IF TREES COULD TALK

LIFE LESSONS FROM THE WISDOM OF THE WOODS

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TRIBAL PUBLISHING
Trees are sanctuaries. Whoever knows how to speak to them, whoever knows how to listen to them, can learn the truth. . . . Whoever has learned how to listen to trees no longer wants to be a tree. He wants to be nothing except what he is. That is home. That is happiness.

— Herman Hesse
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Writing this book was much more challenging than I imagined when I started this project. I had been working on my first novel, and putting that on the back burner to focus on a book about the stories of trees seemed much easier. In reality, this project stretched me outside my comfort zone and helped me to grow in ways I didn’t anticipate.

First and foremost, I will be eternally grateful to A.O. for introducing me to the world of spirituality, which has added a whole new layer to my life’s experience. My heart has so much more to say, but it feels as though putting it into words might limit the depth of all that you have given me. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

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To the Newlands Corner Yew: I’ve already thanked you
in person, but I need to say once more that this book wouldn't exist if it weren't for you. Thank you, once again, for gifting me the idea for this project.

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but also an excellent developmental editor. Thanks for your endless support in everything I do, and eternal thanks for helping me to embark on a path of healing so I could step into my true self, which apparently involves conversing with trees.
PART I
I remember exactly when I first began talking to trees: it was in May 2015. A couple of years prior, I had started getting weekly Akashic Records emails from my friend Vickie Young, and it was one of her messages that sparked a new chapter in my life and ultimately led to the creation of this project. The Akashic Records are an extensive library of energetic records of all souls, including their past, present, and possible future lives. It includes all events, thoughts, words, emotions, and intentions ever to have occurred in these past, present, or possible future lives. It’s like an archive of each person throughout all their life-times. It is thought that each soul has its own Records, like a set of encyclopedias where each book in the set represents a single lifetime. It’s the history — and future — of you, as a soul.

These Records can be quickly and easily accessed in a variety of different ways. There are plenty of training programs available online, and author Linda Howe shares in her books a simple prayer that she uses to access the
Records. That’s how I first learned to access the Akashic Records myself, and it’s how I continue to do so today.

Even though I know how to access my own Records, I rarely take the time to do it, which is why I greatly value the weekly messages that I get from Vickie. They’re short and focused, and they often provide a starting point for my journaling and mindset work each week. I’ve been getting them on and off since 2013, and they’re a very important part of my personal development work. On this particular week, back in May 2015, I received the following message from Vickie and my Records Keepers:

This week Holly, when you are on your sacred walks, take a moment and listen to the plant spirits. They have so much to tell you and they want to share with you their knowledge of the medicine that plant people have for you and for others.

Hold your hands on a tree (you know, The Tree!) and just listen for a voice in an unexpected way. Feel the energy of the tree and notice how it is waking up and moving inside. Feel the energy of the tree inside of your body and notice that a chakra stirs up.

Notice this on each plant that you hold. You see...each plant that you come in contact with will have a healthy influence and message for you. All you have to do is listen and believe!

To be honest, I was a bit skeptical when I read this email. “Me? Talk to trees? I don’t know how to do that,” I thought. But later that week, when I went on my weekly Nature walk, I had the opportunity to give it a try when I got lost in the woods. In fact, I got lost so many times, I
turned an 11.6 mile (18.6 km) walk into a 16.7 mile (26.8 km) walk. I was on a route from Milford to Haslemere in Surrey, England, and I was following the directions that I had printed out. I didn't have a map with me, which was not unusual at the time because, at this point in my life, I often went walking without a map. Later, I would go on to do more training in outdoors leadership and navigation, and I became much more careful on my walks: always walking with a paper map and compass for navigation, with the OS Maps app on my phone as a backup.

But back in 2015, I was a bit reckless. I did most of my walking in the lowlands of Surrey, which always felt like a safe environment to wander around in. Unlike in the hills of California — where I grew up — in Surrey, there were no bears, mountain lions, or rattlesnakes to worry about. It always felt relatively harmless, which had led me to put caution to the side when I went out walking.

