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INTRODUCTION

I'm partial to the quotation, attributed to Woody Allen, "There is no question that there is an unseen world. The problem is how far is it from midtown and how late is it open?" Shamanism holds an answer to that question that has resonated for many people, across many cultures throughout the ages. My understanding of that answer is that the unseen world is right on top of midtown, over, under, and around it, and it's open whenever we care to visit, day or night. This spiritual world doesn't close down on bank holidays and one of the best things about the shamanic version of the unseen world is that it's custom tailored for each seeker.

This book is about my experience of the shamanic world and is intended as a road map to help you find your own. Your shamanic world will undoubtedly look different from mine and likewise very different from that of the indigenous people of the Amazon jungle. Nevertheless, everyone who chooses to explore the shamanic world may find wonder, magic, and healing there.

In addition to a road map for exploring shamanism, I intend this book to provide an array of options for self-healing, using the basic tools of shamanic journeying and a few other relevant techniques. We are energetic and spiritual beings as much as we are physical ones. Every living thing is imbued with energy, recognized by many names across the world, such as 'chi' in China, 'mana' to the Hindu and 'ki' in Japan. When I talk about energy, I am referring to this universal life energy. This is the energy of our spirit, the energy that creates our vitality. This book provides means to support and nurture the energetic aspects of our beings. When those aspects come into alignment, the material world will follow. This book offers information and ideas that you can apply to your normal, everyday life.

In this section, you will find information on the benefits of shamanism and my perspective on it. In Part One, I present background information on shamanism and provide instructions for learning shamanic journeying. Part Two deals with the shamanic worldview, our energetic relationship to the world, and concepts of right

relationship. In Part Three, I explore more advanced concepts, such as past life work and shadow work. This is advanced shamanic work that you can begin to explore once you have mastered the basics. In the final section, I share some of my favorite journeys and experiences with shamanism.

Shamanism can sound very mysterious and has often been represented as something for a chosen few, requiring great sacrifice and/or an indigenous lifestyle. While there are some phenomenal shamanic practitioners for whom this is true, this is far from the only way to experience shamanism. Shamanism doesn't demand long trips to the Amazon jungles and it's not restricted to a few blessed individuals. People come to spiritual initiation in a variety of ways, some gentle, some dramatic. The fact that some people have had very dramatic, life-changing first experiences with shamanism does not mean that's the only or even preferred means of having a shamanic connection become part of your life.

Shamanism isn't difficult or mysterious, although it does operate from some premises that are outside mainstream Western thought. It provides a way of understanding some part of the cosmos that we can't see or touch directly. While the notion of interacting with spiritual guides may seem far-fetched in our modern, scientific age, this worldview has arisen independently in indigenous cultures throughout the world. The actual tools and techniques of shamanism are straightforward, relatively simple, and very thoroughly tested.

When I embarked upon my spiritual path, one of my realizations was that I was not going to be able to use other people for my spiritual connection. It was rather dismaying because it seemed that there were so many people who were already so gifted and so far along. I was seeing the unseen world as the faintest hint of a shadow. Meanwhile those around me seemed to be getting it in Technicolor.

I made every effort to persuade those who seemed to see territory so clearly to make the connection for me, giving my power away rather freely. I was blessed to find teachers who gently but firmly steered me toward learning to see for myself, offering road maps for how to get

there, but steadfastly refusing to be my link to my spirituality. When I began learning about shamanism and shamanic journeys, I suddenly had a way to have the spiritual connection I yearned for, without giving away my power to human intermediaries.

Shamanism provides a direct and immediate spiritual connection to your own personal spirit guides and angels, the natural world around you, and the divine, however you conceive it to be. Furthermore, you gain access to information about yourself, your life path and choices, and the world around you. It offers a way to ask questions about the mundane aspects of life—food, love, and career—as well as the great questions, such as the meaning of life and your spiritual purpose.

