Psychedelics, Dreams, and Rituals:

A Guidebook for Explorers, Therapists, and Facilitators

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Introduction

At sixteen, I decided to initiate myself.

Not into adulthood with a driver's license or a first kiss—but into an illegal, invisible world where a single purple microdot of LSD could change everything.

I didn't tell my parents. I didn't tell my friends. I simply crossed the threshold.

It didn't happen at a party, in someone's basement, or under black lights. It happened in the middle of an ordinary school day—fluorescent lights, linoleum floors, teachers' voices droning on about facts and figures. On the outside, I was just another student sitting at a desk. On the inside, an entirely different curriculum was about to begin.

I knew it was dangerous. I knew people got arrested, expelled, labeled "crazy." I also knew something in me was starving—for meaning, for mystery, for proof that the world was bigger than the pain and confusion already swirling through my young life.

That day at school, I stepped into the unknown.

The classroom did not melt; it opened. Dimensions unfolded like hidden rooms in a building I'd been walking through my whole life but never truly seen. Colors breathed. Time loosened. My own mind became both mirror and doorway. Instead of losing myself, I met parts of me I didn't know existed—an inner witness, a deep calm, a quiet, unmistakable knowing:

You are more than this body.

You are more than this story.

You are held by something larger than your fear.

While my classmates bent over worksheets and textbooks, I was learning from an invisible teacher, in a language my school could never teach but somehow co-existed with everything around me. The bell rang, people shuffled to the next class, and I carried an entire universe in my nervous system.

Chapter One: Origin Stories: The Red Books, the Purple Microdot, and the Teacher Who Didn't Turn Me In

My origin story doesn't start with a mushroom ceremony in the jungle. It begins in a Florida living room in 1968—with a thirteen-year-old girl, a stack of red leather books, and a father who quietly believed the mind was a portal to something much bigger than ordinary life.

The books were small and mysterious, with raised gold lettering and a hand cradling the world on the cover. My dad called them "the red books," but they were more than that. They were my inheritance. First my grandfather (born 1902), then my father (born 1929), and now me: third-generation keeper of Robert Collier's *Secret of the Ages*—a metaphysical guide to "Universal Mind" disguised as a success manual.

Collier insisted that the mind is not a battery that runs out; it's a power plant that generates more energy the more you use it. He wrote about conscious mind, subconscious mind, Universal Mind—three levels of intelligence working together like an unseen triune system. I didn't have that language yet, but I had the feeling: something vast and intelligent lived both within me and beyond me, and if I learned how to listen, I could tap it for healing, guidance, and transformation.

I taped affirmations from the red books to the back of my bedroom door:
"You can do anything."
"You know the answer."
"Open up the channels between your mind and Universal Mind."

Every night before sleep, I read them like prayers. I was thirteen, turning my bedroom door into a tiny altar to the unseen. While my friends practiced cheerleading routines, I practiced entering non-ordinary states of consciousness with nothing more than a book, a chair, and my imagination.

Collier's instructions were simple:

1. Saturate your mind with everything you know about a problem.
2. Relax so deeply you forget your body.
3. Hand the whole thing over to the Inner Healer and trust that something wiser than your conscious mind is working on your behalf.

I didn’t know it then, but this was my first training in psychedelic integration—decades before I ever swallowed a tiny purple microdot.

Three years later, at sixteen, the universe upped the ante.

By then, I’d already learned to talk to the “Universal Mind” Collier described, to ask for guidance and watch how dreams and synchronicities answered back. But adolescence is a hungry time, and books and affirmations were no longer enough. I wanted to *feel* the mystery, not just read about it.

On the morning of my sixteenth birthday, I did something reckless and sacred: I took LSD at school.

There were no black lights, no psychedelic posters. Just fluorescent bulbs, desks in rows, teachers at chalkboards, and one girl quietly dissolving the walls between worlds.

I can still see myself standing in the bathroom mirror before first bell, staring at my reflection and thinking, *Happy birthday. Let’s see what’s really going on here.* I placed the tiny purple microdot on my tongue—a gift from a friend who thought it would be “fun”—and walked into the school day like it was a rite of passage no one else knew was happening.

As the medicine came on, my ordinary classroom began to shimmer. I could see the emotional weather inside my classmates as clearly as the posters on the wall. The teacher’s voice stretched and folded over itself. Time puddled. My body felt like a costume I was wearing, not the sum total of who I was. The metaphysical ideas I’d met in the red books suddenly had texture, color, and weight.

I wasn’t just reading about Universal Mind anymore. I was swimming in it.

Things escalated in the girls’ bathroom. No one had ever warned me about mirrors and LSD. I became hypnotized by my reflection, watching my face multiply and fracture into endless versions of myself—child, elder, stranger, cosmic being—like a living kaleidoscope. The mirror turned into a portal, and I stepped through.

