

The image features a tiger lying in a nest of dry, golden-brown grass. The tiger's face is the central focus, with its eyes looking directly at the viewer. The nest is situated within a circular frame that has a glowing, ethereal quality. The background is a dramatic sky with soft, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall composition is artistic and evocative.

Eyes Of The Jaguar

by
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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my husband John, to my inspirational teachers, and to the Communities of Light who have provided such gentle and loving support along the way.

“In the past, immortality was maintained by the species, but death came to the individual. As one generation would die, the species would change through the next generation. The sick and weak would die off, and the species was kept strong and pure. The evolutionary process happened naturally, and quickly. But technology has changed all that. Now those who would have died still live... technology has cut our connection with nature. We don't have the time anymore to wait for evolution to make us conscious. It is the individual who must make the leap, not the generation. We, as Shamans, the new caretakers of the Earth, must guide our own species through future sight and not wait for the next generation. We have no time to waste.”

Chapter One

We all need reasons to get out of bed in the morning, and I was running out of them. I lay in the wintry, early-morning sunshine, counting the wood panels on the roof, listening to the distant drone of traffic. The world getting ready for another day of rushing here and rushing there so that bank accounts would be higher rather than lower. I was losing my patience with all of that. The wood panels on the ceiling were infinitely more interesting.

I valued these few minutes of solitude and peace, and I was upset with myself whenever I would ruin these precious moments by tail spinning into a funk. None of those cars out there speeding along the Long Island Expressway could have a more frenetic pace than mine. I had recently been hired by a New York state psychiatric hospital to do clinical supervision for thirty-five social workers in mental health clinics throughout Suffolk County. In other words, I had been hired to do the impossible. But the pay was good, the prestige stroked my ego, and I hardly had the energy or time to spend staring at bedroom ceilings, contemplating the emptiness of Life As We Know It.

At last I pulled myself up and went about the business of getting dressed, fixing tea, resisting the temptation to look at the little red light on my telephone answering machine. I wasn't in the mood for early-morning emergencies.

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I cradled the cup in my hand and felt the pleasant steam drift into my face. Outside the world was white and cold and getting colder. The weather report on the radio predicted more snow by nightfall. Great.

I downed the rest of my tea, grabbed my coat, and left. I snuck a look at the light as I went out. It was blinking, and I ignored it.

Score one for the modern woman.

Carole and Ellie were patiently waiting for me in the clinic conference room. They were talking in an animated fashion when I finally burst through the door, hair flying and pen uncapped.

"You've made it," Carole said.

I nodded. "Barely."

Carole smiled. She was a soft-spoken woman in her mid-forties, with pixie blonde hair framing a glowing round face. She had an inner youthfulness that was always refreshing after the sea of stressed-out, aging faces I normally came in contact with.

I pulled up a chair and took a deep breath. "So! Where are the others?"

"How many were there supposed to be?" Ellie asked."

Total of six.

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"Ellie shrugged her shoulders. She was an olive-skinned, large-boned woman, also in her mid-forties. She had thick dark hair that she was always running her fingers through. She wore large rings and bright red earrings to match her necklace. Ellie was a much more dramatic and intense woman than Carole, and her appearance showed it.

While waiting somewhat awkwardly for the other women to arrive, we fell into the casual kind of talk people do. Ellie and Carole had been talking about holistic health, and how the confines of traditional social work made it difficult to truly explore the nature of illness, psychological dysfunction, and roads to true health. I kept my mouth shut for awhile, letting the two women speak. The fact was, I had always had an interest in psychic phenomena and spiritual healing, but it was an opinion I kept safely tucked away from the rest of my more conservative colleagues.

The conversation went on and we all forgot about the business at hand. We exchanged stories in the usual way about various experiences we'd all had, when suddenly Carole froze, her bright round face a study in alarm. Then she clamped her hands over her ears and shut her eyes very, very tightly, the way children do when they exaggerate sleep.

