



Sorcerer's Apprentice: My Life with Carlos Castaneda

By Amy Wallace

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Sorcerer's Apprentice opens with Amy Wallace's first meeting with Carlos Castaneda, the infamous anthropologist-turned-shaman, whose books described meetings with Yaqui Indian spiritual teacher don Juan. Castaneda's rise was meteoric in the late 1960s as he wrote massive bestsellers, inspired many to experiment with psychedelics, and was dubbed "the Godfather of the New Age." The possibility that Castaneda's experiences may have been fabricated did little to compromise his legend. As the daughter of best-selling novelist Irving Wallace, Amy was rarely shy around famous people. When her father insisted she meet Castaneda, she at first demurred. Little did she know that a delightful first meeting would begin a 20-year friendship, followed by her descent into the dramatic and deeply troubled affair chronicled in this book. *Sorcerer's Apprentice* unblinkingly reveals the inner workings of the "Cult of Carlos," run by a charismatic authoritarian in his sixties who controlled his young female followers through emotional abuse, mind games, bizarre rituals, dubious teachings, and sexual excess. Wallace's story is both specific and universal, a captivating cautionary tale about the dangers of giving up one's power to a tyrant—and about surviving assaults on body and spirit.

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Sorcerer's Apprentice: My Life with Carlos Castaneda By Amy Wallace Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"Truth hurts ... and so does *Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Amy Wallace's harrowing account of her years as Carlos Castaneda's lover and disciple is a cautionary tale for our times, the story of a woman whose search for meaning took her to the brink, and damned near cost her everything. In this painfully honest memoir, she takes us deep inside the Castaneda cult and shows us the mind games, ego trips, and petty cruelties that wore the guise of wisdom. 'Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!' the Wizard once tried to tell Dorothy. Amy Wallace has ripped the curtain down, and laid the wizard bare for all to see."

—George R.R. Martin, author of *A Game of Thrones*

"Amy Wallace expertly maps the territory where mysticism merges into insanity, or perhaps the unmarked land between screwball comedy and terrifying tragedy. I can't recall a stranger, sadder narrative than this."

—Carolyn See, author of *Making a Literary Life*

"Having grown up reading Carlos Castaneda's books and finding them intriguing and enlightening like many countless others, I was shocked when I stumbled across Amy Wallace's book. I cannot recommend it enough. It certainly will change your perspective on the scenario and raise awareness of the horrors of cults—and of how sometimes hell lurks right around the corner."

—Jeffery Pritchett, Examiner.com

"*Sorcerer's Apprentice* is a haunting and brutally honest memoir that reads like a tender love story and, at the same time, a taut psychological thriller. Amy Wallace writes with wisdom, grace, courage, and candor about one of the most charismatic figures of all our times, and she allows us to witness both the splendor and the danger of entrusting one's fate to a powerful man or woman."

—Jonathan Kirsch, author of *The Harlot by the Side of the Road* and *The Woman Who Laughed at God*

"I simply could not put this book down. Amy Wallace's relationship with Carlos Castaneda was transformative, exciting, abusive, and painful. This is a cautionary tale, containing essential insights for all of us. Thank you, Amy, for having the courage to tell your story so that others may learn from it, and from the redemptive powers of your own healing."

—Susan Piver, author of *The Hard Questions*

From the Inside Flap

"Amy Wallace takes you behind the scenes into the bizarre personal and sexual life of one of the most influential yet elusive figures of the 60s and beyond—Carlos Castaneda. This book is her journey with the man and his inner circle from her unique vantage point as one of his lovers and wives. Her idealism and disillusionment mirror that of an era which left many, like Amy, searching for hope and unwilling to descend into cynicism and bitterness. Amy's struggle to rebuild a new foundation, though a story of seduction and betrayal on many levels, is also about the author's reaching for transformation and personal meaning. This book will greatly interest anyone who was ever affected by 'the teachings of don Juan.' "

—Joel Kramer & Diana Alstad, co-authors of *The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power*