Before I got lost for the first time that day, I remembered my weekly message from the Records Keepers, and I stopped to connect with the trees. I walked up to one at random, and I put my hands on its bark. I immediately heard the message: "It's okay." The words sounded clearly in my head, in a calm, male voice. I remembered to focus on my chakras, as the message from my Records Keepers had suggested, and I felt movement in my throat center as the energy shifted. It made sense that my fifth chakra would be activated, as I was focusing on communication with the trees. The fifth energy center, or throat chakra, is the one that's related to communication and expression.

I was confused by the tree's message: "It's okay." What did that mean? That was all the tree had to say to me, and at that point, I didn't understand what it meant. I assumed that I must have gotten something wrong, and that I was missing another part of the message. After all, I was new to
this tree communication thing. I went to another tree, hoping to get more information, but it repeated the same message, albeit in a different male voice. Once again, I felt movement in my throat chakra. It was as though new avenues of communication were stirring within me, yet I couldn't understand what the trees were actually trying to tell me.

Their message wasn't clear (or so I thought), but I resolved to continue on my walk and try again later. I assumed that because I was new at tree communication, I either wasn't getting the full details, or I didn't understand the words I had been given. However, I would soon understand that “It’s okay” was all I needed to hear for me to know exactly what action to take next.

Walking along a dirt trail through a wood, I noticed that it appeared to be a commercial forest. The trail was deeply grooved in places where heavy load vehicles had left their mark, and the woodland was made up of a sea of identical conifers. I don't usually like walking through such places, as they feel strange and unnatural to me, but it was a beautiful day, and I felt light-hearted and joyful as I explored the new route. I continued uphill along the trail, soon coming out of the wood into an open area full of low-growing heather, yellow flowering gorse, and lush green bracken. Consulting my printed directions, I turned left. Unfortunately, I hadn’t clearly identified where I was on the page as it compared to where I actually was on the trail, and I turned left where I should have continued on the main path as it curved around to the right, eventually turning left further on.

I happily continued straight down the trail until it closely approached the noisy A3 road and turned right. This is where I realized I was lost. When I attempted to retrace my steps, I got even more lost. I hadn't seen another
walker in over an hour, and there was no one around I could ask for directions...or so I thought.

I was on open access land, which meant that there were many little trails going off in all directions, and no public footpath signs to be found. I had no idea where I was or how to get back on track, and I felt really confused. This is probably the point in the story where I should explain that I have high functioning autism — formerly known as Aspergers — and if I don't make a conscious, focused effort to stay calm in emergency situations I can often spiral into a meltdown. When that happens, all common sense goes out the window and I panic. I could feel myself heading toward a meltdown as I struggled to figure out where exactly I was and where I needed to go to get back on the right path.

A simple phrase popped into my mind: “It's okay.” I remembered what the trees had said just a few minutes prior, and at last, their message made sense. Everything was okay. I just needed a little help to get me back on track. I went up to a slender young birch tree and put my hands on its trunk. I asked it where I needed to go to get back on track, and it gave me a very clear answer. It told me which direction I needed to start off in, and where I needed to turn left, then left again to get back on the main trail.

The birch was right, of course. From there, I quickly and easily got back on the right track, and I soon found my way out of confusion and back onto the route I had been following. I felt fantastic: the solution had been so simple! I was so grateful for the guidance that I thanked the trees out loud as I walked. I was also thankful that it was a weekday, and there were no other walkers in sight to hear me as I spontaneously and effusively thanked the forest for its knowledge. It was almost unbelievable how I had gone
from total disorientation to absolute knowing, thanks to the simple instructions from the birch.

A new chapter in my life had begun.

This experience gave me a new awareness of the trees that I passed as I went on my walks: they had wisdom that I could easily access by simply striking up a conversation and asking them a question. Yet it wasn’t until almost three years later — in January 2018, when I was on a Forest Bathing and Nature Therapy Meetup — that I deepened my connection with the trees even further. After a delightful afternoon of smelling, tasting, and engaging in completely new ways with the forest at Newlands Corner in Surrey, the group was guided to enter an ancient grove of yew trees. We were told to select one of the trees and then connect with it.

