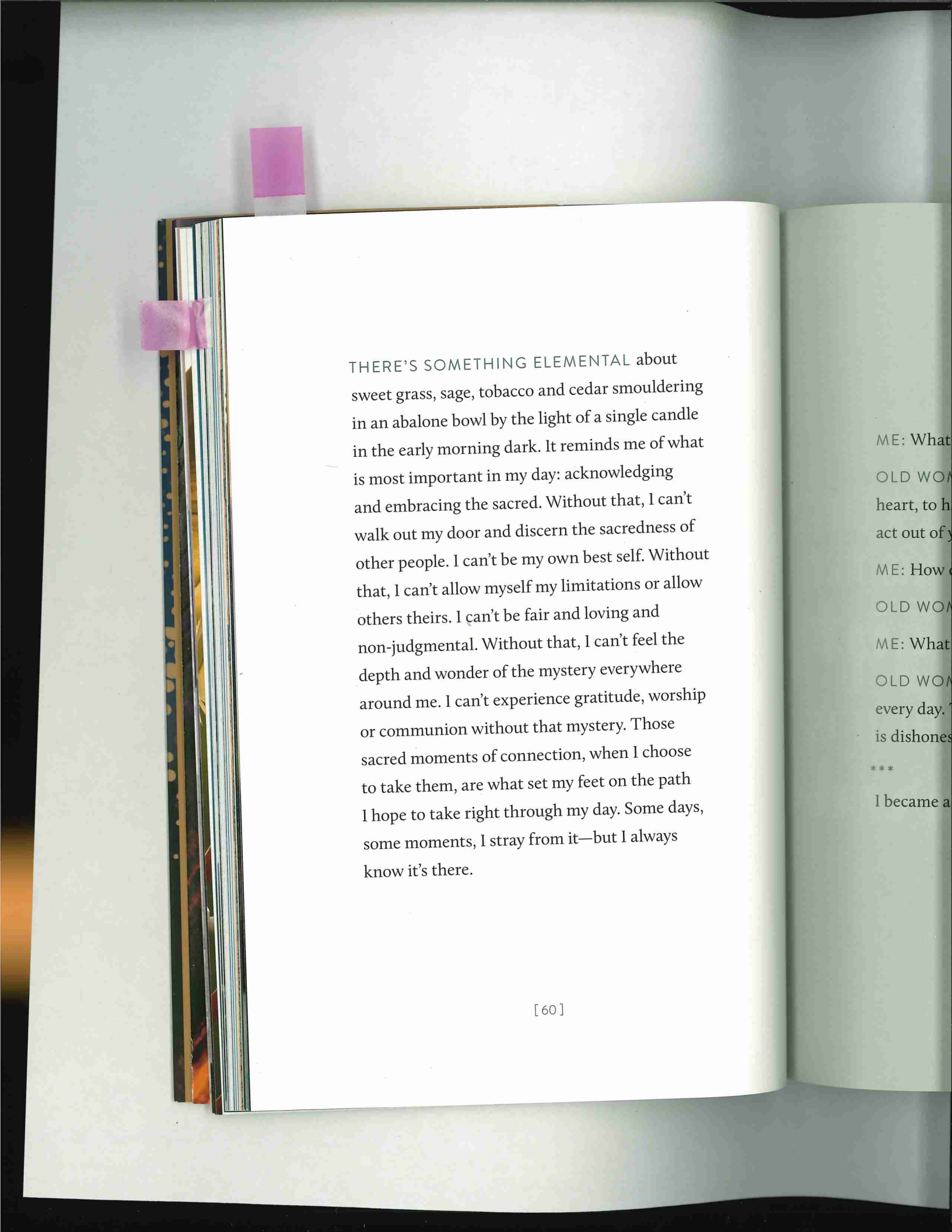


RICHARD
WAGAMESE
EMBERS

One Ojibway's Meditations





THERE'S SOMETHING ELEMENTAL about sweet grass, sage, tobacco and cedar smouldering in an abalone bowl by the light of a single candle in the early morning dark. It reminds me of what is most important in my day: acknowledging and embracing the sacred. Without that, I can't walk out my door and discern the sacredness of other people. I can't be my own best self. Without that, I can't allow myself my limitations or allow others theirs. I can't be fair and loving and non-judgmental. Without that, I can't feel the depth and wonder of the mystery everywhere around me. I can't experience gratitude, worship or communion without that mystery. Those sacred moments of connection, when I choose to take them, are what set my feet on the path I hope to take right through my day. Some days, some moments, I stray from it—but I always know it's there.

