



Black Smoke: A Woman's Journey of Healing, Wild Love, and Transformation in the Amazon

Margaret De Wys

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When composer and Bard College music professor Margaret De Wys learned she had breast cancer, the diagnosis shattered her comfortable life. Seized by fear, crushed by existential loneliness, she couldn't respond when her loved ones reached out to her. To everyone's concern, the illness propelled her away from her family and deep into the Amazon to work with Carlos, a charismatic Shuar master of medicina milenaria, an ancient mystical tradition with a highly sophisticated and precise technology of healing. In *Black Smoke*, De Wys writes of her amazing encounter with Carlos as he guided her into a world of potent visionary plants, harrowing initiations, and ritual purification. It was, as Carlos called it, "the path of the warrior." At once an adventure story, a romance, and a rich exploration of a little-known culture, *Black Smoke* is destined to become a classic. It captures one woman's physical, emotional, and "holy voyage" through a world that differs vastly from our own in its perception of healing and wholeness. And what emerges is a revealing chronicle of spiritual insight and a trenchant exploration of the limits of idealism. Not only does De Wys offer a probing look at how our modern technological culture can learn and benefit from indigenous wisdom, but she also weaves a cautionary tale about how potentially dangerous it is—on both sides—to try to cross those frontiers.

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