"Carlos Castaneda told astonishing truths, with an empowering Gnostic brilliance. He also told astonishing lies, spinning out like wild silk from a crazy spider's ass. *Sorcerer's Apprentice* tells the horrifying,

heartbreaking tale of the lives entangled in his web. And it hurts like a son of a bitch. With far greater personal honesty than Castaneda ever managed, Amy Wallace drags us—first happily, then screamingly—deep into the Cult of Carlos: boldly capturing both the staggering beauty and the utter steaming nonsense of his world. It's an ass-kicking, soul-grinding book, beautifully written and breathtakingly acute. I suggest that you read it, and test your faith."

—John Skipp, novelist, filmmaker

"Amy Wallace has gone through the looking glass of Castaneda's magic and come back out the other side with her wits, and wit, intact. What's more, she has remembered it all with a novelist's eye and ear, so the result is a harrowing and vivid look at life inside a charismatic circle—the petty tyrannies, the abusive cruelties, the sometimes unintended silliness. If this remarkable book is evidence, what enabled her to survive Castaneda and his cult is a lucid, generous, often funny intelligence that spares no one, least of all herself."

—Joe Kanon, author of *Los Alamos*

"Amy Wallace expertly maps the territory where mysticism merges into insanity, or perhaps the unmarked land between screwball comedy and terrifying tragedy. I can't recall a stranger, sadder narrative than this."

—Carolyn See, author of *Making a Literary Life*

"Amy Wallace's compelling memoir reveals what some of us suspected all along: Don Juan's teachings are a yucky way of knowledge."

—Jon Winokur, author of *The Portable Curmudgeon*

"Carlos Castaneda was one of the shapers of human consciousness during the period between the Beatles and the end of the twentieth century. After his death he remains a major spiritual and intellectual force. Yet he cast a schizophrenic shadow over our civilization. On the one hand, he taught us that we are here for a brief time in a beautiful, wondrous manifestation, and we must throw off the shackles of materialism, academic reductionism, and commercial distraction to realize our destiny, to experience the vast, untapped potential of our body-minds; on the other hand, he made the task so daunting and ultimately (if one reads him literally) terrifying and hopeless that he paralyzed many of his devotees and readers into inaction, submission, addictions, and denial. Amy Wallace has finally come along to liberate us from the spell. She says, 'I will show you Carlos as he was. Follow the authentic spirit guide in him, but reject the manipulations of a tragically flawed and jealous guru. You are free to meet the Eagle on your own terms.' "

—Richard Grossinger, author of *Planet Medicine*

"I read *Sorcerer's Apprentice* with absolute fascination. Like millions of others, I had always wondered what was behind the Castaneda myth. My own life once gave me the choice of going down the guru path, a choice I rejected because, to me, it's morally wrong for one person to claim closer knowledge of deity than any other. It's always a lie, and the fearsome consequences of that lie in the life of the unfortunate creature who takes the guru path, as well as his followers, is exposed here with breathtaking candor. *Sorcerer's Apprentice* is an extremely powerful book and fair warning both to those who would presume to claim special favor in the spirit, as well as those drawn by their own needs to such people. Amy Wallace warns us with her honesty and her careful attention to crucial emotional details, that guru-worship is a disease. For those who have wondered whether or not Castaneda's various guides were real in some objective sense, reading this book will clear up the mysteries that need solving. But it is also a compassionate book, deeply so, because compassion inevitably flows from honesty of this high an order. It is a triumph of Amy Wallace's heart to have written this, and I thank her for the wisdom and enrichment of spirit that reading it has given me."

—Whitley Strieber, author of *Communion*

About the Author

Amy Wallace has published twelve books, including *The Psychic Healing Book* with Bill Henkin, and with her family co-authored the #1 New York Times bestselling *Book of Lists* series, which sold millions of copies world-wide. Her solo works include the highly acclaimed erotic novel, *Desire*, and the best-selling biography *The Prodigy: The Life of William James Sidis*. She lives in Los Angeles, California.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Andrew Meadows:

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