

introduction

Late one Sunday morning several years ago, I received an unexpected phone call from my father. As soon as I heard his voice, I knew something was wrong. He told me that he had just gotten off the phone with my brother Tim, who was on his way to the hospital. Dad explained that Tim's girlfriend's 19-year-old brother Jason* mysteriously slipped into a deep coma and that his prognosis was grim.

"The family is hoping you can help," Dad said. "Tim told them about the shaman stuff you do."

My thoughts quickly ping-ponged from "absolutely, I'll help," to "man, I hope I can do this." I felt a strong desire to be of service to Jason and his family, but feared that I might not be skilled enough to pull it off. At the point when I received my dad's phone call, I was five years into an intense Shamanic apprenticeship. I'd worked with many people who were in need of healing, but the greater part of my experience involved working with wounds of the heart and mind. Though my experience working with folks struggling with life

threatening physical conditions was limited, my desire to help far outweighed my apprehensions.

I imagine that every novice of this ancient practice wrestles with similar fears. For tens of thousands of years, indigenous healers the world over have been 'journeying' with their consciousness to the spirit world or the dreamtime in order to commune with helping spirits for the purpose of healing and divination. These gifted visionaries and healers, commonly referred to as shamans, serve as bridges to the spiritual realms for the benefit of the members of their communities.

My own journey down this path began in 1998, although I didn't know it at the time. After a series of unusual visionary experiences (. . . a story for another book), I was hungry for knowledge that would help me to make sense of it all. I later received the foundation of my shamanic training from authors Hank Wesselman and Jill Kuykendall, whose powerful work is founded in the ancient Kahuna wisdom of Hawaii.

The shamanic path is a challenging one – a spiritual bootcamp of sorts. I quickly learned that the more I surrendered, the more profound my visionary experiences became . . . and the more I changed in response. The learning was deep, all consuming, and sometimes quite messy. The biggest challenge, for example, included getting past my big fat Western mind – which, at first, incessantly rolled its eyes at the notion that I could actually have conversations

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with animal and plant spirits, dead folks, and a whole host of benevolent spiritual entities. Once I took that mental leap, I was able to yield to the ethers and to begin establishing relationships with my spirit helpers. Life hasn't been the same since.

The story you're about to read is the true account of my 9-month dreamtime relationship with Jason while he was in various stages of coma. (Please keep in my mind that this story is based solely on my perception of what transpired.) Working with Jason was an invaluable experience on many levels. I'm deeply grateful to him and his family for giving me the opportunity to stretch myself in new and powerful ways.

Most of the narrative takes place in the realms of spirit or what some aboriginal people call the dreamtime. Interspersed throughout the narrative are the actual e-mails I received from my brother Tim, his former girlfriend, and her family. These communications will give you glimpses of what is going on in physical "every day" reality.

Slaying the Mouse is about possibilities. My hope is that this story will leave you wondering about the nature of reality and inspired by human potential.

Wendy Halley

Northfield, VT

** To protect the family's privacy, identifying information has been changed.*

*when I was young
squirming and crawling
my towering world
perfect and tame
made my smile leafy green*

*i was unaware of the coming wind
the bottom of my feast
the end of slow winding travels
soon the others disappeared
and with them, the light*

*alone, paralyzed
stiff in a coffin of my own making
the beginning
disguised as the end
i panicked and pleaded
"please just one more chance
to see the sun, to taste the green"
but with my pleas came darkness
as thick as molasses*

*abandoning my dreams
i surrendered into black
the stillness
vibrating with movement
folding in on itself
until I'm nothing . . .
and everything
i can fly.*

- W. S. Halley

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Jason watched his body from across the room. It lay there motionless on the hospital bed. A monitor beeped to the rhythm of his heart while a machine pumped air in and out of his lungs. He found the scene creepy and surreal, especially the sound of his breathing. There was nothing human about it.

He gave up trying to get his family's attention when they were in the room. He wanted to tell them that he was okay. But they couldn't hear him. At least they couldn't hear the version of him that was screaming to get their attention. They just stared at his body, eyes clouded with fear and tears. They gently shook his body and talked to it, looking for some sign that he was going to wake up.

Jason's confusion was monumental. Questions spun in his head like desert brush caught in a dust devil. *Am I dreaming? Hallucinating? Am I having an out of body experience? Am I dead?* No answers came, just panic.

He watched as medical staff poked and prodded his body. He heard them talk about him as if he wasn't there. They said things like "spinal meningitis" and "encephalitis." After mulling over various "itis'es" they spoke about "brain damage" and "a persistent vegetative state," as if they were talking about structural "damage" to a building or the declining "state" of the economy.

His thoughts raced around the room, ricocheting off walls and slamming back into him. *Was I in an accident? Am I sick? Shit, is this really happening?*

At times he paced. Jason didn't know exactly how he did this, since you needed legs to pace, and his were still attached to the body - his body - which happened to be lying on a hospital bed on the other side of the room.

Sometimes he floated around the room. A familiar sensation. Maybe from childhood.

