess. He went to the great Museum of Anthropology, but the begging didn't work. They would not let him see the sacred stone of Coatlicue.

He returned to Boston. Through days filled with aggravating, barely civil meetings and nights with roller coaster dreams of pitiful, shrieking horror and searing, ecstatic passion, he lost perspective, momentum and part of his sanity. How could the dream frequency be explained? Why hadn't someone discovered its awesome power before now? But of course, someone had.

. . .

Arguing that what he'd stumbled on was as natural as gravity and not supernatural at all but just scientifically undocumented, was useless. Returning to his apartment late one night, shaking with exhaustion, Josh switched on the lights and saw the Joseph Campbell lying open on the dining room table. He didn't recall leaving it there or even referring to it recently. But he knew what it meant. Since his bliss was skin diving and pursuing investigations of the dream frequency on his own, and it was winter in Boston, he went to Miami. On the day he met Veronica Clarke at the beach on the east side of Claughton Island, he'd been working as a diving instructor for almost four years.

Josh's Sierra Club Group had only nine people, but that didn't dampen Veronica's enthusiasm. All in wet suits, tanks, regulators and fins on the rocky ground beside them, they listened as Veronica pointed out to the bay and explained how the Coast Guard and Eastern Steamship Lines had cooperated with the County in sinking the latest old freighter into its place on the new reef line.

Veronica's enthusiasm and lack of self-consciousness refreshed Josh even as they turned him on. She seemed completely unaware of the effect her body in that clinging wet suit had on Josh and the other men gathered 'round her. Engrossed in her descriptions and

directions, she had no awareness of her physical self.

Josh got into his gear mechanically, attention focused on Veronica and trying to maintain a view of her face. Once in the water, he stayed close to her. The easy way she moved softened him. He sighed and swallowed more air than he wanted. Her grace and eagerness excited him more than a mere body ever could have. Her being awakened something -- a sense of who he was and what might be -- that had been dormant a long time.

Singling him out after the dive, she asked for feedback.

"You're obviously the best diver in the group." She looked directly into his eyes, hands on hips in the characteristic relaxed, no-nonsense stance he'd come to love.

"I'd be interested in what you thought of the lecture, the dive and what you plan to report back to the Sierra Club."

"Can we do that over lunch?" he asked.

"Sure."

They spent the rest of that day and night together.

Veronica was comfortable with Josh. Yet though they had many qualities in common, when he talked about where the research was taking him, and his eyes grew wide and fixed, and his body tensed, he frightened her, too. She matched his outrage about the injustices of the orthodox academic/scientific establishment and was compassionate over his wounds. She enjoyed the way her probing barbed questions seemed to encourage him, and came to accept the primary place the dream theories had in his life.

They did South Florida things together touring the Everglades National Park, picnicking in the lush foliage of Fairchild Tropical Gardens and watching Christo wrap the islands between the mainland and Miami Beach in pink fabric. And they made love. Not in the "slam bam thank you m'am" way they'd both become accustomed to, but in the slow, deep, soulful way they'd always fantasized about.

A brief glance, a hushed sigh or a barely visible movement could set them off. Words were rarely necessary. They shared a constant sensitivity, an instant responsiveness. Josh knew, sometimes even before Veronica did, when something thrilled or aroused her, making her nipples erect and the little blond hairs at the edges of her armpits bristle.

He'd work on her delicately, in small ways almost beneath her awareness, nurturing the seeds of a passion she barely perceived, bringing it to full flowing fruition and arousing himself in the process. He'd nuzzle her ear, brush up against her, stroke the side of her hand, catch and

hold her eyes with his, whisper. Veronica knew Josh's secret places and tell tale signs, too. And she was not shy about exploiting what she knew, wherever they happened to be.

They both enjoyed beginning a seduction in public. Once they'd been so inflamed that they couldn't make it home and had to check into a nearby hotel. Even on that occasion, the flame of their passion was, as always, banked by their gentle, exquisite responsiveness to one another.

Josh undressed Veronica with his eyes, then with his hands. That was how their ritual of love began -- whether he undressed her, or she him -- and they gave themselves completely over to it. Sitting on the edge of the bed as she stood motionless before him, Josh gazed at her face, body, flesh.

Soon the goose bumps on her arms told him of her tingling readiness. Pushing her gently forward, he stood and removed her clothes, one piece at a time: blouse, skirt, bra, panties. Each garment a seduction, with sighs and whispered nothings, hot breath in her sweet-smelling ear and lingering caresses with his rough, diver's hands.

Then he stood motionless as she undressed him.

When the clothes were gone, he knelt before her, burying his face in the hairy warmth between her legs, reaching around to caress her naked nether cheeks. And Veronica just stood there, quivering, receiving his adoration, until she couldn't just stand there any longer.

She stroked his cheeks and ears and ran her hands through his thick curly hair. As he brought her closer to orgasm, she reached down and tugged under his armpits. He rose from his knees and Veronica clung to him. She molded herself to him and they moved together like a pair of ice dancers, gliding across the ice in a shimmering blue-green haze. He groaned. She leaned back to open herself and he slid into her.

The first contact was smoldering electricity flashing through molten flesh. Gasping, they clutched one another to keep from dissolving. Pace quickening, Veronica wrapped her arms around Josh's hairy muscular shoulders and shifted her weight, just as he cupped her damp buttocks to lift her off the floor.

Still holding his neck but letting her arms extend, Veronica let her head come level with his. Gazing into his gray-green eyes, she wrapped her legs more tightly around his lower back. For a moment Josh stared back, then nuzzled her neck and blew in her ear, never missing a beat.

Breathing deeply, pacing him with her breath, getting him to breath deeply, too, ingronica

tried to prolong their pleasure. She knew he wanted to wait, to come with her, but that rarely happened. His climax shook and rocked them. He shuddered and cried out. Seconds later, she felt herself start to peak. They were so well attuned that his orgasm triggered hers.

At great cost to herself, Veronica used her love and understanding to help Josh realize he had to finish his degree, even if it meant giving up on his dream force hypothesis. Veronica did her work so well that five months after they'd met, Josh went back to Harvard and she continued her work with the County.

Twenty seven months later, when Josh had finished his degree and M.I.U. offered him a job in Miami, he took it.

For the first few weeks, Josh stayed at Veronica's bungalow in Coconut Grove. They'd talk and share, still cared, but something was different, lacking. He was distracted, withdrawn, not as open. Finally, at his suggestion, they'd set up what she called "separate establishments," meeting at one or the other of them, once or twice a week for the "quickies" they used to despise.

Something vital, deep in Josh had changed. Maybe he was stuck on one of his own pre-sets; maybe he needed to practice what he preached; maybe. . . . Whatever, a substantial part of his consciousness was elsewhere.

They continued encouraging one another to "follow their bliss" and to undertake their most cherished projects; Josh helping Veronica run Allen Sharpstien for the County Commission and in turn, she becoming a founding member of his Dream Group.

The Group counted on Veronica's controlled enthusiasm and analytic ability. She was a reliable source of great stability and energy. Her relationship with Josh was unknown to the others, and they'd been at it so long that unless someone was looking for it, their special connection rarely showed. But lately her enthusiasm was forced. She desperately needed help with a very disturbing dream and wasn't getting it.