I instantly knew which one I needed to work with: it was a yew that had caught my eye off to the right-hand side of where we were standing in the grove. I walked straight to the yew, and I put my hands on its bark to make first contact. I then leaned in to hug the tree as I greeted it. I felt an instant connection to the yew, and he immediately began to speak to me.

The ancient yew acknowledged that he knew I was having trouble with the novel I had been working on at the time, my first work of fiction. It was slow moving, a struggle: I had always found writing nonfiction books to be easy, but fiction was a whole other story. I was learning a new skill, and it was very slow going and not at all fun. The yew suggested that I set aside the novel and instead, write a different book: a book of tree stories, in which I would connect with trees in the same way that I was
connecting with him, and they would share their stories with me.

“This is your work,” the yew said, “to share our wisdom.”

He made it clear to me that it was my job to help people connect to Nature, and to help rebuild the love and respect that humanity used to have for the Earth. He said that this was the way of the future; that this was one way to help the environment. It wasn’t enough to conserve water and other resources; humanity needed to rebuild its relationship with Nature. He said that this book would be a piece in the puzzle of what was necessary to help rekindle the deep and healthy relationship that humanity once had with Nature.

The yew acknowledged that I might need to “wrap it in a package” that would make the stories easier for people to digest: that perhaps the book would need to be marketed as fiction so that it could reach a wider audience. Many truths can be shared in fiction, and he suggested that perhaps the tree stories would be better received by readers if they thought they were made up. Or that maybe it would need to be marketed as a children’s book: he reminded me of the Madeleine L’Engle quote “You have to write the book that wants to be written. And if the book will be too difficult for grown-ups, then you write it for children.”

I took his advice and toyed around with the idea of writing this book as fiction: an eleven-year-old girl goes into the forest and gets one story from each of the Ogam trees. The Ogam — often spelled Ogham — is an early alphabet that has been identified as the earliest written record of the old Irish language. The original alphabet was comprised of twenty letters, with a further five added at a later date. Now, it is sometimes used by druids and other pagan groups as a form of divination, with each letter symbolizing a tree, which in turn represents a message.
The twenty trees of the Ogam are birch, rowan, alder, willow, ash, hawthorn, oak, holly, hazel, apple, vine, ivy, reed, blackthorn, elder, silver fir, gorse, heather, poplar, and yew. My idea all sounded very neat and tidy, quite unlike how this book turned out.

In this initial plan, I would enter the woods myself, collecting the stories, and I would put it all together as if it were a novel. I suspected that the yew was right, and this might help the book to reach a wider audience: that of people who were open to the concept of tree-talk but in a magical, fictional setting. Not everyone will accept the idea of a person who talks to trees, and the yew had made it very clear to me that it was important for me to help them by bringing their stories to the widest possible audience of readers.

Yet presenting this as a work of fiction didn't quite feel right. I detest lying, and I'm extremely uncomfortable with half-truths. After months of going back and forth and worrying about what to do, I decided to simply tell the truth: yes, I talk to trees. Yes, these are their stories. No, this is not a work of fiction.

I wasn't fully comfortable with this decision, mostly because of my fears around what people would think of me. Throughout the year I found myself evading conversation around the topic of the book I was working on. I feared judgment, and only my closest friends knew the full truth of the contents of this book. Yet I knew that this was the right thing for me to do: I had to be honest about exactly where these stories had come from.

Because, let's be honest: whether or not you believe that people can actually talk to trees — and hear their replies — there's a lot more power to these messages if you know the truth of this book, which is that the stories were actually given to me by the trees. I didn't make this stuff up. It isn't a
work of fiction. This is real. This is my truth, my experience, and I have chosen to share the unfiltered stories with you, just as they were given to me.

