



Black Smoke: Healing and Ayahuasca Shamanism in the Amazon

Margaret De Wys

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A diagnosis of cancer leads to healing and transformation in the Amazon jungle

- Explains in vivid detail De Wys's experience of being healed from cancer through visionary ayahuasca rituals in Ecuador
- Describes her apprenticeship and relationship with the shaman who cured her
- Explores the ways this spiritual medicine can heal the emotional origins of disease now plaguing our modern technological culture
- Chosen as one of the "Top 10 Books of the New Edge" by Jonathan Talat Phillips on *The Huffington Post*

When composer and Bard College music professor Margaret De Wys learned she had breast cancer, the diagnosis shattered her comfortable life. Seized by fear, crushed by existential loneliness, she couldn't respond when her loved ones reached out to her. To everyone's concern, the illness propelled her away from her family and deep into the Amazon to work with Carlos, a charismatic Shuar shaman and master of *medicina milenaria*, an ancient mystical tradition with a highly sophisticated and precise technology of healing. In *Black Smoke*, De Wys writes of her amazing encounter with Carlos as he guided her into a world of potent visionary plants, harrowing initiations, ritual purification, and miraculous healings, including the complete disappearance of her cancer. It was, as Carlos called it, "the path of the warrior."

Sharing a journey not only through cancer but also through self-transformation, De Wys provides an intimate inside look at the shamanic ceremonies of ayahuasca and the ways this spiritual medicine can heal the emotional origins of disease now plaguing our modern technological culture. Capturing her physical, emotional, and "holy voyage" through a world that differs vastly from our own in its perception of healing and wholeness, she offers a revealing chronicle of spiritual insight and a trenchant exploration of the limits of idealism. She not only provides a probing look at how our society can learn and benefit from indigenous wisdom but also weaves a cautionary tale about how potentially dangerous it is--on both sides--to try to cross those frontiers.

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