



Becoming Vegetalista

Also by Stephen Harrod Buhner

Nonfiction

Plant Intelligence and the Imaginal Realm: Beyond the Doors of Perception and Into the Dreaming of Earth

The Secret Teachings of Plants: The Intelligence of the Heart in the Direct Perception of Nature

The Lost Language of Plants: The Ecological Importance of Plant Medicines for Life on Earth

Sacred Plant Medicine: The Wisdom in Native American Herbalism

Sacred and Herbal Healing Beers: The Secrets of Ancient Fermentation

One Spirit Many Peoples

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The Taste of Wild Water: Poems and Stories Found While Walking in Woods

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Healing Lyme, 2nd Edition: Natural Healing of Lyme Borreliosis and the Coinfections Chlamydia and Spotted Fever Rickettsiosis

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Natural Remedies for Low Testosterone (previous incarnation: The Natural Testosterone Plan)

Herbs for Hepatitis C and the Liver

Vital Man

In progress:

Healing COPD: Natural Treatments for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Becoming Vegetalista



Veriditas and the Journey to the Self



Stephen Harrod Buhner

Aeon Books

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“The Death of Annie One-Horse” originally appeared in a slightly different form in *Bewildering Stories* magazine.

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*For the Earth
and the ones
who know
this book is
for them*

CONTENTS

A note to the reader xiii

PART ONE
The beginning:
when certain things happened and others did not

Chapter one	In the company of men	3
Chapter two	Tears sand has cried inside glass	33
Chapter three	These most difficult of our teachers	37
Chapter four	The peacock's shimmering blueness	61
Chapter five	Alice: a story	65

PART TWO
And then:
a young girl opens the door of her house
and walks into the forest

Chapter six	For I have heard the earth call my name	85
Chapter seven	A little seed gets in there somehow	103
Chapter eight	Uncle Henry: a story	107



This limited edition of Becoming Vegetalista ends here. The rest of the book, coming sometime within the next few years, looks something like this:

PART THREE

Leaving the house

- Chapter nine** Visions: initiation and descent
- Chapter ten** The darkness of night
- Chapter eleven** Deconstructing and reassembly
- Chapter twelve** For we have eaten something strange
- Chapter thirteen** Root: a story

PART FOUR

Meeting Sacha Runa in the forest

- Chapter fourteen** Veriditas
- Chapter fifteen** For I have heard the world speak
- Chapter sixteen** The long road of exile
- Chapter seventeen** The touch of ancient time
- Chapter eighteen** Green: a story

PART FIVE

They have given me the wrong map and it has intertwined itself within me

- Chapter nineteen** The hermeneutics of suspicion
- Chapter twenty** I have drunk something bitter
- Chapter twenty-one** Monocropping the sacred
- Chapter twenty-two** The dragonfly's silver wings
- Chapter twenty-three** The Allen effect: a story

PART SIX

We make the path by walking

- Chapter twenty-four** Reading the text of the world
- Chapter twenty-five** Wind trails on the sea
- Chapter twenty-six** The journey to the self
- Chapter twenty-seven** Am I standing now in the new life?
- Chapter twenty-eight** Shore leave: A story

PART SEVEN
Vegetalista

Chapter twenty-nine	Between the village and the forest
Chapter thirty	The liminal world
Chapter thirty-one	Eldering and the emergence of hope
Chapter thirty-two	Bearers of speech
Chapter thirty-three	Harvest: a story
Appendix One	A book of useful axioms
Appendix Two	Reading list for those who are leaving the house



We have learned the use of these medicines from the doctoritos, the plants themselves. This is the only way to truly learn the medicines, and it is Sacha Runa who introduces them to us. Our training is long, our whole life maybe, and years must pass before becoming vegetalista. You must understand that many, though not all, vegetalistas are also what you in your country call herbalists, but that is the least of our training: not all herbalists are called, or want to become, vegetalista.



A NOTE TO THE READER

*The owl's dark eyelids cover a luminosity our reason
cannot grasp.*

Robert Bly

I would do for you what spring does for cherry trees.

Pablo Neruda

The best ecstasies take long journeys.

Author's Journal, March 2017

I spend most of my days, when I am not washing the outside steps or cleaning the kitchen, which I am sure Yeats never had do to, thinking and contemplating and imagining and feeling and moving into and through this animate world we call Earth. Sometimes out there in the wildness of the world I come upon a story that needs more than anything to live inside a book, which, of course, it begins telling me pretty insistently that it must do right now and no more procrastinating. Sometimes I don't have what it takes, so the story stays out there waiting until it finds a storyteller who really can craft the words the story needs to be inside of for it to be itself.

Other times, it seems (though no storyteller is ever completely sure of this) that I have both the skill to manage the telling of it *and* the willingness to open myself so the story can enter inside me and remain alive without my trying to make it something it is not. In that way it will still speak in its own voice all the things it needs to say, and that is how the best stories come to be anyway. Once the story realizes this, as all stories that are ready to be told

do to every writer that is, it won't let me alone no matter whether I am sleeping or waking or washing the steps, which Yeats never had to do I am sure. So, that is how this story you hold in your hands came to be.

If you have read any of my other books and think you know what you will find inside this one, I just want you to know that this one is very different from anything I have written before and actually I myself have never read one like it . . .

for it is a quilting sewn from ragged pieces of memoir and remnants of narrative nonfiction and poetic prayer ties and scraps of fictional short stories and even a few odd blanket edges of scholarly commentary and still other things that are not usually found in stories such as telephone poles and the number 37 and purple tennis shoes disappearing around the bend just ahead of you as well as really rare pieces of fabric that can only be found beneath the owl's dark eyelids or inside the emerald glimmering of a newly opened leaf or – sometimes – even inside secrets that everyone says must not be spoken out loud.

. . . despite the fact that I have read ten or twenty thousand books (which people keep telling me I couldn't have done no way no how) during the sixty-five years of my life though of course that includes reading some of them more than once or even ten times.

Like all books, you might like it or you might not. There might be something inside this one that your soul needs you to find right now because that is the way souls are or else it might not be in here at all and if it is not your soul will tell you pretty quickly about it and then you can put the book down and go find what it is that your soul needs you to find right now, which is, by the nature of things, going to be a lot more important than you reading a book that has nothing to say to you.

And for sure, as I say every time I write a story – though for some reason a lot of people don't believe me – most rationalists and all mechanical reductionists and the majority of monotheists and even some love and light beings (because there is so much

dark, heavy stone in here) will hate this book and if you are any of those life forms you should proceed with caution if you decide to open any more pages of the book than this one you are reading right now. For what is surely true is that it will upset your stomach and you will find yourself getting mad, the reasons for which you will only partly know, and waving your hands in the air and expostulating and just having a miserable time so I wouldn't bother if I were you.

On the other hand, if you know what Mirabai meant when she said she has felt the swaying of the elephant's shoulders and if you have spent any time in your life being called by the wildness of the world or having strange experiences like plants talking to you or being awakened in the night by a voice that sounds really familiar speaking your name then there might be some things in this book that your soul needs you to find this day of all days.

Still, there might not be, and if so, just put the book down and go on with your life for the world is as filled with stories as it is with song and with animate beings that care for you and watch you with affectionate looks and there is no reason for you to waste your time here when all that is out there just waiting for you to just happen by.

Because really that's all this book is about: what happened when the Earth and I by chance ran into each other one day, met one another's gaze, and stopped a minute to talk.

In the end, we went back to her place.