As I went on my weekly walks in Nature, various trees started to speak out to me: “I’m in your book,” some of them would inform me. If it was a cold or wet day, I would make a mental note to return and collect their story. Sometimes, if the weather was good, I would sit right down against the trunk of the tree and immediately connect with it to receive its tale. Several times throughout the year, it occurred to me that perhaps I should travel further from home to connect with some of the “superstar” trees in Britain: the most famous, ancient and gnarled trees that make their way into books and magazines. I thought of the Fortingall Yew, the Llangernyw Yew, and the Big Belly Oak of Savernake Forest. But that didn’t feel right: according to the Newlands Corner Yew, all trees have a story, and I had such an abundance of trees who were willing to share their wisdom with me that I decided to stick with the trees I knew. After all, I already had a relationship with them.

And this was a very important part of the journey of creating this book: building a relationship with the trees. While I’ve always loved trees for their beauty — as a child, I absolutely loved eating broccoli because I thought it looked like little green trees — I began to connect with them on a much deeper level, as individuals. I learned to think of them in the way I think of the different people in my life, and I started to feel like I knew them.

This wasn’t an easy process, though. Just because I was given a very clear topic for the book doesn’t mean that collecting the stories was a walk in the park (pun absolutely intended). Instead, it triggered all of my insecurities. Though I’ve been talking to trees since 2015, and I’ve been channeling spirit guides since the year before that, this
book stretched me out of my comfort zone and forced me to grow both as a person and as a channel. Channeling is how I can best describe the method I used to collect these stories: it involves opening up a connection or line of communication, often to unseen or nonphysical beings such as spirit guides, angels, or ascended masters. You can channel your Higher Self, and you can also channel Nature spirits, such as the spirits of the trees who shared their stories in this book.

This book became a personal lesson in *I am good enough*, something that I’ve struggled with my entire life. It’s the theme that keeps coming up over and over when I do mindset work with myself to my clear fears, blocks, and limiting beliefs. I believe it’s one of the main topics that my soul chose to work on, develop, and clear in this lifetime. It’s one of the primary subjects in my personal school of life.

It didn’t help that the stories weren’t what I had expected: I thought I would receive a series of quaint and magical fairy tales, and what I actually got was very different...so much so that I worried that the stories might be a little too serious. I also struggled with the fear that my channeling skills weren’t good enough for me to receive the *full* tales, but rather only a superficial version of them...and that there was actually much more underneath the surface than I was able to tap into. The Newlands Corner Yew had given me a very serious task, and I wanted to do justice to the trees’ project. And to do so, I needed to believe that I was good enough to make it happen.
Before we delve into the stories of the trees, I thought it might be useful for you to get an idea of where I’m coming from. The previous chapter probably left you with a series of questions: How is it that trees can talk? How do I hear them? How is this possible? Is this for real? When I first became familiar with the idea of tree communication, I had a lot of questions, and it wasn’t until I experienced it for myself that I learned how it all worked…at least, how it worked for me. I’m sure everyone who talks to trees has their own way of going about it.

Here’s how I see the world: everything has a spirit. Not just people, but also animals, plants, and minerals. The official term for this belief is animism, and it is common in many pagan belief systems, including those of many indigenous peoples. It’s a way of being that makes me feel very connected to everything around me, particularly the elements of Nature and the members of the plant, animal, and mineral realms.

This means that when I’m talking to a tree, I’m not talking to its bark or its branches, or its leaves — I’m actu-
ally communicating with its spirit. This is the same as the way that we do not talk to the skin, the limbs, or the hair of another human being — we communicate with their spirit, their soul, the energy that brings their body to life. Sometimes I’ll speak out loud to a tree, but most of the time I’m “speaking” with my mind: sending silent thoughts of communication directly to the tree spirit. And when I “hear” the tree responding to me, what I hear is their words flowing into my mind. It’s a kind of silent, telepathic communication.

