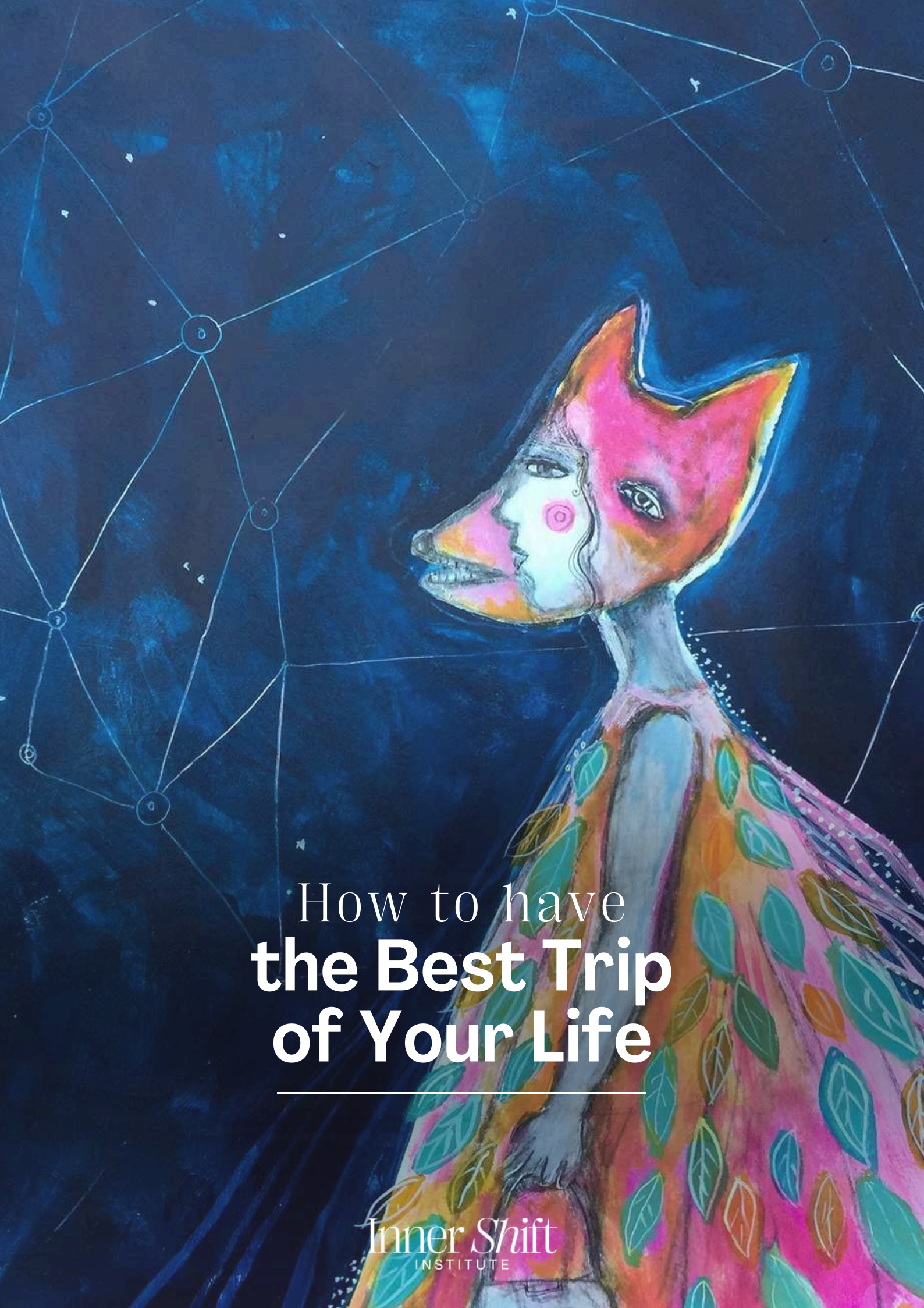


How to have **the Best Trip of Your Life**

Inner Shift
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BEFORE WE BEGINN...

This book is not about trippy colors or festival highs or chasing visions. Psychedelics already have their own mystery and magic. They don't need me to add to that.

What I care about is this: how to have the best trip of your life.

Not just something fun or curious, but the kind of journey that really shifts something inside of you. The kind of trip where you meet parts of yourself you thought were gone. The kind of trip where there is finally relief, release, and sometimes joy so big you wonder how it was hidden in you all along.

People take psychedelics for all kinds of reasons. Some for adventure. Some for escape. Some for healing. And all of that is human. But if what you want is depth, if what you long for is to feel fully met by yourself, then that's what this book is about.





I'm going to share with you what actually makes a trip powerful. It's not just the medicine. It's the space you're in, the intention you bring, the people holding you, and what you do afterward.

So take a breath. Let yourself be curious. Let's start.

And if you'd rather listen than read, this began as a conversation. You can find it as a podcast episode of Shift Within. But if you want the unfiltered written version, the one that feels like you're right across the table from me - Alice, founder of the Inner Shift Institute - then this is it.

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CHAPTER 1: THE KNIFE

Psychedelics are like a knife.

A knife can cut open an apple so you can eat. It can carve something beautiful out of wood. It can keep you alive if you are lost in the wild. And yes, it can stab you.

Psychedelics work in the same way.

They can open your heart so wide you don't know how it all fits. They can strip away the masks you have been carrying for years. They can bring you face to face with the child inside of you who is still waiting to be seen. But if you take them carelessly, in the wrong space, with the wrong people, they can tear you apart.

Not because the plants want to hurt you. They just have a way of showing you what's been there all along.

Many people are taught to use psychedelics like entertainment. A party. A way to laugh harder, see more colors, feel high. And yes, that can happen. You might laugh. You will see colors. But you won't meet yourself. You will just be running again, only this time dressed up in pretty visions.

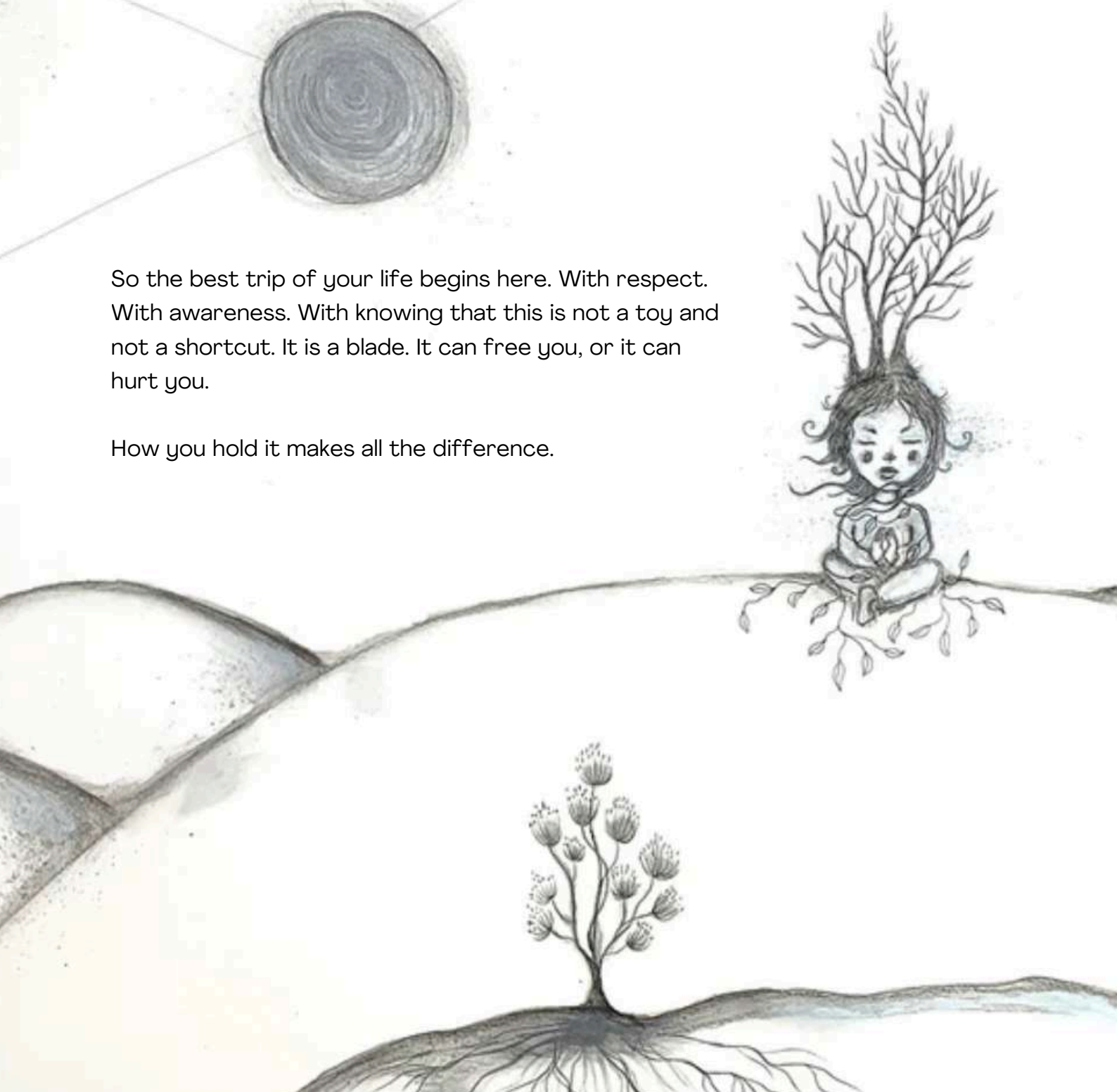
If you want the best trip of your life, you have to hold psychedelics with the same respect you would give a sharp blade in your hand. Held with care, it cuts away what is rotten. Held carelessly, it wounds you.

