

One day the shaman of the tribe called a meeting. They gathered around him, and he spoke very solemnly. "My friends," he said, "there is a world that needs our help. It is called earth, and its fate hangs in the balance. Its humans have reached a critical point in their collective birthing, and they will be stillborn without our help. Who would like to volunteer for a mission to this time and place, and render service to humanity?"

"Tell us more about his mission," they asked.

"I am glad you asked, because it is no small thing. I will put you into a deep, deep trance, so complete that you will forget who you are. You will live a human life, and in the beginning you will completely forget your origins. You will forget even our language and your own true name. You will be separated from the wonder and beauty of our world, and from the love that bathes us all. You will miss it deeply, yet you will not know what it is you are missing. You will only remember the love and beauty that we know to be normal as a longing in your heart. Your memory will take the form of an intuitive knowledge, as you plunge into the painfully marred earth, that a more beautiful world is possible.

"As you grow up in that world, your knowledge will be under constant assault. You will be told in a million ways that a world of destruction, violence, drudgery, anxiety, and degradation is normal. You may go through a time when you are completely alone, with no allies to affirm your knowledge of a more beautiful world. You may plunge into a depth of despair that we, in our world of light, cannot imagine. But no matter what, a spark of knowledge will never leave you. A memory of your true origin will be encoded in your DNA. That spark will lie within you, inextinguishable, until one day it is awakened.

"You see, even though you will feel, for a time, utterly alone, you will not be alone. I will send you assistance, help that you will experience as miraculous, experiences that you will describe as transcendent. For a few moments or hours or days, you will reawaken to the beauty and the joy that is meant to be. You will see it on earth, for even though the planet and its people are deeply wounded, there is beauty there still, projected from past and future onto the present as a promise of what is possible and a reminder of what is real.

"You will also receive help from each other. As you begin to awaken to your mission you will meet others of our tribe. You will recognize them by your common purpose, values, and intuitions, and by the similarity of the paths you have walked. As the condition of the planet earth reaches crisis proportions, your paths will cross more and more. The time of loneliness, the time of thinking you might be crazy, will be over.

"You will find the people of your tribe all over the earth, and become aware of them through the long-distance communication technologies used on that planet. But the real shift, the real quickening, will happen in face-to-face gatherings in special places on earth. When many of you gather together you will launch a new stage on your journey, a journey which, I assure you, will end where it began.

Then, the mission that lay unconscious within you will flower into consciousness. Your intuitive rebellion against the world presented you as normal will become an explicit quest to create a more beautiful one.

"In the time of loneliness, you will always be seeking to reassure yourself that you are not crazy. You will do that by telling people all about what is wrong with the world, and you will feel a sense of betrayal when they don't listen to you. You will be hungry for stories of wrongness, atrocity, and ecological destruction, all of which confirm the validity of your intuition that a more beautiful world exists. But after you have fully received the help I will send you, and the quickening of your gatherings, you will no longer need to do that. Because, you will Know. Your energy will thereafter turn toward actively creating that more beautiful world."

A tribeswoman asked the shaman, "How do you know this will work? Are you sure your shamanic powers are great enough to send us on such a journey?"

The shaman replied, "I know it will work because I have done it many times before. Many have already been sent to earth, to live human lives, and to lay the groundwork for the mission you will undertake now. I've been practicing! The only difference now is that many of you will venture there at once. What is new in the time you will live in, is that the Gatherings are beginning to happen."

A tribesman asked, "Is there a danger we will become lost in that world, and never wake up from the shamanic trance? Is there a danger that the despair, the cynicism, the pain of separation will be so great that it will extinguish the spark of hope, the spark of our true selves and origin, and that we will be separated from our beloved ones forever?"

The shaman replied, "That is impossible. The more deeply you get lost, the more powerful the help I will send you. You might experience it at the time as a collapse of your personal world, the loss of everything important to you. Later you will recognize the gift within it. We will never abandon you."

Another man asked, "Is it possible that our mission will fail, and that this planet, earth, will perish?"

The shaman replied, "I will answer your question with a paradox. It is impossible that your mission will fail. Yet, its success hangs on your own actions. The fate of the world is in your hands. The key to this paradox lies within you, in the feeling you carry that each of your actions, even your personal, secret struggles within, has cosmic significance. You will know then, as you do now, that everything you do matters. God sees everything."

There were no more questions. The volunteers gathered in a circle, and the shaman went to each one. The last thing each was aware of was the shaman blowing smoke in his face. They entered a deep trance and dreamed themselves into the world where we find ourselves today.