

Dear Reader, Teacher, Student and fellow Authors of countless stories that are lived each day,

Welcome to the world of reclaiming stories.

This book is a result of years of working on reclaiming my own stories and helping countless others to reclaim theirs.

At the end of each chapter you will find a list of journal questions and journey questions. These are there to prompt the reader to peel away the layers of their own story. This is a book that requires us to walk into the depth of our own shadows to shine our light there, to transform our faeces into fertilizer.

For teachers/professors working with students this book is for you too. All of us need to do our own work so we can help others to do theirs.

My suggestion is that you read the first couple of chapters in order to give you a clear understanding of reclaiming. Then you can go to the chapters that call you.

Some of the questions will be easier to answer than others. Some you will be eager to dive in to. Others you may look to avoid. Notice where and when your resistance comes up. Do not try to answer the questions from each chapter all in one go. Be thorough, take your time and be willing to peel away the layers so you can journey to the core, the very centre of your own story. You will notice the bonus question. This book is written to help promote creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, attributes that are truly needed in our world.

There are some questions that are very light hearted and others that require great courage to step into. The journey is one of celebration. The most important piece is to not get stuck in the story. Reclaiming encourages us to shift, release and transform.

Some of your journaling will be for your eyes-only; other writings will be for sharing. You need to work out which is which. If a question seems too daunting or a journey overwhelming make sure you are working with a trusted teacher, counselor, or in the case of journeying, a shamanic practitioner who will support your process.

Chapter 1

A Noble White Horse

“Make the mistakes of yesterday your lessons for today.”

-Anonymous.

I love the smell of books. I love to touch them, flick through the pages and feel the paper between my fingertips, to check out the front cover and let my imagination tumble into thoughts of what adventures lie ahead. A great story feeds us on the breath of every word. Those of us fortunate enough to have sat in the presence of a master storyteller know the magic, we feel the wonder and we crave a little bit more. We hang on the sound of lilting tones, gasp during suspenseful pauses and eat up every word the silver-tongued wordsmith weaves in the telling. In short, stories provide a banquet for our senses. They stretch us, teach us and challenge us. We are connected through stories. Ancestral threads reminding us to remember the song of the past, the dance of the present and the poetry awaiting to meet us in the future. We are the characters in each and every tale; we are comprised of the light and the dark, the hero, the villain, the victim, the witness and the passerby. In between the spaces, beneath the surface, in a single word lie transformation, insight, and strands of magic waiting for a diligent seeker to unearth a casket of treasure. So often we skip ahead, gloss over the details and more often than not relegate stories and storytellers to child's play and no more. The truth is stories were never for the children and always for the children. They were danced, sung, weaved on the wind by the light of the fire since the beginning of time. They are a road map, a compass

our own lives. Understanding our own story, allows us to grow, to move forward, to embrace and to live. This is a direct gift from our ancestors.

I have chosen several of my own life stories that I have reclaimed in different formats. These tales offer the reader a possible route to journey and journal on. I encourage you all to allow your creative sides to flourish. The questions at the end of each chapter are a guide to open a doorway for an intrepid traveler to walk through. Hopefully each of you will discover many treasures within yourselves by having the courage to take these steps. For here lies the opportunity for healing, change and self-growth. Beyond this my hope is that you will be inspired to begin reclaiming your own stories.

At the end of each story I have provided two lists. The first list is designed for people from all walks of life to journal on for self-discovery. The second list is for people who practice shamanism and know how to journey into non-ordinary reality. For those who are unfamiliar with this practice I suggest you read this book fully first and then if called seek out a reputable shamanic practitioner to guide you in this tradition. If exploring a shamanic pathway in this fashion does not sing in your heart then have fun playing with the journey questions to transform them into journal questions. What I know for sure is that stories are inherently shamanic.

So without further ado let's delve into the reweaving of a tale, spinning threads of the mythic heroic quest. Through reclaiming our story we empower ourselves by letting go of our past and rewriting our present.

A PAIN IN THE NECK

The original, disconcerting story, was one that I wanted to forget. It wasn't a deep scarring tale, however it was embarrassing to say the least. The punch line was such that was best described as being a pain in the neck.

I was a wild and reckless teenager. I loved to hitchhike, catch a bus, a train, jump in a car or even on occasions take a cab ride and

She was a 1960 Ford Popular, round in shape with little windows and such a lovable face. Oh yes, Poppers definitely had a face. She was a car with character and anyone who took the time to gaze into her eyes would be drawn to her beaming grin. This morning was no exception. I chuckled out loud as I pulled the tiny button that awoke Poppers from her slumber. “That’s my girl!” I cried. “It takes more than a key to get your little heart pumping.” She was a gem of a car and I loved her eccentricity. She needed to have a key inserted for her to start but it took the rapid movement of pushing a lever in and out to ignite her fire. Poppers and I shared several character traits, we both loved to smile, we were both a tad unconventional and we were both born in the 1960’s.