So before you begin, ask yourself:

Am I ready to meet myself?

If the answer is yes, psychedelics can become a scalpel. They cut with precision. They carve through illusions. They expose the lies. They stitch you back together in a way that feels more honest, more whole.

If the answer is no, the knife still cuts. Only now it leaves you bleeding in places you don't know how to care for.



So the best trip of your life begins here. With respect. With awareness. With knowing that this is not a toy and not a shortcut. It is a blade. It can free you, or it can hurt you.

How you hold it makes all the difference.



CHAPTER 2: STOP ESCAPING YOURSELF

I have seen people swallow mushrooms and then spend the whole night running. Running from themselves while sitting completely still.

It looks like giggling at shapes on the ceiling. It looks like chasing visions as if they were the point. It looks like talking non-stop so silence never has a chance to break through. That is not meeting yourself.

The best trip of your life begins the moment you stop running.

When you let the medicine take you inward, don't be surprised if grief rises like a tide. Or if anger, the kind you buried so deep you forgot it had a name, starts to tremble its way to the surface. And sometimes, joy will rise so fast and pure it catches you off guard, like your body suddenly remembered something it had forgotten.Your only job in that moment?

Stay. Stay with it.



Psilocybin doesn't always take the fear away. But it makes it easier to stop fighting yourself. The protector parts that spend a lifetime blocking your emotions lose some of their grip. Your resistance loses its edge. And suddenly, you're not alone in there anymore. Something ancient and wise is walking with you. It doesn't need a name. You'll feel it when it comes.

The real beauty isn't in the colors. It's not in the swirling skies or the strange geometry.

The real beauty is what happens when you finally stop turning away from yourself.

So if you're looking for the trip of a lifetime, forget the exit. Find a seat. Close your eyes. Let the medicine show you what it wants to show you.

You don't need to go anywhere. What you've been searching for has been here all along... quietly waiting, just beneath the surface of you.



CHAPTER 3: THE INVISIBLE & THE VISIBLE

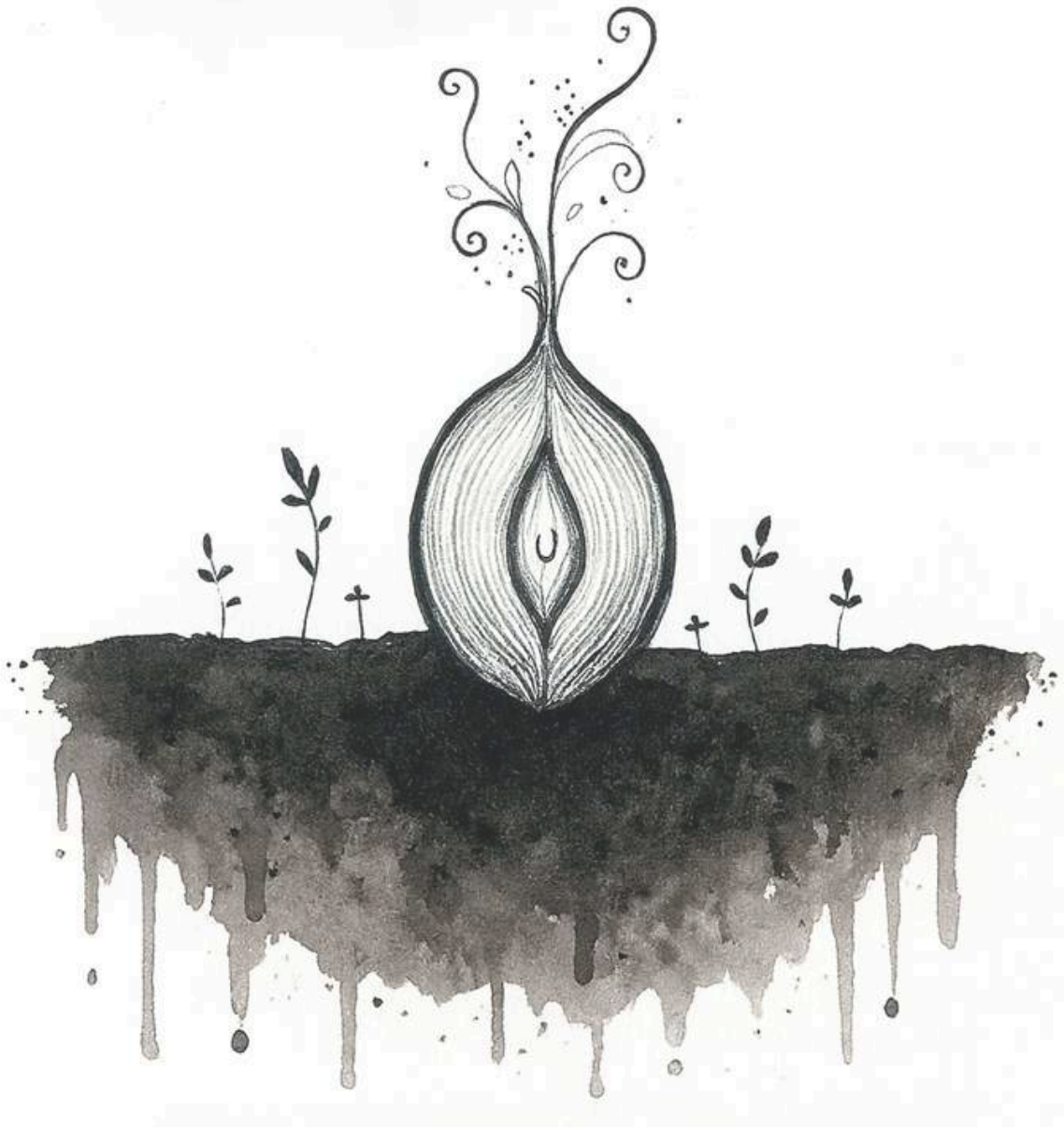
Once you've decided to meet yourself fully, the next thing that shapes everything is this: your inner state and your outer space, also called set and setting.

There is a world inside of you that nobody sees (set). And there is a world outside of you that holds you as you journey (setting). Together they decide how deep you can go.

The invisible is your inner landscape. Your state of mind, the emotions resting under your skin, the intention you set before you begin, the way you approach the unknown. Even the quiet energy you bring into the space. All of this travels with you and colors the journey ahead.

The visible is the stage around you. The light in the room. The blanket on your body. The playlist that stirs your chest open. The faces of the people you trust, or the silence of being held by someone who knows how to stay.

One without the other leaves something missing.



I think of it like a seed. A seed holds all the potential in the world. It already knows how to grow into a tree. But without soil, water, and light, nothing happens. Your inner world is the seed. The outer world is the soil.

Together they decide if you grow.

I have seen people carry heavy grief, but release it completely because the space around them was safe. And I have seen others come with the brightest intention, but in a chaotic setting their walls stayed locked tight.

The best trip of your life begins with both. What you carry inside. What surrounds you outside. One feeds the other.

So take care with both. Prepare the ground within you. Choose the ground around you. Then watch what happens when the invisible and the visible meet.

CHAPTER 4: THE DETAILS THAT CARRY YOU

If you want the best trip of your life, pay attention to the details. They are not small. They play a big part in how far you can go.

At our retreats, we let our participants journey on mattresses so the body can feel comfortable to let go. When the body feels safe, the mind follows. If you are lying on something hard or shifting around to get comfortable, a part of you stays tense, and tension keeps you from dropping into the depth that is waiting.

Music is the next important detail. It is not just in the background. It moves you when words cannot. A single song can open a flood of tears, shake something loose that has been frozen for years, or carry you through a storm you thought you could not survive. Music calls things forward. It guides you when you do not know where to go.