Other times he sat in the chair at the foot of the bed and stared at himself.

His awareness seemed to drift in and out. The moment he thought he knew what was happening he'd be somewhere else. Very disorienting. He didn't know what day it was or how much time had passed since all this began. It seemed like time was all at once slipping by, and yet it was taking so long for it happen.

What the hell was going on? He knew that there was something very wrong, but he had difficulty understanding what it was. It was as if his concept of himself was covered with a heavy grey membrane that suffocated any attempt to ponder his situation. At times, he had a faint glimmer of who he used to be. But Jason was finding it hard to remember that until a week ago, he was a healthy college student making music, hanging out with his friends, and planning his future.

His perceptions shifted incessantly. It was when he looked at his body lying lifeless on the hospital bed that he remembered that he was a 19-year-old man named Jason. But when his awareness drifted away from physical reality, which happened more and more as time went on, his consciousness melted into a vast display of shapes and colors.

A strange routine developed as Jason tried to keep his focus on the physical. He started recognizing nurses and doctors as they came and went, on and off their shifts. He found that he felt more stable if he focused on them. After a while he began to see into them, to see their intentions. He could see each person's truth - which ones truly wanted to help and which ones were easily annoyed and eager to get off work. Their

intentions appeared like clouds of light billowing off their bodies. He noticed that the people who wanted to help were bright like stars with far reaching rays. And the miserable fucks who were putting in their time counting the hours until payday were dimly lit. Instead, a dull light hugged their bodies like a junkie clutching the next fix.

He sat for minutes, maybe days, trying not to think. He was in a trance, listening to the symphony of sounds in the room.

Beep, beep, beep, exhale,

beep, beep, beep, inhale,

beep, beep, beep, exhale,

beep, beep, beep . . .

"Excuse me." A woman's voice sliced through his haze.

He looked up. *Can she see me?*

"Hi. How's it going?" she asked.

He stared at her.

"Are you serious?" Jason said and gestured to his body lying on the hospital bed.

She was a little hard to see at first. But when he concentrated on her she came in to focus. She was slender with long, dark hair and intense eyes. She wasn't alone.

"Are you Jason?" she asked.

He nodded suspiciously. There were three others with her.

"My name is Wendy. Your sister is dating my brother." Her tone gave him the impression that this was all very normal.

"Your family asked me to come and visit you," she said.

All the thoughts that he was trying to drown out with his trance came rushing back. "I don't know what's happening," Jason said sounding panicked.

She came closer and kneeled beside him.

"You're in a coma."

He stared at his body remembering snippets of the dismal things the medical people said.

"I'm here to help you," Wendy said. "Well, actually, I'm not really the one who can help you, but my companions are." She moved towards them.

They came into focus. The first was an impressive looking Indian woman who strongly resembled Wendy. She had a thick stripe of black paint over her eyes that came to a point at the tip of her nose. There were black-feathered wings attached to her arms, and she wore a headdress that resembled a crow or a raven. The dark beak sat in the middle of her forehead and its black glassy eyes stared down at him. He couldn't tell where she began and the bird ended.

"This is Raventalker," Wendy said. The Indian woman nodded a greeting and smiled.

"She's a gifted shaman," Wendy said. "She's my grandmother's grandmother's grandmother's grandmother's grandmother."

All Jason could do was nod.

"Probably more than you needed to know," Wendy said.

Next to Raventalker was a bald Asian man with a long braided white beard. He was wearing golden robes. He appeared both young and old, and as if he was about to laugh at any moment.

"This is Li Ming," Wendy said. Li Ming gave Jason a little wave and a smile. "He works with energy in very interesting ways."

The third companion was not human.

Wendy must have noticed Jason's confusion when he looked at this strange entity.

"And this is Oshira. She's a being of light. She's never been human."

Oshira's body looked like iridescent rays of white, violet, blue and pink light that shimmered and shifted. Jason could see an outline of a flowing gown and long wavy hair. Her features weren't constant. But she was beautiful. She felt beautiful.

"Man, this is one messed up dream," Jason said. "What the fuck is going on?"

"The cavalry has arrived . . ." Wendy proclaimed, making a sweeping gesture with her arm like Vanna White.

Could this get any stranger?

“Jason,” Wendy said, “these are my Spirit Helpers. They’re all very wise and powerful healers. They can help you through this if you want. But it’s your decision.”

“I think it’s too late,” Jason told them his voice defeated

“Why’s that?” Wendy asked.

“Because my body’s too damaged. I heard the doctors talking. There’s no way I can pull out of this. They’re talking carrots and celery.”

“The doctors are grasping at straws,” Wendy said. “They really don’t know what’s going on with you. In fact, you probably know more than they do right now. Don’t listen to them.”

He looked at his body, which was pale and strangely still.

“I don’t want to go back in there. It’s gonna be too hard.”

“I’ve seen the Helpers perform miracles when people want to get better,” Wendy said.

I don’t want to die.

“This is so fucked up.” Jason turned to the Helpers. “Let’s do it.”