"What's the matter, Carole?" I said. "Don't you hear it?"

"Hear what?"

"It!"

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Ellie and I looked at each other, then back to Carole. I felt my stomach go a little cold at the sudden turn of events. I leaned close and put my hand on her arm.

"What is it?" I said. "Tell me."

"The whistling."

Again I looked at Ellie, concerned. "What whistling?"

At last Carole took her hands from her ears and looked us straight in the eyes. "Someone in the hall was just whistling. I'm so sensitive to it. It . . . happens all the time now, and it's so hostile. I just cringe with fear. I feel as though I'm suddenly in danger and I want to go out there and tell them to stop."

"Whistling . . ." Ellie said. "Who in your life whistles?"

"Nobody," she said.

In the electric silence an image began to form in my head. The image of a man. I neither stopped it nor encouraged it. I simply let the image form as it wanted to. The man was thin, about five foot ten, and had dark, thinning hair and a moustache.

"Carole," I said hesitantly.

She looked up at me with her large, emerald green eyes. "What?"

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"Did anyone in your life look like this?" I went on to describe the image of the man in my head, and as I spoke Ellie's eyes grew wider and wider.

"My father! You just described my father!"

"I swallowed hard, felt the coldness in the pit of my stomach.

"Can you see him?" Carole went on.

"No. Not really. But I have an image of him in my head.

"Carole sat back in her chair, took a deep breath, and kept looking at me with wide eyes. Even Ellie was giving me a curious side-glance. We were co-workers, not fortune-tellers, and this sudden and unexpected drop into the spirit world had made us all a bit uncomfortable. Finally Carole cleared her throat and told us of how her father used to whistle just like that, and that he had died not too long ago. It had never occurred to her to put the two things together, but now that it was out on the table she couldn't believe she had ever overlooked something so obvious.

"Are you a psychic?" Carole asked me, somewhat naively.

"No," I smiled. "At least, I've never thought of myself as a psychic in the sense of crystal balls and palm reading. But I always have had a certain . . . feel for things, you know? I meditate . . .

"My voice trailed off. The two women looked at me with both surprise and relief. I picked up my pen and fiddled with it nervously. Shuffled papers. Avoided their eyes. I felt a strange

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sense of violating some unspecific professional code by opening up like that in front of a couple of co-workers. By stepping beyond the traditional confines of what social workers talk to each other about behind office doors.

At last I forced a smile and opened my notebook and we got down to the business at hand. Ellie and Carole still gazed at me with confused and interested faces. Perhaps it wasn't by chance that no one else had shown up for the meeting.

That night I sat alone in my apartment and listened to the rain and thought about what had happened in the conference room. I thought of Carole's stunned face when I mentioned her father, and how Ellie had given me that sideways glance.

Now--in the silence and safety of home--I was able to let myself feel how extraordinary the incident was. Perhaps I was a little blasé because my whole life I had been somewhat psychic, and the experiences didn't shock me anymore. But it had been awhile. The delicate antenna that make such experience possible had been dulled by the repetition and common concerns of our day-to-day, anxiety-ridden existences. Our lives get so cluttered we stop paying attention to all that is not "practical," all that won't help towards paying the rent.

I put down my glass of wine and went to the desk in the living-room. Sitting in the same spot where they'd been left months ago were the brochures. The brightly-colored folders of Peruvian mountains and Amazonian jungles, of Shamans and craftsmen and mysterious lines, ten feet wide, carved into mountainsides.

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They were in the drawer for a reason. Handy, but out of sight. It was a temptation I had been avoiding. An inclination I refrained from following. The mature, workaday woman in me protested that one must grind away, even if you start to find yourself staring at the ceiling at night. But now the brochures that lay spread before me were more than just images of a possible future. They called to me. Spoke to me. Breathed into the room a challenge and a promise.

I took a deep breath, gathered them up, and put them back in the drawer.