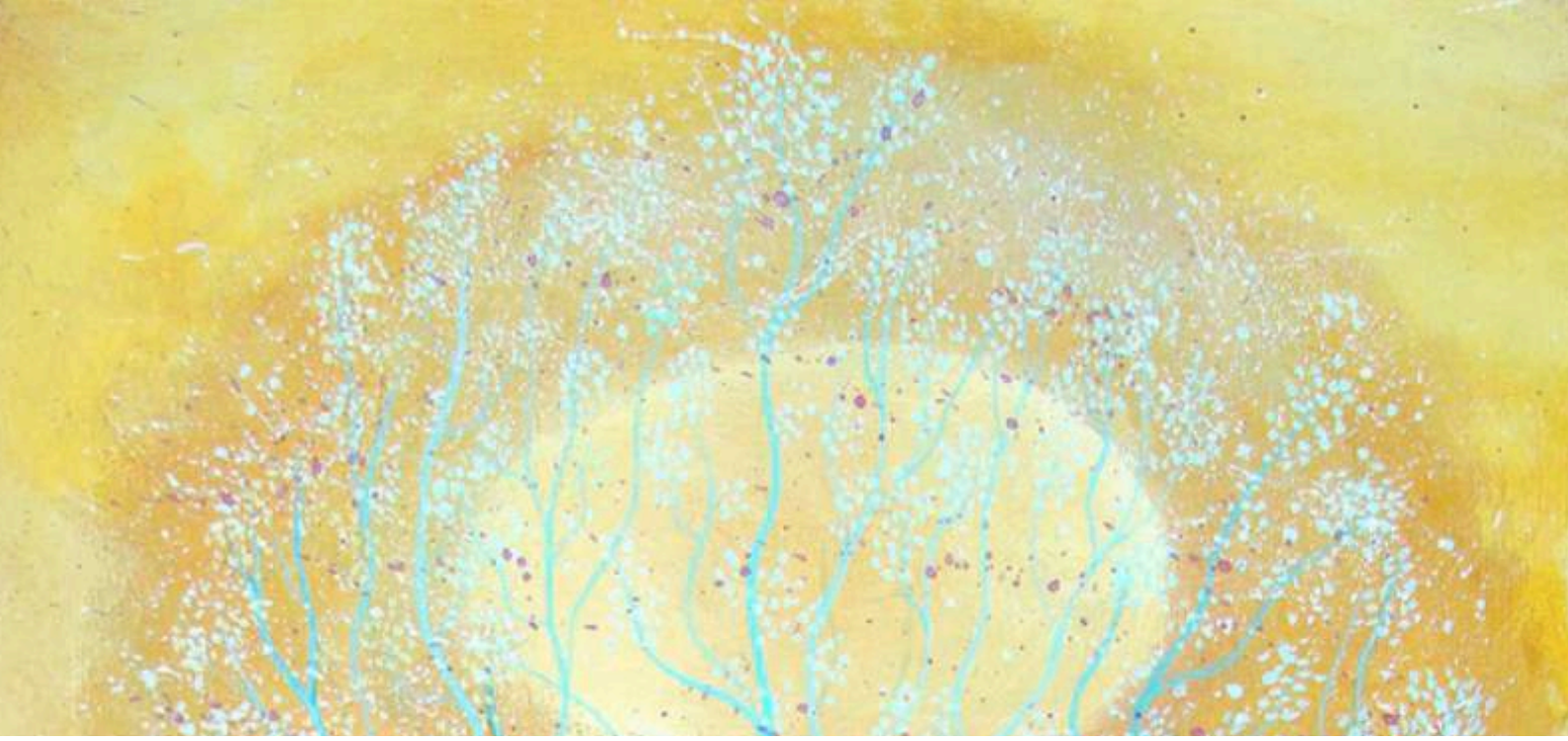




And then there is the eye mask. A strip of fabric, but it changes everything. With your eyes open, the mind keeps looking outside. With the mask, there is nowhere to run. The outer world disappears and you are left with what matters: yourself. For most people, the mask is what lets them drop in and really go deep. A few can do this just as fully with eyes open, but that's rare.

What matters is finding the way that takes you inward.

The best trip of your life is not only about the medicine. It is about the conditions that hold you while you meet yourself.



CHAPTER 5: PREPARE LIKE IT MATTERS

The trip doesn't start when the medicine is in your body. It starts the moment you decide you are going to do it. From that point on, everything that happens becomes part of the journey.

If you spend the days before numbing yourself with junk food and endless scrolling, that energy comes with you. If you eat light, rest, and give yourself space, you will walk in differently. Neither is right or wrong. Both are fuel. The question is: what fuel do you want to bring?

Preparation is not about rules. It's about respect. Clearing your system is not a punishment. It's you saying: this matters to me, I want to be here for it.

And then there is intention. You don't need a long essay. The strongest intentions are simple.

Let me feel what I've been avoiding.
Help me trust.
Show me what I need to see.
One honest line is enough.



I think of intention like a bow and arrow. You choose where you want to aim, you pull the string, and you let go. That release is already the start of your journey. You don't hold on to the arrow once it's in the air. The intention just sets the direction.

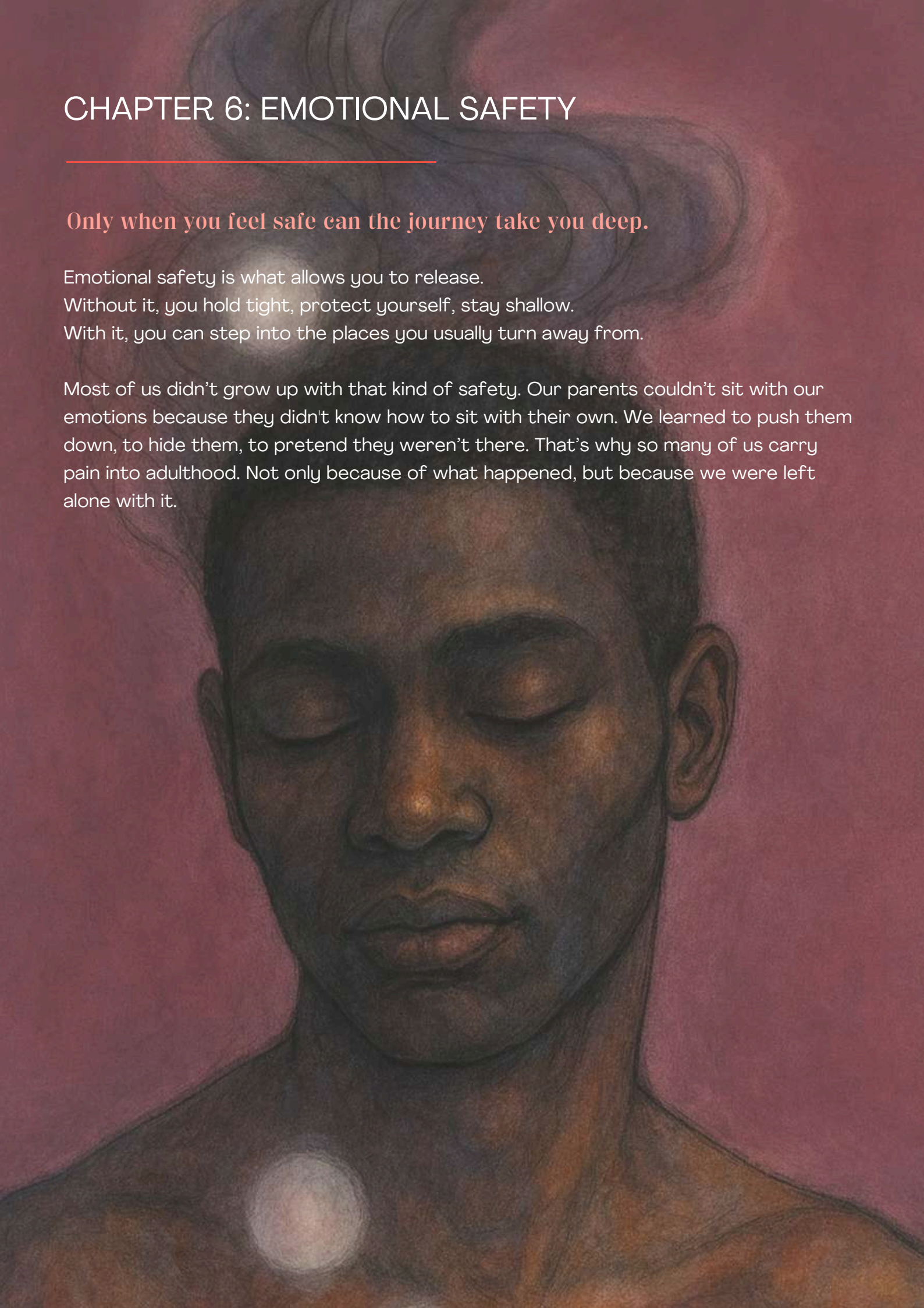
Preparation is important because it sets the tone. The way you walk in often shapes the way you walk through.

CHAPTER 6: EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Only when you feel safe can the journey take you deep.

Emotional safety is what allows you to release.
Without it, you hold tight, protect yourself, stay shallow.
With it, you can step into the places you usually turn away from.

Most of us didn't grow up with that kind of safety. Our parents couldn't sit with our emotions because they didn't know how to sit with their own. We learned to push them down, to hide them, to pretend they weren't there. That's why so many of us carry pain into adulthood. Not only because of what happened, but because we were left alone with it.