I was the tender young age of 22. I had awoken that morning with three glorious days stretching before me. I had nothing on my plate, nowhere I had to be. I was free to follow my heart and go where the wind called me. As I stretched my lean body and rummaged through my drawers searching for the clothes that caught my eye I was struck with a bolt of inspiration. How about I adorn the forest green and step into the world as one of my all time favourite heroes Robin Hood? His rebellious

spirit was akin to my own. To provide sustenance to the poor and address the balance of the greedy aristocracy who looked down their noses at those they deemed unworthy. These noble qualities had always struck a chord in my heart. I dug around until I found a green shirt and an old tunic that had tinges of green and brown. It looked magnificent with a thick leather black belt wrapped around it. My long legs were camouflaged in green tie-dye leggings with a tatty ripped up pair of



THE NEXT STEP: JOURNEY WORK AND/OR JOURNALING INTO A STORY

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. Let your imagination float through time and space to moments in your childhood where you were out in nature or were in the height of creativity and journal several moments that made you smile. Which of these situations call you to revisit and implement more often in your life?
2. If you could wear the hat and cloak of any storybook or 'his'torical character for the day whose robes would you wear and why? How are you like this character? What traits of this character could you imbue into your life story for the benefit of all?
3. Walking into the large oak tree where the legendary Robin Hood once planned adventures is like walking through a portal into another world. Where have you stepped through a doorway that led you to imagine yourself in a different world and/or where have you been surprised by walking into a situation that you thought would offer one thing and it offered something totally different? Work with something that shifted your perspective.
4. Take yourself out into nature for at least an hour, preferably longer. Find somewhere to sit where you are not around any other human beings. Allow your self to sit still and blend in with your surroundings. Listen to what the natural world has to say. Whether you choose a forest, river, mountain, lake, cliff edge or meadow, become a witness and notice insects, animals, clouds, sunlight, raindrops, shadows, the breath of the wind, and whatever else comes your way. Be silent, be still, and on your return journal what you learnt about yourself, your day, your surroundings, your life.
5. In the story the roar of the Land Rover makes us jump and then we sit in the dark wondering what is out there waiting for us. In the end I stood up and went to face the darkness. Where have you stood up and faced your fears? Journal about a time you found courage to face the unknown.

Bonus Question.

What question can you find to ask yourself from this chapter that has not yet been asked?

SHAMANIC JOURNEY WORK

1. Journey to your child self and ask how you can honour your own journey and the planet by playing more in and with the natural world.
2. Journey to a dress up box and open it up to see what fictional or 'his'torical' character's dress attire is inside. What characteristics do you share with this person? What aspects of this person's character could you imbue into your life story for the highest good of all beings?
3. In the story we enter the hollowed out oak tree that Robin Hood and the Merry Men used to gather in. Journey to the Spirit of the forest and ask to merge with an ancient oak. In the Celtic world oak is known for wisdom. Ask the tree to share oak wisdom with you. What seeds can be planted in your own life that will serve the wild places in the world?
4. When we arrive at Sherwood we run around the forest looking to be part of the unseen world. Journey to the Unseen beings in the forest and ask for a guide to wander in the forest with that will help you to cloak yourself and move unseen into the mysteries of an ancient forest. What are the essential secrets that are revealed in these wild places that will help you to strengthen your relationship with the green world?
5. In the story I am forced to confront whatever lies in wait for me in the darkness. Journey to your forest guide and ask them to support you as you face up to what dark shadows are in your life right now. What are you blindly running away from? Ask for support and guidance to carry your light into these dark spaces.

Bonus Question.

What Journey can you offer yourself from exploring this chapter that has not already been suggested?

- If there is a 'his'tory then surely there must be a herstory!

Chapter 5

The Dark Knight & The Bright Day

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each guest has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Rumi.

So far we have looked at reclaiming a story using the key Elements and weaving a tale around them. We have worked with a tall tale version and introduced a Power Animal to the mix. This time I will reclaim a challenging story by writing it as I remember it warts and all. To release the ghosts of the past we sometimes have to spill all of the shadows on to the page and in so doing we feel liberated in the sharing. When I put this story onto paper I found that I did not need to change anything. The sheer act of sharing brought total liberation and reclamation in itself.



ALL THINGS BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL...

The bus trundled along a winding lane where hedgerows grew tall and wild-flowers peeked out from every crevice. Cornwall is famous for its colourful slate walls dotted throughout the countryside. Anticipation kissed the air with a buzz of excited chatter amongst the members of St. Peter's Choir. We were nearing the towering spires of Truro Cathedral, the working



a road map of joy, sorrow, wonder and wisdom carved into her leathery flesh.

Some whispered that she could shape-shift, that her den, which was in Hogs Lane, was named so because she could be seen rooting in the earth, on a dark moon, half moon and full moon night. There were rumblings and murmurs that in the guise of an old sow she worked her magic there. She was tiny in stature and yet her presence was huge. When she laughed, she cackled. Her jaw protruded so that her bottom teeth un-naturally enclosed her top teeth and her eyes glinted with a knowing that went way beyond this mortal realm.

Word had it that she used those gnashers to ferret out and grind properties from the earth that she scattered into a giant cauldron for making potions and salves.

The general consensus amongst the boys in our troop was that a kiss from Mrs. Letzte would be your last, the kiss of death. Perhaps that was what brought the glint to her eye, for the wise ones know that there can be no life without death; that in the ever-spinning wheel the last will be first. The Old Sow, the She Wolf,