Monday morning I was sitting in my office when the door burst open and Carole came bouncing in.

"Do you have a minute?" she asked.

"Sure."

Carole closed the door behind her, sat in the chair, and smoothed imaginary wrinkles out of her skirt. "I spent all weekend thinking about how you picked up on my father the way you did. I . . . have you always been able to do this?"

"Yes," I said. "But I'm pretty careful about where and how I use it."

Carole nodded, let her eyes drop to the floor. She was wanting to get to something, but was having trouble. Finally she said, "Do you think it's some sort of psychic message?"

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I shook my head. "I have no idea what it was. It came to me, and that was as far as I analyzed it."

Carole nodded some more, obviously not satisfied with my answer. Her eyes scanned my desk, and I saw them stop on a dime.

"What's that?"

She pointed at the brochures of Peru and Brazil I had brought along to the office. I bit my lower lip. Oh, well. Too late to cover them up now.

"It's a long story," I said.

Carole shrugged. "I have all the time in the world."

"Okay." I leaned back in my chair and told Carole the whole chain of events that brought the brochures to my desk in Long Island. "For quite a few years now I've been interested in psychic ability, healing, and exploration. I took a course in psychic development, then enrolled in a week-long workshop in upstate New York that was taught by Dr. Alberto Villoldo. He's a psychologist with a research background, based in California, who has studied Shamanism for over fifteen years in Peru." Carole looked confused, as if I was speaking an unfamiliar language, "Shamanism ? what's that ?" I tried to maintain my professional stance. " A Shaman is a medicine man or woman, a healer who works with spirit and mediates between spirit and our ordinary world.

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"The workshop sounds interesting," Carole said, her eyes brightening."

It was incredible."

"What made it so incredible?"

"Well . . ." I smiled and looked at the far wall. "Alberto is tall, dark, handsome, young . . ."

"That's it," Carole said, laughing. "You don't have to explain anymore. He just met all my requirements for a week- long workshop."

I laughed along and sat up straight, gathering the brochures in my hand. "But seriously, there was much, much more. He took us into the non-ordinary reality of the Shaman through meditation. We learned to connect to our own power source and with our own power animals.

"Carole looked at me blankly. "Power animals?"

"Yes." I felt myself fumbling along. I wasn't used to talking about these things. They were special concerns of mine, concerns that I had kept private and close to the vest for a number of reasons, both personal and professional. Also, I felt in my heart that I didn't entirely understand the whole mystical and terribly mysterious world of the Shaman and power animals either, and that my attempts to explain what I felt would inevitably fall short. I fumbled on. "It's difficult to understand, but there is a way to

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connect with these power sources and use them for healing. For obtaining knowledge."

Carole hadn't taken her eyes off me. They held a stare--complete, absolute, unwavering. "Can you do this?" she said. "Can you connect with your power animals?"

I stood and walked to the window. "I don't know. I think I have, but it is still very murky . . . I'm not as disciplined or as clear about it as I should be . . . as I want to be. It's like you talk about love, and somebody asks you if you have ever loved like that. You might say yes, but then the future proves you wrong."

I turned from the window and met Carole's relentless and fascinated gaze.

"That is why I have those brochures on my desk," I said, gesturing towards the pamphlets. "Every year Alberto takes a small group to Peru, deep into the jungles and high atop the mountains, to study with a very famous Peruvian Shaman. I would love to go some day. There are times when it is all I think about."

Carole stood and continued to slap the wrinkles from her unwrinkled skirt. I suddenly felt foolish and a little afraid. It was not like me to go on about this subject with co-workers.

She walked to the door and didn't say a word, opening it and standing for a moment in the open threshold. Then she turned to face me and her eyes were as serious as any eyes I had ever seen before.

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"Go to Peru," she said. "Go."

I cleared my throat. "You think I should?"

The traces of a smile drifted across Carole's face. "Maybe the whistle had more than one purpose." And she turned and left me in the office alone.