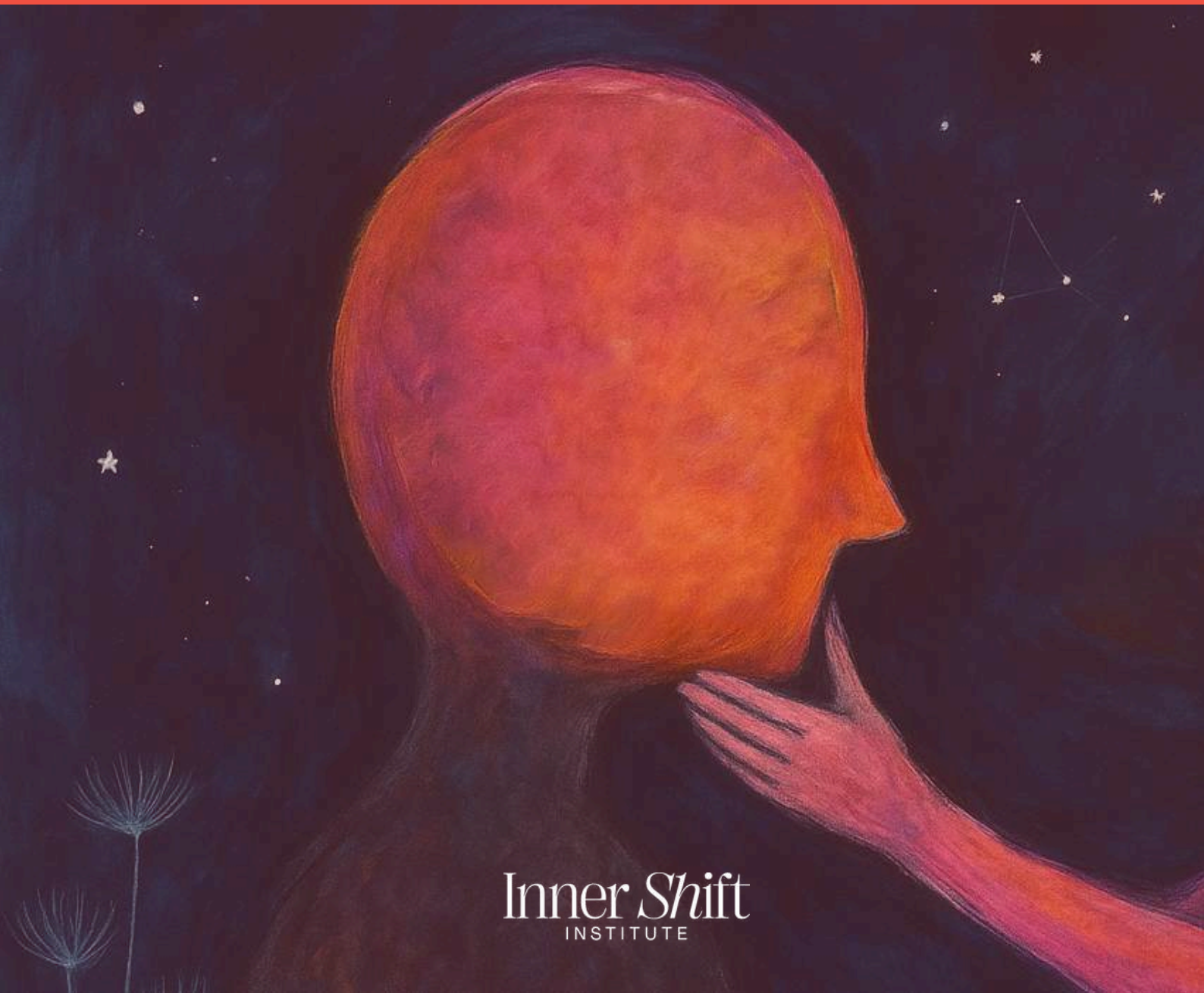


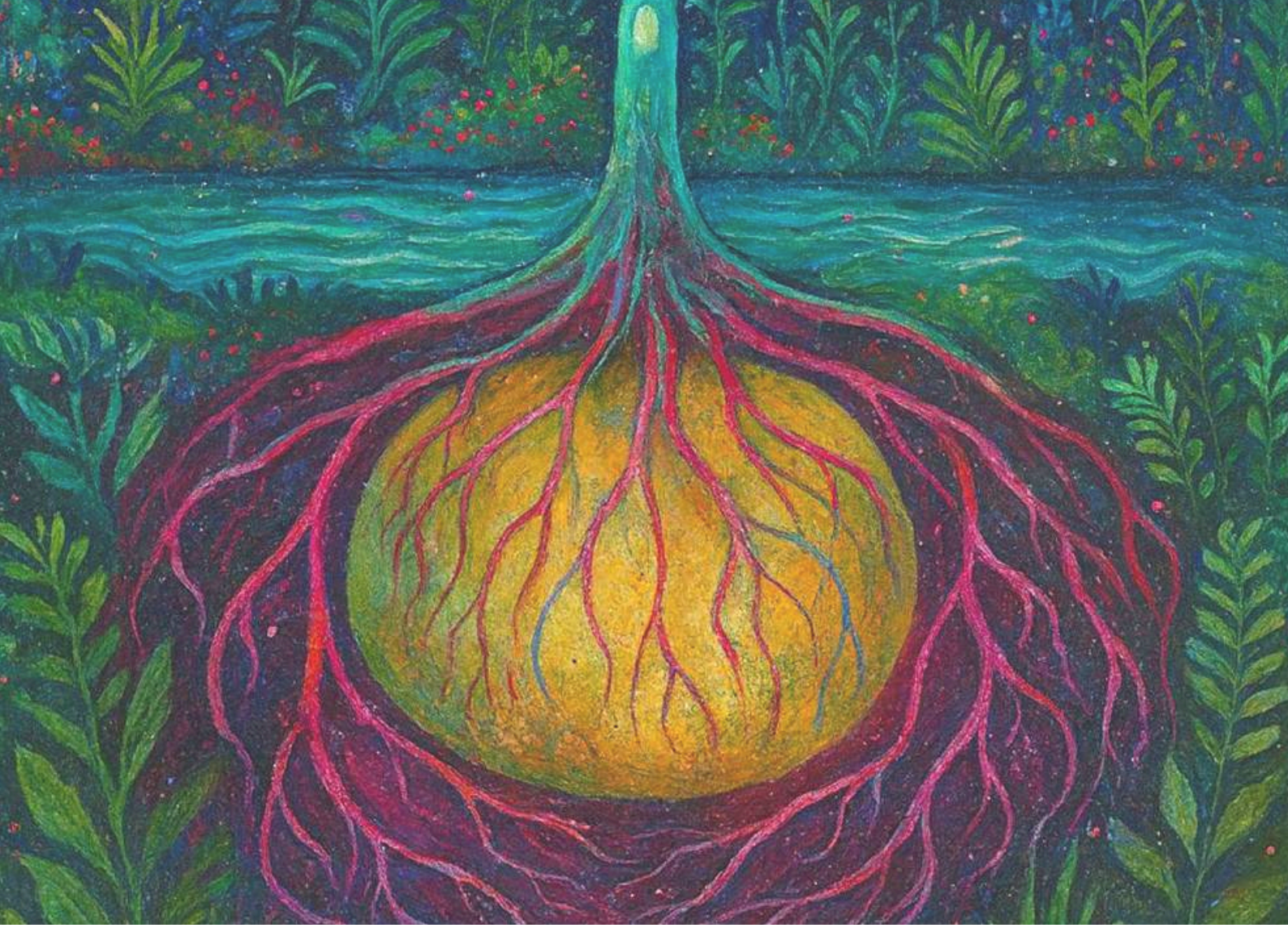
In a journey, it's the same. If you feel alone with what comes up, you resist. If you feel safe, you let it move through you.

That's why the role of a facilitator matters so much. Not just someone who watches, but someone who stays with you when it gets heavy. Someone who shows with their presence that all your emotions are welcome. Fear. Anger. Grief. Joy. Shame. Nothing is too much. Nothing is too dark.

Emotional safety is what turns a painful memory into something you can finally release. It's what makes the difference between being overwhelmed and being held.

If you want the best trip of your life, choose people who know how to create that kind of safety. People who are not afraid of your emotions. People who can sit with you in the storm until you find your way through.





CHAPTER 7: WHO HOLDS YOU

Who facilitates you in a psychedelic journey matters just as much as the substance itself. You can only let go as far as you feel safe, and that safety is largely dependent on the person guiding you.

There are different ways to guide a session. Some facilitators follow a non-directive style. They stay present but step back, only intervening if you ask. The idea is simple: you find your own way, and silence gives space for that.

Others use a more directive style. They take an active role, especially when you are stuck or overwhelmed. Instead of leaving you in silence, they might help you follow an emotion further, guide you through inner child work, or mirror back what they see in the moment. The idea here is that much of our hurt happened in relationships, and it often takes relationship to work through it.

Both ways have strengths and risks. Non-directive can give you freedom, but it can also leave you feeling abandoned when things get too heavy. Directive can take you further, but if it's overdone, it can feel intrusive.

At the Inner Shift Institute, we work in between. We give space for your process, but we also step in when you are stuck in a loop or too afraid to face something alone. We know how easy it is to shut down when nobody reaches out, and how powerful it can be when someone is right there with you, helping you through the storm.