I don’t know how long I was gone, but long enough for my English teacher, Mr. Sepos, to notice I hadn’t come back to class.

He sent another girl to fetch me. I, being sixteen and very high, told her cheerfully, “I’m tripping.” She ran straight to him. He sent me to the nurse.

In that moment, everything could have gone very badly.

The nurse could have called my mother. The school could have called the police. I could have been expelled, marked, punished, and shoved into the "troubled kid" category that closes doors for years. Instead, something remarkable happened.

The nurse took one look at me, heard my half-true explanation about "cramps," and handed me a hall pass back to class.

I walked down the hallway suspended between two realities: the buzzing hive of school and the vast inner universe that had just opened. Lockers, linoleum, and bell schedules on one side; swirling colors, telepathic empathy, and the unmistakable sense that *I was not this body* on the other.

When I stepped back into English, Mr. Sepos looked up, assessing me with the kind of quiet curiosity only a good teacher has.

"You okay?" he asked.

"The nurse checked me out," I said, borrowing her authority.

He didn't call the principal. He didn't lecture me in front of the class. He did something that changed the trajectory of my life:

He turned my dangerous experiment into an assignment.

"You owe me," he said later, when we spoke privately. "You're writing for the yearbook. I want you to use that imagination of yours."

That was it. No shaming. No expulsion. No "What were you thinking?" He gave me work, not punishment. He handed me a pen instead of a verdict.

Without realizing it, he became my first psychedelic integration facilitator.

He challenged me to turn what could have been a chaotic, secret, potentially traumatizing experience into story, meaning, and craft. He anchored my expanded consciousness in language. He invited me to make use of what I'd seen instead of hiding from it.

I went home and wrote.

I wrote poems, pages of reflections, metaphysical musings sparked by Collier and supercharged by LSD. I wrote about doors and decisions and the strange new awareness that my life would be shaped not just by what happened to me, but by how I chose to interpret and respond to it.

One of those early poems ended with this line:

The doors I open can be closed only by me.

At sixteen, I didn't fully understand how true that was. Today, as a therapist and author whose entire career rests on the power of conscious choice, it feels like a prophecy I whispered to myself.

Years later, when I read Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception*, I recognized the terrain. Huxley described the urge "to transcend self-conscious selfhood" as a principal appetite of the soul. I had tasted that appetite in a school bathroom, then spent decades learning how to honor it safely, ethically, and therapeutically.

In the psychedelic world, we talk a lot about "set and setting"—mindset and environment—as the crucial ingredients in any journey. That first LSD trip had neither in the formal, ceremonial sense. What it had was something else vital: a foundation and a teacher.

The foundation was metaphysical: my red books, my teenage experiments with visualization, my sense of an Inner Healer and Universal Mind already at work inside me. I didn't enter the medicine as a blank slate; I entered as someone who had been practicing inner work for years, even if I didn't have that language yet.

The teacher was human: an English instructor who chose curiosity over condemnation, creativity over control. Instead of shutting down my experience, he offered me a container—a place to put it, shape it, and learn from it. In doing so, he modeled something I now consider essential to psychedelic-assisted therapy:

We do not punish expanded awareness.
We help people *integrate* it.

That day, the triune pathway quietly came online in my life, long before I'd name it:

- **Psychedelics** cracked open perception and revealed deeper truths.
- **Dreams** and imagination continued the work, offering symbols and storylines in the nights and weeks that followed.
- **Ritual and writing** gave those experiences form—on the back of my bedroom door, in my journal, in a poem, in the yearbook.

I was still a teenager, still reckless, still very much at risk in ways I didn't fully grasp. But woven into the danger was something else: the sense that if I listened closely, wrote honestly, and honored what I was shown, this path could become more than a secret thrill. It could become a vocation.

Looking back now, I see that my origin story is not simply “girl takes acid, sees dancing lights in mirror, becomes therapist.” It is a story about how early encounters with non-ordinary states, metaphysical teachings, and good teachers shaped my lifelong commitment to **integration**—to turning wild, ineffable experiences into grounded, compassionate healing for real people with real lives.

This is why I ask you, as you read:

What was *your* origin story?
Who handed you your first “red book,” your first doorway, your first glimpse that reality might be larger than you were taught?
Who helped you integrate it—or who punished you for it?

The rest of this book will offer frameworks, tools, and stories for working with psychedelics, dreams, and rituals in a way that honors safety, ethics, and community. But it all begins here: with a thirteen-year-old metaphysician, a sixteen-year-old psychonaut, and an English teacher who chose to ask, “What can you make of this?” instead of “What’s wrong with you?”

In a world where many young people are still punished for their initiations, my hope is that this origin story invites you to see your own differently—and to consider that the most dangerous thing may not be crossing thresholds into mystery, but crossing them alone and without a guide.

You deserve better.
Your story deserves meaning.
And your inner healer—like mine at thirteen, at sixteen, and now—deserves a framework that lets it lead the way.