For me, owning my own power and having a direct connection to the spiritual was one of the greatest gifts of shamanism, but there are many others as well. Immense healing resources are available to you through shamanism. Our spirit guides and helpers can remove negative energy and restore life force energy. They can help you walk through your greatest fears in a gentle way. They can even hold you while you cry. Within the shamanic world we can experience divine love, acceptance, and unconditional support. In one of my early journeys, my guide took me to a barren rock in the middle of the ocean and sat there with me until I understood that however alone and isolated I might feel, my guides were always there with me. I was never truly abandoned or forsaken.

Shamanic practices and understanding provide a path to right alignment or right relationship with the world. When you are in right relationship to the world, the universe will work in mysterious and overt ways to advance your goals and well-being. Luck and serendipity become a constant part of your life, allowing you to connect with wonderful people, succeed in your goals and business endeavors, and generally receive gifts that far exceed anything you requested.

Shamanic journeying offers tools for self-mastery and growth. You can use shamanic journeys to access the deepest parts of your being. We all have patterns and ways of walking the world that don't serve us, yet we persist in them again and again. Conscious insight into the whys

and wherefores of those patterns isn't always enough to shift them. By accessing the unconscious aspects of yourself through shamanic journeys, you can shift and change those patterns overnight. Many philosophies are based on the idea that with a healthy mastery of self, you don't need to change the external world in order to find peace and happiness. Shamanism is one of the pathways to this mastery.

Whenever you select a teacher or a book or a healer, it's important to understand their "take" on the subject. With shamanism appearing in so many different cultures and times, teachers and practitioners approach the subject in a wide variety of ways. Rather than saying one approach is better than another, I simply want to be clear about the approach I use for teaching shamanism. My approach to shamanism is *not* a traditional one.

I've spent a lot of time studying, exploring, and trying a variety of shamanic practices and ideas. I've woven them together into a fabric of my own making. Because I value this process of creating your own spiritual belief and understanding, I urge you to do the same with my shamanic teachings. Take what serves you and leave the rest. If what I say doesn't fit for you or if your guides tell you something different, go with what feels right to you.

My personal approach to shamanism doesn't include much ritual, even though shamanism is often a very ritualistic practice. For example, many shamanic practitioners begin by honoring the elements or burning herbs. My emphasis is on giving you the tools to connect with your guides, as simply and easily as possible. If ritual is a good match for your practice, your guides will teach you what rituals will serve you best.

This book is designed for someone living in our busy modern world. Our world is far from perfect, but anyone who waxes too nostalgic about the past hasn't paid very close attention to history. I adore e-mail and computers and the wide array of opportunities for experiences that are available. We have more choices and options and access to ideas than our ancestors have ever known. We can create communities that nurture who we are, rather than learning to survive in the communities

we are born into. Of course this creates greater complexity and new challenges. It can be harder to find what we want, with so many choices. It can be more difficult to create downtime with so much to do. I hope the shamanic information I provide will help you to stay centered, choosing what nurtures you and feeling whole and fulfilled in our busy world.

My goal in writing this book is not to produce a definitive work on shamanism. I'm not the expert and I'm still learning. Instead, I strive to communicate my experience clearly and give you the ideas and tools needed to begin your own shamanic explorations. Rather than persuading you of my truth, I want you to be able to find your own wisdom and knowledge along your spiritual path.

I have found the spirit world eager to communicate, filled with love, and possessing quite a sense of humor. When I asked for a blessing/permission to beginning teaching shamanism I was shown a huge group of spirits. One stepped forward and offered me a folded piece of paper on a silver tray, formally and officially inviting me to teach. I got the distinct impression that I had been being nudged in this direction for some time, so they were playing with me, saying, "Of course we support you in doing this, but if you need an engraved invitation, we can do that too." So, in turn, allow me to formally invite you, on behalf of your spirit guides, to step into shamanic reality and experience that world first hand.