This is why who holds you matters.

It's not only about their training or knowledge. It's about whether you trust them enough to fall apart in their presence, and to come out the other side.



CHAPTER 8: WHAT TRAUMA REALLY IS

The hardest moments in a trip often bring the biggest shift. To understand why, you need to know what trauma really is.

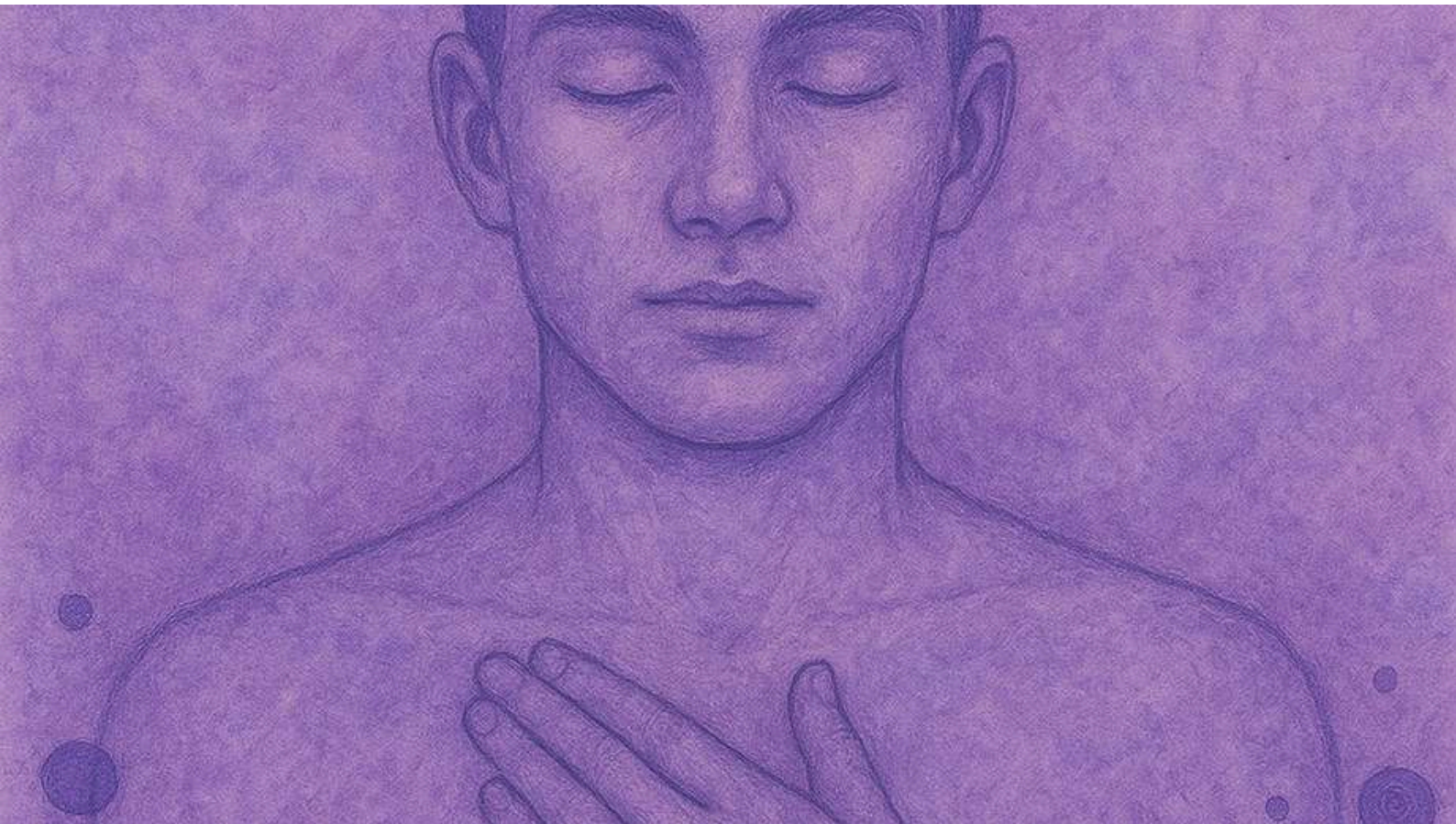
Most people believe trauma is the event itself. The car accident. The abuse. The night everything fell apart. But trauma is not the event. Trauma is what happens inside of you when the experience overwhelms you and you are left alone with it.

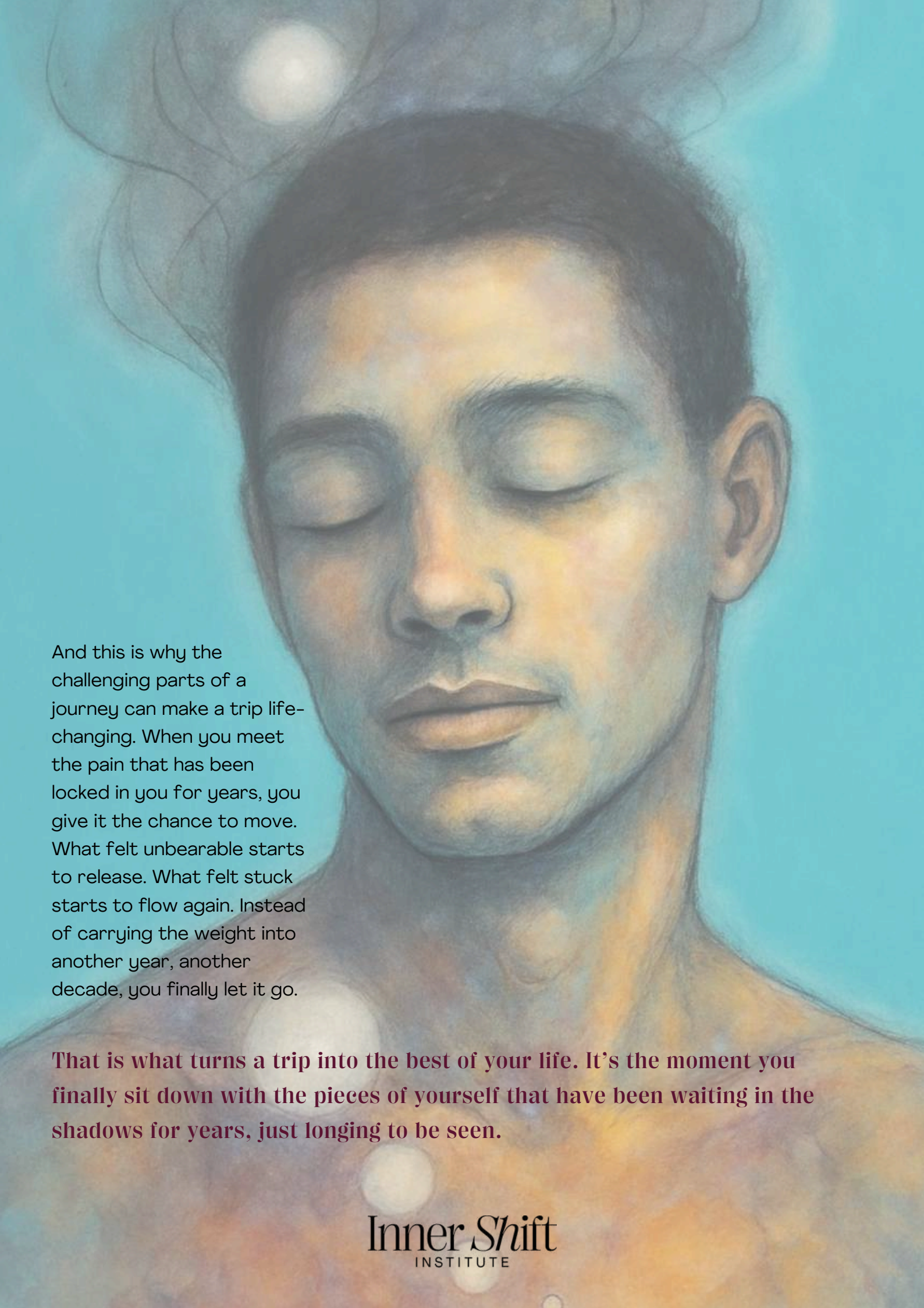
Gabor Maté puts it simply:

> "Trauma is not what happened to you, but the disconnect of the self as a result of what happened to you."

It can come from the obvious big moments, but just as often it comes from the quiet ones. Being told to stop crying. Feeling invisible. Waiting for comfort that never came. Sometimes the deepest wounds come from what did not happen at all.

What many people call a "bad trip" is often exactly this: the painful emotional memories rising to the surface. Without the right support, it can feel overwhelming and unbearable. But with a skilled facilitator, these same moments become challenging yet profoundly healing experiences.





And this is why the challenging parts of a journey can make a trip life-changing. When you meet the pain that has been locked in you for years, you give it the chance to move. What felt unbearable starts to release. What felt stuck starts to flow again. Instead of carrying the weight into another year, another decade, you finally let it go.

That is what turns a trip into the best of your life. It's the moment you finally sit down with the pieces of yourself that have been waiting in the shadows for years, just longing to be seen.