ME: What

OLD WOMAN

heart, to h

act out of y

ME: How c

OLD WOMAN

ME: What

OLD WOMAN

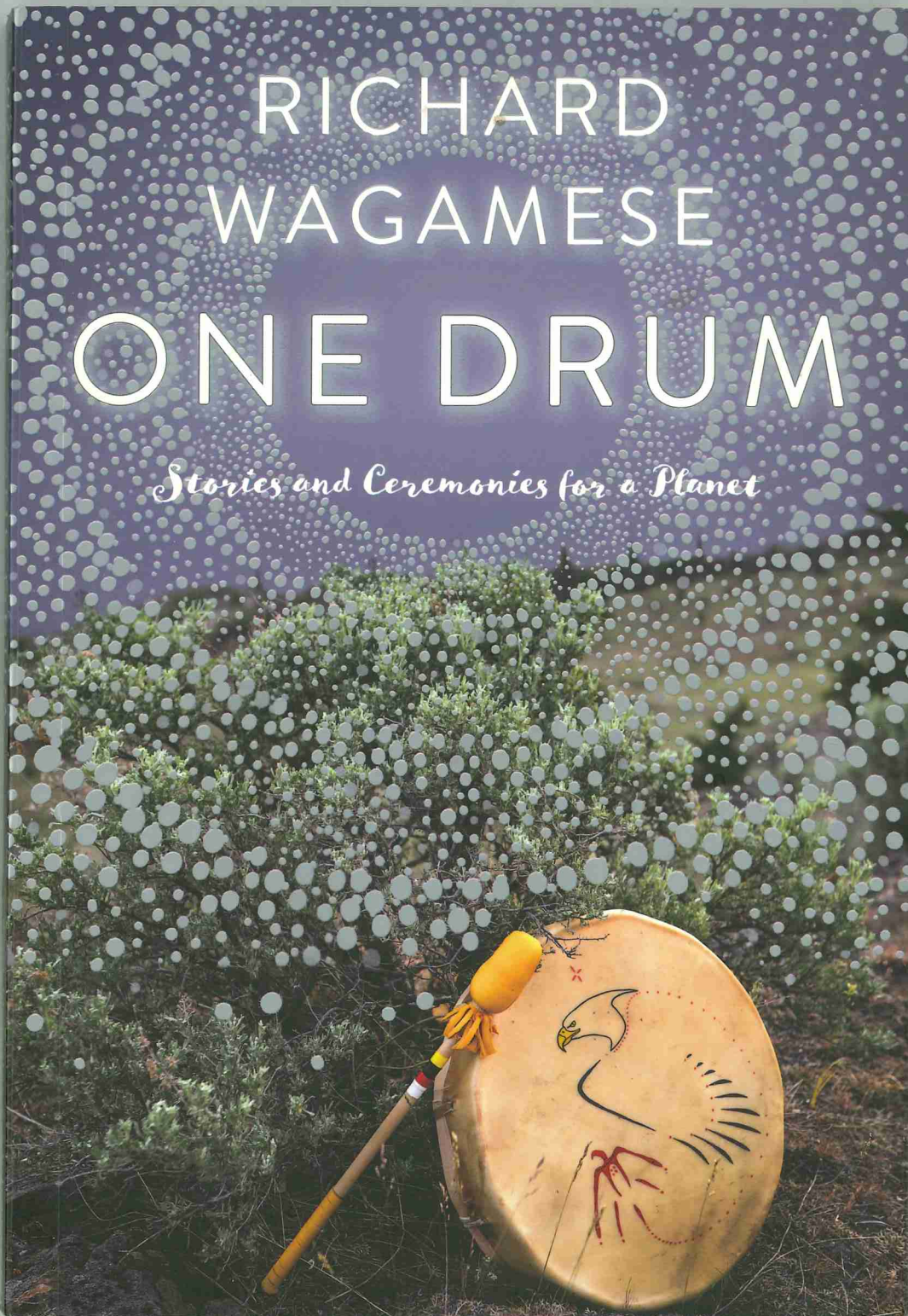
every day.

is dishones

I became a

RICHARD
WAGAMESE
ONE DRUM

Stories and Ceremonies for a Planet



and the nature of our lives in this reality. We
human nature to forget that. But ceremony
order and ceremony allows us to embrace
This is the way the Teachers saw things
ceremony.
ceremony is about gratitude.

THE SECOND CEREMONY: *The Tobacco Offering*

THIS CEREMONY IS called the Tobacco Offering. Because tobacco was the first gift following the flood, the first sign that life would continue, tobacco plays a very elemental part in Ojibway life. It is widely used as a sign of thankfulness. Even outside of specific ceremonies, Native people offer small bundles of tobacco wrapped in cotton cloth as an indication of their gratitude for a kindness. These bundles are called tobacco ties and they are integral to this ceremony.

Many years ago now, I was living in a healing lodge for Native men on a reserve outside of Calgary, Alberta. It was called the Sarcee Old Agency Lodge at that time. It sat on a curve of the road above a small creek and below a series of rolling hills. I remember how quiet it was there and how clear the air felt and tasted. I'd been living in cities all my life and the chance to live awhile in the open country appealed to me. The Lodge was a place for men with addictions to come and learn to heal themselves through the practice of traditional teachings. There were other programs offered too, like AA and other contemporary teaching paradigms, but what struck me most deeply were the traditional teachings. They resonated within me. They felt true. They made me feel that wholeness and life without alcohol were possible. Every sweat lodge