For the purposes of this book, I channeled the trees’ stories directly. This means that I used myself as a verbal channel to receive and speak the trees’ stories out loud into my phone, which I then had transcribed for this book. When I do this, it’s as though my own consciousness moves to the back of my mind and the tree’s spirit takes the driver’s seat. I’m still there, but I’m a passive observer in the background: watching, listening, but not interfering. I felt that this would be a much more straightforward way of capturing the trees’ messages and, even more importantly, the essence and the energy of their stories. It was also much easier to speak their words than to write them down directly, as I would have struggled to keep up the pace with their messages, which were often passionate and ranting. Finally, it allowed me to truly feel the energy of each tree as it was speaking through me — an experience that was often exhilarating and deeply moving.

For some readers, who are familiar with the concept of channeling, this will all seem perfectly normal. For others — perhaps for most readers — it might be a stretch outside their current belief system. If this is the case for you, I would like to encourage you to open your mind to the possibility that trees can talk. Wherever you are on the spectrum of belief, if you keep an open mind, I assure you
that you’ll get something out of this book. If this is too much of a stretch for you to believe, then I suggest that you simply take this book as a work of fiction, not nonfiction, and in this way you can still get the value from the stories of the trees.

In any case, I invite you to set aside any judgment you might be feeling. If we allow our inner critic to take a back seat, as my mind does when I’m channeling, we open up space for new things that are waiting to be discovered by us. And in turn, we expand our awareness to include new worlds of possibilities.

As you read this book, you’ll notice that I refer to certain trees as “he” or “she.” When I first started talking to trees, I always heard a male voice in my head. Each tree seemed to have a different voice, much like different human beings do, but they were all male. Eventually, I began to make contact with trees that had a female voice, such as a holly tree that I connected with during a plant spirit initiation ceremony guided by my friend Suneet.

In this book, the vast majority of the trees had male voices, with the most notable exceptions being The Grandmothers, The Three Witches, and the Savernake Queen Oak. I’m not sure why this is, and I’m not sure if it’s even important whether the voices are male or female. In any case, speaking from a botanical perspective, most trees and plants that will be familiar to the home gardener or the woodland walker are what’s known as “monoecious,” which means that a single plant or tree bears both male and female flowers. Beeches, oaks, and sycamores, for example, are monoecious, with both male and female flowers occurring on the same tree.

Other types of trees and plants are called “dioecious,” which means that some trees produce male flowers, and other individuals produce female flowers. Hollies, for
example, are dioecious, and you may notice when you’re out for a walk during autumn and winter when the hollies are fruiting that only some will be adorned with red berries, while others will be barren. The berry-producing trees are the females — only female plants are able to set fruit and produce berries — and the plain green hollies are (probably) the males. If you pay attention when you’re outdoors in areas where hollies tend to grow, you may see many more fruitless hollies than you will see fruit-bearing ones. This might be because there are more males along the trails that you’re walking, or it may mean the exact opposite: that there aren’t any male hollies in the area, as you need males and females near each other (within about 200 yards) so that the females can produce berries.

To give you another example, yews are mostly dioecious, but occasionally can be monoecious, and they can even change sex with time. The famous Fortingall Yew in Scotland, believed to be one of the oldest trees in Europe, recently surprised the world by appearing to change sex when it began producing red arils — the particular type of fruit this tree produces — on its upper branches. The yew had been male for as long as anyone could remember — the tree is thought to be at least 2,000 to 3,000 years old, though some estimate its age at 5,000 years — and it suddenly began behaving as though it were female.

Botany lessons aside, I don’t think it really matters whether the tree spirits speak to me in a male or a female voice, and I don’t think it’s worth reading anything more into this. That’s simply how I perceived the voices of the trees that chose to participate in this book. Perhaps we hear the voices that we need to hear, in the way that we need to hear them.

The important thing, as I see it, is that trees — whether male, female, or bisexual/hermaphroditic — have a much
broader perspective on life than we humans do. Trees can live hundreds — even thousands — of years, compared to people, who for the most part don’t live past the age of ninety or one hundred. As healthcare improves, our lives are lengthened, but our time on Earth is still very, very short compared to the lives of the trees. This, combined with the vast communication network that trees have, which you’ll hear about in future chapters, means that trees have access to thousands and thousands of years of wisdom that we’re able to tap into.