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CHAPTER 9: DON'T ROMANTICIZE THE AMAZON

You don't need a jungle to have a life-changing psychedelic journey.

The story is tempting: drums at night, smoke in the air, a shaman in a place that feels ancient. It sounds beautiful. But it's not required for depth.

What shapes the quality of your trip is not how far you fly. It's how well you are understood while you are in it.

If your guide doesn't speak your language, they can't hear the nuance in your words. If they don't know your cultural background, they might miss what your nervous system is doing. You could be looping in terror while someone only increases the chanting. You could be reliving abandonment while the standard of the facilitation is to leave you alone with it. These ways of facilitation come from a tradition that has worked for centuries for those born into the Amazon, shaped by their culture and upbringing. But if you didn't grow up there, your needs might be different. None of this is wrong in their tradition. It just might not work for your nervous system, your history, and your way of making sense of the world.

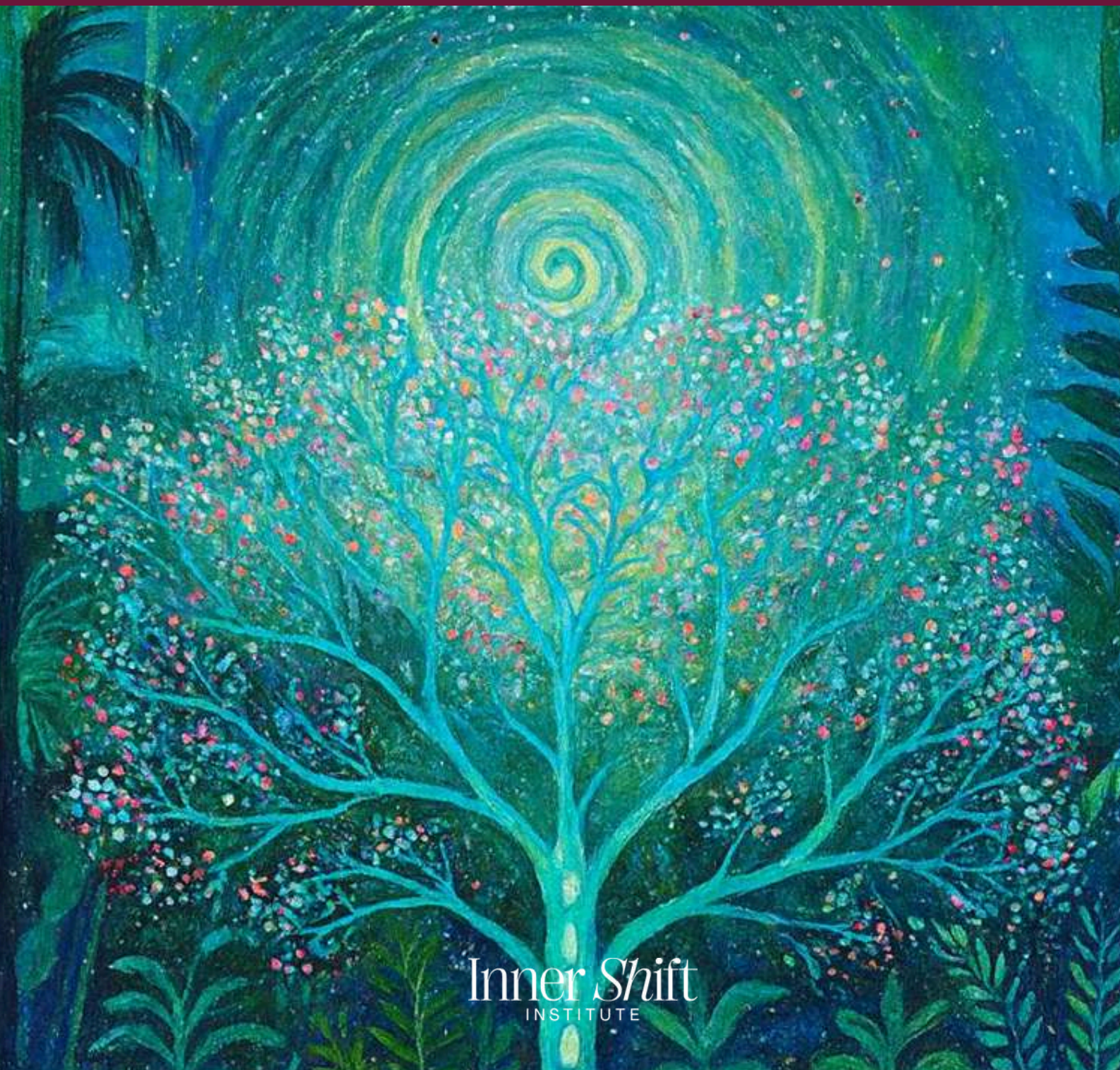
I've met many people who came back from faraway ceremonies confused, shaken, or shut down. Not because the plants failed, but because the support didn't meet their needs.

Exotic settings can be meaningful. And for some people, they are exactly what works. If your intuition says that's where you need to go, then that is right for you.

But for many, the best trip happens closer to home, with people who can read them without guessing. With someone who knows their psyche, their patterns, their boundaries. Someone who understands dissociation and can call it out. Someone who can see trauma patterns, family conditioning, and projections for what they are. Someone who can sit close when it's unbearable, and step in when you are stuck.

Psychedelics are found in many places. Insight can happen anywhere. What makes it life changing is not the jungle, not the setting; it's safety and understanding.

The jungle is optional. Feeling fully met is not.



CHAPTER 10: INTENTION VS. EXPECTATION

In all the years we've guided journeys, one thing keeps repeating: the people without expectations usually go the deepest.



An intention is not the same as an expectation. An intention is a direction, not a demand. It's a way of telling yourself, "This is what matters to me right now."

Expectation tries to script the trip. It says how it should look and when it should happen. I should see visions. I must feel only love. This has to fix everything tonight. When the psychedelic journey goes into a different direction, the mind starts to resist and the body tightens. The journey becomes a struggle.

Some people come hoping for light and end up meeting their grief. Others expect a vision and instead find deep silence. None of it is wrong.

The journeys that change us the most are rarely the ones we planned.

Set your intention, yes. But then let go of how you think it should look. The less you try to force it, the more space there is for something transformative to happen.

The best trips rarely look the way you imagine them. They move where you need to go, not where you thought you would.

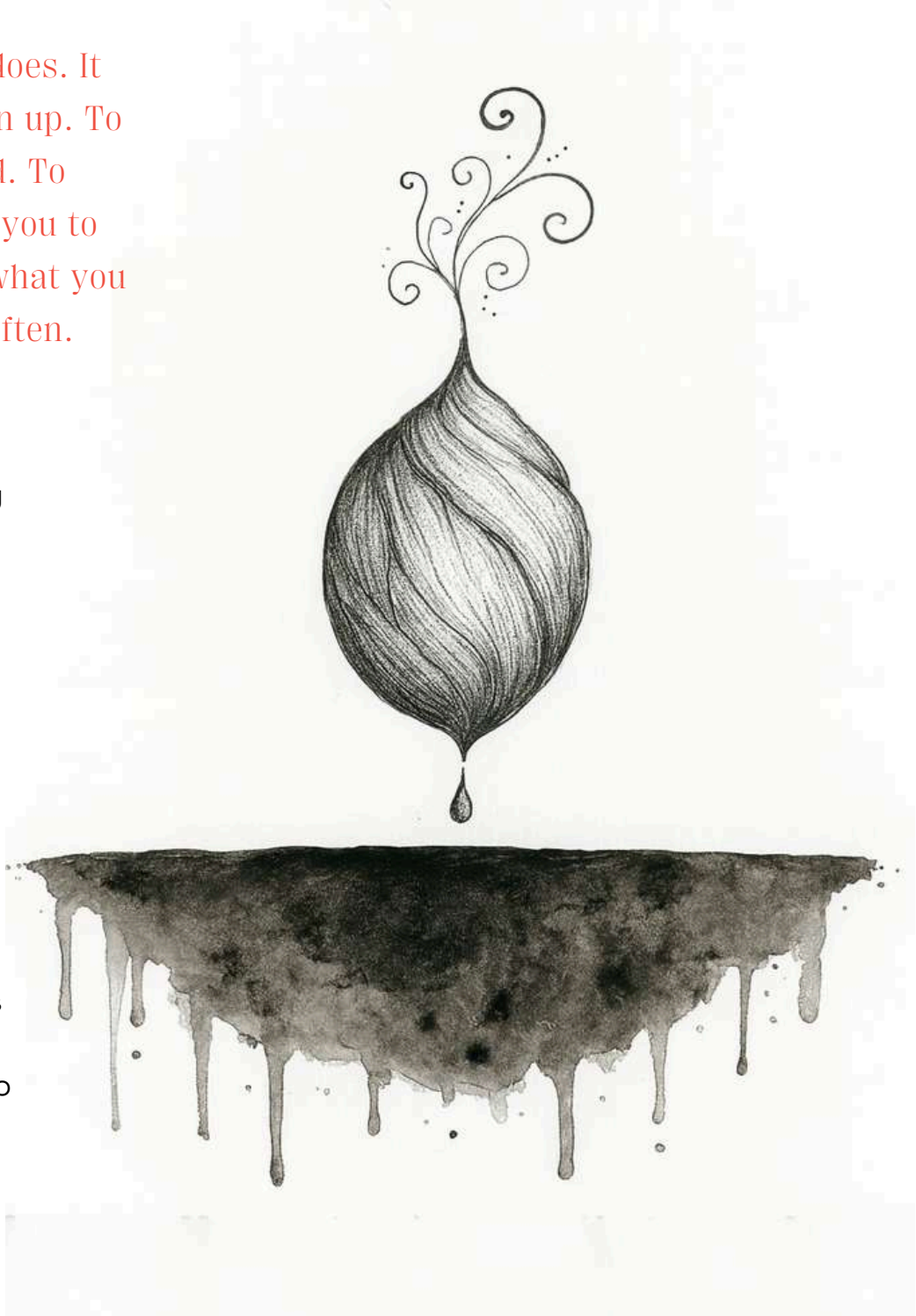
CHAPTER 11: SURRENDER WITHOUT FORCING IT

If you really want a journey that goes deep, one that actually shifts something in you, at some point, you'll have to let go.

And I'm not saying that because surrender is some trendy concept. I'm saying it because psychedelics work differently when you stop trying to control what's happening.

But you can't just let go because you want to. That's not how it works. You can tell yourself to relax, but if your body has learned that letting go isn't safe, it won't happen. No matter how much you try. Your nervous system keeps bracing.

That's what trauma does. It teaches you to tighten up. To expect something bad. To stay alert. It teaches you to survive, even when what you actually want is to soften.



And this is why who is with you during the journey matters. Letting go doesn't happen because of the substance. It happens when your body starts to feel that it's okay to stop fighting.

That safety doesn't begin in the session alone; it also comes from the preparation. The more your body has practiced feeling safe before, the easier it is to surrender when the medicine takes you deeper.



Sometimes you need someone next to you. Not far away. Not just sitting there. Someone who notices what's happening in you. Someone who sees when you're caught in a loop. When you're about to shut down. Someone who knows when to stay quiet and when to speak. When to sit close and when to back off.

Sometimes that support is just presence. Sometimes it's a hand on your shoulder. Sometimes it's someone helping you face the thing you've been avoiding for years.

And when there's real safety, the letting go happens on its own. Not because you made it happen. But because, for the first time, you didn't have to hold it all by yourself.

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CHAPTER 12: INTEGRATION IS THE REAL TRIP

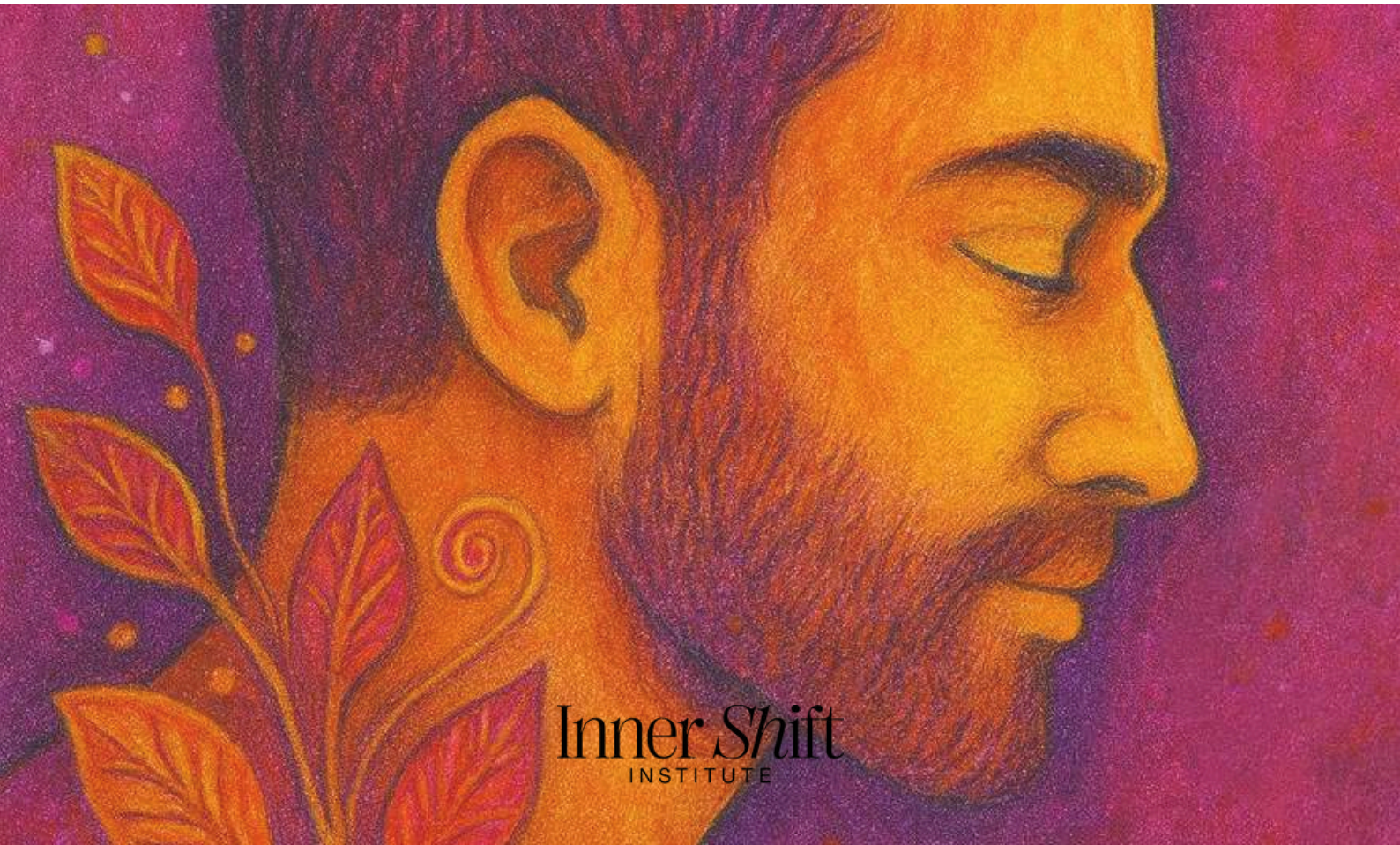
A journey can feel like a whole life in one day. You see things you can't unsee. You remember parts of yourself you had completely forgotten. You feel love so big it makes you cry. Or pain so old you thought it was long gone.

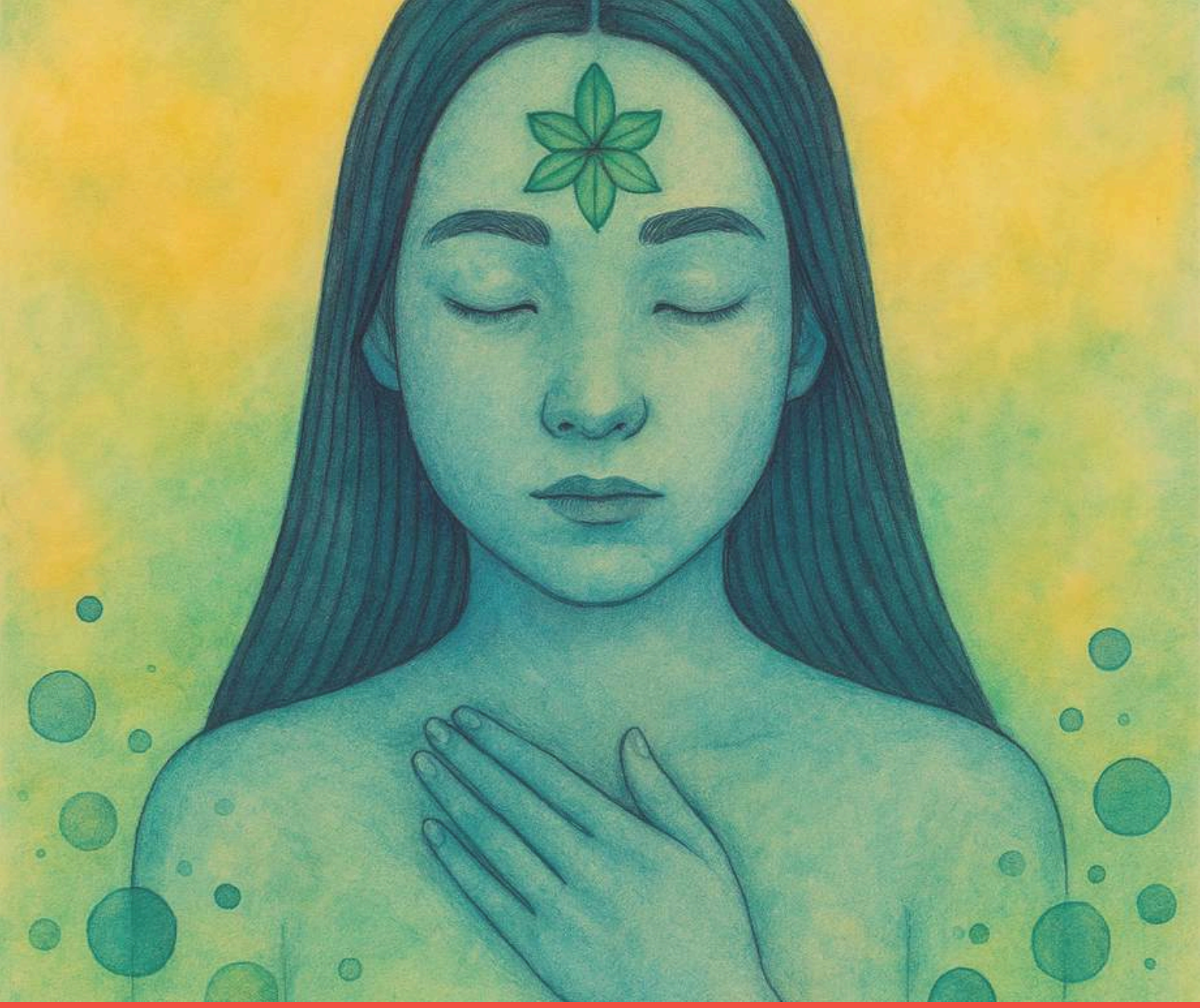
But it's not the journey that changes your life. It's what you do with it after.