Nature is generally defined as the phenomena of the collective physical world on our planet, including the elements of the plant realm, the animal realm, and the mineral realm. It refers to the Earth’s resources and to the four elements: earth, air, water, and fire. It concerns the features of the Earth, rather than things that have been created by humans. Because Nature is deeply sacred to me, I have chosen to reject conventional grammatical advice, and you will see that I capitalize the word “Nature” throughout this book. This was a conscious decision, made to emphasize the importance of Nature in my life, and in all our lives.

My own relationship with Nature has evolved greatly over the course of my life. My father and my grandmother were avid gardeners, and they were probably responsible for planting the seed of my love for Nature. When I was fourteen years old, my parents gave me a patch of dirt in the front yard for me to start my own garden. My dad took me down to a local garden center called Mountaire Garden Supply where Virginia, the owner’s daughter, helped me to plan out my garden. One year later, when I was ready to look for my first job, it was she who hired me. For a young lover of Nature, this was the perfect job, and I learned so much about gardening and ornamental plants.
At the same time, I developed a great interest in walking and hiking. I lived just down the street from the Mt. Diablo State Park in Clayton, California, which is located across the bay from San Francisco. It was no more than ten minutes on foot from my house, which meant that I spent many a scorching hot summer afternoon exploring the trails with my friends, who were surprisingly willing to be dragged up the mountain by me. When I went to university, my passion for hiking and exploring sadly waned, which was especially unfortunate considering that the hills surrounding San Luis Obispo were filled with gorgeous places to walk. However, my passion for gardening was rekindled each summer when I returned to work at Mountaire.

From there, I spent many years in Latin America. I lived for several years on the coast in southeast Mexico, where I cultivated tropical plants in my spare time, of which I didn't have much. I lived in the jungle, surrounded by lush Nature, but I didn't really have the time to take advantage of it, aside from admiring its beauty every day. After living in Argentina, and spending much time in Chile, I moved to London, then to the Surrey Hills, an area rich in public footpaths and emerald green forests. Surrey is the most wooded county in England, which means that I have had an abundance of trails to explore under the shade of trees.

I began exploring the local trails on a regular basis, and I eventually ventured out on some of the longer National Trails, experiences which I shared in my books on the South Downs Way and The Ridgeway. I was walking, walking through the woods, but I wasn't really connecting with Nature. At the same time, I was beginning to feel that I needed to expand my spiritual awareness to include the natural world. I wasn't sure exactly what that meant, or what a Nature-based spiritual system might look
like for me, until I eventually discovered OBOD — The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids — and began my spiritual journey by signing up for the Bardic Grade training course, which finally gave me the words to express the things I’d been feeling when I was out in Nature. It opened me up to a whole new way of connecting with the woods and the natural elements.

Finally, I want to mention the idea that Nature can be a mirror: a place that reflects back to us the things we need to see in ourselves. It can trigger the stuff that we need to bring to light so we can work on it in our personal development (things such as my lesson of *I am good enough*). It can also provide a space for deep healing. That’s one of the many lessons that I received in this year of collecting tree stories, and as you’ll soon see, their tales give us the opportunity to better connect with ourselves and get to know our true selves by connecting with Nature.

By now, you should have a pretty good idea of what this book is all about, and the journey you’re about to join me on. To further clarify, this book is for you if:

- You love Nature and the outdoors
- You feel like there’s something more to life, but you don’t know what that is
- You’re feeling disconnected from yourself, like your life has somehow gotten off track
- You feel like you don’t really know who you are anymore...or maybe you’ve never truly known yourself at all
- Life is going just fine, but you have the suspicion that things could be much better
- You live your life in front of a computer screen or glued to your phone, and you’re ready for something different
Throughout this book, you’ll follow me on my journey as I connect on a deeper level with the trees, building relationships with them as the year goes by. You’ll hear their stories, and you’ll be given a series of experiments to carry out, should you choose to do so. These will help you to connect with yourself through connecting with Nature, and they’ll open you up to the deep wisdom and healing that the trees can offer us. They will assist you in getting out of your head and into your body, so you can feel more deeply and truly experience all the joy that life has to offer. They’ll add a new level of richness to your life that you may have never thought possible. I invite you to join me on my journey of collecting the trees’ stories.
How you use this book is entirely up to you, and you alone will know the best way for you to work through the chapters based on what's right for you. I'm not here to teach you anything; on the contrary, it's the trees who are the teachers in this book. I'm here to share my journey and my experience with the trees with you, and to facilitate your own personal growth by making the stories of the trees more readily available to you. You're the one who is actually going to do the work, should you choose to do so. Be sure to tailor this to fit your own personal wants and needs.

Now seems the appropriate time to share a confession with you: I'm not an expert in all this. Instead, I'm going down this path along with you. I may be one or more steps ahead of you on this journey, I may be walking alongside you, or I may even be walking behind you. We're all at different places on our path, moving along at our own pace.

Remember: in this book, as in life, only you know what's best for you. Take any advice you receive with a grain of
salt, including the suggestions in this book. Take what serves you; leave what doesn’t. Likewise, some of what’s shared in this book will resonate with you, some of it may not. See what feels right to you and go from there. Some topics may require a stretch outside of your comfort zone; others may require you to expand your current belief system. You do you.

This book chronicles my experience throughout 2018 as I received and documented the stories of 28 trees. You can choose to read each chapter in order and experience the adventure and the stories as I did, in chronological order. If I were going to read this book, that’s probably what I’d do, simply to get a feel for what the journey was like for the author.

You can also dip in and out as you like. You might want to open the book at a random point and read the chapter that you open up to. I’ve done that before with certain books, and I’ve often found that I “coincidentally” opened up the book to precisely the chapter that I needed to read at that time because it provided guidance or information on an issue or a topic that had been on my mind.

Or you could pick one species of tree and read through all the oak stories, then all the yew stories, then the sycamore stories. You might start with your favorite species of tree and then go from there. Or you might simply read through the table of contents and pick whichever chapter stands out to you or has a kind of zingy feeling to it.

One thing I need to mention: you may notice that the trees have a very peculiar way of telling their tales. There’s a lot of repetition of words, phrases, and concepts. At times it almost feels like they’re chanting a mantra. Again and again, as I was receiving the stories of the trees, I got the feeling that they think we humans need to hear something several times before it actually sinks in, and they’re prob-
ably right. This means that you may find yourself reading and re-reading certain chapters and picking up on different details each time. I know that I have books that I’ve read and re-read and marked up with a different color pen each time, underlining different passages with each reading.

The trees’ stories often include suggestions of activities for you to try: new ways of doing things, new actions to take, or new ways of looking at things. You might want to read the entire book first, and then go back and do some (or all) of the activities, or you might want to read each chapter and do the activity before moving onto the next chapter. Or, as I recommended earlier, you might open the book at random, then read the chapter and do the corresponding activity wherever you’ve opened up the book.

I do, however, urge you to give the activities a try: this is not a book that’s simply meant to be read. It’s meant to be experienced, and you can only get this experience by getting outdoors and taking the actions that are suggested by the trees. That means putting the book down at some point and going outside to meet the trees in your area — or taking the book outdoors with you to read it in the woods!

To make this easier, I’ve also created a full workbook based on this book, where you can not only work through the activities suggested by the trees, but you’ll also have space to journal and write about your experiences. You can purchase that workbook wherever you bought this book, or visit my website to learn more.

Do not be bothered if you cannot find oaks, yews, and sycamores in your local region. You do not need to replicate my experiences, nor do you need to seek out the same species of trees. All trees have wisdom. All trees will help you to connect to the magical healing powers of Nature. Do what you can with what you have available to you in your
local area. But I urge you: do not simply read. Do. Be. Experience. I wish you the best of luck on your journey!

For now, join me on my own adventure as I speak with the trees and receive their stories. They have great wisdom for you, and I can’t wait for you to hear their tales. Let’s get started.