Your brain comes out of a psychedelic journey like wet clay. For a little while, it's soft. Shapeable. New patterns are easier to build. Old ones are easier to drop. The story you've told yourself about who you are and what is or isn't possible suddenly doesn't feel so fixed anymore.

This is biology. Psychedelics quiet down the part of the brain that keeps looping, the part that replays the same story over and over again. And when that part goes quiet, something else gets to come forward. You experience yourself without the weight of all that noise. And that feels like freedom. Because in that moment, it is.

But your brain loves what's familiar. Even if the familiar hurts. So if you go straight back into the same routines, the same relationships, the same way you talk to yourself - the clay hardens again. It goes right back into the shape it already knows.





Integration matters. That's where the real work is. Not forcing yourself to change everything overnight. Not blowing up your life in one big move. But choosing again and again to live from the place you touched in the journey. To stay close to it.

To say the thing you always swallow.
To set the boundary you usually avoid.
To treat yourself the way you were treated in that moment when everything finally made sense.

Psychedelics won't change you.
They give you the chance to.

The ceremony cracks the door open. What you do next is what decides if you walk through.

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CHAPTER 13: STOP CHASING HAPPINESS

There's this idea that healing means feeling good. That if something works, it will make you happy. That psychedelics should bring joy, peace, love, and light.

But real healing doesn't always feel good. Sometimes it feels like falling apart. Like crying over something you didn't know was still inside you. Like meeting the sadness you've avoided for years. Like facing truths that don't feel peaceful at all.

There's a story that runs deep in modern culture: that happiness is the goal. That if you're not feeling good, something is wrong. That a good life is a happy one. And that healing will bring that happiness once and for all.

But the best trip of your life is not about chasing happiness. It's about getting honest. Meeting the parts you pushed away. Feeling what you've been running from. Letting what's real come to the surface, even if it hurts.

Sometimes that does bring happiness. A kind that feels deeper than before. But it doesn't last forever. No emotion does. The ones who go the deepest are not the ones who had the happiest trip. They are the ones who stopped needing it to be anything. Who let the grief move. Who sat with the shame. Who met their fear without turning away.

I've seen people weep for an hour, not because they were sad, but because they finally let something real move through them. No light. No colors. Just honesty.

Emotional maturity is not about feeling good all the time. It's about staying rooted when you don't. Like a tree in a storm. The wind comes. The sky shifts. The branches shake. But the roots stay. Life moves through you and you don't collapse.

Psychedelics give you a mirror. And what shows up might be light, dark, flat or heavy. But if you stay, something shifts.

The point is not to be happy. The point is to be with what's there, so fully, that it loses its grip. And from that place, yes, joy comes. Not the chased kind. The real kind. The kind that doesn't need to stay because it's not the goal anymore.

So I invite you to stop chasing happiness. It's not what makes a trip or life in general powerful. Presence does.



CHAPTER 14: THE REAL GIFT

The best psychedelic journeys are not always the ones where everything feels easy. They are the ones where you finally touch the places inside you that have been waiting to be seen.

And when that happens, what matters most is not the substance. It's whether someone is there with you when it all comes up.

Trauma isn't just what happened to you.
It's what happened without anyone truly there to hold and support you.
It's the loneliness inside the pain.

It's the lack of a witness.

Healing is the opposite. It happens when you are finally met, when pain is witnessed. When someone can sit with you without turning away, without trying to fix you, without being afraid of your darkness.

Sometimes that person is YOU. A journey can show you how to stay with every part of yourself, even the ones you've pushed aside.

Sometimes that person is your guide. Someone who has learned how to sit with all emotions, all parts, and welcome them in.

Because when you are fully met there, something shifts. What once felt unbearable becomes something you can finally hold. And when you can hold it, you are no longer trapped by it.

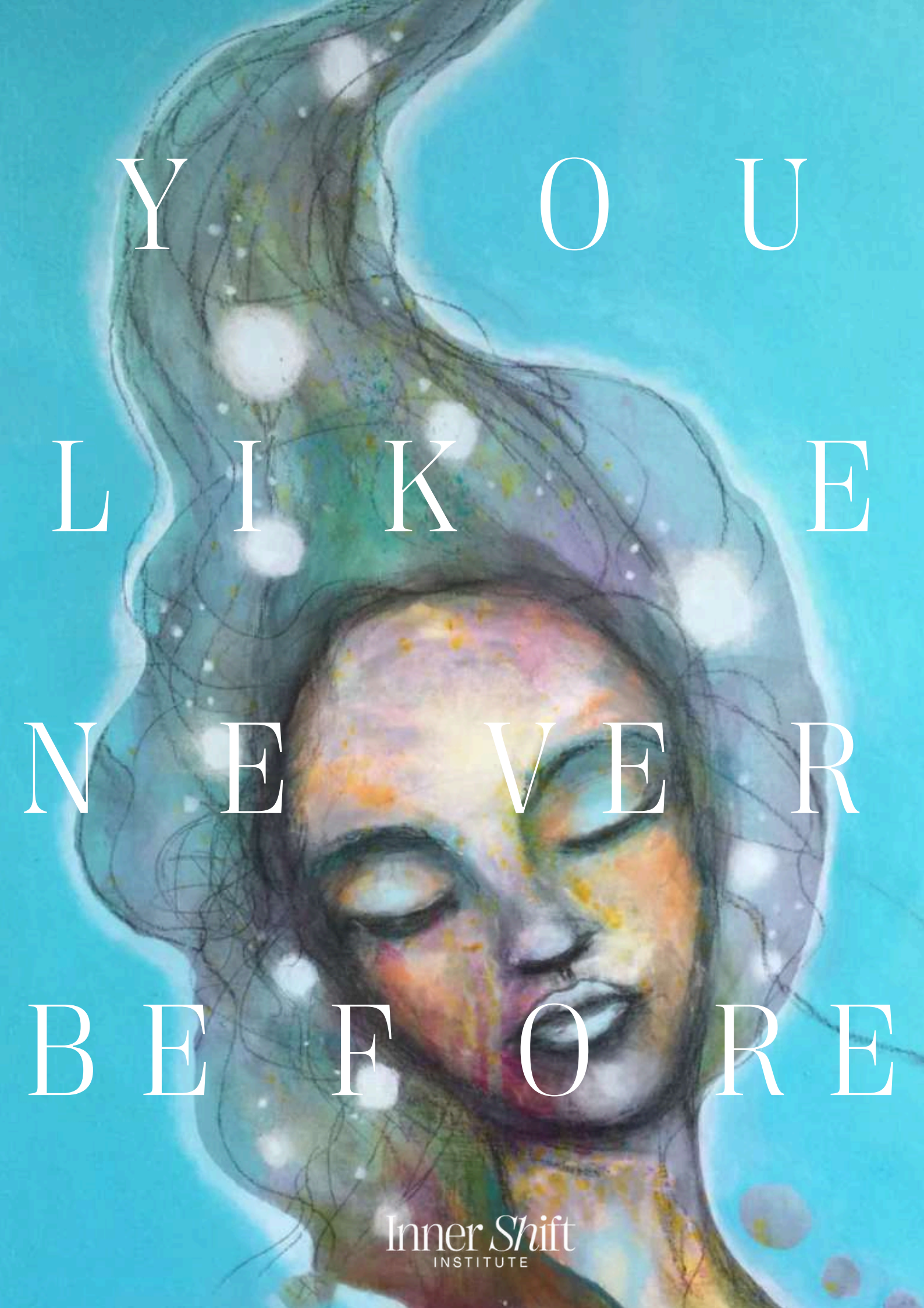
This is what makes a journey powerful. Not avoiding the darkness, but finally not being alone in it.



CREDITS

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